

THE USE OF ROLE PLAYING IN MANAGERIAL LEARNING: A SOCIO CONSTRUCTIVISTIC APPROACH

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Abstract

This research deals with role playing (RP) aimed at assisting learners to optimize their managerial style. While RP is often used in training sessions, contributions on its evaluations have decreased since the beginning of the 1980s. Although RP as a training method had been criticized for several reasons, RP has the advantage to conciliate theoretical knowledge and practical construction of meaning, based on the learners' experiences, games and the group as a place of creation and growth. In this research - based on the analysis of a reflexive exercise led by a trainer during 17 years of experiencing RP - it is argued that the socio-constructivist approach, by promoting awareness in the training process, allows trainers to develop relational skills and to gain behavioural flexibility in their sessions. The main results of our study indicate the need for learners to co-determine the parameters of the RP process (rules and security) in close collaboration with the trainer, in order to make this method effective.

Key words: *experience, experienced security of learners, role playing, learner, group, management learning, socio-constructivism, rules, trainer.*

Introduction

Management teaching is needed to acquire techniques, but also to give sense and meaning to the profession by understanding human relationships. However, the theoretical and the experiential learning it covers, by its interest and its needs, remain limited considering its complexity. These considerations lead to a cogitation of learning methods to help professionals to cope with human relations and/or to handle their human resources managerial responsibilities. The difficulty of understanding the effectiveness of roleplaying (RP) that is “*behaving in accordance with specified function*” (Mc Sharry & Jones, 2000) is recognized. Being an important training practice in this regard, RP lies in testing the outcomes associated with the benefits of such an approach. On the one hand, learners are facing – by engaging in the role playing game – the risk of making

mistakes, herewith leaving them in a position of loss of status” and discomfort associated with felt shame. On the other hand, these difficulties question the trainer’s role, an issue that has been criticized previously in the literature of social psychology (Greenwood, 1983). This last comment particularly leads us to examine the responsibility of trainers in proposing rules that insure the experienced security of learners. That is to say, the use of role playing as a training practice should be more deeply investigated in order to further optimize the practice as for learners an unsafe or unhealthy experiment staged in a group could lead to a narcissistic injury created by the awareness of their shortcomings. Therefore, this research goes into a reappropriation of a trainer’s personal experience as an attempt of an “*explanation and a restitution of a denied or forgotten piece of reality*” (Anzieu, 1981:107).

In this research, the socio-constructivist approach (Vygotski, 1997) is actually considered to be the key of success for RP, combining the experience and the theoretical reflection that gives the learner the opportunity to practice an exercise of reflexivity in the mirror of the trainer. Socio-constructivism - valorizing knowledge co-construction - focuses on learners’ knowledge, their social representations (Jodelet, 1998) and/or their expertise to question themselves. In this sense, knowledge is structured from learner’s experience, discussed within the group that is facilitated by the trainer. This situation is then enacted and played by the participants assisted by the trainer. The learner - by exchanging experience and feedback provision with the learners’ group and the trainer - is helped to reconstruct and/ or to co-construct his/her relational skills. Socio-constructivism recognizes the importance of mistakes made by learners. Relying on their own experience, learners extract their own sense to act. With this view, RP provides the learner with the awareness of how to understand and to communicate, because the learner is requesting and being requested by his/her training group members, and by the trainer, to find his/her emotions (fear or anger, for example), and feelings (discomfort, about being ignored, for example) experienced during the game. Subsequently, he/she will articulate the emotions and feelings felt, with his/her own representations (of professional roles and tasks) that normally stimulate the process of detachment from the deeply felt emotions (De Angeli & Hebrard, 1976; Pfeiffer & Jones, 1972).

First, the theoretical part of this research started by providing a short overview on RP history. Previously, RP was situated as a relational process, building upon earlier criticisms that is highly important in the light of envisaging the learning process as raising, teaching and training. This step led to highlighting epistemological issues focusing on the socio-constructivistic insights. Second, the methodology – based on the analysis of a trainer’s reflexivity over 17 years of experiencing RP - described a thoroughly analysed training sequence that focused upon the advantages of socio-constructivism compared to behaviorism, regarding the stages of: (1) the definition of the scenarios enacted by the learners; and (2) the procedure to debrief for the group and the learner. Third, the results showed the psychological advantages of a socio-constructivistic approach leading the group to express and share the emotions felt during the game. As a consequence, the trainer’s role is based upon carrying the responsibility to fix the parameters of safety and security.

A Relational Process of Learning

History of RP

A frequent recurrence indicates that RP is anchored in three different theoretical fields (Bion, 1961; Lewin, 1951; Moreno, 1943). Historically linked to Moreno’s spontaneous theatre, RP highlighted the therapeutic effect opportunities that led Moreno to discover the value of psychodrama. The technique became specific by distinguishing three phases: (1) a theme emerges from a story or from an imaginary common theme defined by the group; (2) learners provide the answer about the origins of the script; and (3) the game is operated by the protagonists. Psychodrama and RP inspired group dynamics studies (Lewin, 1951) aiming at reducing racial tensions in the USA. A juxtaposition of lectures, case studies and ‘miniature situations’ were set up to involve trainers in the learning process. This approach also enriched communication concerning physical and emotional dimensions, giving rise to the emergence of encounter groups that abandoned explorations of feelings and continued with the wishes of the group. The use of miniature situations in military

selection constitutes another field of theoretical references in the history of human relations training. Even before the advent of Nazism, social psychologists had developed miniature situations in which the candidates for leadership positions had to manage young recruits for various projects (mass escapes, for example). However, the military psychological service was eliminated by Hitler. In 1942, other experiments were conducted in England by Bion (1961). Thanks to the observation of officer candidates involved in the process of selection (War Office Selection Board), he developed knowledge related to group dynamics by means of the so-called 'leaderless group technique'. Later in the USA, Lewin, Lippitt and Murray were employed in Assessment Centers (Office of Strategic Service) to develop a system of selection for leaders and for those who were in charge of espionage and sabotage.

All in all, some group dynamics methods have been criticized. On the one hand, role and power relationships are underestimated (Amado & Guittel, 1975), and, on the other hand, these methods are associated with unusual and traumatic therapies (De Visscher, 1975). As a consequence, nowadays, human relations training is more oriented to professional practices analysed by the group (Altet, 2000), and targeted to train professionals to lead groups with a social change perspective revealing the complexity to combine psychodrama and group dynamics. As a consequence, RP is used both as a therapeutic and as a training tool.

Compared to Moreno (1943), RP is used in professional situations (meaning not based on personal situations) and moreover, by leading the learner to experience a fictional role based on a real experience instead of a role in a fictional situation that is enacted. Moreover, the theme defined for a RP refers to a real event that refers to the professional learners' experiences, and in contrast with Moreno (1943), the trainer is not an ego-auxiliary, and does not reply to the learners. He/she only plays the role of observer and facilitator: the rules of the games are co-decided by the learners.

From Criticisms towards RP to Educational and Epistemological Cogitations

Two main criticisms have been underlined in the literature and refer to the lack of, on the one hand, realism related to the conditions of RP (based on fictional situations that are enacted instead of based on real experience), presumably resulting in serious evaluation limits, and, on the other hand, learners' involvement. Moreover, as noted by Greenwood (1983: 243) "*while realism and involvement are in part a function of the experimenter's skill in creating effective experimental settings, they are also in large part a function of subjects' role playing skills*". As a result, if the trainer is not able to create the conditions of involvement or to help the participants to develop their playing skills, the game might be inefficient for the participant.

A third criticism is linked to the trainer's intentions. More specific, a previous literature review has shown that the number of publications on the theme of role playing has considerably decreased at an international level, since the late 1970s. One explanation for this is linked to the fact that some trainers and/or researchers had gone too far in their experiences, empowering the participants to understand situations role played, and the feedback they gave to the participants. These interpretations could have a disclosure effect for the learner, who, thus exposed, is unable to cope. In addition, this disclosure generates a feeling of shame, which is expressed by a loss of poise in front of the group. As a consequence, the impact on the participants was sometimes dramatic (e.g. loss of self-confidence, depression, etceteras). This last criticism leads to question safety/security and ethics in experiments. 243). As such, the trainer should have the ability to conciliate his own role of 'accompanist' of the safety/security and ethical rules of the RP without encroaching on the participants' freedom of 'being' and 'playing' (Greenwood, 1984: 243).

To resume, a RP situation's reality, the learner's involvement, and trainer's intentions are the most difficult rules to control when its goal is to develop participants' managerial skills: "*While it is certainly legitimate to evaluate role playing by attempts to simulate the behavior of subjects who perceive a social situation in a specific meaningful way, it is not legitimate to evaluate role playing by reference to attempts to simulate the behaviour of subjects in situations lacking in meaning*" (Ibid, 1983: 245).

In this manuscript, it is argued that the learners' commitment is more effective when they script a managerial situation already experienced, rather than enacting a scenario, which they always qualified as 'irrealistic'. In this perspective, another aspect to consider is the conformism that is attached to the group (Moscovici, 1985; Moscovici & Faucheux, 1972). Thus, a group that is not in confidence with the trainer and/or one or more of the other learners will tend to adopt protective measures that limit the staging. In this part, the roles of the trainer, the individual learner and the group as a whole have been questioned, leading us to focus on the most suitable method to implement RP, regarding the criticisms above.

A Socio-Constructivistic Approach for a Relational Method of RP

Learning should always be attached to a certain situation that is meant to contextualize the learning in order to put it into perspective. The socio-constructivist approach to learning (Vygotsky, 1997) can serve this purpose of contextualizing relating the newly learned not only to social interactions with other learners and the trainer, but also to the nature of the specific knowledge that is contextualized. As such, the learner having the opportunity to encounter 'the others' - with their own world representations - has to face 'socio-cognitive conflicts' (Doise & Mugny, 1984), bringing him/her to mobilize his/her cognitive and psychoaffective work spaces. In such an experiential context in which knowledge is internal to the subject, the theoretical stage, however, falls within the Cartesian model of the transmission (Morin, 1979; Vial, 1997). Although the theoretical stage is meant for the transmission of knowledge, its effectiveness relies on the fact that the general theoretical frameworks that are used become the answer to specific questions and situations explored by the learner. When emotions are expressed, learners are returning to the general theory that, in essence, is based on the transmissive model, but the socio-constructivism approach adds focus, herewith answering exclusively the questions that arise during the experience. As such, learners link their informal internal knowledge to formal theoretical knowledge, possibly allowing them to accommodate it or even assimilate it (Piaget, 1974). Therefore, we propose extending the socio-constructivistic approach about learning by comparing behaviourism approach in combination.

Co-Analysing the Strengths and the Weaknesses of Combining a Socio-Constructivistic and a Behaviourism Approach to Learning, in Particular, RP

Some RP specialists endorse a so-called packaging model, advocating the use of video plays to show the 'right way' to apply the specific technique so that students can learn to master it or 'be mastered/controlled'. However, a possible danger is that learners who have a high level of certainty lose the ability to develop a critical attitude or sensitive listening, as a result of them having the idea of already mastering a certain technique (Bachelard, 1980) while uncertainty is the key to learning, leaving room for doubt and other expressions of emotions felt. However, if RP is part of a socio-constructivistic approach to learning, it should give as much importance to the action of constitutive development, which is characterized by the construction of new knowledge and conceptualizations.

Building upon the behaviourism approach to learning, filming the scene to recognize the subjectivity of the subject on the basis of objective data has been proposed. Memorizing the scene and the emotional climate is the trigger of 'stimulated recall' and an approach to explain decisions and attitudes expressed through the practices, knowledge and know-how used (Vermeesch, 1994). The power of verbal expression, analyzed in depth, captures non-verbal communication that is beyond consciousness, and reality is dramatically illustrated through facial expression and verbal style. The theoretical outline in combination with the video analysis gives the learner meaning, while the learner is being helped by the group and guided by the trainer, to refine his/her ability to respond effectively to real-life situations. The specific epistemological stance proposed in RP expresses the trainer's cultural, social and human belief system and its relationship to action logic. The experience, the game, and the words used in RP situations echo theorists who argue that experience is more effective than transmissive education (Clap  r  de 1930; Dewey, 1997).

In summary, it is not only Piaget's constructivism that is important in this regard, but also the socio-constructivism as indicated by Vygotski (1997), who stressed the social dimension of the group represented by the functions of speech, development cooperation, mutual aid, and mutual interest. The learner develops the questioning pedagogy by his/her peers, generating socio-cognitive conflicts (Doise & Mugny, 1997). In this perspective, cognitive and psycho-affective work spaces are not only situated in learners' spirits, but also in their environment, allowing an exchange between practice and theory. Following an inductive pedagogical approach, three propositions are formulated stating that learning is a result of three didactic challenges related to the: (i) experience; (ii) group; and (iii) game.

The Didactic Challenges of RP

- Doing and undergoing as a way to learn (the experience):

"Experience is not what happens to a man; it is what a man does with what happens to him" (Huxley, 1932). Experience is often treated in contrast to academic knowledge and is known to be a lever to learn for an adult audience. Dewey (1997) - considered as a founder of the progressive school - is one of the most important American philosophers interested in experience. He considered an experience and theory interactions as a dialectic process: experience gives to theory its energy, and theory gives a direction to experience. Experience promotes awareness which is a conceptual reconstitution and an interpretation of action (Piaget, 1974), distinguishing between two phases: succeeding and understanding. More specifically, aimed at building up new knowledge, the importance of experience for learners distinguishes everyday (based on experience, the concrete, the immediacy) and scientific concepts (transmitted by language). These two phases of experience ([1] everyday and [2] scientific concepts) lines would be united by "the proximal zone of development" and "the present level of development" (Vygotsky, 1997: 373). More specifically, the zone of proximal development refers to the distance between the actual developmental level as determinant by independent problem solving by the learner, and the level of potential development as determinant through learning under careful guidance by the trainer, or in collaboration with one's peers.

Moreover, to dialogue with each other and to dialogue with oneself, awareness allows learners to understand the rational system in which they are integrated, and that they feed on to each other. By expressing words and exchanging thoughts, language is used as a tool, more or less transformed by its application in speech and meanings, and enriched by the exchange between the learners and the trainer, also referred to as 'elucidation'.

Also, learning, as a result of cognitive development or/and of social interaction, is most often studied in a cognitive rather than an emotional perspective. However, as noted by Demailly (2001), these two dimensions are strongly linked, and should be considered in connection to one another. He referred to experience as a whole way of being, thinking and doing, appropriated by the professional. These social properties are built through action in the context of professional events, and partly in the domain of non-work, referring to the difficulty to separate work and 'non-work' times. Experience inextricably implies emotional and cognitive disappointment, pleasure, pain, intuition, organizational 'know-how' and methodology, behavioural skills, ethical changes, regulatory changes, aesthetic learning, action contexts, etceteras. By connecting the learner's previous experiences with his/her experiential learning across the training sessions (De Visscher, 2001), RP promotes the emergence of cognitive and psycho-affective elements in the discourse, and by their elucidation, the transfer between theory and practice.

- RP as a means for elucidation: from experience to theory (the group):

One peculiarity of RP is to rely on various techniques, including group techniques.

Following Lewin (1942), who performed some very interesting group dynamics experiments, the basic thought in this regard comprises that the feeling of belonging to a group modifies individual attitudes. Lewin's explanation was contested by psychoanalysts (Anzieu, 1999) who also focused on group dynamics, and stresses the group's interest in training for two reasons.

Firstly, group training supports the development, facilitates learning, generates encounters with others, and confronts the learners with representations of the world that are different from their own ones. Concrete, Perret-Clermont (1979) and Doise and Mugny (1981) described this mechanism as a 'socio-cognitive conflict'. A group allows the co-construction of knowledge and understanding through a process of representation clarification, including the expression and sharing of beliefs and emotionally loaded values. Exercises, such as role playing games or exploitation, enhance awareness by allowing the learner to better understand both conscious and unconscious elements that guide his/her behaviour. Secondly, RP, being an experiential situation, comprises a crucial group's input. Indeed, alliances, pacts and agreements that are made unconsciously between peers in a group are crucial to maintain intersubjective links (Kaës, 1993), and are made conscious by reflecting on these during the group sessions. Through group experiences in RP wherein emotions and fantasies are allowed to flow, learners are required to elucidate the imaginary representations that impede 'good operation' in the group.

- Games used as an intermediate area between action and elucidation (the game):

The use of the word Game suggests that this activity would be rather reserved for children. Its use in a training context refers to Winicott (1975:103) for whom playing is the third area that extends to the creative and cultural human life: "*Playing is an experience, always a creative experience, and it is an experience in the space-time continuum, a basic form of living*". Playing, as an area located outside the learners's professional reality, helps to better understand the experiences and to manipulate external phenomena (situations experienced in organizational work teams). Understanding human relationships through games and experimentation with other roles, attitudes and behaviors, prepares the learner to conduct professionally at the workplace as he/she build up occupational expertise based on dealing with the unpredictability of interaction, and by critically reviewing his/her behavioral patterns and internalized representations. Like children's games with the function of social role internalization, RP, including experiments wherein seriousness alternates with diversion, could exemplify Platon's '*spoudaiōs paizen*', meaning 'playing seriously' and suggesting that 'leisure' and 'school' have the same Greek etymology: the 'scholé'. This last observation leads to an epistemological questioning that requires further empirical investigation.

Scheduling and Analysing RP in a Training Sequence Using a Socio-Constructivistic Perspective

This research is based on the analysis of the use of RP by a trainer building upon more than 17 years of experience with an audience of 50 learners in class per year (University of Rennes, Brittany, France; students aged from 30 to 55 years old, 90% female), divided into groups of 10 members each. Each year, the training concerned interview techniques (7 hours), driving assembly (12 hours), conflict management (12 hours), and negotiation (7 hours), which comprises 42 hours per group per year, or 2100 hours per group in total, equalling 17 years of experience. RP comprising a central role in the process of training, and was organized into 'workshops' with the objective to raise the learner's awareness of communication dynamics in groups. Over the years, the reflexivity exercise (Cros, 2007; Cunliff, 2002) showed that training was less effective when RP scenarios were imposed. That is to say, learners appeared to feel more comfortable staging situations which had already been experienced by one or more participants themselves.

An Analysis Based on the Trainers' Reflexivity

Referring to a group of 10 or 12 learners, structured exercises in group dynamics are known (Baiwir & Delhez, 1975) to occur in 8 phases¹ that structure the sequence of training. However, the epistemological stance of the trainer and his/her ability to create a safe environment largely influences the organization of the sequence. The focus was made on the situation (phase 5) and the procedure (phase 8). At first, the trainer explained the objectives and the organization of the training, including the session's rules designed to establish a secure environment. Each learner was invited to share a professional situation connected to the workshop's theme, and the group chose one to be thoroughly analysed: knowledge began to be built. Everyone selected and prepared a role, including the managerial one, in which each participant could most easily project him or herself. A group of two to four observers analyse the interactions and the execution procedure, and a camera was placed – with the agreement of the group - so that the played scene could be studied subsequently. Once the duration of the scene had been defined (depending on the theme, the scene can last from 10 to 20 minutes), the RP began. During this exercise, the learner that took the managerial role and tried to manage the situation based on his/her intuition, his/her experience, or on the knowledge he/she had built by means of previously experienced trial and error learning. RP was then exploited by analysing the feelings and the feedback of each participant, guided by the notes taken by the trainer. The learner who was in the role of the manager was the first to express what he/she felt, followed by respectively the observers and the other participants, leading to the process of elucidation. In this process of elucidation, the knowledge resulted from a construction of meaning found through and endogeneous creativity of the learner who produced a cognitive activity, herewith corresponding to the constructivism model of learning (Piaget, 1974). The trainer and the group – whose participants that belong to different institutions with their own representations of roles and practices – subsequently examined the principal actor's vision. The expression of their own experience generated a socio-cognitive conflict, a source of discomfort and uncertainty for the learner, which was, however, following the socio-constructivistic model of learning (Vygotski, 1997), the key to learning. RP varied in its practices, based on the specific learning model to which it referred; informal, spontaneous or demonstrative (Eightington, 1990). If the RP was demonstrative, the learners would only implement a technique and would be faced with “what to do” and “what not to do”. The exercise should have been repeated to enable the learners to integrate the technique. Knowledge would have therefore been external to the learner and have promoted conditioning (behaviourism approach). More specifically, the learner would be directed to a pre-built standard without consideration of the conscious participation of the learner (his/her so-called black box), and would have been approached from a cognitive and theoretical point of view at the expense of his/her emotions, imagination and unconsciousness.

However, each learner is a cultural, psychological and social subject that is set in a historical and political environment. Therefore, RP should be systematically based on the learner's specific previous experience. In the psychosocial design of RP, as developed by Moscovici (1984), the learner is “subject and object” at the same time. The representations, as a form of practical knowledge, use a double logic, cognitive and social, leading to a so-called cohabitation between the rational and the irrational. In the psychosocial design of RP, rather than referring to the roles assigned by the trainer (behaviourism approach), the socio-constructivistic approach stressed and intensified the emotional involvement of the learners, as a result of a representational construction to promote learning and to facilitate transfer of knowledge to professional situations.

In contrast to the transmissive lecture imposed on students and perceived as ‘foreign’ to them (behaviourism), the knowledge extracted from experiences revealed real meanings for the learner. If the socio-constructivistic approach was translated into a RP situation that was comfortable for the learner, the trainer was in charge of keeping ‘their eye on the ball’. Moreover, the discussion certainly fed the learner's awareness, but did not enrich constituted knowledge per se. Thus, as a next step, theoretical recovery was essential and needed to be incorporated as well (i.e., the

1 (1) The intent; (2) the objectives; (3) the nature of the task; (4) the shape of the task; (5) the situation; (6) the possible number of participants; (7) the material; (8) the procedure and the duration.

transformation of informal corporal knowledge into formal knowledge that had been prepared and pre-built by the learners themselves).

According to behaviourism, video use in RP confirmed the certainty of adopting ‘good behaviour’. The video kept learners thinking, generated unlearning and might evoke stiffening in behaviour. With certainty, the individual would lose his/her critical attitude and his/her active listening while uncertainty, on the contrary, left room for doubt, being the key to learning. The added value of the socio-constructivistic approach in this regard was that it led learners to really understand the roots of their actions. Filming a scene on video helped learners to build up a mode of intelligibility of action. Re-storing the scene and the emotional climate associated with it was the trigger to ‘stimulated recall’ as, in reference to the socio-constructivistic approach, it was aimed to lead the theory “to talk”, to be transferred, and to make sense while helping the learner to refine his/her ability to intervene effectively, rather than ‘formatting’ behaviour. On a cognitive point of view, the method used in the research promoted a practice and knowledge decontextualization supported by a co-construction of meaning, leading to an ‘explicit understanding’ (Barth, 1993). That meant helping the learner to explain the ‘how’ of his/her actions, his/her norms and his/her procedures (Vermersch, 1994), so that he/she could transform objects, methods to adapt him or herself to the actions and contexts he/she would then encounter. This meta-cognition exercise was coupled with a meta-communication exercise, facilitating reflective practice (Perrenoud, 1997): with elucidation being the last process step in this regard.

Creating the educational conditions for learners to transfer knowledge through discontinuous and heterogeneous situations was a challenge that is always difficult to face (Meirieu, Develay, Durand & Mariani, 1996). The key consisted in going with individuals to mobilize their cognitive and psycho-affective work spaces, who were becoming aware of their understanding and communication ways, and boosted by their partners to find the critical distance that was needed to sound managerial learning.

Discussion

The transmissive approach of management learning addresses the consequences of a normative way to learn, failing to consider that in practice, every professional situation is unique, emotive and deals with complex issues. These considerations lead this research to argue that “*learning may be constructed as the relational-responsive dialogue in which we connect tacit knowing and explicit knowledge, talk the imaginary into the imagined*” (Cunliff, 2002: 25).

The main contribution of the research concerns socio-constructivism enrichment, over and above the behaviorism approach, by questioning and repositioning the learner, the group and the trainer roles as indicated in the Table 1.

Table 1. A comparison between behaviourism and socio-constructivism.

Epistemological Posture	<i>Behaviorism</i>	<i>Insights from behaviorism</i>	<i>Socio-constructivism</i>	<i>Insights from socio-constructivism</i>
<i>Pedagogical Approach</i>	Stimulus => Answer This equation leads to ignore the subject's black box, i.e. his/her cognitive and psycho-affective resistances period.	Importance of the "good behavior" to be adopted in a scenario/situation that is already determined/built. That determinism leads to reproduce technical acts.	Social representations the key to learning and not only the beginning or the result of the learning process.	Importance of reflexivity that is determinant in the professionalizing skills approach.
<i>Knowledge</i>	External knowledge to integrate and to reproduce.	The external knowledge is not interrogated. The knowledge is pre-existing and imposed to the subject.	Internal knowledge to develop and to build.	The internal knowledge is critically reflected by using the learner's individual norms and values system. The knowledge is submitted to an ethical questioning.
<i>Trainer</i>	Normative and transmissive attitude : The trainer is a controller and a corrector. The trainer is focused on the expected behavior.	Importance of control to correct mistakes.	Non-normative attitude and non-transmissive : Research on sense-making for the subject ("transition"). The trainer is an accompanist, focused on the learner.	Importance of dialogue and listening that is developed by a reflexive attitude on one's own psycho-affective operation.
<i>Learner</i>	Passive : The learner has an "empty head". She/he develops automatisms to propose the expected behaviors transmitted by the trainer.	Passive : Each subject is considered as a good "little soldier".	Active : The learner is a researcher who has a "full head" (social representations). She/he is building representations and questioning her/himself (epistemological rupture)	Each person has resources, is to be recognized and is in progress/development. Each person determines her/his own needs for protection and defines the rules of security with the group.
<i>Group</i>	Passive : may possibly act as an observer-controller of the expected behavior.	See above	Co-constructor of representations. The group makes cognitive and psycho-affective working spaces.	The group must be safe and secure to be a vector of learning. The group builds rules of security that are connected to the identity of the group.

In this research, the learner took on the principal actor's role in his/her learning process while the trainer and the other group members became 'accompanying mirrors'. Indeed, the learner developed his/her knowledge by becoming an observer of a situation he/she had experienced, and which was performed by the group. This educational innovation allowed the learner to objectify his/her experience by comparing his/her reactions (which he/she has memorized and internalized) with those of others (who re-enact his/her experience).

The Psychological Advantages of RP for Learners

RP is important in the light of personality integration. According to Tap (1988), the status attached to the specific role played is part of an interstructuring process of the learner and his/her specific institution, combining the internalization of social models and the expression of uniqueness that gives each person his/her own personality. As such, the role visualizes the social identity resulting from internalized roles and rules that are the effects of socialization and the alienation processes (Tap, 1988). In RP, the experience of interrelationships between the group members and their analysis has a mirror function for the learner, who discovers his or her mode of communication, and its effects on others. Second, according to Moreno who referred to the function of 'catharsis, psychodrama can help the learner to be delivered from his/her internal conflicts. Even though the catharsis cannot be systematically verified by the trainer during structured exercises,

RP at least gives the participants the opportunity to release forbidden emotions and feelings. In business situations, these emotions and feelings are usually kept inside because of the rigidity of social roles and societal norms, that are maintained by cultural, familial, and societal institutional context.

As pointed out by Tap (1988: 207), the expression of emotions allows the participant to become aware of his/her own feelings and reactions vis-à-vis others which first leads to confusion, but from which he/she will then receive differentiated forms of action and intellectual apparatus. Third, besides the release of emotions, RP allows the participants to experiment and to develop behavioural plasticity; the capability to take on different roles in various situations. The ability to invent, to create, and to imagine something, is mobilized in this perspective. RP, in this regard, develops the subject's capacity of insight, allows him/her to provide a mirror through the feedback gathered, which furthers the perception of oneself and his/her sensitivity towards others.

Safety and Security: the Trainer's Role

Core attention for safety and security in the group is necessary in order to make the insecurity associated with the learning situation bearable for the subject. Four aspects seem inevitable in this regard: (1) the duration of the training is important in group construction as an "envelope that holds all individuals" and that builds up a protective barrier against the "outside" (Anzieu, 1999); (2) the group's specific operating rules as a means of opening the session, is a second peculiar aspect to establish links by building protective barriers. These barriers (or rules), securing the group, function as symbolic guardians serving the specific needs of each individual (not to be judged, not to be heard, to say 'stop' when needed, etceteras); (3) the trainer's role is to help participants to recognize and to understand the analyzed and played situation. But by reactivating the earlier scenes – which might be confrontational and painful - the game situation sometimes leads to confront the learner with internal tensions, to which everyone is not always prepared, herewith stressing the important role of the trainer in this regard.

Two features stand out in the role of the trainer (facilitator): the *facilitation* and that of *regulation*. The *facilitation* role focuses on the 'shape' of the session and consists of promoting exchanges among participants on what happened. The *regulatory* function aims to cope with the emotional life of the group (Amado & Guittet, 1975:152-161). The trainer bases his/her analysis on the sentences he/she has carefully transcribed, reflects on non-verbalized feelings by questioning actors about their conduct, and helps the group to understand and to realize feelings and motivations. Both these functions open the *interpretative* function of the trainer in group experiences. In fact, Anzieu (1999) recognized that awareness of unconscious phenomena is difficult, and that dramatic interpretation is only admissible to exchanges by the participants who have agreed with this symbolism; (4) the involvement of the trainer, as a form of social intervention, is crucial too. It starts from the Lewinian design of relationships between the learner and his/her environment in terms of the group. Indeed, groups are formed sets defined by the interdependence between their members by having a specific psychological field. This form of pedagogy is based on participant observation (Lapassade, 2003) during the social interactions, uniting actors, observers and trainers.

The involvement that is related to the method of intervention that is used in the RP, asks the trainer to work using a proper distance that both unites and separates him/herself from the learners, in order to understand them without melting them (Kaës, 1993).

This research was aimed to come up with epistemological enrichments to RP. As a main result, the learner/the professional (the lead actor) objectifies his/her act by the mirror of other learners, being accompanied by a trainer whose traditional role is questioned here. The main insight concerns an extension of the Vygotski paradigm by offering two insights: (1) to position the role of the learner, his/her co-learners, and the trainer in the RP; (2) to provide parameters related to safety and security regulation (and professional ethics). A socio-constructivistic approach is advocated, allowing to articulate theory and practice, facilitating the transfer by awareness of feelings experienced by actors and their reactions toward others. RP develops 'knowledge' that articulates,

with a better awareness, the 'know-how' to acquire skills, and the 'how to be'. RP questions the identity of the subject in his/her communication with others, and gives a real professionalism to training by allowing the subject to develop a clear vision on the job he/she is preparing for. For RP to succeed, the trainer should be able to grasp the meaning of his/her own relationships with others, which requires him/her to control his/her projections, desires, and concerns, indicating his/her ability to analyze and to control these operations. Probably, in order to do so, the trainer should have worked on his/her own defensive mode alone, allowing him/her to be in phase with the emotions of training groups, and, still maintain a professional ethic.

To conclude, notwithstanding the fact that the literature shows that the number of articles on RP have considerably decreased over the years, it does not necessarily mean that this practice is not used by trainers. Professionals' stories, developed after training sessions, exemplify RP experiences, and stress its impact upon the learners. With our contribution, we would like to call for more writings by trainers consisting of reflective analysis on their relationships with the learners. Only when more empirical knowledge is shared in this regard, evidence-based empathic and ethical relationship with learners can be developed.

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