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Kolb's cycle in teachers' group work in the context of transactional analysis

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Abstract

In this paper we look at processes occurring among teachers during annual development programmes, juxtaposing observations of behaviour in the context of Kolb's cycle with selected elements of transactional analysis.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a preliminary analysis of phenomena, as described by Transactional Analysis (AT) (Jagięła, 2015, Motyl, 2019), that may occur in the first two phases of Kolb's cycle. The premise of the work is that the teacher's development priority is the ability to self-observe and build awareness of one's own decisions, behaviors, and motivations (Juszczak, 2013, Szymańska, 2016). The development programs from which the observations described in the article were taken, were attended by 120 people, belonging to 6 workshop groups. Each group consisted of 12 to 20 teachers of various subjects in grades 4–8 and elementary school principals from all over Poland. The groups implemented, preceded by an extensive needs analysis, the development programs *Sense and Method* and *Join the Dots* over the years 2017–2021. Each program had a developmental goal, was not planned and implemented as a research program. Observation records and internal recordings were analyzed for the purpose of this study. However, the organic nature of the classes (natural conditions, natural need and motivation of the teams, awareness of the lack of evaluation) allowed us to look at the observed phenomena and design future research based on them.

Keywords: transactional analysis in school, games in adult learning, Kolb's cycle, adult learning.

– Are we never going to change? We keep doing these games and we keep making the same mistakes. Is it changing?

– I have it different. I have some lessons learned from last time and now I have acted differently.

(from a conversation with participants of one of the Connect the Dots workshops)

Introduction

A school is a specific environment that has several characteristics that distinguish it from other environments:

- it is an environment that has a specific goal – the development of students, implemented by or with the participation of adults, teachers,
- the core of the school community consists of students, teachers, and parents,
- students, as the defining entities of the school phenomenon, participate in formal and informal developmental processes.

This paper is based on the experience of working with teachers and does not deal directly with work with students and parents, although the effects of the processes described include all three groups. The authors have not found similar suggestions in the literature for reference. Although the literature proposes an extensive number of items, concerning the implementation of the project method (Btemirova et al., 2020; Kilpatrick, 1918; Knoll and Dewey, 2012; Kolodziejski and Przybysz-Zaremba, 2017; Kobernyk, 2022; Mitchell et al., 2020, Murdiati et al., 2021; Parisoto et al., 2021), no less the authors of the article propose an original authorial approach (Józefowicz and Buchner, 2022) and in this text do not directly refer to the project method itself.

Within the framework of the *Sense and Method* and *Joines the Dots* (www.polacz kropki.com.pl) Programs, implemented since 2017 in selected Montessori schools throughout Poland, the participants – elementary school teachers – took part in comprehensive workshops, implementing and developing competencies of working with the project method. One of the important methodological assumptions of both Programs was the work in Kolb's cycle, which – in the first stage of the process – was implemented on the basis of workshop games. For the purpose of this article, and in order to distinguish them from games in the AT approach, it will be referred to as an activity. In further stages, the programs were no longer based on workshop experiences, but on real work of participants in their own groups and in cooperation with children and parents. In this paper we describe 2 stages of Kolb's cycle – the experience stage and the reflection stage, which took place in the workshop room, with the direct participation of the authors, which makes it possible to describe the observations.

Theoretical assumptions

Games in transactional analysis

Transactional analysis is increasingly making its presence felt in education. Hough (1971) stated that “the role of the school in the process of shaping one’s script and position in life cannot be overestimated” (p. 38). The role of the teacher is also gaining importance and has begun to receive more attention, as confirmed by Frazier (1971): “Before the learning process can take place, teachers can become aware of the major elements of a student’s life. Teachers can develop skills to help the student untangle intersecting transactions, understand secret messages, and make new constructive decisions” (p. 17–18). He also noted that “TA, in teaching, recreation, and discipline, becomes effective when it is connected to these other variables in the present moment, in the here and now” (p. 20). For Stewart and Joines, a teacher’s work is primarily concerned with the social level, not the psychological level, so it relates to an overt rather than a covert agenda (Stewart and Joines, 2016, p. 279).

There is a kind of interference in communication between people due to differences, between the uncovered and hidden agenda, unconscious rather than conscious. Stewart and Joines (2016, p. 318) outline the general characteristics of these actions, referred to here as games.

Play is a process in which we do something because of ulterior motives that:

- are beyond the Adult’s awareness;
- do not become clear until the participants in the game change their behavior;
- cause everyone to feel confused, misunderstood, and tend to blame the other person. (Stewart, Joines, 2016, p. 331)

Games in the training room usually (though not always) occur at the first level specified by the authors, and only this level is addressed in this paper.

According to Berne (1966), each game follows the G Formula, i.e., a sequence of 6 points:

trick > weak point > reaction > switch > consternation > payoff

trick – initiation of the game – revealed agenda unconsciously different from non-verbal concealed one

weak point – the weak point of the person to whom the foray is applied, and which makes it possible to “*fall for*” the bait, here e.g. from the level of the I-Parent: “*You have to help if someone asks for help*”.

reaction – response, which is usually the sum of transactions

switch – a switch, usually associated with a feeling of surprise

consternation – the consternation that results from this surprise

payoff – the payoff, i.e. the alternate feelings with which the parties end up

Each game can also be analyzed using the dramatic triangle proposed by Steven Karpman (Stewart and Joines, 2016, p. 323), suggesting that in games individuals take on one of 3 scripted roles: the **Persecutor**, the **Victim**, and the **Rescuer**. Both the **Persecutor** and the **Rescuer** place themselves above others; they are OK, others are NOT OK, with the Persecutor demeaning and viewing others as inferior to themselves, and the **Rescuer** as insufficient and in need of his (being OK) rescue. The victim, on the other hand, puts herself in the NOT OK position, looking for either the **Persecutor** to humiliate her, confirming her perception of herself as worthless and deserving of persecution, or the **Rescuer** to show her again how badly she can't handle herself.

Each role is compensatory in nature and is a reaction to what the person has experienced in the past rather than what is happening here and now. Typically, a person starting a game from one position of the triangle switches to another at the switch stage – the Formula G switch.

Games can be disarmed at different stages. Stewart and Joines distinguish several ways of dealing with games (p. 345): catching the game at the fortuitous stage, confronting nonrecognitions in games, not accepting negative payoffs, moving to intimacy at the moment of switching, and replacing recognition signs coming from games. However, as the authors point out if a person is playing his or her favorite game, he or she can interpret any response, even one that is an element outside the game, in a way that allows the game to continue so that the expected payoff is received at the end.

Kolb's cycle

David A. Kolb's (1984) most popular model of adult learning is a multidimensional developmental model based on experiential learning. Its foundation is based on the work of many researchers, viz: John Dewey (1925, 1938), Kurt Lewin (1939, 1951), Jean Piaget (1970), Lev Vygotsky (1978), Carl Jung (1933), Carl Rogers (1959, 1964, 1968), and Mary Parker Follett (1924). The theory of experience as a source of learning and development (Kolb, 1975, 1976, 1984), is built on six foundations that are shared by these scholars.

1. Learning is understood as a **process**, not as an outcome. It does not end with an outcome, nor is it always confirmed by results. Rather, it takes place in the course of interrelated experiences during which knowledge is modified and reshaped. To improve learning, the primary focus should be on engaging learners in the process that best supports their learning. This process includes feedback on the effectiveness of their efforts in acquiring knowledge and skills.
2. **All learning is re-learning.** Learning facilitates a process that brings out learners' beliefs and ideas about a topic so that they can be explored, tested,

and integrated with new, more sophisticated ideas. This is known as constructivism (Piaget). Individuals construct their knowledge of the world from experience and learn from experiences that lead them to realize how new information conflicts with their prior experiences and beliefs.

3. **Learning requires resolving conflicts** between opposing ways of adapting to the world. Conflict, differences, and disagreement are what drive the learning process. These tensions are resolved between opposing ways of reflecting and acting and feeling and thinking.
4. Learning is a **holistic process of adapting to the world**. Learning is not just the result of cognition, but involves the integrated functioning of the whole person - thinking, feeling, perceiving, and behaving. It includes other specialized models of adaptation from the scientific method to problem solving, decision making, and creativity.
5. Learning results from **synergistic transactions between the person and the environment**. It occurs by balancing the processes of assimilating new experiences to existing concepts and adapting existing concepts to new experiences. Learning is influenced by the characteristics of the learner and the learning space (Lewin, 1951).
6. Learning is a **process of knowledge creation**. Knowledge is seen as a transaction between two forms of knowledge: social knowledge, which is co-constructed in a socio-historical context, and personal knowledge, the subjective experience of the learner. This conceptualization of knowledge stands in opposition to the traditional model of education in which pre-existing, fixed ideas are transmitted to the learner. Meanwhile, social knowledge is created and reproduced in the learner's personal knowledge.

Learning is defined as "the process by which knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge is created through a combination of grasping and transforming experience" (Kolb 1984). Understanding experience refers to the process of acquiring information, and transforming experience is how individuals interpret and act upon that information.

According to Kolb's model, effective learning occurs in four stages associated with four abilities and activities:

- concrete experience (feeling);
- reflective observation (observing) theorising;
- forming abstract hypotheses (thinking);
- active experimentation (action).

Learning occurs as a result of resolving the creative tension between these four modes of learning. This process is often referred to as **Kolb's cycle**. Ideally, Kolb's cycle is a process or learning spiral in which the learner touches all the bases by experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting, in an iterative process. This process is sensitive to the learning situation and what is being learned. The

process is sensitive to the learning situation and what is being learned. Immediate or concrete experiences are the basis for observation and reflection. Reflections are assimilated and transformed into abstract concepts from which new implications for action can be drawn. These implications can be actively tested and serve as clues in the creation of new experiences. Outside of the model, in real life the cycle can stall – individuals stop acquiring new skills. For the assimilation of new knowledge, skills or attitudes to occur, the learner must have the capacity to engage fully, openly and without prejudice in each phase of the new experience.

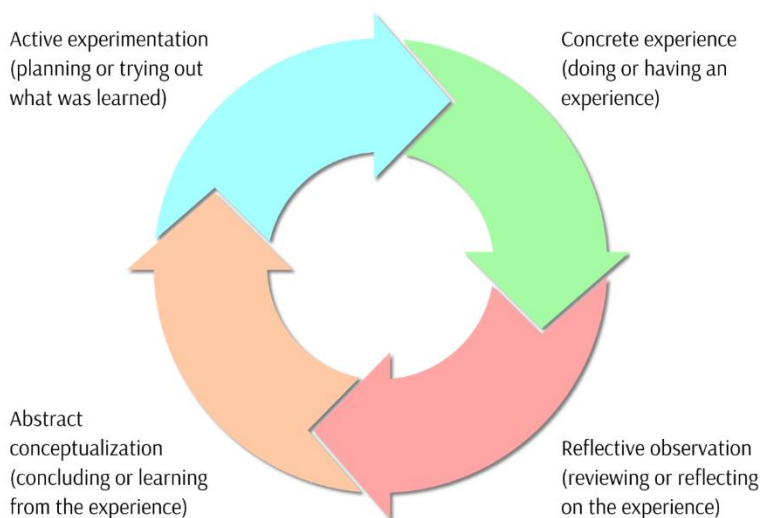


Fig. 1

Kolb's cycle

Source: own sources based on Kolb (1984).

Description of observation

Participants

This paper is based on the observation of 6 independent workshop groups of 120 people (approximately 14–24 people per group). The participants were real teams – elementary school staff, consisting of teachers of different subjects in grades 4–8 and elementary school principals from all over Poland. The only criterion for selection to the groups was the fact of being a teacher of grades 4–8 or a headmaster. Individuals were required to participate in the Programs. Classes were held on the premises of schools. The described observations were

collected during the first stage of the Programmes, during which the participants went through the Kolb cycle in a workshop room, on the basis of the activities proposed by the leader.

Selected activities

The activities referred to in the text were one element of the workshop work, a starting point for experimentation – both of the groups and their members – in a safe environment, where each experience (positive and negative) was discussed with the facilitators.

The Kolb cycle used in the Programs was applied in both Programs at 2 levels:

- the entire Program (on an annual basis);
- specific experiences, based on diverse activities, the selection and arrangement of which depended on the group's advancement in the programme, its level of development, previous experiences and group needs. Each activity introduced provided a starting point for the next Kolb cycle. Often the last phase of the cycle of one activity, **Active experimentation**, provided the first phase of the cycle, **Concrete experience** of the next activity.

The activities listed in the text:

Islands – an exercise in which participants have unequal access to resources (sight, speech, freedom of movement) and their task is to get from point A to point B based on restrictive instructions and within a specified time.

Symbols – an exercise in which participants have fractions of information on cards, and their task is to find the correct order of these cards using verbal communication and in a short time arrange them on the board.

Stones – an exercise in which each participant has some resources, and the task is to make the resources in a limited time in accordance with the instructions.

Rope – an exercise where participants have a long rope and instructions that significantly limit the use of this rope in achieving the goal of moving the rope.

Aims of workshop work with participants

The purpose of this phase is to prepare participants for the next phase, where they will be able to apply the skills developed during the workshop, working with students. The experiments, which are closed in the workshop room, give the participants the chance to experiment in a safe environment and within a certain time period. A key element of the workshop activities is the presence of the instructor, whose task is:

- in the experience phase: planning the process and laying out the tasks in a way that supports the process, preparing materials and aids, proposing tasks, overseeing their progress in a way that depends on the purpose and rules of the task;

- in the reflection and conceptualization phase (if possible and advisable in a specific task and in a specific group): support in analyzing the course of the task, e.g. moderating the discussion, highlighting the less audible voices, highlighting the elements/significances which are not seen by the group, explaining the situation on a theoretical level, referring to contexts, supporting the conceptualization process.
- In all phases: crisis support (if possible).

Types of participant presence

In the context of participants, the nature of their presence during the meeting is important, that is, whether they participate in:

- a **guest position** – the person declares/shows nonverbally or does not reveal that he/she is present only because he/she was instructed to do so,
- a **complaining position** – the person is aware of why he/she attends the meeting, but believes that the solutions depend on someone else, some others (management, parents, colleagues, students, or husband/wife) and at the meeting he/she will certainly not find them,
- a **cooperative position** – the person is aware of why he/she is at the meeting, believes that to some extent it depends on him/herself whether and what he/she gets out of it.

The type of attendance is influenced by the culture of the school, how it manages and gives responsibility to staff. In institutions where teachers feel their responsibility, the **positions of guest and complaining** happens, but rather in the initial phase of the activity or sporadically later. Then a **position of cooperation** prevails. And not necessarily understood as turquoise management, but rather about clear rules and giving responsibility for tasks in their entirety, including consequences, and for a moment and seemingly. In situations where the **guest position** was leading in 100% of the observed cases there was an implicit or explicit conflict at the level of management – teacher/s, and the workshop was one of the many battlefields. In contrast, where a **complaining position** could be observed the explanation was often a sense of lack of appreciation and a lack of situations in which the person could see their impact.

Looking at the types of presence in terms of games, it can be seen that in the **guest position** there is often a transfer from the role of the Victim (*I have to be here even though I don't want to, Nobody asked my opinion, I have no idea why they make me sit here*) to the role of the **Persecutor** (*I don't understand why I need this, We are wasting time, We are having fun and nothing comes of it*).

As long as the person in the **complaining position** makes no attempt to look at himself or herself as someone who could influence the situation, take responsibility or even have a voice, he or she enters the role of **Victim**, ceding influence to others more or less by default.

The person operating in a **collaborative position** does not enter into the roles of the **drama triangle**. He cooperates by openly communicating his needs. This does not necessarily involve active participation, but even if it does not occur the person names the situation. A training contract is helpful here, which – in the case of the mentioned Programs – is always present and assumes voluntary participation in all activities.

Kolb cycle – participant behaviour in the experience phase

During the experience phase, the person engages to varying degrees or does not engage in the proposed activities. Often (during the whole activity or parts of it) he/she enters the **flow state**, where:

- the artificiality of the situation is not important to him/her (activities are arranged situations, they do not solve problems in participants' real lives),
- full commitment appears, even though the stakes are low (e.g. will I collect the stones, will I arrange the cards correctly, will I complete the task),
- the person cuts himself off from external factors, i.e. time (it does not matter how long the activity lasts), space (it does not matter that people are e.g. in a classroom), social context (it does not matter that people are observed by other people participating in the activity or not).

The level of **engagement** depends on beliefs, current relationships and relationship history (with other participants/participants or the facilitator), experiences with these kinds of propositions, but also depending on current attitudes or moods.

In the context of relationships (both here and now and historically) a person can make decisions, regarding the quality of the activity, depending on the quality of the relationship in 5 main configurations:

- teacher vs. teacher,
- teacher vs. manager,
- teacher vs. trainer,

but also individual vs. group configurations (and vice versa):

- teacher vs. group of teachers,
- group of teachers vs. trainer,
- group of teachers vs. manager.

In addition to those listed, there may also be specific configurations, e.g., teachers of one grade or grades 1–3 or all mathematicians or teachers from Building A or newly hired teachers.

In each of the above, there are relationship-specific **dependencies** that may directly or indirectly influence the quality of engagement, flow, and choice of presence tools (e.g., games). In the context of individual relationships, the sense of safety and history of the relationship with the individual play a particularly important role.

Teacher vs. teacher

If it is another teacher – the experiences we have gone through that invite full engagement or not – matter. For example, the *Island* activity requires trust and complete reliance on another person. Experiences show that the discomfort a person feels in a relationship with someone with whom they have not had a good experience will encourage them to seek escape routes:

- openly, in a message clearly stating the need, e.g., *I can see that we are supposed to do this task together, but because of past shared experiences it may be more beneficial for both of us to separate* (the **Adult Self** state) or *I don't want to work with him* (the **Free Negative Child Self** state);

or

- in a camouflaged way, using excuses or games, such as: *Come on. I always help you, now I will also tell you what and how* (**Rescuer**), *How good that you are with me. You are going to save me* (**Victim**), *And how am I going to prove this task with such a team* (**Persecutor**).

Teacher vs. manager

If it is a person in charge, e.g. the headmaster, it is also important to have a sense of security resulting from the guarantee of job retention, the culture of the school and the knowledge (not acquired during the workshop, but which the person comes to the workshop with) of how failure is treated in the school, whether there is space for it or whether it is necessary to keep up with expectations and strive for perfection. If there is no openness to failure the person will more than likely drift into a **guest position**, settling into the role of **Victim** and sometimes moving into the role of **Persecutor**. Anxiety is not conducive to learning and growth. As an example, there are many times when the manager participates in activities but not in all of them (occasionally leave the workshop room). There are individuals whose level of engagement then does not change – the presence and absence of the boss does not affect them (**Adult**). There are participants who only then “breathe”, become active, and also those who then let go, stop working. In both of the latter cases, we are dealing with the state of the Self – the **Adapted Negative Child**, where there is a permanent dependence of the person, manifested in an unfavorable way for the person.

Teacher vs. trainer

If it is a relationship with a trainer – apart from the feeling of security and the history of the relationship with the person, also the quality and punctuality of the communication regarding the meeting is important. To what extent was the person invited early enough (in his/her perception), how was the invitation – was he/she able to make a decision about participation, did he/she find out

for what purpose he/she would spend his/her time. And the second issue – verification of the quality of the shared experience - whether the trainer, in the opinion of the person, brings valuable content. If this is not the case, if the trainer has not fulfilled expectations and, for example, does not constitute an authority for the participants – and this experience is especially important for people in the teaching profession, i.e. being a trainer in various configurations – the participant may become a **Persecutor**. In this case, it depends on the participant's invention how it is to be realized, from asking questions in detail, to questioning the content or sense of the work, to behaviors that make the meeting difficult (loud conversations, jokes), etc.

Team roles

Team roles, i.e. person versus group and group versus trainer, are also an important issue. During the experience phase, the patterns of the group become apparent fairly quickly, viz:

1. Who steps into leadership roles and how, whether there is a person(s) who immediately assumes the role of leader (often from a position of **Rescuer**, especially in caring professions or in education), or whether the emergence of a leader is a process, whether there are individuals who take this role according to need and competence, and whether the group is open to such action and situational leadership. This is an important indicator of how people are functioning in the group, and it gives a clear indication of whether there is room for decisiveness and agency, or whether this is a resource reserved for the chosen few.

EXAMPLE: After instructions were given, a young person who had recently become the leader of the group immediately took command and led the group until – at the end – she had no idea how to proceed and considered closing the task and declaring it unfinished. At that point, one person spoke up, hitherto silent – a newly hired employee – who calmly, systemically, led the group to complete the activity. While in the case of the employee we could observe the state of the **Adult Self** – analyzing resources, making an attempt, in the case of the boss we could talk more about the **Adapted Child** – awareness that others expect her to take on the leadership role, but in the absence of a sense of security in the leadership role she did not decide to consult, lest it be perceived as a sign of weakness.

2. Who by definition withdraws, **enters the position of Victim**, waiting for others to take care of the task (*I have no idea how to do it, I don't know what it's about, I don't know how to do such things*).
3. Someone who, **without thinking, starts an activity**, not necessarily knowing the goal, guidelines, sense (*Let's have fun! Come on, it will be fun*), realizing

from the position of a **Free Child** their own goal, e.g. having fun, often one that only they know about.

EXAMPLE: The group took part in the *Rope* activity, which is based on the fact that there is no time limit and physical activity is possible, even imposing itself as a solution. The team was trying to complete the task for about 40 minutes, some of the participants were already tired, when suddenly a new spirit entered the group.

The initial target was unknowingly converted to an alternate target. Messages could be heard: *It's fun, I won't have to go to the gym anymore*. The participants could not handle the goal, but since, as from the position of the **Adapted Child**, they needed to perform, they replaced the goal with one at which, while performing the identical activity, they felt no discomfort or their discomfort was less.

4. **Who yells, reprimands, or sets up** a group or individuals in a group.

EXAMPLE: During the Symbols activity, when the group was nearing the end of the activity, one of the participants, unable to cut through the noise resulting from the involvement of several people, shouted loudly: *Silence!* The group fell silent for a moment, after which individuals began to return to their activities. After a while, however, the action was stopped again, this time by another person who said with tears in her eyes: *I don't want that. You shouted at us. We work differently here. I ask you to be fair to each other*. It can be debated what states the two people represented. As observers of the situation, we accept the interpretation that the person yelling reacted from the position of the **Normative Parent**, while the other person at first – the crying reaction – reacted from the position of the **Child**, later – given what they said – from the position of the **Adult**.

Maintaining the status quo

Another interesting element is how the status quo of the group is maintained in front of the facilitator (an outsider with some authority). This is important because it can significantly affect the work of the group. We can observe: self-mobilization of the group members, motivating each other, “seducing” the instructor, diverting his attention, etc. Generally, a wide range of behaviors from the **Child** Self state appear here. It is interesting to note that the **Child** Self is particularly evident in this phase – the experiential phase, when the participants have space for exploration.

Alternative agendas

In addition to the relational aspects, individual agendas can also be observed, which are already visible at the level of achieving the task goal.

EXAMPLE: The group found the *Symbols* activity very challenging, so they changed the task during the game, completed it according to the new rules, and then celebrated their success.

The initiator's state of **Free Child Self** (*This is not cool, let's do something else*) did not spread to all group members. Some people rationalized their decision (*We have influence on what we do, we can change the task*), referring to the contract (**Normative Parent**), some remained in the position of an **Adult**, verifying what are the boundary conditions of this situation and what they can finally afford.

EXAMPLE: During the workshop, the group was planning to solve a conflict of the team with one of its members.

Such situations do happen, but it is useful to understand their consequences for the process, when participants are very involved, but not in what they do in the open agenda. Each activity then brings them closer to or further away from their own goal, so the planned goal is not realized. It is important that the facilitator is informed of the situation and has the opportunity to address it and contract on something with the group. If this is the case it helps to stick to the **Adult Self** state - to clearly establish the boundary conditions of the situation, e.g. time, tools, roles and responsibilities. Working with people who are heavily involved in a common topic and can't close it despite being together is not effective. On the other hand, if the facilitator has no information and can't agree on anything, the participants will be doing a role hopping, jumping from role to role after the drama triangle, and the facilitator has little chance to find out what is actually happening. The quickest way to recognize such a situation is by the number of personal comments and/or aggression in the statements, e.g. *You always have something to say, As always you have to comment (Persecutor), Well, it came down to me again (Rescuer), I don't know, let someone else go, Do it yourself (Victim)*.

In the experience phase – if the participants are involved – there are also messages, addressed directly to other participants, indirectly to the instructor, and related to the **hidden agenda** of the activity, e.g.: *a hidden bottom, a simple solution that has to be found, a trick, a ploy, being led astray, being tricked*. Participants look for answers in the structure of the task, read instructions or ask for repetition of instructions. Such cheating usually starts when the group already knows that the task may be difficult.

EXAMPLE: A participant stopped the process, asked for a copy of the instructions and reviewed the task point by point with the group, verifying that everyone understood what the activity was about. The **Adult Self** condition revealed here was not the most common choice. In another situation, a participant, unheard by the group, purposely dropped the already-arranged pieces from the

elevation to get the group's attention and to communicate that the chosen method was ineffective and the group needed to change the activity.

The state of the **Negative Free Self** presented here happens quite often, especially at the final stages of the activity, when the participants know that they have little time left. However, there are also situations that show how important it is to look at activities holistically, because the fact that they are separate entities does not cancel out the fact that if they are carried out by the same people, they are going through a broader process than the one that comes from the individual activity.

EXAMPLE: During an activity, participant Y kicked and trampled a structure, made by participant X, after being hurt by X during an activity that had taken place about 2 hours earlier.

What was evident here was not only the entry into the **Free Negative Child Self** state, but also the transition from the **Victim** role to the **Persecutor** role. Interestingly, the group seemed to overlook the situation (again the denial of the **Adapted Child**) in order to protect the good atmosphere in the team.

Testing boundaries

At the experience stage, there are also situations of verification whether the rules written in the contract will actually be respected. Often the first signal is a message about the person's possible inability or unwillingness to perform the task. The tutor reacts according to his own preferences, most often depending on the previous contract or the goal of the activity.

EXAMPLE: A group that, from the very first minutes of a meeting, showed a lot of defensive behavior, i.e. expecting or even demanding strict observance of time, presenting the purpose of the meeting several times, the consequences of possible absence. After establishing an extremely detailed contract, during the first activity, two persons appeared and announced on the forum that they did not want to take part in the exercise, referring to the contract in which the voluntariness of participation in activities was written. The presenter thanked them for the information and the activity – to the verbalised surprise of the group (*They really don't have to?*) – was carried out without the participation of two people. In the next one everyone participated. In the Free Child condition, individuals tested the boundaries and then joined in the activity.

To sum up, the experience phase includes exploration, the possibility of making mistakes, flow, experimenting with previous roles and choices (also in terms of Self-states). If the action takes place with a sense of security, it can constitute a space for conscious development work, not only on the declarative level, but in real situations, in interactions that do not leave room for theoretical considerations, but require choices. This is the time of verification to what ex-

tent our reflections from previous activities are already internalized, to what extent we understand our scripts and are able to consciously choose decisions that are most beneficial for us here and now.

The phase of reflection

The next phase occurs when, just after participating in the activity, a person has time to reflect on what really happened and how decisions were made. Again, **the level of development of the group, the identification of people with the purpose of the meeting, their own goals, relationships, but also team roles** are important here. The more experienced the group is in working together, the more they have gone through the ordinary ordinary days of work, but also mistakes and celebrations, the more individuals are able to detach themselves from group functioning and focus on individual development.

It is still important to take care of the **status quo**, especially in communities where it is stable and cooperation - at least at the level of declarations - is based on values.

EXAMPLE: During the *Stones* activity, participant X takes away all resources from participant Y without any consultation. When, during the discussion stage after the activity, participant Y called the situation from the **Adult** Self position: *"I felt robbed"*, X accepted the information and explained that he understood and that for him it was a task that he completed using the most effective method in his opinion. It can be debated here whether the behavior presented was realized from the state of the **Free Child**, the **Persecutor**, who then stepped into the role of **Victim**, or whether it was a rational choice, later a rational communication by the **Adult**. However, the key reaction occurred in the group in which:

- Several members defended X: *You know that he would give his last shirt, Everyone knows X and knows that he will always help everyone* (the **Adapted Child** Self, here with the message of denial: *It didn't happen*);
- There were some statements calling person Y to order: *How can you do that, those are too big words, they are just stones* (the **Normative Parent** Self);
- There were some statements calling the tutor to order: *This was supposed to be a short activity before dinner, but here we see such things* (the **Parent Normative** Self);
- One statement appeared, describing, but also evaluating the situation: *I think we should be ethical in every situation* (the **Normative Parent** Self).

Knowing the team allows us to redefine the situation – the person who took away the resources had a strong position in the group, was one of its leaders and its **gray eminence**. The person who had resources taken away was an **outsider** who often had his own opinion and communicated it in a non-imposing but consistent way. Group members made sure that the situation did not affect

the status quo, at least on an overt level. The situation continued with the roles of **Victim** and **Persecutor** occurring interchangeably (participants X and Y are the same people from the example above, where Y kicked the work done by team X).

It is in this phase that the participants' goals and limitations become most apparent. While phase one (experiencing) consists of facts, phase two (reflecting) is fishery:

- **fishing, or identifying facts,**
- **naming them,**
- **looking for causes and consequences.**

Challenges arise already in the first step, when the person may or may not care about the facts in question for various reasons.

EXAMPLE: In the *Lina* activity, one of the participants communicated from the beginning, from the moment she heard the instructions, that she was unable to complete the task. The group did not pay attention to the clear message, which was repeated several times. During the discussion, neither the person reporting the problem nor other group members raised the issue. Similarly, in the *Island* activity, when the person with covered eyes tried to suggest something, but no one responded to the messages. During the discussion, no one raised the issue until the person in question misspoke and said *I was invisible* instead of *I couldn't see*.

In both of these situations (in different groups) at the behavioral level, no one made a decision about the importance of the group identifying the fact that the person was deaf. Based on further events, however, when both situations were discussed, it was clear that the deaf person here entered the role of **Victim** (*Again, nobody listens to me, my voice does not matter*), while the rest of the group was okay with not naming this situation. Putting the person in the role of the **Victim** automatically triggered the position of the **Persecutor** in some of them, and consequently the feeling of guilt. They have adopted the state of the **Adapted Child**, who knows what the rules of cooperation are and that if the cooperation is not a complete success, it may be better to keep quiet about uncomfortable details.

The Conceptualization Phase

The phase of drawing conclusions and learning also often turns out to be a challenge. It requires looking at oneself from a perspective, verifying to what extent the experience during which one made such and not other choices was an individual situation, to what extent it is repeatable and constitutes a script which we use more often, and most of all – whether this script is actual and beneficial for a person, or it is just an echo of the past.

Experimentation phase

In Kolb's cycle, this phase is simultaneously the phase of experiencing and the next activity, which, by bringing in new content, gives space to verify previous observations and implement conclusions.

For effective work, a person should use all ego states, the teacher should notice them, name them and appreciate their resources. A teacher who can be aware of a student's nonverbal cues has the ability to deal with them in the classroom. So the teacher should be an attentive observer and an attentive listener, have a sensitive understanding of others before he can best help the student by directing all his energy, all his awareness to the task of learning (p. 216). It is difficult to imagine how this can be achieved if the psychological level is not taken into account by the educator. Many contemporary educators argue that for learning to be effective, the psychological level must be included in the educational contract. (Emmerton, Newton, 2004, p. 283).

Clarke (1996) presented five leadership concepts based on transactional analysis that she found useful for teachers: **frame of reference, imago of the group, three functions of leadership, egograms, and the five P's - acquiescence, patronage, potency, practice and perception** (pp. 214–219).

Temple (1999) proposed the term "*functional fluency*" to describe an educator's ability to respond flexibly to a range of positive behaviors so that he or she can engage effectively with students, understand their difficulties, and impart material with enthusiasm and energy. She writes: "The teacher's basic need is to develop a sensitive and formed maturity that enables him or her to disengage symbiotic invitations and instead give strokes that help students or pupils go beyond the script" (p. 171).

Conclusions

At each stage of the learning process and in each phase of Kolb's cycle, we encounter drama triangle positions, games, and states of Self that may or may not serve the person. For an instructor – whether a teacher educator or a teacher himself working with a group – disarming games can become one of the essential tools of the work. On an ethical level, in order to be able to use it, it is important to signal at the stage of the initial arrangements, but also of the contract, on what level and with what he will work. States of the self, even negative ones, but also the games themselves, as Stewart and Joines (2016) point out, are a resource for the person who uses them. He or she reaches for them for specific reasons and for specific, though mostly unconscious, purposes. Dealing with them without general consent that we will do so or with the resistance

of the person or group (which, if it happens, is caused precisely by a lack of information) constitutes violent behavior and is itself a game, except that the initiating player in this case is the instructor.

If the tutor or teacher is given permission to catch and show the mechanisms that emerge in the participants, he/she can become their ally on the way to a better understanding of themselves and higher communication effectiveness. Moreover, in a group that feels safe, trusts the facilitator or teacher, and understands the meaning of such work, identifying mechanisms through a strictly cognitive presentation and highlighting the moments in which they appear can be a breakthrough in group development.

EXAMPLE: A group that, despite 2 years in the same composition, was still at the first stage of development. The culture of the organization and the number of people avoiding confrontation (both with each other and with others) effectively prevented the group from moving from the recognition stage to the storm stage. The triggering activity proved to be the transition to intimacy at the time of the switch in several key individuals. Others had the opportunity to experience for the first time in this group collaboration based on openness, saw the value in it and in subsequent meetings tried – more or less subtly – to continue this way of working, which turned out to be a cleansing situation for the group.

This work is particularly important in the first stage of Kolb's cycle, during the experience, which is often carried out through concrete activities. This stage is distinguished from the others by its intensity and can often appear not to be work but play. This is valuable because it is the easiest place for a person to lose attention. Her behavior and choices here are closest to real life. But also – and this is very important – this is not the moment to stop the frame from the instructor and name the phenomena, only the observatory. The only people who can stop the process and draw attention to something are the participants. At subsequent stages, where there is more space for reflection, time and an invitation to think, this work proceeds differently. Above all, it is possible to react immediately, to name and discuss interesting elements of both the past experience and the current discussion. There is room for possible intervention by the facilitator. In a way, these are safer stages.

In sum, every person who works with others in developmental processes, and therefore – may I say – every teacher has the opportunity to actually support individuals and build their maturity. He or she will not be able to take advantage of this opportunity if he or she does not work on his or her own maturity, defined as self-awareness. Transactional Analysis can be a useful tool in this process, but as with any tool, it should be handled carefully and with respect for the other person.

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Czy my się nigdy nie zmienimy, czyli cykl Kolba w pracy grupowej w kontekście analizy transakcyjnej

Streszczenie

W niniejszej pracy przyglądamy się procesom zachodzącym wśród nauczycieli podczas rocznych programów rozwojowych, zestawiając obserwacje zachowań w cyklu Kolba z wybranymi elementami analizy transakcyjnej.

Celem pracy jest wstępna analiza zjawisk, opisanych w AT, jakie mogą pojawić się na kolejnych etapach cyklu. W artykule uwzględniono pracę 120 osób, należących do 6 grup warsztatowych. Każda z grup liczyła od 12 do 20 nauczycieli klas 4–8 szkół podstawowych z terenu całej Polski. Grupy realizowały programy *Sens i metoda* i *Połącz Kropki* na przestrzeni lat 2017–2021.

Dla potrzeb pracy przeanalizowano zapiski z obserwacji oraz nagrania wewnętrzne. Wnioski stanowią punkt wyjścia do dalszej obserwacji oraz przygotowania systematycznego badania kolejnych uczestników programów.

Słowa kluczowe: analiza transakcyjna w szkole, gry w uczeniu dorosłych, cykl Kolba, uczenie dorosłych.