THE BRAINSTORMING TECHNIQUE

Brainstorming is a technique devised and formulated by **A. F. Osborn** for the University of Nebraska, back in 1926.

It is based on a **cross-group discussion**, led by a moderator / facilitator, in our case the Waterschool mobilizer, predictably YOU.

This kind of meeting, however, is not completely new, as Osborn explained, because a similar procedure has been notoriously used in India for more than 400 years, as part of the technique of Hindu teachers working with religious groups: the Indian name for this technique is **Prai-Barshana**, where Prai means "out of yourself" and Barshana means "question". How to say: *objectify a problem*.

The aim is to express, in an absolutely unconstrained manner, the greatest possible number of ideas on the problem in question, in this case how to make your school a Waterschool.

Brainstorming (literally "storm in the brain") is therefore a technique that aims to favour the development of thoughts, preventing the onset of judgments. In these meetings, therefore, **neither discussion nor criticism** is allowed.

The evaluation of ideas takes place during subsequent meetings of the same group.

The central core of the technique is to produce **as many ideas as possible** (creating a check-ist): more important than their quality is their number, especially because, the greater the number of ideas, the more likely they are to find some useful.

These ideas then serve as a starting point for solving problems; and can be subsequently evaluated and further elaborated, according to the **principle of the deferred judgment**, that is to say that the validity of what has been developed with this process is established only at its end.

The aforementioned group discussion can involve **4-5 people** up to a few hundred, and can develop in more than one meeting.

It does not require special technical tools: in addition to a room and seating, a table, a flipchart, large markers, possibly in multiple colors, sheets of paper are sufficient.

It can be organized in the following phases:

A. Preliminary phase of **analysis of the situation**. In practice it is a question of presenting the problem and the limits placed on its possible solution (economic limits, time limits, etc.);

B. Phase of the **discovery of the data** characterizing the problem posed, and consequent redefinition of it. It is a phase of collective research that aims at the group's authentic understanding of the problem;

C. Phase of the **discovery of idea**s by means of collecting a large number of them, which, by shared rule, are not subjected to criticism during the meeting, adopting the already mentioned "principle of deferred judgment". These ideas can then be used to solve the problem;

D. **Selection phase** of all the ideas that emerged to record the best ones, that is those that can be implemented directly, and that can be reconciled with the others considered valid;

E. Final phase, with the participation of those who posed the problem, **to choose the solution** and / or adopt decisions and action plans.

Brainstorming rules can therefore be summarized in the following four points:

1. free ideas;

2. quantity before quality;

3. no copyright;

4. criticism is prohibited.

The role of the facilitator / mobilizer (in this case, YOU ...) is to invite all participants to propose as many ideas as possible, both in free association and stimulated by processes such as analogy, substitution, modification, etc.

The presence of the facilitator / mobilizer must be:

- **discreet**, so that ideas always remain centered on the problem;

- **stimulating**, because it must introduce, if necessary, the opportune ideas to encourage and reinvigorate group work;

- **safe**, because each participant must feel that the facilitator / mobilizer guarantees the application of the brainstorming rules during the works, and therefore no idea will be subject to criticism by others.

At the end of the group activity, the facilitator / mobilizer will govern the final discussion, enhancing the contribution of each of the participants.

Normally **brainstorming** works: try it!