Konstanz Method of Dilemma Discussion

The Konstanz Method of Dilemma Discussion (KMDD®) as an educational and psycho-didactic tool that is aimed at fostering moral competence development in a course of moral and spiritual education and supporting overall personal and psychological development. The authors consider moral education to be of pedagogical importance, the task of which is to support and stimulate the individual development of the moral autonomy of an individual. Spiritual education is understood similarly, but it relates to the sphere of spiritual autonomy. Within the concept of spiritual education, a more specific area of religious education can be distinguished from the perspective of a specific religion. Given that a contemporary spiritual and moral crisis translates into an increase in ideological, moral, and religious conflicts (Agrimson and Taft 2009), the spiritual and moral education of the next generation, the development of respect for other cultures, religious tolerance, and the development of readiness for cooperation are the most urgent challenges facing today's education. Moral and religious education in eastern Europe is underestimated in schools and is treated as indoctrination entities in which moral educators tell people what to do and religious educators what to believe. The aim of both should be to help sensitize students to ethical issues and help them to form their own judgments and beliefs within the context of a broader social perspective. Therefore, fostering personal development is one of the most important, as well as one of the most demanding, tasks of education at all levels.

1. KMDD® and Its Theoretical Basis

Through implementing the assumptions of the cognitive and developmental approach in developmental psychology, it could be argued that moral development is the result of not only stimulation of the moral sphere of reasoning but also of moral competence, which, as research results show, is subject to learning processes by performing specific activities in the practice of everyday life. Moral education should be based on this as well (Lind 2011b). Thus, the concept proposed by G. Lind realizes the postulates of pedagogical progressivism based on the principle of learning by doing by John Dewey, for whom education was an inseparable element of democratization processes and, therefore, has been very close to morality (Dewey 1997). The assumption about the possibility of shaping moral competence through specific educational interactions based on democratic principles and communication is the basis of the Konstanz Method of Dilemma Discussion (Bardziński and Szopka 2011).

The method is a response to the need for moral-democratic education, which is so urgent in modern times, especially given the global crisis of morality and spirituality (Purpel et al. 2004). Preventing this crisis from deepening further may also have a positive effect on the psychological well-being of individuals (Hendriks et al. 2018). Effective support of moral and spiritual development is thus one of the most important educational challenges, especially with the increasingly influential changes of the modern world, including globalization processes (Ben-Nun Bloom et al. 2014). This applies equally to the field of moral and religious or spiritual education. What binds these two spheres together is personal development, which contributes to positive mental health (Yachina 2015). KMDD® itself is not specifically aimed at fostering religious or spiritual reasoning or competence. However, due to the openness of this method and the possibility of using any kind of dilemmas during the discussions, it can be used not only to support moral but also spiritual development, which are understood as equivalent aspects of personal development. To maintain the clarity of the argumentation and to emphasize the original idea, this part of the paper mainly focuses on morality.

The theoretical beginnings of Lind's work on the KMDD® method are the effects of polemics, with the idea of discussing moral dilemmas during school classes over a cycle of twelve weeks, during which, each student is faced with moral conflicts involving the structure of thinking for a level higher than the currently represented stage of moral reasoning (Blatt and Kohlberg 1975; Berkowitz 1981). The presented dilemma cannot exceed the learner's cognitive abilities, but also must introduce a specific cognitive challenge that the learner will be able to undertake with a certain probability of success

The KMDD® method is based on the model of the two-aspect theory of behavior and moral development, also known as the two-aspect theory or the two-aspect theory of moral action (Lind 2016), taking into account the cognitive (level of reasoning) and the affective (motives, orientations, attitudes, ideas) aspects. The proposal of a two-aspect theory of moral action is the result of a critique of the classical cognitive-developmental approach, which recognizes the cognitive-structural elements as largely independent of affective factors. Lind, referring to Piaget's (Piaget 1981) approach, points to the importance of the subject's own activity in the course of development processes and emphasizes the importance of qualitative changes taking place in thinking, not only at the level of structure but also in the sphere of behavior. According to the main representatives of the cognitive and developmental approach, the latter can coexist with structural and cognitive factors, but cannot be combined with them within one coherent construct, which is moral development. Meanwhile, Lind assumes that cognitive and affective factors are two inseparable and always coexisting aspects of human behavior (Rest 1980) that can at best develop in parallel (Lind et al. 2017). Moral competence is understood here as the basis of a natural human inclination to participate in democratic processes that are based on a common communication space and not on relations of force and mutual violence.

The proposed method of defining moral competence guarantees a parallel understanding of moral behavior as derivatives that are adopted and internalized by the subject of moral principles, and not only the processes of adaptation to external standards and norms toward the perpetrator. In terms of cognition and development, it is the so-called socio-moral perspective (Kurtines and Gewirtz 1984). In practice, this means the ability of the perpetrator to think carefully and conduct an adequate discourse, which is a good justification for proposing methods of stimulating appropriate competencies. KMDD® is a practical dimension to Lind's systematic view of moral development. Many years of research on the two-faceted theory of moral action showed that moral development and moral behavior must be effectively stimulated through educational interventions in order to foster the awakening of the democratic personality. It can be assumed that the same may be true of religiosity or spirituality. Moreover, it was shown that moral-religious education increases the effectiveness of self-conscience training as well as the effectiveness of training of different competencies such as self-conscience or reflectivity. (Croitoru and Munteanu 2014; Stokes 2019)

According to the *Educational Theory of Moral Development* (org. *Bildungs theorie der Moralentwicklung*), moral development requires not only the ability to understand and adapt to general social norms but also moral competence that enables the application of moral principles to specific events and dealing with moral, spiritual, and religious dilemmas (Lind 2016). Competence is a broader concept than skill because it relates not only to learning processes but also to the broader context of thinking, actions based on motivational processes and previous experiences, and individual emotionality. The concept of competence is firmly embedded in a practical and dynamic context. The latter aspect concerns cognitive and meta-cognitive skills; knowledge; understanding; interpersonal, intellectual, and pragmatic skills; and ethical values and moral attitudes. Moral competence understood in this way can be developed through appropriately adapted educational interactions (Kohlberg 1964).

Lind believed that moral competence is based on skills that depend on the learning processes that can be applied as a part of educational interactions. They cannot, however, be the same as knowledge, which, if it is the basis of skills, is just one of many aspects of competence. From this point of view, if there is not enough stimulation in moral education, there may even be a regression observed in the course of moral development, especially in an unfavorable environment that does not stimulate moral and spiritual development (e.g., medical studies, imprisonment) (Lind 2000). The classical cognitive and developmental approach does not consider this aspect at all. The KMDD® method is Lind's answer to the question of how to stimulate the development of students' moral competence in the best way. Although the method itself originally evolved from the method of discussion proposed by Blatt and Kohlberg (1975), in the course of research and numerous modifications, the earlier assumption about the necessity of using dilemmas from a higher stage than is represented by the learner was abandoned. It is much more important, according to Lind, to face arguments that oppose student's own opinions. The same situation happens when it comes to discussions regarding religious issues (Bozorgmehr et al. 1993). What is more, all moral dilemmas to some extent touch the problem of spiritual involvement of discussing agents even if they are not directly visible. For example, some spiritual dilemmas may touch specific religious values and hence involve spiritual engagement. The aim of the discussion in the KMDD® method is, therefore, not only the stimulation of moral reasoning but also the promotion of democratic attitudes and communication skills that can guarantee tolerance, understanding, and dialogue. The development of moral–democratic and discursive skills becomes an introduction to the world of a democratic society, the essence of which is conduct based on the principles of democracy. KMDD® contributes to tolerance education. By positively influencing tolerance, KMDD® is at the same time a tool that supports spiritual and religious development. Religious tolerance promotes mental stability and self-confidence, which contributes to positive mental health and personal self-actualization (Papaleontiou-Louca 2021). The basis for this is the ability to discuss with other people according to democratic principles and the ability to deal with emotions that can grow when conflicts arise (Erman 2009). In such situations, the declarative level of moral development, e.g., to what

extent one can claim what should be done and what is right, is not what counts the most; practical abilities are much more important. The fact that someone is very efficiently considering the problem of freedom or democracy is not tantamount to the fact that, in life, this person is guided by the principles that characterize moral reasoning. Moral and democratic competencies are more than conflict resolution techniques or a high level of interpersonal competencies. Such skills are also very useful, but they do not replace what Lind describes as inter-subjective agreement on the commonly accepted ethical basics and empathic understanding of each other for genuine cooperation (Lind 2016). The development of such understood competencies is a problem for the education system in general, regardless of social, cultural, and religious conditions (Lind 2011a).

Overcoming the need to defend one's own position in the discussion in favor of recognizing the rank of counterarguments of someone who represents the opposing position is a great challenge for global and local moral and spiritual education.

2. KMDD® as a Psycho-Didactic Method

KMDD® is a method that supports ethical and moral-democratic education in a way that can be described as a psycho-didactic method (Steć and Kulik 2021). The use of KMDD® in educational practice may favor individual mental development. Its characteristic and, at the same time, a distinctive feature is the underlying idea of constructive and discursive learning (DeVries and Zan 1994). The constructiveness of the KMDD® method includes the teacher's obligation to prepare an educational story that will be presented to the group of participants, present it, and conduct a KMDD® session in which, paradoxically, the teacher's participation is hardly visible (Herring 1997). During the session, the teacher acts as a moderator who ensures compliance with two rules: the ping-pong rule (voting for willing participants from the opposition group) and the prohibition of using ad persona arguments (Lind 2016). Both principles are intended to introduce a peaceful exchange of views based on mutual respect between the participants.

Constructivism is also visible in the chronological nature of each KMDD® session (Sjøberg 2010). The dialogical nature of the KMDD® method supports the participants' striving to look at the core of the problem and to independently discover fundamental moral principles in the frame of democratic interactions with others (Serin 2018).

Competences can be successfully shaped in a special didactic space, which was developed by Piaget, Kohlberg, and Lind (Piaget 1981; Kohlberg 1964; Lind 2016). To create such a space in a real teaching process, a qualified educator that is specialized in modern and interactive teaching and upbringing methods involving cognitive and emotional abilities, as well as communication skills, is required. The point is to support practical and psychological moral abilities and not only moral normative knowledge about moral or spiritual principles. In this respect, traditional teacher-centered learning methods and academic discourse would not bring the expected results as well as KMDD® would (Serin 2018). The KMDD® method is one of the few tools that a teacher can use in the practice of supporting the development of students' moral and spiritual competence.

KMDD® seems to be one of the best developed *psycho-didactic* educational methods supporting democratic and moral development that also contributes to spiritual development. A psycho-didactic approach to education is based on the idea of the combination and integration of psychological methods, as well as the didactic principles and methodological, pedagogical, and specific thematic knowledge from a certain area (e.g., moral education). The psycho-didactic approach may be simply described as the process of using the psychological methods in the didactics of a particular subject in order to support the personal growth of a student (Gelfman et al. 1997; Steć and Kulik 2021). The psycho-didactic approach is an innovative and interdisciplinary vision of how education can be successfully joined with one's psychological development. In this regard, KMDD® seems to meet the requirements for psycho-didactic methods in moral and spiritual education (Steć and Kulik 2021).

KMDD® is based not only on a well-established theory but also on many years of practice that confirmed its effectiveness in numerous research programs and the process of a KMDD® teachers' certification that was formalized by its founder. It allows one to maintain a good quality of intervention every time a KMDD® session is introduced to the audience. Lind developed the course of the model session of KMDD®, which is a series of procedures, training, and certification in the field of KMDD®.

Every single KMDD® session should last 90 min, repeated no more than once, with an interval of 2–6 weeks (Biggs and Colesante 2015). The session should contain all the required phases arranged according to the alternating work rhythm: emotional excitement, rational calm, individual and group work, and oral and written work. This translates into the effectiveness of the method and its psycho-didactic potential.

The first part of each KMDD® session includes an oral presentation by the teacher of a short story about a fictional protagonist who has a dilemma to deal with. In this part, the role of the teacher is to increase the attention of the audience. In the second part, the participants read the printed version of the story and take notes. The next step is to clarify whether the story has a problem or is simply a dilemma in the eyes of the audience. If the group does not see any problem in the story presented, there is no point in further discussion. If so, they are divided into groups that are "for" and "against" the right choice made by the protagonist of the presented story. This is accompanied by another division into teams of four developing the strongest arguments within the general division of "for" and "against." The main part of the KMDD® is a half-hour discussion based on the two principles mentioned earlier: the ping-pong principle and the principle of excluding ad person am arguments. During the discussion, the volunteer makes notes of the arguments presented by opposing groups. All arguments are presented to the participants afterward. After thirty minutes, the participants again form smaller groups to discuss which arguments from the opposing group are best in their opinion. At this stage, the opposing groups vote for the best counter-argument from the opposing group, which supports the ability to see values in the argument with which they do not sympathize. Each participant can express a positive opinion to members of the opposite group. The next step is a second vote to verify the opinions of those who changed their mind. This is not something that is highly expected, as there is no specific purpose in the discussion since neither winners nor losers are declared; the activity is really about the discussion process itself (Steć 2019). The last part is a group assessment. Here, all participants are asked to present their own thoughts and observations one by one (Bardziński and Szopka 2011). Throughout the session, the moderator or the teacher watches over the length of each stage. It is worth mentioning that the topic of discussion during the KMDD® session is a semi-real dilemma, a hypothetical dilemma, similar to the proposal of Kohlberg. The fictionality of each story is based on the lack of connection with the actual personal situation of the participants in the discussion. However, this must be a probable dilemma insofar as it can occur in reality (Lind 2016).

One of the most popular stories concerns a judge who, in an unexpected and extreme situation, must decide whether to permit the torture of someone in order to save others. The KMDD® story can involve religious issues as well, but whether it is noticed this way depends on the individual's religiosity, for example, as in the story about a young girl who has to decide whether to undergo an artificial insemination procedure and give the fetus over for medical research in order to earn money to help her ill parents. This story will be perceived differently by religious and non-religious people, but thanks to KMDD®, they can discuss the dilemma with each other with respect and tolerance, which may contribute to spiritual growth, as well as moral growth.

Preparing a good dilemma is a difficult and demanding task for the teacher. The way of presenting it to a group of listeners is also important from the perspective of a teacher. Lind believes that the key ability here is to be able to build dramatic tension via the skillful use of pauses during speaking and to arouse in the listener the ability to identify with the protagonist of the story that is faced with a difficult choice between mutually exclusive moral reasons. They must make a choice, which will involve some hesitation. This choice is finally made and the participants of the discussion must establish whether the choice was right or wrong by voting (Carr 2011). Giving a name to the character makes it unique for every listener. Each participant develops an individual cognitive representation of the protagonist of the discussed dilemma. The story must be intellectually and emotionally stimulating, while the emotions caused by the dilemma cannot interfere with the process of rational argumentation. Balancing the proportions of both aspects also depends on the teacher's involvement. The teacher/moderator must remember to shape the session in such a way that emotions are a supportive factor, not an obstacle to the success of the whole discussion (Steć 2019; Rahman Khan 2020). The dilemma should be short enough to be easily told. Due to the specificity of the process of building dramatic tension when presenting a dilemma, it should not be read. However, its adequacy also depends on the degree of its comprehensibility for recipients, and thus its content should be adjusted to the cognitive-affective abilities of the participants.

Benefits that come directly from participating in KMDD® sessions are numerous. This approach to moral competence stimulation proposes the innovative discursive process of supporting moral and democratic competencies. Its psycho-didactic potential is strongly emphasized in its structure and principles, as well as the importance of developing an effective method of evaluating the obtained results. Moreover, KMDD® enables respectful discussions on controversial topics, such as religious values, worldviews, and personal spirituality.

3. Moral Competence Test

From its beginning, KMDD® was enriched by Lind with the use of a technique to measure its effectiveness (Lind 2008). Lind believed that it was not possible to measure individual morality due to the complex nature of personal morality and the imperfection of the psychological measurement methods. The only thing that may be done in this area is to measure the effectiveness of educational interventions on the basis of a pre-test and post-test results comparison of an *experimental questionnaire* (Lind 1982). Lind introduced this term to describe psychological tools that are based on the

idea of using certain skills to achieve certain results. This is in line with the assumption that only an observable change can be measured. In the process of checking to what extent a certain variable influences the process of this change, such tools are indispensable. The same is true regarding establishing the effectiveness of KMDD®, which may be considered as a variable that may change the level of moral competence, understood as the ability to judge arguments depending on their real quality and not the fact whether they support one's own opinion. The technique used for this purpose is the *Moral Competence Test* (MCT®, formerly known as the *Moral Judgment Test* (MJT), or in the original version, *Moralisches Urteil Test* (MUT)) (Lind and Wakenhut 2010). The MCT® tool enables the simultaneous measurement of moral orientation and moral competence. The idea is based on a cognitive-structural and experimental approach to psychological measurement, which means that it refers to an individual pattern of behavior rather than a general tendency that can be easily generalized ([1] 2008).

The MCT® contains two short dilemma stories ("Employee dilemma" and "Dilemma of the doctor"), in which each protagonist faces the need to make a difficult moral choice. Both dilemmas were chosen due to the reference to highly demanding moral principles from the fifth and sixth Kohlberg stages of moral reasoning development (Kohlberg 1964). Each story contains information about the final decision made by the protagonist of the story, just as it is in the KMDD® discussion. The task of the participant is to judge how the decision made by the protagonist was right or not right. The participant who is filling out the test must successively confront six different arguments for the decision's rightness and six different arguments for the decision's wrongness and judge to what extent they would take each argument into account. Arguments represent the six moral stages distinguished by Kohlberg (Kohlberg 1976). At the same time, the MCT® test is subordinate to the idea of three levels of difficulty for the participant: first, they must refer to the arguments "for" and "against," and not only to say "for" or "against." Second, the participant must differentiate the arguments according to their moral status. The low moral competence will manifest itself at the level of the easiness of the acceptance of arguments supporting the personally chosen position, regardless of the real value and quality of the given arguments. Third, the participant must differentiate the opposing arguments according to their own evaluation of the protagonist's behavior, which may be a serious difficulty due to possible cognitive imbalances.

The MCT® test is not a tool for assessing individual competencies. It is only a technique for evaluating the effectiveness of the method of stimulating competence. However, it is possible to use the MCT® individually to get to know the pattern of responses that are used by each person. The more diverse the pattern of answers is, the more can it be assumed that in the process of assessing the given dilemma, one was looking for the most adequate way of judging each argument rather than only positively judging those arguments that confirm their position. The identically understood moral competence is fostered with KMDD®. This makes the MCT® the best evaluative tool for KMDD® assessment. The MCT® also enables comparison between KMDD® and other methods and techniques used in moral education practice (Zhang 2013; Lind 2016).

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