

Of Thi Thoug

Today Edward de Bono is known the world over. There is no university that has not considered his methods which are promulgated by a network of some 1200 trainees worldwide. Meeting him in Malta during one of his pauses in between delivering speeches and holding international seminars, provides insight into the personality and the man.

“My methods of thinking can be adopted in any field and certainly they have been adopted by diverse people, multinational companies and artists of world fame. For instance in art and music, they have been taken up by great artists such as Peter Gabriel, the Pet Shop Boys and Eurythmics. Then there are the schools. Research carried out in the UK has shown that there is a tangible increase in the improved performance of students who are taught my thinking methods.”

Certainly de Bono’s thinking skills can be adopted by the very young, even as young as four years of age. This age group can kick off with the Six Hats parallel thinking methods, yet they would only be learning a simplified version of what is taught to top economists around the globe. Lateral thinking has also been found to be extremely useful to the very old, since it empowers the aged to find methods of reducing confusion. Even the parents of schizophrenic children have found the methods helpful in this regard. “I must say that this method has been taken as far afield as Papua New Guinea. There the method has been taught to the populations living in the remote highlands and after they learnt the method, they admitted that it had changed their lives.”

But why do de Bono’s methods clinch such popularity? Why would China set up five pilot projects in five different provinces to teach his methods to thousands of school children? And why would big names, the likes of IBM, Du Pont, British



by **Marika Azzopardi**

He originally qualified in medicine and proceeded to work clinically as well as follow up on research about the interaction of different systems, applying the principles of medicine to those of neurology. His findings ultimately gave rise to the rules of lateral thinking. As early as 1969 just a few years after becoming a doctor, his book ‘Mechanism of Mind’ caught the attention of the American Nobel prize winner Professor Murray Gell-Mann, a physicist who worked on a theory of elementary particles, and whose name became synonymous with the quark.

Thinking Hats and Thought Revolutions

Airways, and Siemens take up his thinking methods? The latter corporation decided to teach his methods to all of its estimated 370,000 employees in a bid to help improve their performance and efficiency. And it is not just about education and big business. In the US the de Bono methods are taught to jurors and in at least three states, this is done under the direct recommendation of the presiding judge. This has been a major change in the US's jurist system.

It all seems simple enough. De Bono speaks about changing thinking patterns. He highlights the inadequacy of our way of thinking and the problems that it tends to lead us into. As he speaks, Dr de Bono discusses various practical methods which people should know of, if they only think the right way, yet still ignore because they believe they have other, simpler solutions to their problems. "Take the classic migraine. Somebody would dash out to buy aspirin to get rid of the pain. But all it takes is one simple paper bag. Breathe in and out of the bag. This will raise CO₂ levels in the blood and stop blood vessels from going into spasm... this will stop you getting the migraine."

He speaks of the way people become entrenched in what seems to be the most secure way of thinking – a pattern that is hard to break. Motivation to explore diverse potentials can only be gained by means of certain tools which you can learn, no matter what your age is.

"The Greek gang of three – Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, utilised truth, logic and argument to prove their points. Since then, 2,400 years hence, universities have followed on their teachings and as in their great part, universities eventually belonged to the church,

they didn't encourage creative or designer thinking, and this has come down to us today. Our existing thinking is about judgement not about designing a way forward. We are still depending on methods which were adopted when creativity was crushed, and yet our world is craving for creativity and innovation."

With some 72 books to his credit, and translations of same to 41 languages to date, de Bono admits that his work originally proceeded by word of mouth, as people heard him talk, were interested enough to read his books and eventually adopted the methods he advocated. Surprisingly, with the advent of the computer age, his teaching of thinking became even more sought after. "When computers came along, a really strange reality stepped in. Children especially started believing that they did not have to think anymore...all they needed to do was search. That is dangerous. It is the kind of trap which even big businesses risk falling into when they think that enough information will do the thinking for them. One must develop a knack of looking at the available information in different ways, so as to glean maximum benefits from it. People are not against new ideas. Ultimately I am constantly astonished at how we have paid so little thought to thinking itself."

As we
end off
the

interview, Dr de Bono admits he travels a great deal, working with corporations, in the field of education, and writing. He utilises his self-same credo to produce his several books, each and every time. "I only need one week to write a book. I can be very focused in my thinking and have specific techniques that allow me to produce better and faster."

It is what most people hanker for isn't it? [☞](#)

