

## Profile of the animateur

Drawn up by Ninja Kors

The publication 'The art of the animateur' (Animarts, 2003) deals mostly with the *implicit* qualities of the animateur. Combined with the explicit, generic skills listed by the National Music Council in 'Sounding out the future' (online publication), the following – often interlinked – main qualities can be distinguished that constitute the profile of the animateur:

Ability and attitude to

- create the right atmosphere for creativity: inspiring, safe, etc.
- acknowledge skills, input, personal processes of participants
- structure the creative process, providing 'head and tail' and connect creative elements in a meaningful way
- if necessary, take the lead in the creative process, start experimenting, try out new things
- forgo centre stage: abandon the ego to create space for participants to 'shine'
- work together constructively
- reflect on process and own role in it
- forgo explanation: communicate through means other than words: body language, facial expression, musical language

Other qualities include generic skills for the workplace (organisation, finance, etc.)

### Definition

Animateur: a practicing artist, in any art form, who uses her/his skills, talents and personality to enable others to compose, design, devise, create, perform or engage with works of art of any kind. (9)

### Observation

What was learnt (...) was just how multi-faceted the role of the animateur is, requiring a wide variety of inter-connected teaching and learning strategies and skills. It draws on different components of knowledge and intelligences simultaneously. (39)

*When trying to describe the explicit and implicit qualities which are essential to the animateur, the research group comes across a model by the late professor Kitwood. The model describes the main types of positive interaction by health professionals in the care of dementia patients. The research group has drawn on this to build a similar list for animateur practice.*

- ◇ **Recognition** – acknowledging the participants as individuals, known by name and affirmed as unique. The animateur brings an open and unprejudiced attitude.
- ◇ **Negotiation** – consulting the participants about their preferences, rather than making assumptions. The animateur sets aside all ready-made assumptions about what is to be done and seeks to ask, consult and listen.
- ◇ **Collaboration** – working together to achieve a definitive aim.
- ◇ **Abstention** – the animateur deliberately abstains from using his/her power. A space is created for the participant to contribute as fully as possible.
- ◇ **Play** – the animateur is prepared to play and engage in an experience which involves exercising spontaneity and self-expression which has value in itself.
- ◇ **Celebration** – where boundaries of ego become diffuse and the sense of self is expanded. The animateur is open to opportunities for celebration of self or life.
- ◇ **Relaxation** – the animateur identifies the need for and allows moments of respite for body and mind within the process.
- ◇ **Validation** – the animateur accepts the reality and power of participants' experience and hence its 'subjective truth'.
- ◇ **Empathy** – the animateur is able to go beyond his/her own frame of reference to have empathy with participants.

- ◇ **Holding** – the animateur is able to provide a safe psychological space, remaining fully present, steady, assured and responsive. He/she is able to tolerate and deal safely with disturbing emotions and to know when to seek assistance from a more experienced professional.
- ◇ **Facilitation** – the animateur is able to respond to participants' contributions and not force meaning onto them, but find a place for them within the structure of the work.
- ◇ **Creation** – the animateur finds a place for his/her own artistic intentions and language whilst acknowledging participants' abilities, ideas and skills, and responds to them without taking control.
- ◇ **Receiving** – the animateur has the humility to accept and include participants' contributions within the frame of the work.
- ◇ **Giving** – the animateur gives his/her skills and experience honestly and openly

*An other analysis, closely connected to Kitwood's, is the following:*

We do:

- ◇ Give permission (to participate in creative activity)
- ◇ Continually reassure and encourage
- ◇ Set an example and model (giving permission to do the same)
- ◇ Provide specialist tools/equipment and show processes
- ◇ Provide a structure and show a path
- ◇ Clearly set boundaries and limits
- ◇ Re-direct/channel energies
- ◇ Praise and celebrate
- ◇ Enjoy it
- ◇ End it/finish it/provide closure

We do not:

- ◇ Diffuse positive energy
- ◇ Tell people they've done it wrong
- ◇ Discourage
- ◇ Exclude or inhibit
- ◇ Explain everything

We do it with:

- ◇ our hands, faces, bodies, etc.
- ◇ our tools
- ◇ our skills, confidence and experience
- ◇ our openness and generosity
- ◇ our ideas, energy and inspiration
- ◇ our positive attitude, kindness and love

We do it in order to:

- ◇ open minds to new possibilities
- ◇ develop confidence
- ◇ offer new opportunities for understanding
- ◇ engage with and develop existing cultures
- ◇ develop a cultural perspective of the world
- ◇ introduce lateral and alternative perspectives and intelligences
- ◇ pose questions and offer (some) solutions

*Other skills and attributes of the animateur, as encountered in the Animarts publication:*

- The ability to work as a member of a team
- To monitor resources
- To evaluate a programme against agreed criteria (38)
  
- has the imagination to link and draw together the most unlikely of ingredients, acting as a stepping-stone from one experience to the next, manipulating group mood and perception (41)
  
- to establish appropriate mood
- to model a relaxed and consensual approach to creating (46)
  
- content seems to be most effectively communicated through gesture, body language and facial expression with language (i.e. the spoken word) almost taking a secondary role. (47)
  
- (*concerning creative parity with the teacher – i.e. your partner in the proces*) it is generally the implicit communication and reflective skills of artist and teacher which are at the heart of successful relationships. (59)

*Other key skills, like those described by the National Music Council in 'Sounding out the future – Key skills, training and education in the music industry' are very closely related or the same as those described in the paper about generic skills (Peter Mak). They include skills such as*

- communication skills
- finance
- organisation
- technical skills
- flexibility
- management
- business skills & awareness
- marketing
- performance
- creativity
- motivation
- IT
- leadership