

Fostering Moral Competence with KMDD® (Konstanz Method of Dilemma Discussion) - New Opportunity for Moral & Democratic Education

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Abstract

Konstanz Method of Dilemma Discussion (KMDD®) introduced by Professor Dr Georg Lind from University of Konstanz, Germany, is one of the most effective and well-documented methods of fostering moral development, namely *moral competence* which is defined as *the ability to solve problems and conflicts on the basis of universal moral principles through thinking and discussion, instead of using violence, deceit and force*. KMDD® is based on the idea of providing discursive situations in which people would find themselves respected valuing members of a democratic society. Every KMDD® session must always be embedded in positive emotions, atmosphere of open communication, mutual respect and empathy. KMDD® is not *just* a training of some social skills. With KMDD® morality and democracy can be taught effectively and sustainably. It can be used in all ages, all cultures and religions for training of pupils, students, teachers and educators. After just one or two sessions of *Konstanz Method of Dilemma Discussion* a measurable and sustainable effect occurs which can be examined with the *Moral Competence Test* (MCT®). The test has been designed to measure the effectiveness of the method, but not for measuring personal morality (individual morality cannot be judged with external standards). KMDD® is recognized in over forty countries all over the world where it is used to promote morality and democracy among people through discussion and cooperation. KMDD® is supported by research studies and certification programs which ensure its high quality and confirm its high educational potential.

Keywords: *Konstanz Method of Dilemma Discussion*, KMDD®, moral competence, Dual-Aspect Model of Moral Behavior, moral development

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Introduction

Promoting moral and democratic development and fostering moral competence is one of the most urgent tasks of education all over the world. Recent studies examining the importance of moral education for the general development points out its practical character which is in accordance with the theory of virtues. It defines personal morality as the *ability* which can be shaped by appropriate stimulation and which leads to a certain interpersonal competencies connected with human relationships. It requires the ability to deal with everyday moral dilemmas and to implement behaviors compatible with individual moral reasoning and emotions. Even the social-cognitive theories of moral development primarily focused on the role of cognitive factors in the process of shaping individual morality and the restructuring of moral reasoning patterns do not perceive cognition as the one and the only factor sufficient to achieve this goal (Kohlberg & Mayer 1972). Proper moral development cannot consist only of cognitive structure shaping, and therefore - moral reasoning ability. This conclusion has become the starting point for establishing many educational methods dedicated to support moral development focusing not only on its cognitive aspect. At present, one of the most and well-studied, but at the same time relatively unknown method of fostering moral development not based exclusively on cognitive development is *Konstanz Method of Dilemma-Discussion* (KMDD[®]). It was designed in Germany by Georg Lind at the University of Konstanz. Learning experiences related to participation in KMDD[®] discussions support - as it is suggested by the author - *moral competence*, which should be understood as *the ability to make decisions and moral judgments and to act in concert with them* (Lind 2002). Lind claims that KMDD[®] supports not only moral but also democratic competence. It is a part of moral behavior consistent with cognitive and affective components, as well as with the whole context of democratic principles of social cohesion that define human behavior in the social world. In other words, *moral competence is the ability to apply moral judgments in the decision-making practice of everyday life within democratic society*. Just as it is difficult to imagine moral behavior impassively subordinated only to the sphere of thinking, it is equally difficult to imagine a morally important situation assuming only a simple calculation of profits and losses as a basis for choosing a specific action by an experienced moral subject. Life practice shows a different tendency. We cannot deny the existence of moral dilemmas in everyday life. Morality in the most practical sense consists of making choices in face of moral dilemmas and behaving morally in accordance with our choices. We have to deal with dilemmas relatively more often than we think. Choice is never a simple result of a quantitative comparison of the given alternatives. It results from complex cognitive and affective processes that take into account the whole social and communicative context of democratic coexistence. On this issue, G. Lind refers to the communication theory of Jürgen Habermas and his proposal of the definition of democratic discourse through non-violent communication acts (Habermas 1984). Moral development is subject to learning processes by performing specific actions in the practice of everyday life (Lind 2002). Thus, G. Lind's concept fulfill all demands of John Dewey's progressive pedagogy for which education was an inherent part of democratization processes (Dewey 1916). The assumption of the existence of the ability to shape moral competence through specific educational influences based on democratic principles and communication skills is the basis of the Konstanz Method of the Dilemma Discussion (KMDD[®]). It is a response to the urgent need for moral-democratic education in postmodern *fluid* reality where successful promotion of moral competence is one of the major

challenges. KMDD[®] method may be considered as a result of the polemics with well-known studies by Moshe Blatt and Lawrence Kohlberg (1975) on discussing moral dilemmas at schools. M. Blatt and L. Kohlberg, have hypothesized that the most effective support of moral development of a young person could be accomplished by presenting him/her some moral conflicts involving thinking structures of a higher level than the present stage of his/her moral reasoning level. Presented dilemma cannot exceed the cognitive ability of the student, but must be also a specific challenge that he/she will be able to handle with. G. Lind challenges the homogeneity of M. Blatt and L. Kohlberg's assumptions and suggests a model which simultaneously supports two aspects of moral and democratic behavior: cognitive and affective. It is described by the *Dual-Aspect Model of Moral Behavior*.

Georg Lind's Dual-Aspect Model of Moral Behavior and Educational Theory of Morality

KMDD[®] method is based on the *Dual-Aspect Model of Moral Behavior*, also called the *theory of two aspects* or the *two-sided theory of moral action* (Lind 1985, 2000). Within his theory, Lind proposes a thesis of the highest importance of *moral competence* for the overall moral development, but not only in its cognitive but also affective aspect (e.g. ideals, attitudes, emotions) (Lind 2016). *Moral competence* is a tendency of man to participate in common communication space without using of strength or mutual violence. Lind's theory criticises the classical cognitive-developmental approach, which considers the cognitive-structural aspects largely independent of affective factors. G. Lind, by referring to the J. Piaget's cognitive-affective parallelism, questions the primacy of the cognitive structure over the affective aspect in the model of moral behavior. He assumes that cognitive and affective factors are two inseparable and always coexisting aspects of every human moral behavior (Lind 1985). They are not even separate components that develop in parallel way, as James Rest have proposed (Rest 1973, 1979). These aspects cannot be separated, neither from behavior nor from one another. Lind argues his conviction in reference to Jean Piaget's (1981) approach, which have pointed to the importance of the individual's own activity in the process of development, and further emphasized the importance of qualitative changes in thinking over changes at the structural level of reasoning. These changes manifest throughout two aspects of one phenomenon (moral behavior): emotions (motives, orientations, attitudes, ideas) and cognition (*moral competence/moral judgment competence*). While creating this concept, G. Lind was leaning on L. Kohlberg's definition that claims *moral judgment competence* is *the capacity to make decisions and judgments which are moral (i.e., based on internal principles) and to act in accordance which such judgments* (Kohlberg 1964, p. 425). Lind saw this breakthrough within the understanding of morality as something derived from attitudes and values acquired through learning and from something biologically or culturally determined. This way of defining *moral competence* guarantees a parallel understanding of moral behavior as a derivative of the accepted and internalized moral principles, rather than the processes of adapting to external norms (in the cognitive and developmental approach it was introduced as *the socio-moral perspective*). Thus affective, cognitive and behavioral aspects have been integrated by Lind within the definition of *moral competence* which describes it as *the ability to solve problems and conflicts on the basis of universal moral principles through thinking and discussion, instead of using violence, deceit and force* (Lind 2016, p. 45). In terms of practice, this implies the ability of the subject to reflect

thoughtfully and conduct an adequate discourse. The practical dimension of that systematic view on moral development introduced by G. Lind is *Konstanz Method of Dilemma-Discussion* - KMDD[®]. Long-term studies on the *Dual-Aspect Model of Moral Behavior* have shown that moral development and moral behavior can be fostered through educational interventions (Lind 2004, 2008, 2011). This became the basis for the formulation of Lind's *Educational Theory of Morality* (*Bildungstheorie der Moralentwicklung*). G. Lind believes that moral development requires more than understanding and adapting to general social norms (by learning). *Moral competence* is more required since it allows the individual to apply moral principles to specific events and to resolve moral conflicts in situations of incompatibility of everyday practice (Lind 2002). Competence is a concept broader than the ability. It refers not only to learning processes of what has not been known before, but also to the wider context of already known reasoning and more familiar relationships or actions (motivational processes, past experiences, abilities or individual emotionality). Hence, the concept of competence is strongly embedded in a practical and dynamic context. Therefore, *moral competence* can be stimulated by appropriately adapted educational interventions. However, they cannot be identical with the knowledge which is just one of many aspects of competence. According to G. Lind the absence of proper moral education can lead to the regression in moral development of an individual (Lind 2000). The cognitive-development approach does not take it into any consideration. The response of G. Lind to the question of how moral development can be fostered is the KMDD[®] method (Lind 2010). Although the method itself originally evolved from the dilemma discussions proposed by M. Blatt and L. Kohlberg, after many years of research and numerous modifications made by G. Lind and other scholars KMDD[®] became relatively independent from cognitive-developmental approach. Most of the research and educational programs are aimed at stimulating justice based moral reasoning. For G. Lind it is much more important to argue with judgments that oppose one's own opinion than to deal with a dilemma just representing higher level of moral thinking of a certain kind. The purpose of discussion in the KMDD[®] method is not only to stimulate moral reasoning, but at the same time to promote moral and democratic competences which reinforces democratic society in many different ways. In real life situations, the declarative level of moral development does not count as much as the practical ability to deal with a particular moral problem. The fact that someone is very keen on the issue of freedom or democracy does not mean that he or she is guided by the principles that characterize his or her reasoning. Moral-democratic competences are more than conflict resolution techniques and more than good interpersonal skills. Such abilities are also very useful, but they cannot replace what G. Lind describes as inter-subjective consensus on mutually recognized ethical foundations and empathic understanding of each other for genuine co-operation. Development of such competences is a problem of most of educational systems all over the world, regardless of local socio-cultural determinants (Lind 1986, 2016). Overcoming the need to defend one's position and making a step into cooperation between people during the discussion is a great challenge for global and local moral education worldwide.

What is *Konstanz Method of Dilemma-Discussion*?

Konstanz Method of Dilemma Discussion - KMDD[®] - is a method supporting ethical and moral-democratic education. Its most distinctive feature is the idea of constructive, discursive and dialogical learning as its aim (Lind & Nowak 2015).

Constructivism as a leading idea of the KMDD[®] method lies in the teacher's obligation to prepare an educational moral dilemma that will be made-to-measure to the group of debaters, then to present the dilemma to this group. During the main discussion - paradoxically - teacher's participation is just minimal. The teacher during the session is only a moderator who keeps two simple rules in charge (rule # 1: everything can be said but no persons must be judged positively or negatively; rule # 2: *ping-pong*: the person who spoke last picks a respondent from the opposite side) and also keeps the chronology of the KMDD[®] session (each session contains of nine phases). Constructivism is also included in the contribution of participants to the process itself. The KMDD[®] dialogue encourages participants to look at the root of the problem and to discover the fundamental moral principles within interacting with each other dialogically (Lind 2016). This is particularly worth emphasizing that the presence of practical aspect in the programs for teaching ethics is far too small. Mostly theoretical content of the curricula of ethics may be the reason of the low effectiveness of the educational impact of ethics in general. Based on abstract philosophical assumptions ethics does not activate at a sufficient degree the cognitive-affective ability of schoolchildren, and therefore does not support the understanding of the essence of democratic principles shaping real social relations which goes hand in hand with social, moral and democratic practice. It can be said that ethics taught only as a theory increases the amount of knowledge but does not impact on moral competence and moral sensitivity of an individual. It can be also compared to the formation of propositional knowledge (*know-what*) growth of which does not necessarily lead to the development of practical skills (*know-how*) (Ryle 2009). Competencies can, however, be successfully shaped, within the support of a special didactic space and principles developed step by step by J. Piaget, L. Kohlberg and G. Lind. To create such a space qualified teachers specialized in modern, interactive teaching methods are needed. It is about supporting practical skills, not the internal morality understood as knowledge of moral principles, which - in fact - are mostly external. In this regard also academic discourse does not produce expected results. KMDD[®] is one of the few tools that the teacher can use to promote the moral development of his students without acting as a parent, psychologist, therapist or a confessor or someone who just *knows the best*. At the same time, KMDD[®] is one of the most developed teaching and learning methods supporting social and moral development of an individual and of whole groups at once. It is based not only on a well-established theory, but on many years of experiences in numerous research programs. It is also based on formalized certification processes that allows for a consistent increase of the quality of interaction provided by the certificate owners. G. Lind has developed a KMDD[®] model benchmark, as well as a series of KMDD[®] training and certification procedures. One of the most important is *Moral Competence Test* - MCT[®] which is used to evaluate the KMDD[®] effectiveness (Lind 2008). None of the methods currently used to support moral development have been found of similar facilities. An example of a high level of refinement can be any individual KMDD[®] session. It should last for 90 minutes and not repeat more often than once every 2-6 weeks. It should contain parts (nine phases) arranged by alternating work rhythm (affective excitation, peaceful rational phases, individual and group work in oral and written form). At the beginning it includes a professional oral presentation of the moral dilemma (educational semi-real dilemma story about a certain character dealing with the situation of hard moral decision to make). After that, participants declare do they see any dilemma in the story and vote "for" or "against" the decision made by the protagonist of the presented story. This is accompanied by a split into

quadruple teams developing the strongest arguments for their chosen option. The most important phase is a proper discussion based on two principles (the aforementioned two rules/principles). It comes with redefining of positions and a moment in which one can change his mind about the original evaluation of the behavior of the character of the dilemma. In this phase each group also votes for the best argument of the opposite group, which supports the ability to perceive values in arguments which are not in accordance with our own opinion. KMDD[®] session finishes with reflection, additional questions and the group feedback. Throughout the whole session the teacher-moderator watches over the length of the phases and helps debaters to keep the rules of the discussion. It is worth mentioning that the discussion during the KMDD[®] session always contains a semi-real dilemma (hypothetical dilemma). It is in the accordance with L. Kohlberg's proposal. "Semi-real" means the lack of any particular connection with the actual personal situation of the debaters taking part in the discussion. However, this must be a probable dilemma, as far as possible. Creating a good dilemma is a difficult and demanding task for a teacher. It is also important to present it to a group of listeners in a certain way which is somehow dramatic, but not based totally on theatrical emotions. G. Lind believes that the key matter is the ability to build dramatic tension in the listener (skillfully manipulating pauses) and awakening the ability to identify with the protagonist of a dilemma faced by the choice between the moral rational exclusions. Giving a certain name to a protagonist makes him/her unique for every listener. Each participant develops an individual cognitive representation of the protagonist of the discussed dilemma. The story must stimulate intellectually and emotionally, but the emotions caused by the dilemma must not interfere with the process of rational thinking. Balancing the proportion of both aspects also depends on the teacher's skills. The teacher-moderator must remember to shape emotions as a support factor, not as a barrier to the success of the whole discussion. This is why the dilemma should be short enough to make it easy to tell naturally. Due to the process of building dramatic tension during the presentation of the dilemma, it should not be read from a sheet of paper, but told as a story. On the other hand, its adequacy depends also on the degree of comprehensibility for the audience (Lind 2016). The benefits of participating in the KMDD[®] sessions are the subject of many positive opinions from the scientific community. It is currently the only method which integral part contains of the *Moral Competence Test* - MCT[®] that measures its effectiveness (Bardzinski, Szopka, 2011).

Moral Competence Test (MCT[®]) - effectiveness verification and research

KMDD[®] has been enriched by G. Lind with the technique that measures its effectiveness. The technique designed exclusively for this purpose is the *Moral Competence Test* (MCT[®], formerly known as the *Moral Judgment Test* - MJT[®]) (Lind 2008). It allows for simultaneous measurement of moral orientation and moral competence. Lind's idea is mainly based on the experimental approach to psychological measurement, meaning that it refers to an individual pattern of behavior rather than a general tendency that can be transferred to a generalized trial (Lind 2004). The MCT[®] contains two short dilemma stories ("worker's dilemma" and "doctor's dilemma"), about people who must make hard moral choice. Both dilemmas were selected because of the reference to the highly demanding moral principles of the 5th and 6th Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning development (Lind 2000). Each story contains information about the protagonist's decision, so it is not required for the test taker to make own choice. The task is to judge whether the decision taken by the

protagonist was correct or not (evaluation of another person's conduct). Every test taker must confront six different arguments "for" and six different arguments "against" the decision of the protagonist. Arguments represent six moral orientations distinguished by L. Kohlberg (1984). The MCT[®] is subordinated to the idea of three degrees of difficulty for the individual: first the individual must refer to the arguments "for" and "against", but not to claim to be personally "for" or "against". At the same time he/she must differentiate the arguments according to their moral rank. Low moral competence will manifest itself at this level with easy acceptance of arguments supporting a personal position, regardless of the value (inner quality) of the given arguments in general. On the third level of difficulty the participant must differentiate the opposite arguments according to his or her own assessment of the protagonist's behavior, which can be a serious problem because of a possible cognitive imbalance. In MCT[®] the individual level of moral competence is expressed by the value of the index: C-score (*competence score*), which refers to the ability of making moral judgments by taking into account the moral value of the arguments themselves, without referring to other factors such as conformity with social expectations (conformism). The C-score index ranges from 1-100, where it can be differentiated within the scale between low (1-9), medium (10-29), high (30-49), and very high (over 50) level of moral competence. This allows for cross-group and intra-group comparisons of the obtained C-scores on the basis of multidimensional repetitive (*pretest/posttest*) and by using e.g. multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). So far, a great number of studies have been conducted with MCT[®]. It shows that it is an effective tool with high research potential. Longitudinal German studies (Lind 1986) on KMDD[®] with MCT[®] tool shows not only the correspondence with the results of the original American studies by L. Kohlberg, but also the positive correlation between the level of moral competence and the number of years of education. The last correlation was confirmed by G. Lind in study, which involved 780 adolescents, between 14 and 21 years of age (Lind 2000). Young people who did not continue their education respectively have represented a regression in the development of moral competence. There has been no similar trend while the adequate continuity of education was maintained. The positive impact of higher education (studies) on the level of moral reasoning and moral competence was also confirmed (Pascarella 1991). This influence is independent of cultural diversity. M. Schillinger in her intercultural studies has confirmed the positive correlation between education and moral competence in Brazil and Germany (Schillinger 2006). One of the biggest long-term research study with using MCT[®] was introduced by the FORM project funded by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* with a range of 4000 students from Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Poland. Polish students participated in the research three times in 1977-1983 (Bargel, Markiewicz & Peisert 1982). One of the goals was to determine the level of moral competence of students in the above countries. The results have shown that, regardless of political and ideological background, Polish students represented the same moral orientations as those found in other Western European countries participating in the study. Nevertheless, in case of Polish students between 1977 and 1982 a rapid increase in the level of moral competence was recorded followed by a sharp decline. At the same time, German students were characterized by small but steady increase in the level of moral competence. Perhaps this tendency was influenced by the process of democratization in the 1970s, followed by violent socio-political changes in Poland. The results have become the basis for further discussion by Lind on the phenomenon of regression in moral development (Lind 1986, 2000). MCT[®] studies on the effectiveness of KMDD[®]

interventions have been conducted not only on students. One of the groups included in the research project were prisoners. It appears that KMDD[®] has been successful in both processes of education and rehabilitation (Hammerling, 2014).

Conclusion

Moral-democratic education is one of the greatest challenges of modern teaching systems. Preparing a young person for participation in civil society, working in a democratic exchange of social capital, and presenting an appropriate sensitivity to ethical problems that accompany it is a difficult task. However, it turns out that it is not impossible. Teaching, or rather education, should focus on practical skills, competences, abilities. Especially when it comes to assessing available opportunities and making the right choices. The need to stimulate moral competences is one of the greatest challenges of education. Referring to the classic results of L. Kohlberg on discussing moral dilemmas during school lessons, it is assumed that supporting the moral development of a young person may be based on presenting moral dilemmas in order to stimulate his/her reasoning. However, it should be kept in mind that the stimulation of reasoning does not fully convey the notion of moral development. Currently, one of the most widely studied and described methods of stimulating moral development through dilemma discussion is *Konstanz Method of Dilemma-Discussion* (KMDD[®]), introduced by Prof. Georg Lind from the University of Konstanz, Germany. Educational experiences related to KMDD[®] classes support moral competence which can be described as the ability to make moral decisions and to act in concert with them, as well as the ability to solve problems and mitigate conflicts based on internal moral principles and through joint deliberation and discussion instead of using violence and deceit. The KMDD[®] method is grounded in the original theory of *Dual-Aspect Model of Moral Behavior*. Professor Lind argues that the stimulation of moral competence should be based not only on cognitive but also affective aspect. They cannot be separated. This assumption significantly influences the structure of a single KMDD[®] session. Each session consists of nine phases during which thinking and emotions are alternately stimulated. This keeps the average level of excitement that helps to foster moral competence without involving unnecessary emotions. During each session participants take turns working on their own and together. This enables both: personal reflection and co-operation with others in order to modify individual position. So far the method has gained recognition in more than forty countries around the world and its popularity continues to grow. The effectiveness of the KMDD[®] method is confirmed by numerous studies. Prof. Georg Lind provides a strict certification process for users and teachers of KMDD[®] which helps to maintain its high quality.

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