

Creative Action Methods

The use of Drama Techniques in Organisational Training- T.T.Srinath

People learn in various ways, but most often they learn best if they are part of the activity.

NTL has established through research that learning happens most when people are involved.

An ancient Chinese proverb sums up the best principles of training

*'Tell me, I forget
Show me, I remember
Involve me, I understand'*

Action Methods with its use of Drama as a tool for self-expression and empowerment reaches the crevices and crannies of the mind and soul rarely impacted by other techniques.

Formal class setting is not very appropriate for adult learning (Ron Wiener-1997). It:

- a) denies life and work experience
- b) encourages a pedagogic approach
- c) is passive

Ron Wiener quotes Brookfield (1986) who enumerates six principles of adult learning. They are:

- a) voluntary participation
- b) mutual respect
- c) collaboration
- d) experience based
- e) critical reflection
- f) self-direction based on the individuality of each learner

Drama, more specifically Action Methods, is interplay of body, mind and soul.

Drama, as a tool for training has been used for hundreds of years. Indian mythology is peppered with examples of extensive use of drama.

Modern drama as a process of training and healing found its positive exponent in Jacob L Moreno around the turn of last century.

Moreno, it is often said, went to Freud and told him, "While you destroy people's dreams, I teach them to dream again."

Drama, some say, is a regressive process, encouraging people to go back in life to find solutions for current behaviour. The old adage of 'you believe what you see' is altered in drama as 'you see what you believe.'

Drama excites spontaneity, creativity, widens role repertoire, and brings vitality and playfulness.

For those who understand Rogers, and I am a great fan of his, drama uses the facilitative dimension of Rogers, that is, warmth, listening and responding coupled with Robert Carkhuff's action oriented dimension that is, self-disclosure, confrontation, immediacy and concreteness.

Drama uses various techniques such as:

1. It clarifies feelings by using a technique called doubling, the soliloquy and multiple selves.
2. It facilitates expression of emotion using amplification, aside and exaggeration.
3. It is self-confrontative by using role reversal, chorus and audience feedback.
4. It clarifies goals and values using projective techniques.
5. It supports growth by sharing and ego building
6. It is group centric using sociometry, the relationship of groups of people.

Preparing people to face life, to cope less painfully, to trust the process of living is thus the basis of any training or facilitation.

A little boy was troubling his father who was busy at work. The father decided that the boy needed to be occupied. He took a picture of the world cut it into pieces and asked the boy to assemble it. He believed that the task would take long. Soon the boy brought the picture back and the father was surprised at the quickness with which the task had been done. He asked the boy "How did you do it so quickly?" The boy turned the page and showed him the picture of a man which was on the reverse. He said "I put the picture of the man together and world became one."

The essential ingredients of good drama are:

1. The very nature of drama activities is such that the actors must shed their personality patterns and patterns of behaviour to acquire the freedom and flexibility to truthfully project another character on stage. This freedom and flexibility fine-tunes sensitivities, broadens perspectives, and facilitates bonding with each other. Moreover, the entire exercise of facing together the tensions, the pressures, the insecurities and the joys of a production creates a very high degree of team integration and mutual acceptance.
2. A group of brilliant actors not surrendered to a brilliant director cannot do a good play. A group of average actors, surrendered to an average director can do a much better production. At the same time this surrender is creative, in the

sense that within the framework given, each actor must offer to his director a wide range of possibilities. This process is all the more remarkable because everyone involved is creative and sensitivities and challenges are high.

3. One the first ticket is sold, or the first ad or poster released, there is no turning back- irrespective of what happens.
4. If an actor does well, the entire group gains. If an actor does badly the entire group loses. Each actor wants the others to perform well. A mistake is often responded to with a hug and reassurance rather than criticism.
5. Drama is considered to be “relaxing”, “getting in touch with oneself”, and fulfilling. Most amazingly, in drama, there is no a monetary incentive or promotions involved. The whole exercise is fun and enjoyable.

The success of drama as a learning tool is that complex, experiential insights leading to transformational learning takes place in a play situation. Play is fun irrespective of age or designation and receptivity and retention is high.

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