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[Miguel Angel Garcia Lopez](#) [1]

Nov 2012



Quick interviews with famous people about their favourite tools for learning and maybe even their least favourite ones too!

What is your favourite energiser? (if you have one)

Energisers are to me what a bath is to a cat: we just don't match... I avoid them, systematically forget them and after many, many years, I still do not see the point of energisers. Well, yes, I do see the point of being 'energised', but not necessarily in any way and at any time. Hence, I do put up a very strong resistance to systematic energisers... 'There must be at least one that you appreciate', will you tell me. If I search my memory a bit and although it perhaps did lose a bit of its 'prestige', Madzinga does still work with me. But then if the group is too big or precisely not energetic enough, the 'Maaaaa.....' ends up in a sort of sick cat lament... not very vigorous anymore...

Tell me a secret... Which one is the tool for learning that always works with you?

People! The true source of learning for me is made of people. Peers, colleagues, participants or others. I do feel like a sponge observing, listening, contrasting, sharing, exchanging, questioning, wondering,

and exposing. I indeed think that I am where I am today thanks to people. I do apply the concepts of self-assessment and feedback to myself as well and thanks to that, after more than fourteen years in this field I realised about two years ago that perhaps I was able to call myself a 'trainer' (though I still doubt a lot, as you can see). Back then, the feedback and the contributions I received from colleagues at the end of a rich and intense long-term training course really allowed me to think about how do I behave with and in a team/group, what are my weaknesses and my strengths, what do I still need to work on and develop, and what did I already forget that I was able to do... It has been an important moment where the human potential has played an enormous role. No wonder why I do wish to continue working and exploring coaching, mentoring and supervision... But hey, please don't tell anyone.

And the last one that you have discovered?

Process drama or drama-based pedagogy. I did follow theatre classes in my 'young age' and I do know the process of using scenarios to explore the action-reaction process, for instance when working on impro-theatre. But I never had the chance to see it applied in a training course. The basic idea is to present the group with an already-made scenario (a given situation) which is potentially conflictual. The overall process includes 'acting' a sequence of situations within a given story, which is interrupted by the facilitator so as to explore what is or what may be going on. How the situation ends or whether the conflict is solved is not the point of process drama; the focus is on the actions or sequences and what they generate. I do

believe that such a tool or method requires time and a very good knowledge of drama based work. As any tool inducing emotions and sometimes very deep and intimate personal thoughts and values, it is not to be used unless the facilitator perfectly knows what s/he is doing.

Is there a tool which you see as being very popular but really does not fit your idea of a tool for learning?

Not really... To my view, any tool that you use and adjust properly within a learning context supports someone's learning in one way or another. There may be some that I like more or less, but methods which do match the general learning objectives and fit the methodology will do it. What isn't correct though would be to use a huge variety of tools without really exploring their learning value (through debriefing, observation, assessment, etc).

In which area do you think that our tools for learning are most developed? (E.g.: intercultural dialogue, human rights, social inclusion?)

Answering that question isn't that simple for it requires knowing all those tools and having an expertise in all those areas, which is not my case. I have the feeling that HRE and more generic Training for Trainers are fields of work where there numerous tools aiming at enhancing a learning process have been elaborated. For instance, HRE benefited enormously from the publication and revision of material such as 'Compass' and 'Compassito'. Of course the methods within those manuals are not new or aren't originally exclusively meant for HRE, but many of them have been adjusted to the sole purpose of HRE, supported by solid and vast theoretical resources. Similarly, Trainings of Trainers have the luxury to embrace tools for learning in general.

As the nature of those trainings supposedly encompasses several key topics trainers have to be able to deal with (HR, ICL, youth participation, democratic participation, inclusion, citizenship, etc.) it automatically opens the door to all possible methods. Lately though, additional tools have been developed so as to allow trainers to reflect and organise their learning process in an autonomous

manner. Though this naturally fits the fundamental principles of non-formal education, it wasn't so present about ten or twelve years ago. Tools such as self-assessment questionnaires and/or learning plans, now gathered under different names do add on the already long list of tools for learning, though from a different angle.

I may be wrong but I have the feeling that less exists in the field of citizenship, for instance. Perhaps because it is a topic which you can isolate from others... As for intercultural dialogue, I would rather translate that into 'intercultural learning' when it comes to learning. ICD gathers concepts and approaches which are those of ICL and is therefore more related to social and political strategies and frameworks than to education as such.

And in which area do you think that we need a renewal, some kind of "fresh air" of creativity so that our tools for learning really become more meaningful?

I would not say that we need some 'fresh air' to be more 'meaningful' but perhaps to better fit our reality/ies and the principles of non formal education. I cannot talk about an area in particular though perhaps those where we have the most developed tools are those to primarily question. NFE embodies being creative innovative and looking at everything from a different perspective. Nonetheless and even though we claim to act differently (and to a certain extent, we surely do) we still base our work on a very common way of thinking, simply because this is how our society acts, reacts, and develops... For instance, yesterday I was watching a documentary about youth clubs where I did hear several times the words 'jeunes en difficulté', which you would translate by 'disadvantaged young people'. Until now, we haven't found the best way to describe such groups of young people but I was just wondering if they are the ones having or facing difficulties or if we are rather unable to holistically adjust to - or respond to, their way of being, thinking and facing a reality which doesn't correspond to them and to their way of learning. I know that this is a very superficial or general thought and I do not pretend to have the solution either. But a huge dimension of our work starts from a basis which has proven to fail, at least with certain groups and learning styles. Those are for me the areas where we would need to rethink our way of working and especially our way of dealing with learning...

Now I tell you a type of tool for learning and you have to add an adjective which would correspond to your practice as a trainer. ready? Well, ok, a sentence is also acceptable.

Simulations: be careful! It needs a real preparation to reach its learning potential.

Power point: yes but only if creative Energisers: you must be kidding...!

Group building activities: setting the basis Drama and theatre: confronting oneself and opening up

Group work: useful and important

Plenary discussions: sharing

Role games: as for simulations. And mind the reverse of the medal...

What else would you like to tell us?

Just thank you for giving me the opportunity to share some of those thoughts with you, hoping that tools for learning will keep on developing, changing, confronting our minds and challenging our creativity, in the very primary sense of the term...

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