

7.6 The experience-centered teaching approach (ECTA)

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The experience-centered teaching approach (ECTA) is a possibility to address, develop, and/or improve students' and teachers' True Self, thereby encouraging them to maximize their potential and develop emotional intelligence (EQ). In addition, the ECTA provides a conscious examination of normativity and its unavoidable omnipresence within psychological and sociological systems. To be successful, however, the ECTA requires three necessary conditions:

- (1) The teacher's internal (individual) authority, i.e., his or her developed True Self, EQ, and the acceptance of termless being;
- (2) The teacher's conscious attempt to facilitate the student behavior that helps to transcend disciplinary, institutional, and cultural boundaries; and
- (3) This transcending as a matter of reflection and an explicit part of the teaching.

In our experience, team teaching (two teachers) is not required, but highly recommended. Research is underway to determine the impact of team teaching versus individual teaching.

From our point of view, the drawback of the (Harvard) case method is that people (students, participants in training and development courses etc.) tend to dissociate their own emotional connection from a presented case. One of the reasons may be that a case, while emotionally touching, always involves unknown people there and then (Schuster 2015, 229). This dissociation makes it impossible to reflect on genuine emotions occurring in the here and now of the situation. This dissociation is also enforced by the teacher's institutional authority (authority by virtue of office) which – as it should – forces the students to conform. In addition, the teacher's institutional and professional authority also implies the difficulty of changing into the role of “facilitator,” mainly because the group of students tends to force the teacher into the more familiar role – for both parties – of the authority (Heintel et al. 2015, 85). Even approaches such as the McAleer Interactive Case Analysis (“MICA”; Siciliano, McAleer 1997), which have been described as better in terms of student preparation and activity compared to the Harvard case method (Desiraju, Gopinath 2001, 405ff.), cannot completely solve the issues of student-teacher interaction. During this interaction, emotions build up on both sides. If there is no explicit effort to reflect on the here and now, these emotions are not recognized and/or are deferred – because of the existing blind spots of social norms (Krainz 2011, 26f.). Focusing on the cases without reflecting on the here and now means staying in a rather dissociated – rational – mode (i.e., by performing role plays or abstract discussions related to the case). The same applies to the interpersonal dynamics of the protagonists in the case, which are analyzed and discussed only on an abstract meta-level. To be explorative in the sense of this paper, the participants must explicitly discuss the dynamics within the group of students or between the students and the teacher.

These points demonstrate that the (Harvard) case method is appropriate for analyzing complex social and/or organizational situations, as well as individual and cultural

aspects in a dissociated, rational way. It also helps students to learn about distressing aspects of organization of social systems and emotions as related to existing norms. In this context, the role of the teacher is that of a professional authority acting on behalf of the teaching institution. One way to counterbalance this normativity would be to install a T-Group (Krainz 2008, 27) within the curriculum of a UAS system. However, because of the above-mentioned scheduling, this is currently not possible. Nevertheless, by combining the (Harvard) case method with aspects derived from rather exclusively explorative group dynamics approaches, namely T-Groups, O-Labs, and the Leicester Conference, we have found a way to increase the complexity of teaching within the UAS system despite its rigid scheduling regime.

We see an advantage in transcending the normativity of the HCM through explorative reflection, and vice versa, thereby maximizing the learning outcome for the whole system, i.e., teachers, students, and program managers alike. Miller, addressing learning in the context of Group Relation Conferences, pointed out the importance of a person's ability to differentiate between "... how far he is responding to what the other person is actually saying and doing, and how far he intrudes into the relationship primitive images of a benign or punitive authority that belongs to his own internal world" (1993, 22f.).

While a person's internal world in the context of this section is primarily related to internal (individual) authority and to the GD approach, subject-specific knowledge and the teaching institution itself are primarily related to professional and institutional authority and the (Harvard) case method, as shown in Figure 36.

Transcending the subject-specific (professional) knowledge and even scrutinizing the sense of the teaching institution by facilitating group reflection allows teachers to emphasize internal (individual) authority (Figure 46).

In contrast, by focusing on the (Harvard) case method, teachers can enhance their professional authority and facilitate dissociative analyses.

Figure 47 shows the two poles of teachers, or rather individual authority and the underlying institutional authority (authority by virtue of office), together referred to as the "authority complex."

For physiological reasons, some subconscious or unconscious (authority) complex (Norretranders 1999, 222) is always implicitly present in any (teaching) institution.

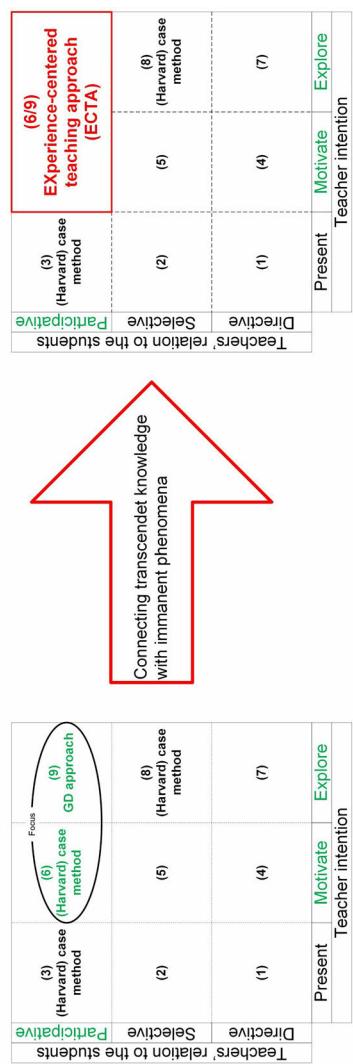
This concept incorporates three insights:

- That every official role implies institutional authority (authority by virtue of office) for those who personify¹² the role;
- That subject-specific knowledge gives the specialist professional authority; and
- That be it a False or a True Self, every person's internal world includes an authority.

That is why we use the authority complex to describe the experience-centered teaching approach in this section and apply it to the teaching process regarding the explorative group reflection itself.

12 How those people can recognize and apply their role successfully is another question (Hirschhorn 1985, 335-51).

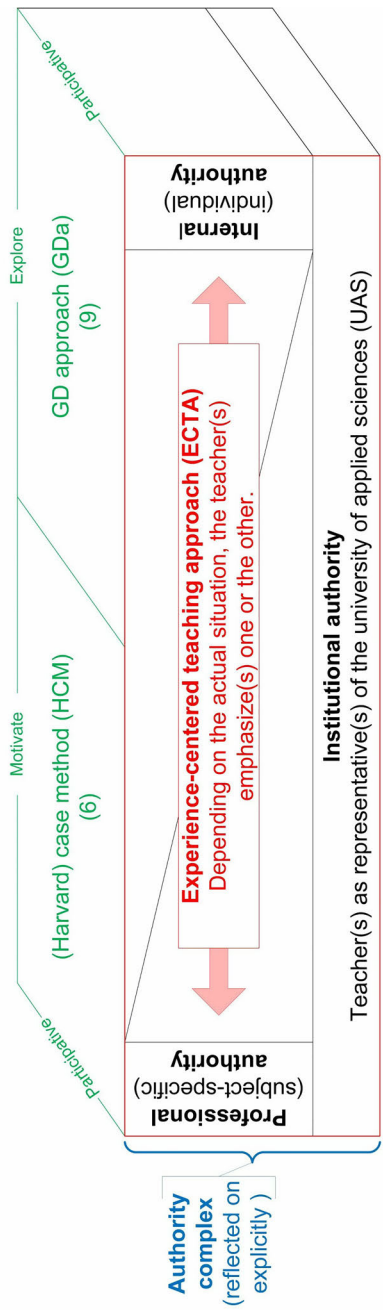
Fig. 46: The combined teaching approach



Based on: Heindl, A. (2007, 12-9), Theatrical Intervention, [Theatrical Intervention, translated by R. J. S.] Vienna: Dissertation University of Vienna.

The ECTA is developed to fit the rigid scheduling frameworks typical for universities of applied sciences (UAS). This framework is important both for the andragogical setting as well as its usefulness as one issue for group reflection regarding organizational coercion. Such reflection is designed to allow discussions of issues that students and teachers are directly concerned with. Within group reflection, the teacher allows a certain amount of bargaining room for decisions between the teacher and the students and/or among students themselves. In our experience, these negotiations tend to be emotional, because some of the students' differing interests are suddenly open to negotiation. Usually, the accommodation of these interests would be decided by the teacher's professional authority, his or her institutional authority, or the scheduling of UAS systems.

Fig. 47: ECTA and the corresponding authority complex



Source: Self-created

A necessary institutional condition to use the ECTA is an agreement between the teacher(s) and the study program director regarding the scope of operation that the teacher(s) have. In our experience, it is very likely that students will try to appeal to the next level of institutional authority to resolve their conflicts, rather than negotiate with each other. However, it disrupts the explorative approach when the study program director interferes without coordination.

7.7 Discussion (Authors: Jürgen Radel & Roland J. Schuster)

By providing a synopsis of the HCM, followed by an interpretation from a group dynamics perspective, we have elaborated the advantages of combining the HCM with a GDa to teaching. The importance of combining relatively dissociated, rational analysis with reflection on the here and now within a group is a promising way to increase the complexity of teaching. Using a concept from the field of therapeutic depth psychology, we have illustrated how it can be helpful to include the subconscious and unconscious in considerations of teaching or communication processes among students, teacher(s), and the teaching institution as a whole. Finally, we introduce the experience-centered teaching approach (ECTA), and show how it can be applied to teaching, particularly within the UAS system and other similar teaching institutions or settings. ECTA offers teachers and students the possibility to modify the learning experience, gradually moving towards GDa or back to HCM when a guiding institutional or professional authority seems necessary.

Regarding students and teachers, the ECTA includes

- Analyzing complex cases rationally as well as emotionally (HCM), thereby providing students with experiences concerning the importance and relevance of empathy; and
- Reflecting on the here and now of the teaching situation (GDa), including the roles of students and teachers and their impact on the case discussion process. This is inextricably linked to the indispensability of emotions and the development of emotional intelligence (EQ).

Regarding teachers, their role within the teaching institution, and their superiors, the combination suggests

- An agreement regarding teachers' scope of operation and – if necessary – its approval and support by the superior.
- Teachers' awareness of the authority complex and his or her authority by virtue of office.

Based on our experience to date, we believe that the advantage of the teaching approach lies in its increased complexity compared to other models. Future research is planned to gather more data and gradually refine the ECTA.