

# J.L. Moreno's method: a rich ground for developing multiple intelligence.

A workshop on the use of Action Methods in companies, organizations and institutions.

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## Abstract

This article presents an actual training session based on Action Methods, in which participants learned not only about Multiple Intelligence, but also about how to promote it through Action Methods when working as a trainer in institutions, companies, and organizations.

The author unveils the active learning process of the group, describing step by step his methodology, and presents the outcome of such a learning, including the major characteristics of each intelligence and the ways one can promote through action everyone's multiple intelligence in a group.

## The author

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## Introduction

One of the workshops that I ran during the *1<sup>st</sup> Summer Academy of the Asociatia Romana de Psihodrama Clasica in Paltinis (Roumania, 2012)* was on the use of Action Methods (Williams, 1991) in Companies, Organizations, and Institutions. 30- 40 professionals attended the workshop. They were expecting (1) to experience Action Methods (2) to understand its use and its limits (3) and

to be able, when working as trainers, to solicit everyone's multiple intelligence in order to enhance a training's efficiency.

Even if that had not been their request, the methodology would have been Moreno's, since it functions as a *Learner Generated Context* (Apter, 2011) from which creativity and spontaneity can grow and bring about integrative means of learning, which the participants can transfer into their practice. My challenge was to build a 3 hour workshop in which they would grasp Howard Gardner's concept of Multiple Intelligence, link it to Action Methods, and come out of the session capable of creating a synergy between both theories.

This article gives you an overview of the workshop, its process, its learning.

## **The training session**

In order to activate the group's Collective Intelligence and in order to show (not only to speak about) how one can use J.L. Moreno's method with a group in institutions, companies, or organizations, I elaborated the workshop around the five regular phases of Action Methods:

- the three classical phases described by J.L. Moreno: Warm up, Action and Sharing –here called Pooling. (Ancelin-Schutzenberger, 2003 ; Blatner & Blatner, 1988; Moreno, 1965)
- two phases that I add for the sake of training : Putting into perspectives and Utilization Planning.

Hence theory and experience of the session would be coherent.

### **First phase: Warm up**

#### *A. Group warm up : getting a safe and conducive togetherness*

Creating a climate of trust and acceptance is of primary importance in a group (Apter, 2003; Kellermann, 1992; Carl R. Rogers & Kinget, 1962). It is linked to the way of being and of doing of the trainer, in which he facilitates the group through its own path. So as usual in running a training group, I started by asking participants about their goals. For this, I suggested that they split into four groups. When they met in the small groups, each coming up with three major questions for the workshop. Their primary questions were mostly on the role of a trainer when working for companies and organizations: how to go about it? How to market an action-based training? How to delimit the contracts (professional vs personal growth)? Who should be present (hierarchy, staff etc....)? What type of follow up (report)? What about confidentiality?... Some questions were about the specificity of the use of J.L. Moreno's method: How to clearly differentiate between Psychodrama and Action Methods<sup>1</sup>? How to go about "resistance" to using action in companies? Some other questions were on Multiple Intelligence and what it encompasses. All very important questions! Indeed before providing training in companies, one should be clear about the fundamentals of the role of trainer through Action Methods.

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<sup>1</sup> *Psychodrama* refers here to the use of J.L. Moreno's theory and method in psychotherapeutic settings, whereas Action Methods refers to its use in companies.

As a way to facilitate the climate, I did what Charles Devonshire (a close colleague of Carl Rogers) used to repeatedly assert in our training as client centered psychotherapists : “Trust the process of the group”. Indeed the actualizing tendency (Apter, 1987; Bozarth, 1998; Maslow, 1972; C.R. Rogers, 1963) is at play, not only in each person but also in each group.

So, in order to follow the specific path of the group, I went through the 12 questions that were raised, and gave some of the basic answers that were needed. It apparently helped everyone to let go of these issues and open up to the central issue that we would be addressing: Multiple Intelligence and J.L. Moreno’s method.

I went on with sociometric exercises – for each participant to further meet each other and for me to get a better idea of what kind of group I was running a workshop for. We therefore started by creating *a live map of where people work*, then *clusters of the main professional activity they have*; we also designed *live lines of knowledge or experience* in the issue to be addressed etc. Through these sociometric exercises, I found out that more than half of the participants were from the world of psychology, and less than a half from the world of company... few of them were experienced in training groups or teams in companies.

#### *B. Theme warm up : a verbal introduction to the multiple intelligence*

In order to warm up the group to the theme that we would address (soliciting Multiple Intelligence through Action methods), I reminded each and everyone that in the 1920’s and 1930’s, when J.L. Moreno created Psychodrama and Action Methods, the concept of multiple intelligence did not exist. Indeed it is only starting in the 1980’s that Howard Gardner developed it (Gardner, 1983, 1999). Interestingly enough, Moreno’s method is probably the best suited to solicit each and every intelligence that a person uses.

In my experience, it is important that the psychodramatist be capable of expanding his/her own ways of using J.L. Moreno’s method by promoting the protagonist’s multiple intelligence.

Both expertises need to be combined in a session. It means that the psychodramatist will lean on his/her own multiple intelligence when applying the method and on the protagonist’s multiple intelligence when addressing the content itself of the session. Moreover, the psychodramatist will add to this collective intelligence any multiple intelligence of the group members – be they auxiliaries or audience members.

#### *What is multiple intelligence?*

Howard Gardner’s theory is based on the idea of the biopsychological<sup>2</sup> potentialities of the human being: our species has a series of potential intellectual skills that it can use.

In other words, a person has diverse modalities of “viewing” the world. It is no surprise for someone who is knowledgeable of Moreno’s Role Theory. However what makes Gardner’s theory so special and so complementary to Moreno’s is

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<sup>2</sup> Heredity (biological basis) and environment (psychological basis) are intermingled in the development of one’s potentialities.

that it refers to its panel of ways of 'thinking' and of activating one's intelligence. There is not one intelligence any more: there are nine of them, which are combining with each other in specific ways, according to the person (and her history), the moment, and the internal and external circumstances. Gardner started in 1983, by presenting seven intelligences (here by alphabetical order): Bodily kinesthetic, Interpersonal (or social), Intrapersonal, Linguistic, Logical-mathematical, Musical, Visual and spatial. Later on, Howard Gardner added two, one by one, which both are related to some kind of inner 'wisdom': Ecological (naturalistic), Existential.

Briefly, I introduced each and every intelligence, interacting verbally with the participants, before proceeding to *action*.

### **Second phase: Action**

#### Part one: *Relating*

Cards – with the names of intelligences - were spread on the floor. The group members were asked to position themselves according to their "first dominant" intelligence, then according to their "second dominant" intelligence, and at last to their least developed intelligence. Each time few words were shared about the choices and about the specific competencies that this intelligence implies.

#### Part two: *Using collective intelligence*

Small groups were created; they received pieces of paper, and two "intelligence" cards. They were asked to list what kind of techniques they would use in order to train these intelligences and to promote their expression.

#### Part three : *Showing and learning through it*

Each group of trainers was asked to choose and to "show" a type of intelligence through a creative way, i.e. live sculpture, dance or movement, musical, poetry, sketch, ... (five minutes of preparation)

The groups showed one by one the outcome of their preparation, and after each presentation I asked the audience : "What did you see? What did you hear? What did you understand?"

The audience discovered not only the types of intelligences shown on the stage, but also some of the sofar unexpressed characteristics of the presented intelligences.

### **Third phase: Pooling** (called in psychodrama : Sharing)

In small groups, the participants discussed, shared during 10 minutes on the question: "How does what was seen on stage reflect parts of your life?"

### **Fourth phase: Putting into perspectives**

At that point we had such a little time left before the end of the session and so much had been expressed, that I simply made a quick summary, and reminded everyone of the importance of using the 5 regular phases of Action Methods when providing a training in an institution, company or organization.

For information here<sup>3</sup> is an extensive –if not exhaustive- description of what came out from the group during this learning process, about Multiple Intelligence and about actions promoting it. I amended it only a little.

*1. Bodily kinesthetic intelligence*

*Characteristics:* a tendency to express oneself through physical movement, to look for physical contact, and to have the need to touch and to hold things.

*Soliciting actions:* stretching games or sport, dance, mime, live sculpture, handcrafts, mirroring of physical postures (doubling) and obviously role play, since it concretizes and makes visible internal and external processes etc.

*2. Interpersonal (or social) intelligence*

*Characteristics:* Communication skills, non-judgmental attitudes, cooperation, understanding of oneself and others, balancing of altruism and egoism.

*Soliciting actions:* using active listening exercises, setting games on conflict resolution or on project management in a team, and obviously using role reversal and sharing, which both require double focused attention and caring (of oneself and of the other) etc.

*3. Intrapersonal intelligence*

*Characteristics:* self-acceptance and self-questioning, openness to one's own (emotional, cognitive and behavioral) processes and reactions.

*Soliciting actions:* using soliloquy, facilitating internal dialogue in action, accompanying silence, setting relaxation and concentration techniques, writing a journal and/or a portfolio, using interventions such as “what is happening inside of you? Show me” and the apart technique etc. which promote reflecting on oneself.

*4. Linguistic intelligence*

*Characteristics:* love for words, nuances, storytelling or story listening, understanding of multiple meanings within a specific context, creative in interpreting

*Soliciting actions:* writing key words or key sentences on a board, games with words such as gibberish talking or stories to be continued; tale in action, exercises of assertiveness and of speech making; summarizing in few sentences; role training and obviously doubling (beyond what is said) etc.

*5. Logical mathematical intelligence*

*Characteristics:* love for numbers, analysis, reasoning, sequential thinking, causal explanations, organization (including organization of steps or stages in regards to goals/results).

*Soliciting actions:* sorting (through showing) questions (or worries), resources/difficulties, assets/obstacles etc. ; using games of strategy, differentiating in space past, present and future; establishing criteria of evaluation and classifying into squares on the floor (e.g. yes, no, torn apart, indifferent), using time-line-in-action planning etc.

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<sup>3</sup> The intelligences are presented in alphabetical order:

#### *6. Musical intelligence*

*Characteristics:* sensitivity to sounds, rhythms, melodies, capacity to correlate tones and loudness to potential emotions or importance of the message; love for music

*Soliciting actions:* doubling the unspoken voice, writing a song or a slogan; singing a song or a feeling/emotion, creating a rhythm or playing an instrument (as a warm up or in order to support a specific scene) etc.

#### *7. Visual and spatial intelligence*

*Characteristics:* understanding through seeing milestones; visual representation of the world; imagination; capacity in spatial organization of objects, feelings/emotions, people...; artistic sensitivity...

*Soliciting actions:* creating diagrams of inner or relational processes, drawing or making an action sculpture of an emotion, a relation or a situation, producing action charts, using photo-language, doing symbolic work, setting a scene (whether it be an inner scene or an interpersonal one)

#### *8. Ecological (naturalistic) intelligence*

*Characteristics:* sensitivity to nature, knowledge and caring for plants and animals, and commitment into the protection of the world's ecological system at large

*Soliciting actions:* warming up by becoming an animal or a natural element, standing on the moon; using a meta-role from nature (a pet, a tree, a river, the wind, the earth, the sun etc.) and role reversing with it, creating the dialogue self/meta-role.

#### *9. Existential intelligence*

*Characteristics:* questioning life and death, seeing the big picture, the meaning and the origins, stepping back from microcosmic worries, positioning oneself in relation to the (macro)cosmos

*Soliciting actions:* going beyond the senses, using "wise" meta-roles (whichever they are for that person) with techniques such as apart, soliloquy and obviously role reversal in order to ask the meta-role for its wisdom and create a supportive dialogue.

### **Fifth phase: Utilization planning**

As usual for the ending of a training session through Action Methods, I asked the participants what they had learned and how they plan on making a good use of it in their professional life. It is a very important time in the learning process: planning the transfer of the learning into one's actual professional life. For each person it becomes a time for choosing the first step.: what could be easily and efficiently inserted in one's professional life. For the trainer it is very interesting to hear what people choose to implement among the many things they have learned and how they plan on doing it. The variety of choices made brings about the richness of the seminar and the span of its potential applications in "real life".

## Conclusion

Providing a training based on Action Methods about “Multiple Intelligence and Moreno’s method” brought about quite a learning process. All the more since, as we know, learning is no passive reception: it is a process of active investigation ; a training thus has to call upon each and every participant. J.L. Moreno’s method provides all the means to facilitate such an active involvement from participants, and once again, the results of this methodology with a group of professionals was convincing. Through the 5 necessary phases of the method, participants had opportunities to use what I call the 6 integrative lines<sup>4</sup>: Expressing, Exploring, Exercising, Elaborating, Evaluating and Evolving. The outcome was quite impressive: spontaneity and creativity were promoted in a safe and structured way and the collective intelligence brought about a very rich set of learning.

In fact, Moreno’s method is not just a series of phases, techniques and tools: as a complete method, it is also a philosophy, a science and an art. Action Methods transform what could have been a simple use of action into a process that which facilitates, through action, (1) the dynamics, and (2) the dynamism of a person and of a group, as well as (3) the capacity of linking together experience, awareness and knowledge, thus (4) producing the transformation of the learning process into competences that are directly applicable at the work place.

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<sup>4</sup> Line : one of the translations of the french word « voie », other translations could have been « ways », « lanes »... For a long time, I was calling them « axes » (Apter, 2011) I changed due to the connotation of « axes » (World War II). The term « line » does justice to the complexity of the movement and to the unexpected elements that one can encounter.

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