

Summary of my second KMDD training

I have been a KMDD teacher for several years now. I have learned a lot during this time: In particular how to recognize my own limits and draw the right conclusions from them. At our school, KMDD sessions have become an integral part of the training. The *Konstanz Method of Dilemma Discussion*[©] is a teaching method appreciated by many teachers and students.

I have learned that it needs perseverance to establish this method at a school. And it is only now that more and more learning effects become visible for others too.

The KMDD is a classroom discussion reviving the Socratic concept: Discuss using reasonable means and thus gain knowledge of what is good. The KMDD was developed from classroom discussions by Moshe Blatt and Lawrence Kohlberg. It picks up the ideas of discourse ethics by Habermas and basic approaches of the discourse method developed by Oser. Professor Lind, experimental psychologist and philosopher, is the inventor of the *Konstanz Method of Dilemma Discussion*[©]. His dual-aspect theory is its theoretical basis (Lind 2009, Lind, 2015). The KMDD makes it possible to become aware of your own moral principles by thinking and discussing with others. It requires a discourse that is free of powerful emotions. It is only under these conditions that decisions can be carefully reviewed. Moral principles can then become sustainable decisions. At best, they become

sustainable actions. According to my perception, the students are more helpful, have a higher ability to understand others, take better decisions, learn better and are less ignorant. To attain this level, the students have to control their own opinion with their conscience and be in the position to double-check it by other people's opinions. This enables them to continuously develop their moral competence. Moral education takes place by continuous development of personal moral competence. Moral competence means the "ability to resolve conflicts through thinking and discussion on the basis of moral ideals (principles) rather than through violence, deceit and abuse of power". And more specifically, it is defined as the "ability to assess the reasoning of other people with respect to their moral quality rather than their opinion conformity" (Lind 2008, Lind 2011, Lind 2015). At a KMDD session, I learned it is possible to have my students develop maximum attention and willingness to learn. I can motivate students to develop their thinking and discussion. At a KMDD session students learn, for example, how to moderate a discussion. To this end, the teacher has to introduce only two rules of discussion. In the course of the discussion the students learn to focus on the subject rather than on people. This learning process starts out with the presentation of the dilemma story. But by no means does it end after the 90 minutes of the KMDD session. I learned that KMDD sessions have a long-term effect. Scepticism about this method mainly arose from the following: A lack of knowledge of this method and its theoretical background; the insufficient mastery of its tools, or both.

As part of my second certification I had lengthy discussions with my colleagues about the first certification and the feedback of my sessions showed that at that time I was already good at this or that but not yet so good at other things. Initially there were breaks that were too long in the plenary discussion when reasoning stagnated. The quality of the dilemma stories and the presentation of the same were frequently major causes. At first, the students considered the ping-pong rule disturbing. But I had clumsily explained it back then. And I was much too exact when it came to supervising the observance of the freedom of opinion. Laughing, as long as it is not laughing at someone, is part of the KMDD session today. It is even a sure indicator that the lesson is fun. I remember it well when during the migration crisis students asked me after a KMDD session to have a proper debate again. I agreed and asked one student to chair the debate. I also asked him to set up his own rules for discussion. "With me everyone can say what they want", he proposed. The debate was passionate and a helter-skelter. Suddenly the moderator stepped in and said: "I am in favour of adopting Mrs. Reinicke's rules anyway." They all agreed. Then, the debate took place in a more sober way although still very emotional. The two rules alone are not what make the KMDD special. I, as well as my students, understand better and better that the 90 minutes are more than just a special form of discourse: You become aware of your own feelings, learn to think and talk about them, argue with others about them, learn to listen to others, learn to appreciate completely opposing opinions. In brief: You

learn to forge your own informed opinion. And you learn to act in a democratic way. I have learned that, in order to reach this goal, you as the teacher have to become aware of your own role. Often enough we manipulate our students unconsciously: With our facial expression and gestures, the manner we use to listen to our students, the way we respond to what they say, how we ourselves accept and give feedback. We have to give marks but how and what for? These are the decisive questions. I have learned it is important to motivate our students to be willing to learn for their own life rather than the upcoming examination. It is necessary on the one hand to support them in doing so and on the other to challenge them by way of difficulties. I am still fascinated by the role I play at a KMDD session, strictly speaking: almost none and still the lesson goes well. I have learned to have greater confidence in the students. Also at a vocational school apprentices are able to exert discipline over themselves and still be creative provided they have the right tools. I am interested in my students' opinions. It is interesting and revealing to listen to them. One thing I have definitely learned: I now listen better to my students and appreciate them for making their views openly known. I have learned that the courage to speak one's mind should not be taken for granted. It means that I myself have changed my role as an ethics teacher since I became a KMDD teacher. Only recently a student approached me in the school parking lot: "Mrs. Reinicke, I really have to tell you something: You have to become stricter again." (Years before in her first training she experienced a different me). Weeks later,

when I told this anecdote to a different class I was surprised: "For heaven's sake, no!" was the unanimous opinion of the students. When I asked what they meant they answered: "What you teach is human and authentic. You have a real interest in us. Our ethics lessons inspire us to think and debate seriously."

This is the way the teacher increasingly "disappears" during a KMDD session but at the same time challenges the students and supports them in being morally competent. The students learn to exercise their democratic basic right to freedom of expression. I now still sometimes lack the inner serenity needed to be able to understand every student. It is often noticed by my body language but this has much to do with my own bringing-up and my own experience. To get rid of it is, indeed, not easy. The only thing that helps is filming and watching my own lessons. Conversations on the KMDD with others who are interested in this method as well as with people who are sceptical towards it are also good. Some of my colleagues were particularly sceptical when I proposed to conduct a KMDD session with our foreign students. But when I invited two colleagues to attend this session and we talked about it days later a lot of new and valuable ideas emerged from this conversation. I have learned: Not to see my mistakes as shortcomings but a reserve for self-improvements. Transparency and openness are the key when it comes to changing things. I also learned to converse with my colleagues about the planned sessions. Many of them want to know in advance what it will be

about this time. Often a spontaneous dilemma clarification takes place during a lunch break in the teachers' room. So, I know beforehand whether someone can see a dilemma in a story or the story is not so good and has to be improved. Quite spontaneously suggestions for improvement are made and personal stories are told. These breaks are never boring. Everyone has something to say, to express their view. It is not uncommon that the following proposal is made: "You could write a story on this subject." At times I then try to do that and even manage now and then. I also learned to take students on board. Every year I have a class that has the privilege to act as "initial examiners" of my stories. They enjoy it like little children when Mrs. Reinicke comes up with a new story. Since I have only one lesson per week with this class, we generally get to the dilemma clarification only. But even that boosts moral competence: these students think about a problem, they learn to recognize the moral core of a problem, they learn to formulate their own moral feelings and they hear what the other students think about it. I have also learned to make use of the potential of the *Konstanz Method of Dilemma Discussion*[®] as a school counsellor. The KMDD as an inclusive teaching method creates different opportunities to cater to students individually and strengthen them no matter which specifics have to be taken into account. The KMDD is suitable for all students, everyone is valued, some them for the first time. And I have learned that conducting KMDD sessions can bring about changes to the school culture. Students become more confident, more helpful, more willing to learn and

understand others much better. These arguments cannot yet be verified by figures but that is how I perceive it...

Our society changes rapidly. If we want to counteract impoverishment, it is high time we start teaching morality in schools. Morality can be both the subject of true-to-life lessons and the prerequisite for a modern way of teaching. The *Konstanz Method of Dilemma Discussion*[®] (KMDD) and the *Moral Competence Test*[®] open up entirely new possibilities of teaching.

The author, a certified KMDD teacher herself, provides us with an insight into a method that, despite having been tested successfully for over 40 years now, still is a highly modern approach. She shows us how the potential of KMDD can also be applied to other teaching methods. After explaining the term "morality", she goes on to explain why it is necessary to teach morality in a clear and entertaining way ...

Cover idea: Georg and Thomas Lind

Moral Competence Reloaded



Martina Reinicke

ILLUSTRATED BY LUISE HALBHUBER