

Georg Lind (2016). How to teach morality. Promoting deliberation and discussion. Reducing violence and deceit. Berlin: Logos Verlag. ISBN 978-3-8325-4282-5, 19.80 €.

This Book is essential for any academic interested on democracy, peace and morality. Its clarity and theoretical solidity makes it very useful and helpful.

The main thesis of the book is that morality can be taught and, consequently, we can avoid violence, deceit and promote democratic principles. The question that arises is: *How can be taught morality?* In order to answer this question, the author exposes a very well designed method: The *Konstanz Method of Dilemma Discussion* (KMDD)®.

To explain the KMDD, its origin, fundament, development and praxis the author divides the book on three parts; the first one is the introduction, the second one is dedicated to the theoretical background, and the last one to the way of fostering moral competence.

In the introduction, Dr. Lind makes clear that democracy is a moral ideal, which is related to inclusion, freedom and justice. If we understand, as many studies strongly suggest and Dr. Lind demonstrates, that morality is a competence, then to promote this competence is an imperative in order to try to reach the ideal of democracy.

In the part corresponding to the theoretical background, the author emphasizes his concept of moral competence and clarifies questions like: *“What are the origins of morality: the genes, the environment or education?”* After a comprehensive analysis, the conclusion, for the author and the reader, is that the education plays a central role in the promotion and development of the moral competence. This postulate emerges after the explanation about the effectiveness of the KMDD in many diverse and different contexts (environments). One of the main conclusions in this part is that the development of the moral competence leads a better behavioral decision, it means a decision that implies thinking, reflecting, speaking and listening to others (even opponents) instead of using violence and deceit. How can be the author so confident about his method? The answer lies in the *Moral Competence Test* (MCT), a way to measure with accuracy and objectivity the impact of KMDD on the development of the moral competence in the persons that take part in the discussion dilemmas. The MCT arises after years of observation and analysis of the dilemmas discussion as well as from the critical reading of the oeuvre and the work together with the psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg. The MCT displays a C-score for the moral competence of the individuals taking into account complex statistical issues that are very specific for the measurement of individuals and their moral competence (humans cannot be measured like objects or simple numerical artifacts).

The C-score (ranging from 0 to 100) goes up several points after the participation in one session of the KMDD. If the person takes part in two or more sessions during a couple of years, this value could be increased significantly. In addition, participants of the KMDD and persons related to them also declare to be more moral competent and enjoy a better environment with less violence and deceit. As a qualitative confirmation, the KMDD participants say that after the dilemma discussion, it is easier to discuss, think and act about difficult issues even with persons with a very different idea in regard to what is “good” or “better”, in other words, the praxis of the democratic principles. In this manner the author makes very clear and strong the link between moral competence and democracy. In the case of my country, Colombia, this linkage is crucial. In the current peace process is very necessary to promote the democratic principles and avoid the violence and deceit if we want to stop a very violent armed conflict lasting more than 50 years.

In the second part of the book (*Fostering Moral Competence*), Lind explains in detail, the KMDD, the preparation of the sessions of discussion, its efficacy, the Just Community (JC) Method and its relation to the KMDD, as well as the training of KMDD teachers (this method have been widely used in schools, but also in prisons and military academies). In chapter 12, Lind answers frequently asked questions.

According to the author, the evaluation of KMDD-sessions should have three elements: Pre-test, the KMDD-session and the Post-test. In the Pre-test the moral competence (C-score) of each participant is measured. The KMDD-session lasts 90 minutes. The main element is the discussion of a dilemma story in which two moral principles collide (for example, to tell the truth or help a friend). Finally, in the Post-test the new C-score of the participants is measured. The protagonist in the dilemma-story is fictional in order to avoid an excess of feelings and emotions. Too much feeling and emotions can prevent rational thinking necessary to express arguments and ideas during the discussion between the participants.

The KMDD method is only effective if the teacher who leads the session is well trained. Although any person can conduct a KMDD-session, not everybody can be effective. The book explains the training of the teacher.

Dr. Lind emphasizes two important rules for the discussion: 1) Freedom of speech: each person is free to say that he or she wants. But no person must be evaluated. Attacking participants is not allowed. 2) During the discussion the teacher acts only as a referee: the participants themselves moderate the discussion according to the so-called ping pong rule (the contribution from one group is followed by a contribution by the opposite group, and vice versa).

In respect to the Just Community Method, the book examines some interventions in USA and Germany concluding that there is not enough support to affirm that the Just Community alone develops the moral competence, even though it promotes a democratic culture in the schools and it could create a positive atmosphere for the KMDD.

Jaime Castañeda [1], a Colombian master student in communication and school teacher, analyzed the possibilities of implementing the Just Community (JC) to promote the moral competence with his students in a public school located in a zone of poverty and violence, but, agreeing with Dr. Lind, he has more success with the dilemma discussion than with the implementation of the JC due to the enormous efforts in terms of persons, time and financial resources that the Just Community requires. In contrast, the implementation of dilemma discussion was easier and with clear observable results: less violence and bullying in the class room, more motivation for learning and a more open attitude to different opinions and arguments. This empirical experience, in a place far from where the theory was formulated (Germany), demonstrates how valid and effective is the argumentation of Dr. Lind. In the book there are many interesting examples that illustrate and support with quantitative and qualitative data his experiences and the results of the KMDD across USA, Germany and other countries, among them, Colombia.

At the end of the book there are very useful forms to use for KMDD-sessions.

In countries like Colombia, where for decades differences of opinion have been solved through violence and deceit, the development of moral competence, as postulated in this book, is urgently needed.

Jairo Ordóñez

Notes:

[1] Castañeda, J. (2016). The historical, epistemological and conceptual development of citizen competences and citizen capacities in the Bogotá public educational model. (Master Thesis). Bogotá: Universidad Santo Tomás.

About the Author: Jairo Ordóñez earned his doctorate in Psychology at the University of Konstanz in Germany. Currently he is professor at the St. Tomas University in Bogotá (Colombia). His areas of interest include quantitative and qualitative methods of media content analysis, conflict research, peace studies and emerging citizenships.

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