Using Action Methods for training in Institutions,

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Professionals are tired of *ex cathedra* training sessions. They are becoming also tired of the use of powerpoints as the major educational means. In fact, they'd rather be active than passive. This is probably why so many trainers start including "action" in their way of providing seminars. However, *in a group or in a team, action – and, even more so, interaction- between participants is not at all trivial.*

Introducing action and interaction between participants of a seminar without using a well designed method is risky. Fortunately, J.L. Moreno created such a method in the 1930's. His first focus was the psyche, so he called his method *Psychodrama*, literally psyche-in-action. But his range of interests was much wider than just psychotherapy and he created a method aimed at being utilized and adjusted to numerous settings. When training professionals of any institution, company or organization, we don't want to address their psyche: it is not part of our contract ! Moreno's method adjusted to this reality and its contractualized limits, is usually called *Action Methods.* Not only is it an elaborated theory and a secure way to facilitate participants to be crea(c)tive during a seminar, but also -and above all- it provides means to transform learning into competencies that which are directly applicable at the workplace. Action Methods is not just a series of techniques and tools: it is a complete method that which solicits awareness and behavioral and/or attitudinal changes, through a safe and structured –although flexible- interactive process.

Combining the phases of such a process with diverse axes of integrations, while soliciting each participant's multiple intelligences, facilitates everyone's professional growth.
This is what we will address here.

Utilizing the necessary phases
In order to be clear and efficient in training professionals in an institution, a company or an organization, one usually sets diverse S.M.A.R.T.[1] professional goals: the general training goals, and the goals that are specific to each part of the training. It is an excellent containing and focusing way, especially when using Action Methods. In order to enforce safety within the interaction and also to maximize the integration of the experiencing, J.L. Moreno suggested three phases:

1. Warm up
The *Warm up*'s purpose is to enter smoothly

1 - S = Specific, M = Measurable, A = Attainable, R= Reachable, T = Timely

into trusting the interactional process of learning. The first day, each person in the group or in the team needs (1) to tame the trainer and (2) to establish this new contact (of co-learners) with his peers. Each participant of the training also needs (3) to get acquainted with the idea of not sitting all the time during the session: (s)he is about to contribute through creative (inter)action. This is quite important since as Marcia Karp states : "The warm-up serves to produce an atmosphere of creative possibility " (Karp *et al.*, 1998, p.3). And - last but not least - each one needs (4) to smoothly enter the issues to be addressed during the training session. It is of utmost importance not to consider *Warm up* to be exclusively a first day activity: each new part of the training session, each new chapter, each new issue requires this smoothe and crea(c)tive entrance.
A great number of action techniques can be used for this, whether it be wandering around and reflecting, entering into sociometric games, creating human sculptures, showing "future's projection", etc.

2. Action

This phase provides the core experience on the issue to be treated. It might be done through successive brief action techniques or through an "educational psychodrama"[2]. As Moreno suggested, the trainer will facilitate going from the periphery of the question to its center, and taking into account all the ramifications that are popping up throughout the process in order to acknowledge and address its scope. This phase is highly characterized by concretization. As Antony Williams states : "Concretization is an incarnation." (Williams, 1991, p.4). Entering the incarnation (for example of a role or of a concept, a structure, a procedure, or an organigram, etc...) and, within it, interacting, produces an undoubtedly wider range of learning than just talking about it .

2 - For educational psychodrama to be utilized, the specific rules and boundaries of Action Methods should more than ever be maintained. The three *sine qua non* ones are :
 a) It only addresses the professional world : family and private issues are out of its range.
 b) Clear contract and sticking to the chosen S.M.A.R.T. professional goal(s) is necessary in order to contain and to help focusing.
 c) Balance between cognitions, behaviors and more or less mastered emotions has to be permanently facilitated by the director, so that no pent up emotion be expressed in an "excessive way", and no catharsis ever occur!
Infringing these boundaries will often be felt as an abuse, or at least as a rupture of the contract...even when some protagonists do 'ask for it'...!

Here again, a lot of action techniques exist (or can be created). It is stimulating to see how much fun and how much density a group can experience when asked to represent (for example "the factors of motivation and those of de-motivation") by creating a sociodrama, or their own semi-fictive role play, or by doing a Brainstorming-in-action or the 1000 chairs, or even by elaborating together a poem, a song, a dance, a mime... Specific details and generalizations, as well as symbols and metaphors (etc.) appear (voluntarily or not) and expand the scope of the potential learning. In this phase, the group's action research is on its way: it brings about its own results... sometimes the most unexpected and efficient ones.

3. Pooling (called in J.L. Moreno's theory of psychodrama : *sharing*)

How does the *Action* relate to each participant's professional experience? Such is the only issue addressed in the *Pooling*. No interpretation whatsoever is allowed: the *Action*, as it took place is, as such, the only interpretation that matters (Leutz, 1985). As we know, *Pooling*, this moment of expression of one's experience(s) connected with *Action*, is of utmost importance, in order to reintegrate the protagonist(s) in the group or the team. Moreover, during *Action* a lot might have been triggered in each and everyone in the room. It is highly unusual in institutions, companies and organizations to express what has been triggered or how one relates to the other's experience, even though it increases everyone's feeling of belonging and enhances cohesion. In terms of professional growth, another most significant potential of this *Pooling* is embedded in the stimulated awareness of the link between the *Action* and one's professional reality: integration is in progress. *Due to the educational setting of a training, we need to add two phases to the above three necessary phases that J.L. Moreno suggests:*

4. Putting into perspectives (different from what Morenian psychodrama calls : *Processing*[3])

In this phase the group (or team) will be facilitated into stepping back and putting into words its learning. (1)Identifying the significant elements of the *Action*, (2) analyzing the dynamics, and (3)evaluating the adequacy of behaviors, will help each and everyone to (4)bring up his/her own

3 - *Processing* is used for training psychodrama-tists and is meant to be a learning experience for the « becoming director » of psychodrama ; whereas *Putting into perspectives* is not inter-ested by the director, but by the group's learning from the earlier *Action*.

Companies and Organizations

'theory' (what was adequate, what was missing or could have been different, when, why, how etc.).

The learning drawn through the group's collective intelligence anchors the empowerment. If needed the trainer will enlarge this learning by some external theoretical inputs.

5. Utilization planning

Figuring out, or at least clarifying for oneself, how to make good use of the learning is a real need for a professional. Hence this phase provides (through discussions and/or action techniques) time and space for (1) synthesizing one's major learning and its potentials in one's professional reality, (2) deciding on one's change(s) of attitudes and/or behaviors, (3) fixing reachable goals, choosing (4) means to achieve them and (5) ways to evaluate one's own results.

Promoting multiple and collective intelligence

In the above description, it is interesting to notice that in phase 4 (*Putting into perspectives*), the focus is put in a blatant way on collective intelligence. But in reality, Action Methods function as a *Learner Generated Context;* therefore, collective intelligence is already utilized in the first two phases, through facilitating everyone's spontaneity and creativity while promoting interaction. Indeed, J.L. Moreno's method relies on the fact that "It is the energy of spontaneity and creativity which enable us in the Here-and-Now to transform, to actualize our Self" (Apter, 2003, p.32) : in a training session using Action Methods, the group's spontaneity and creativity enhance the co-creation of the learning.

For collective intelligence to be maximized, the trainer must absolutely balance (through his/her choice of techniques) the opportunities for each participant to awaken one's intelligences. Indeed for Howard Gardner, in each person, solving problem stems from more than just one intelligence; it emerges through the person's specific configuration of his/her multiple intelligences: linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, musical intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, spatial intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, naturalist intelligence, existential intelligence (Gardner, 1999)[4]. The trainer needs therefore to be very attentive and promote not only words, information and its organization, or understanding of links..., but also skills in appreciation of intonations, rhythms, gestures, movement, images, use

4 - Howard Gardner hesitates about whether and how to delineate another possible intelligence : the moral intelligence

of space,... as well as interaction, reflectivity and step back etc... All of these diverse aspects (and many more) of multiple intelligences are quite easy to solicit through the variety of techniques available in J.L. Moreno's holistic method. By doing so, the trainer not only addresses, during each phase, everyone's specific multiple intelligences, but he/she also reinforces in turn the collective intelligence's potentials.

Axes

In order that this 5-phase methodology (promoting multiple and collective intelligence) does not only facilitate 'learning' but also 'growth put into practice', the trainer needs to utilize what I call the 6 axes of integration:

- **Expressing**

    Expression takes place through words, facial expressions, intonations and gestures, of course, but also through the whole body in movement, and through the interaction itself. What is expressed -be it emotions, thoughts, wishes, needs, etc.- becomes vivid.

- **Experiencing**

    By "being" in the action, a participant can actively address concepts, dynamics or complex situations. He/she feels, thinks, acts and interacts in order to explore them and to re-actualize his or her responses.

- **Exercising**

    The participants are groping, putting into action some resources, some difficulties. Partly aware (including emotionally) of the diverse ways of being and of doing that are present, they get, through *Exercising*, a chance to have a 'first practice' of their skills.

- **Evaluating**

    When using Action Methods, the participant is encouraged to step back, grow awareness and assess (1) his/her attitudes and behaviors; he/she is also supported in estimating (2) the responses received from others, as well as (3) the ongoing dynamics ... while searching for his/her anew positioning.

- **Elaborating**

    Throughout the process each one develops new awareness and new understandings. One can then elaborate, through action, new realistic options. He/she can search and modify them till it becomes satisfactory – or at least acceptable for him/her.

- **Evolving**

    Evolving is the special result of the gained awareness stimulated by the
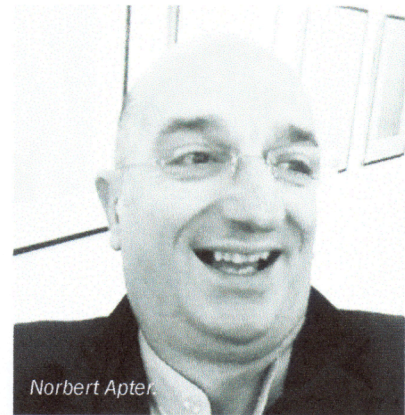
Norbert Apter

method and by the trainer's genuine interest that which Zerka Moreno characterizes by the fact of asking "naïve questions" (Karp et al., 1998, p.156). *Evolving* is part of each of the five other axes of integration.

It is important to remain aware that there is no order, nor any hierarchy of these axes: the inner synergy of integration is linked to their balanced utilization.

Conclusion

By using Action Methods, the trainer provides means to activate spontaneity and creativity within cognitive, emotional and behavioral elements, in a safe and structured way. The trainer's use of techniques is not enough: the trainer needs to master the 5-phase methodology, to promote multiple and collective intelligences, as well as to diversify and to balance the 6 axes of integration.

Moreover, in order to anticipate the risks of 'skidding', the trainer should be well trained in J.L. Moreno's method : vision of the human being, role theory, sociometry, techniques, surplus reality, applications and limits, etc...

Only then, training in an institution, a company or an organization can be safely crea(c)tive and dense. Only then does the trainer have a real chance to transform, through Action Methods, learning into a wider knowledge, and this knowledge into competencies that are directly applicable at the workplace.

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