

# On the Ambivalence of Competences

Session 4 reminder

EDM DSBA – T3 2020 2021

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# The session structure

- Introduction – back to the Government case session 5
- A document on your collective project for the next time (deadline May 10th 5 p.m.) as well as your projects for the final individual paper (deadline Mai 17th, 5 p.m.)
- The Bhopal case : Introduction – question on the triggering event, group discussion – back to plenary discussion, how to prevent such cases, what is at stake ?
- On the ambivalence of competences – e.g. why are behaviour « complex » ?
- The reflection / reflexes tension

# The Bhopal case

- Deleterious atmosphere – no managerial caution, no training, no communication, not respected teams
- Two skilled employees give a recommendation – the two others do not know the concerned tanks system in detail
- « open the taps » : they comply with the order. They do not know nor imagine that they do not know that the system has two functions – the second being to fulfill the tanks to provoke chemical reactions.
- Cf the document on facts

# The CSR Controversy

- The CSR tension : Freeman (***stakeholders*** approach) vs. Friedmann (***shareholders*** approach)
- A Company : *what for* ?
- Is the only aim of Business to make money independently of the Companies purpose ?
- Some Companies are stronger than States : the notion of « social » responsibility might be extended as a « political » responsibility
- How to Raise the Right Problems Together ?
- What about the possibility of a Common Knowledge (CK) in Organizations ? A communication issue
- People generally don't get a CK : why ?

# On Competences

- « *When you know how to do something, what is the most significant criteria which makes you sure that you know how to do it ?* »
- You do not need to think of what you do to do it – to the contrary. Efficiency and reactivity depend on **embodied** reflexes

The Learning and the Ethics tensions may be interpreted on the below basis :

- Routines
- Skills
- Reflexes
- Things go « *without saying* »
- Answers, solutions
- Action
- Future
- Theories
- Reflection
- Making clear the reality
- Questions, problems
- Doubt

# The various tensions overlap

- *Behaviour* – what people do
  - Practices
  - Reflexes
  - Simplicity
  - Control (comfort zones)
  - « Short-term »
  - Manipulating the structure tension only as a reflexe
- *Norms* – what people *should* do
  - Theories
  - Reflection
  - Complexity
  - Uncertainty
  - « Long-term »
  - Acting on the other 4 tensions

# The Routines Organisational Issue

- Routines are Indomitable
- They Emerge Spontaneously from *repeated practical experiences*
- *On the Basis of Repetition of Operations*
- They Create Unavoidable double Blindspots (being reflexes and our ground)
- Blindspots Should Constantly be Made Clear : the Metaphore of Standing up
- Ambivalence makes competences (« behaviour ») complexe



# The Apprenticeship Tension

- **Learning** : from what « *should be* » done (norms, rules, commandements, law) to what people *do* (behaviour) – embodiment process through repeated experiences
- **Un-learning** : *doubting* the taken for granted routines, skills, know-how – making a *step back*
- **Re-learning** – new norms, rules, commandements, law, etc
- A good leader makes people feel that everybody continuously learns on a collective basis

# Last statement

- During an Executive education day, a pilot working on managing the unexpected when flying planes suddenly understood the reflexes reflection tension and loudly said : « *I got it ! We need to acquire the reflexe to quit our reflexes* »
  - This is true and wrong on the same time – it is indeed undecidable. Because it is of course efficient to acquire such kind of reflexe. But on the same time it would still remain – only – a *reflexe*. As a consequence, it needs in turn to be questioned. Added to this, *we can never know in advance when and to what extent*.
- In other words, we all humans constantly need to be ready to question our evidences, we need to constantly refresh our relationship to reality – cf about the very last question asked by Yixin.

# The Theory / Practice Tension

## Practices

- Reflexes
- Spontaneous
- Know How, Skills, Routines
- Unconscious
- Efficient
- Ambivalent because Invisible
- Past oriented (Repetition)

## Theories

- Reflection
- Deliberate
- Rationales about the Future
- How things *should* be
- Future oriented (Dreams and Projects)
- « *Of no use* » : *no immediate usefulness*

# The Theory / Practice Tension

- People can talk about everything – Practices are always very precisely focused
- It is utmost difficult to *talk* about what people *do*
- People continuously *interpret* reality
- Teach others constanly through questions and discussions about deeds, and accept to be taught
- It is much easier to answer an *asked* question than a non asked one (cf the Bhopal example)