

### Original English Version

#### 1. Can a person learn to be creative at any time of its life?

There's a lot to be said about this. A couple of things: People are inherently creative, except that adults have already collected quite some routines and forgotten to look at things creatively. Also, most often routines are good enough to deal with all the questions or problems one encounters, so why be creative ?

But people also tell stories, or they dance, or prepare a nice meal with ingredients they happen to have (at the end of the month).

But with daily 'adult' business one is not supposed to be creative. It can pose a threat to management when personnel is inventing all kinds of new ways of doing things, creativity leads to unpredictability and a lack of (feeling of) predictability and control.

In many (Western European ?) job descriptions, one sees words like 'innovative and creative'. But once these people get to be employed, they are supposed to "not rock the boat", and creativity is soon forgotten.

Another aspect is that many personal members have an operational role. Creativity leads to new approaches which almost per definition will at first be less efficient than the existing way. So, creativity at first would lead to higher effectiveness, but lower efficiency. It's only with some endurance/perseverance that new ideas can be optimized and made more efficient as well. Creativity also contains an element of risk, but this can be overcome by involving experienced creative professionals (designers, artists, entrepreneurs, etc). But allowing for mistakes, in a creative discovery process, is kind of an important condition for successful innovation. Ideas can also be seen as hypothesis and need testing. Making prototypes, or doing other kinds of tangible tests, making mistakes and learning, immediately moving on to a next version of an idea or design is an integral part of making creativity and innovation possible in companies or other organizations. When talking of creativity and innovation, mistakes will happen, but make them as early as possible, when financial consequences aren't as high yet, and/or make those mistakes in places with limited negative consequences (e.g. test marketing).

But all that being said, people are inherently creative but need encouragement and space to be allowed (and feel confident) and empowered to allow themselves to be creative. The barriers are often hidden in the culture (e.g. business culture). And another aspect is that of course there are many people who can't be bothered by having to be creative. Participating in creative/innovative process should always be voluntary. One invites somebody to be creative, and then hopefully the person will have some form of intrinsic motivation to step into such a role.

Learn to be creative ? Yes - by applying techniques, by participating in exercises and experiencing how creativity techniques can help solve certain problems. This experience helps to feel confident about applying such approaches.

#### 2. Do the most successful people have a creative thinking?

In an absolute sense, I am not sure. What is 'most successful people' ? Luck is often also part of being successful, lots of practice (years) as a musician may be necessary to do something of real value (skill). Good memory and observation can help in collecting ideas around you without having to be creative oneself. And definitely, to a part of these successful people creativity will certainly be part of the equation, but not necessarily a must. I even believe (considering myself being creative) that creative people may need other (less creative) people around them to complement certain skills necessary to build the whole story (engineers, financial people, banks, managers, etc. etc.).

#### 3. What is the recipe for being a creative person?

two elements:

1. allow oneself to imagine things that at first may seem illogical or non-sensical (because at first one judges these ideas with 'old' logic). I call this suspension of disbelief.
2. have the guts / courage and (maybe even) childish imagination to imagine and present innovative ideas

4. What role should the manager of a company have to improve the creativity in his employees?

Watch for the more innovative minds, figuring out if they might be useful to the company, and then provide support (money, time, workshop capacity, expertise, etc.) one encountering promising ideas. But this would demand a longer and more nuanced story than just this idea. There is also something with organizational culture allowing for such enterprises, maybe putting some people forward as role models . . . ?

But this answer is also too simplistic.

5. How to encourage creativity from the childhood?

By keeping creative tasks and activities in the curriculum and teach creative techniques similarly to calculation or mathematics. It is a basic skill of human beings, at the same level (of importance) as language usage and being able to calculate. It should be actively taught and practiced at all ages, up to university level.

I should note here that in our work in the Netherlands we find the teachers to form the biggest problem. They can be supplied with proper teaching materials and methods but somehow they have great difficulty in applying these. I just have a Master graduation student working on this theme, for the Dutch situation: how to help teachers in primary school to bring/present/teach creative techniques/process and attitude.

By the way, I believe in the future, people will all need these capacities, just like calculus.

6. Do you believe that there should be policies from the State that concerns the potential of creativity in education?

Yes, they would definitely help. It can be about providing means to develop teaching material, but it can also be about setting up some pilot studies in a limited number of schools, and then spreading the results to other schools.

Speeches by political leaders may also help, of course. It's about influencing culture. To that end there are many tools. One thing I'd like to add is that such an initiative (from a governmental point of view) could take some 7 year plan to get to a reasonably satisfying result, first two or three years starting some pilots, developing teaching materials, then after year 2 or 3 start educating teachers in a wider context, and further implementation of such a subject in the curriculum of schools.

At the same time, a network of creative professionals may be helped or supported, a network that can help define policy and methods.

I would like to note that this network should mainly consist of young people and that one should avoid having political leaders (with a big ego) run such an initiative. Political and governmental leaders are important (and should be involved) in setting conditions and helping to find means, but should not 'pull' or lead such an initiative. Of course there may be exceptions to this last statement, but see this as a general rule.

7. How do you see Medellín in creativity issues?

Wonderful. Just heard that Medellin has been voted most innovative city in the world. And I would immediately agree. For example, think of something like 'Cultura Metro', it's working ! It's safe, it's clean, people behave, I believe there's no (or little) criminality and this idea of respect might spread from the metro to other parts of the city. It's amazing ! And there are countless other examples. All the changes that have been made, transforming one of the worst cities to the top rank of most innovative city in the world.

I reckon what's happening in Medellin is nothing short of a miracle ! With great ideas and lots of momentum of people really wanting to 'clean up' their city and make it into a place everybody loves to be, la ciudad de eterna primavera.

I have stayed in Medellin a number of times now, teaching at EAFIT and talking to companies (e.g. Haceb), but although I am there to teach, I learn at least as much from being there and visiting projects around the city. The thing is, one can talk about innovation, whereas in Medellin, it's all happening right here and now.

An idea I have had when visiting was that there should be some kind of exchange program for city council people and affiliated organizations (e.g. Cedezo) with other cities around the world, to continue learning and growing, from both sides. Spend three months in Toronto (Ca) or Rotterdam (NL) and the other way around, providing three months of internship to professionals from around the world and come and help in projects in Medellin.

Another idea is to set up a youth hostel in one of the poorer neighborhoods (not in the city center, really in a neighborhood). Local people would run it, providing jobs, and the exchanges between local young people and international visitors. Some more thought should go into it to make it really work, also about how to provide security in a non obtrusive way, but especially working at interaction and exchange between local youth and international visitors. Make Medellin a city 'open to the world'.

When thinking of Medellin I often think of Barcelona in Spain. It's not the largest city, but it is the prettiest, and has great fashion and design activities, and in the future I guess a growing cultural and entrepreneurial creativity. What I miss a little bit is artistic creativity, music (jazz) and musea; By the way, I reckon the museum of Modern Art should become more a place of inspiration for local creatives, it could even contain a collection and continuous exhibition on Design in Colombia combined with examples of great design from around the world.

8. You used on the cover of your book Creative Facilitation, a photo located in Spain, Why?

It's not Spain ! It's the Biblioteca España in Medellin. I love Medellin, and I love this initiative of setting up these libraries in the poorest, or most needing neighborhoods, providing a little island of humanity amidst crime and violence and thereby spreading a more humane culture of respect through these neighborhoods, similar to a virus spreading among a population, but now a positive virus.

It facilitates the growth of a certain way of interacting with each other, maybe even a creative way. My book is called Creative Facilitation, and these libraries are a typical example of Creative Facilitation.

Another thing I'd like to share is that these libraries are designed by the greatest architects, and are by themselves examples of creative and innovative thinking with a lot of importance put in the unique high quality design itself. As such, and looking at these like 'Ondas en un Estanque' they may provoke people to adopt a different attitude in life, similarly seeking certain creative qualities, not just accepting violence as a fact of life, but daring to work at improving one's community.

9. What is the difference in managing a creative entrepreneur and one that is not?

Although there are risks, and it's maybe not for everyone, provoking a feeling of responsibility in the company (through shared vision ?) and then leaving people to work relatively independently. This doesn't mean people work on their own, there will probably be a lot of interaction and sharing, but not in a hierarchical way. It's a more horizontal organization. Of course, there is leadership, setting objectives and boundaries, but it's not as formalized as it may have been in the past. I reckon it might also be about 'serving leadership', leadership is there to support people, not the other way around.

Some organizations are able to set this up, but often, traditional leadership finds this threatening and steps back 'into power' killing first initiatives in such directions. It may be that we have to wait for young people (20 - 35) to set up their own companies, with a new generation of organizational culture forming independently from existing companies.

10. How can a city begin the path to turn its economy into a creative economy?

Through education. Just as an hypothetical example, by educating many designers, automatically these young graduates will attempt to work in their field of expertise, getting design on the agenda in many instances, among others in companies, forming networks, demonstrating their pluvale and thereby influencing the whole business 'world'.

The example is not so hypothetical. I know of initiatives to set up such networks presently in Bogota and in Medellin, and design agencies starting to become serious business, e.g. Solutions Group in Bogota.

11. How to measure the creativity of a country? Is there a country that is identified by the creativity of its people?

I really don't know. The first question would be, what do you mean by creativity. Is art part of that equation, or do you mean societal or business innovation ? In terms of societal innovation, Colombia would be in the lead, not simply because it's innovative as it is, it also comes from a situation which could impossibly sustain itself (drugs, violence, etc). So, suggestions for such social innovation are quickly put into practice and also quickly lead to improvement. And, I believe Colombia has been lucky to have some incredibly wise and creative political leaders in the recent past. Whether it can maintain its momentum of social innovation and continue improving the social situation in other parts of the country could now be an issue.

In terms of economical growth, I'd say Colombia is especially productive as well, but it seems to be more from a 'me to' position. It would be great if Colombia were to start having more unique Colombian products and brands, and maybe at some point even a renowned creative industry, but this does take years and a lot of perseverance to develop (10 to 15 years at least, I'd say, although sometimes things can move faster).

12. Medellin is recognized as an innovative city. ¿That means that there are creative people?

As explained earlier, it has been a combination of remarkable people and a need to solve huge problems.

And whether there are creative people, There are of course, but it is still rather difficult for some of them to get a foothold in mainstream business. There seems to be quite an entrepreneurial culture, but I can't oversee in how far this is more or less than any other place.

13. The social inequalities increase or make difficult creative thinking?

Also a big question ! When people live under daily stress to just be able to survive (with just enough food, amidst insecure situations) I'd say there is little place for learning, developing and innovating.

At the same time, such inequalities can provide the right background for innovation. There is a need for work, a job means security and better self-image, it also means you invest in something (for example a career) and you have more to lose, which in turn might provoke more safety in neighborhoods.

But there is psychology and culture behind this as well, in the sense that people need examples, and support in taking initiatives. One needs to have a belief in what one does. As such I remember working with a group of women with a small company called Henrietta, producing chocolate bonbons. Although they produced these bonbons, they had an incredible vision of what the company was about. As I understood it, it was really about middle aged women who don't have a whole family to take care of anymore (the kids have grown up) and in this way, they could provide employment and income for themselves and others, in such a way also as to build self-esteem in this new part of their lives, having a job, running a company, selling products, a whole new life they had never been able to explore before.

14. What are the easiest strategies to be inspired and be creative?

First of all, don't criticize everything different from the ordinary. Pay attention at everything around you, be sensitive to ideas both around you, from others, and your own inside you (intuition ?), and dare to explore such ideas. Creativity is also simply about copying/stealing ideas. Steve Jobs from Apple admits it freely that many of the ideas used in Apple computers and other products, he just picked up from visiting other companies.

Talk to people, visit different places, cultures. Realize that many of the things that you believe to be true are only one way of seeing things.

But most often, people are not waiting for ideas. Try presenting an idea to someone or some company, 9 out of 10 times, they will not want to listen to you. More important than ideas are problems. Once you discover a problem, and you can imagine an answer, you have a potential for business.

So, although the question is about where and how to find inspiration, I reckon it's at least as important to imagine questions or issues that might need some creative solution. In my experience, imagining a solution is mostly easy, although I am slightly biased.

15. Does creativity get old? It is harder for a 40-year person to increase his/ her creativity than a 20-person year?

Although there are numerous exceptions, I more and more believe that it's more difficult for older people, not because they can't, but because they have invested so much in what they believe to know and now have come to consider as unshakable truths.

When I assist students in learning and experiencing creative process, a few words are enough to get them into action and happily come up with great outcomes. With adults (>30) one needs 10x the time to explain and seduce them into stepping into some creative process. (I may be exaggerating somewhat to make the point, but it's not far from the truth !).

Again, there are many exceptions ! But maybe these people never stopped being creative, it may have been dormant for a while, but they never really forgot about it and just wish to re-awake these capacities.

Thank you very much!!!!