

The Three Cycles of Learning



We are at the beginning of three exciting and inspiring days. And believe me, I am also excited. My biggest concern is my language skills in English. And yet I find it wonderful to experience this process with you, to benefit from your knowledge that everyone brings with them and to share my knowledge with you. I love these co-creative processes.

Why knowledge is a garden

Every one of us who sits here brings along his knowledge, sensibly processed experiences he or she has had, knowledge of contexts and interpretations, stored information, knowledge of what to do and a few unanswered questions.

We live, as it were, in the garden of our knowledge. (Picture)

This garden is beautifully fenced in by our respective frames of reference and when we come across new information or irritating information, the question is whether we take it into our garden, drop it onto fertile ground or leave it outside the garden fence.

Maybe I can come back to it later. For the time being, I leave it beyond my own frame of reference.

This is also true for our trainees.

What the trainee is not able to make use for himself is not integrated into his previous knowledge as information. Either it falls on fertile ground and a new knowledge arises or it ends up outside his/her frame of reference.

For example, if I teach something about substitute feelings (rackets), a trainee can probably give the definition of substitute feelings (rackets), but that definition may be outside his/her garden fence.

So how can we teach in a way that our trainees start to relate to it independently and to do inner integration work? Only then can they orientate their actions accordingly.

Let me put it differently: Think about what you have already read and heard in your life. What have you kept in mind? What has changed your patterns of perception and your explorations of reality? Which of the infinite amounts of information have you taken up in such a way that they have changed you? And how did that happen?

Buzz groups

All our instruction methods and training styles, all our teaching is aimed at this goal: The trainee's ability to relate to our TA knowledge and to orientate his/her inner logic of action accordingly.

Essentially, this is what "Learning and Teaching" is all about.

That is why I would like to reflect with you more differentiated on this central point.

Ulric Neisser's Perceptual Cycle

Our frame of reference with all its interpretation systems frames our perception. The psychologist Ulric Neisser has demonstrated how human perception rotates in a cycle.

(graphic)

It is composed of three elements: the actually available information, the patterns and schemata of our understanding (*individual cognitive map*), and the (*perceptual*) exploration of reality.

The patterns of our understanding (*our individual cognitive map*) direct our perceptual explorations of reality, in other words, what we focus our attention on. What we observe and try out leads to which available information we select. These in turn modify our schemata (our cognitive schemata) of understanding.

When the focus of our attention changes and we begin to explore, we select the appropriate information from the available, giving us then a chance to modify our understanding (*cognitive map*) and our patterns.

As teachers, we need to change the perceptual cycle of our trainees, irritate and stimulate it at one point, trigger search processes. Altering one point can have a domino effect on the whole cycle. However, the domino effect may also be interrupted because the necessary inner permissions are lacking and the change in perception is blocked by the script's schemata.

Irrespective of the methods and learning styles we use, what is decisive is the effect: is the perceptual cycle changing? Does the teaching reach "the garden"? Can we observe that something is growing?

Do the schemata change? In TA we would speak of script patterns. Does the attention shift, do the explorations change? Will new information be included that affects the patterns of interpretation? Does this in turn change the way he/she experiments and tries out?

Personality development and competence development are two sides of the same coin. The increase in competence is determined by the perceptual cycle.

Our EATA Handbook describes the competencies we expect from a Certified Transactional Analyst for each field of application. For us teachers, this means developing each individual trainee in his/her perceptual cycle so that he/she has the personal disposition to act competently.

This is our great challenge.

How do we enter the garden? Into the perceptual cycles of our trainees?

We don't. Everyone is self-determined. The garden fence is the boundary of the self.

Schiffs have seen the frame of reference as a skin lying around the ego states.

Only if he/she opens his/her garden door, is willing to pay attention to me, is ready to let me irritate him/her in his/her schemes, and is prepared to engage in something new, then I can influence the trainee becoming a gardener in his/her garden and changing it.

During the teaching-and learning process we not only ensure that something new is sown in the garden and can then grow there, our aim is also to raise awareness that each gardener is in his own garden. Sociology calls it the "individual actor". Transactional analysis (TA) calls it the "integrating adult".

It is me who maintains my perceptual cycle, who continues my script. I can have a relationship to myself, be my own gardener. I want to speak to the gardener. Is he/she at home?

The awareness that I am the gardener of my own experience of the self, this awareness can only be developed through me – you relationships. In the relationship space to the other (you) the becoming of the self (I) takes place. The self is growing through encountering the other.

In the end everything is about the question: What causes me to look at myself and my situation in a different way than usual, so that I get a chance to organize myself differently in the relationship to myself, to others and to the context?

Self-experience

Therefore the alpha and omega for me in my TA training seminars is self-experience. To create different spaces for self-experience.

Self-experience is a broad term.

This raises the question: What is self-experience in training seminars? And what kind of self-experience do we wish to encourage?

Buzz group in twos

Which kind of self-experience do I as a teacher wish to encourage and which not?

Exchange thoughts you have on this with your seat neighbour.

This can only be a kind of flashlight, however it is important to me that you take a quick look into your own garden and exchange little impulses with your neighbour.

Throughout these days you will have time to deepen your own thoughts and search processes and we will have the opportunity to share them and inspire each other.

At the moment I would like you to let me direct your thoughts towards another of my reflections.

The self-experience that we strive for in TA not only refers to letting something new grow in the garden, but also to our trainee becoming a gardener in his own garden and maturing as a gardener.

I think the self-experience that brings a person's ego into a becoming process happens in circular processes. (graphic)

I receive an impulse from outside that induces me to take a look at myself, there may be an aha-experience and something changes, I am mirrored from outside and I discover choices, I am mirrored from outside and I can see myself interacting with myself. To use the picture: what kind of gardener I am. And at the same time my garden is growing and I have to decide if I let everything grow like this or change something. **Group culture**

The garden fence opens only through the relationship that creates trust between me and the trainee. If there is no personal trust, he/she will not look over the fence and will not let me look inside. Then he/she cannot take up the teaching and use it in such a way that his perceptual cycle changes. However, this must happen so that he/she can develop competence.

But it is not only me as a teacher who stands at a trainee's garden fence and invites him or her to open the door. In addition, I make sure that the trainees from his group also come to his/her garden fence. They have a different approach. They are often my best co-teachers because their way of coming into contact with the garden fence triggers various stimulations and irritations in the garden and stimulates growth processes. (picture)

The trainee with his frame of reference is in the training seminar in an ecological landscape of transaction-analytical (TA) culture. And that culture is based on our transaction-analytical (TA) values.

This is how I influence the perceptual cycle of each trainee through personal relationships and via the group culture with the TA values that hold true in cooperation.

In my training seminars, I pay great attention to the personal relationship dynamics between myself and each individual trainee. I also ensure that the group is given plenty of space to profit from each other in giving and taking (i.e. exchanging fruit from the respective gardens) and to treat each other with appreciation.

In the EATA, we define our values in an appreciative way on the basis of our 5 ethical guiding principles:

- • Respect
- • Empowerment
- • Protection
- • Responsibility
- • Commitment in relationship

And I, as a teacher, provide a model and intervene in the group processes focusing on these 5 guiding principles in order to create a transaction-analytical group culture.

Finally, everything revolves around the question: What makes me look at myself and my situation differently than usual, so that I get a chance to organize myself differently in the relationship to myself, to others and to the context.

Maya Mäder writes in her doctoral thesis about self-experience in advanced education: When we think about self-experience, we first have to ask ourselves: what is our understanding of the human being? Well, that's what we do now at the end.

Berne has laid down the core of his conception of man in the concept of autonomy. Man strives to develop autonomy, to become the gardener of his own garden. Man grows through the interaction of three factors:

- consciousness
- spontaneity
- capacity for intimacy

The longing for autonomy development does not have to be planted or brought about by us as teachers. The longing is already there, lies in every human being. There is a power in man; Berne calls it physis, which strives for self-development. I love the expression of Hildegard von Bingen. She speaks of the green force in man. I see our task as teachers in bringing attentiveness to this green force and making awareness, spontaneity and intimacy available for growth.