



by Mark Taylor

Do you arrive **with** clothes on or **off**?

How WATERPROOF ARE YOU?

What if the television comes?

When is training really **NOT** needed?

Can youth researchers
get the experience?



«Marker» is a regular column in Coyote, written by Mark Taylor, looking at issues in training and hoping to encourage debate and questions. Fully-dressed feedback and conversation particularly welcome.

Trainer One:
“When I first stand in front of participants at the beginning of a course, I am naked. I don’t know what they will think, I don’t know what they will throw at me, I have no way of dodging the way they look at me. As time goes on, little by little, I put on a jacket made of reactions, underpants made of feelings, shoes made of cooperation. So by the end of the training I’m fully dressed – if it has gone well, at least”.

Trainer Two:
“Strange! I go into the room and I have on all the clothes I can possibly wear, even sometimes a pair of oven gloves. I need the protection at the start. Gradually the clothes come off and I can finish with all of them in a pile in the corner.”

Are you putting anything on for your next training?

Talking the other day about “teflon trainers”. What do you mean? Well, I notice some colleagues who are really well-prepared, they know their stuff, they can often judge what is happening in the group with great precision, they give well-structured inputs, they make sure they chat to many participants. And yet, although they can criticise others sharply, they remain completely untouched by any of the emotions involved in the training process. Oh, I get it, you mean they are kind of “waterproof”!

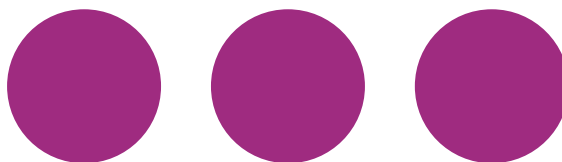
Do you get wet sometimes?



Ah, the excitement, the excitement! A television crew is coming to film some of the course! That will be good for the visibility of the funders! And for intercultural training! No, it's not MTV, but still... So, what should we propose to them to film? How about the simulation exercise? No, they can't come tomorrow. Maybe they will come in a couple of days. OK, then at least make sure they realise that they are not supposed to do interviews with participants during the activities – coffee breaks and lunch will be fine. The great day arrives and the film crew are late and come into the plenary setting up their equipment, moving participants' belongings out of the way, chatting to each other, filming with the camera in peoples' faces, putting themselves in between speakers and flip charts. Everyone attempts to continue doing what they are doing as if nothing unusual was happening. During an exercise outdoors, a mobile microphone is clipped on to a participant while he is leading it. On the way indoors, one of his colleagues is stopped for “an instant reaction”. One trainer

(me) jumps up and down and gets a bit furious. Film crew much surprised. Film crew finish up their last shots and leave. They call later to say that they will not use the film; then they report that they will use the film as part of a documentary. On the day of the broadcast, an associated debate takes more time than planned. So the film from our course is cut from that evening's programme...

To tv or not to tv? – that is the question!



Bring a group of youth workers from different countries together for three days so that they can find partners for exchanges. Mix in some increasingly challenging getting to know each other exercises, a pretend radio show and a magical drumming workshop. Season with regional specialities and add a sprinkling of technical information. Leave to cook in a sauce of project ideas, creation and management. And zowie! Chemistry between people! Partnerships! Plans for exchanges, even seminars! Sounds like A Success, yes? Yes. The only thing which was certainly hard for the so-called trainers team was the fact that there wasn't any "real training" involved; we were facilitating a process and that was it. All along the way, comments came up, opinions were aired, questions floated – all of them could have been used to go much deeper into the reasons for changes, the educational goals and means, intercultural learning, etc etc. And we had to let them go. There was no time for all that. All we could do was to highlight those elements and give tips to people about where they could go for more information or future training opportunities. And hope that the way in which we had organised the process would be seen as a kind of training in itself. After much discussion, we realised that the seminar was OK like that – and maybe it is possible to be too much "the trainer".

When did you last find that training was not needed?



Howard Williamson is a respected researcher, he is now Professor for European Youth Policy at Glamorgan University in Wales. He has been involved in youth work for a long time. A while ago he decided that it would be important to demonstrate in detail the value involved in non-formal training activities. After some reflection he took the opportunity offered by a long-term training course in intercultural and experiential learning to observe everything from the initial planning, to the final ritual of the second course, to the evaluation meeting. And he got more and gave more than he ever expected. And he has written about his experience in a way which is both scientific and deeply personal. Trainers (and participants) are not used to having a researcher around all... the... time... and he often had a rough time being in and outside the process at the same time. I admit an interest as I was also involved. We decided to publish the report as a web site called Madzinga (see the references section below), with everything free to download. Reactions so far have been pretty positive.

How can trainers and researchers continue to learn from each other?

Thanks to the people who replied to the last Marker with guesses about the FEAR acronym and adding some new triangles. Sadly no-one sent me a Toblerone chocolate bar
Next time we explore the use of pataphysics in intercultural communication

References, influences and sounds



- Darko Rundek (2002): Ruke, Metropolis Records, Beograd MCD046
- Madzinga report web site: www.outwardbound.be
- Withnail and I (1987) – a film directed by Bruce Robinson.

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