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Transactional Analysis @ Work: An Experience

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Abstract

A healthy inter-personal relation is the need of the hour today. Our life is surrounded with people, process, technology and systems and within this context, how we manage ourselves and how we can manage others to fulfill our goals is a major challenge a person faces. Managing ourselves is easy as compared to managing others. In managing others we carry the element of risk and uncertainty. As we want to influence others about our opinions, others are also careful that their ego is not hurt while they are being influenced. The paper examines how interactions between two persons might lead to dysfunctional relations and what role a person has to play during the interaction process for a healthy and effective interpersonal relationship. This paper is based on real time interaction during the regular class. This is an experience of one of the authors and then the experience has been conceptualized collectively by all the authors. Hence the paper is presented in the same as it was experienced.

Key words: Interpersonal Relations, T.A, Ego States

I once took a Personality Development Session on Leadership for engineering students. During the learning process, I was emphasizing that if a leader were to be successful he should identify the Key Result Areas of the organization and explain the Desirable/Undesirable consequences of Action/In-action (thoughts included) respectively to the workers. I mean, Right Thoughts/Actions lead to Desirable Consequences and Wrong Thoughts/Actions lead to Undesirable Consequences. The consequences (right or wrong/desirable or undesirable) need not be immediate. For example, if a shop-floor worker is producing “nuts & bolts”, the operational leader should make the worker understand the consequences of producing the right/quality units. I

mean, how the shop-floor workers' work is significant to achieve departmental & organizational goals. The leader should not restrict the importance only to organizational goals but continue to emphasize on how the workers' job has significant relationship with the stakeholders of the total product. The worker may be dealing with a part of a product, but the 'part' may be very significant in the total product chemistry. I still went on in detail by explaining that if the worker is overseeing the quality of producing a unit, the after-effect may be as follows:

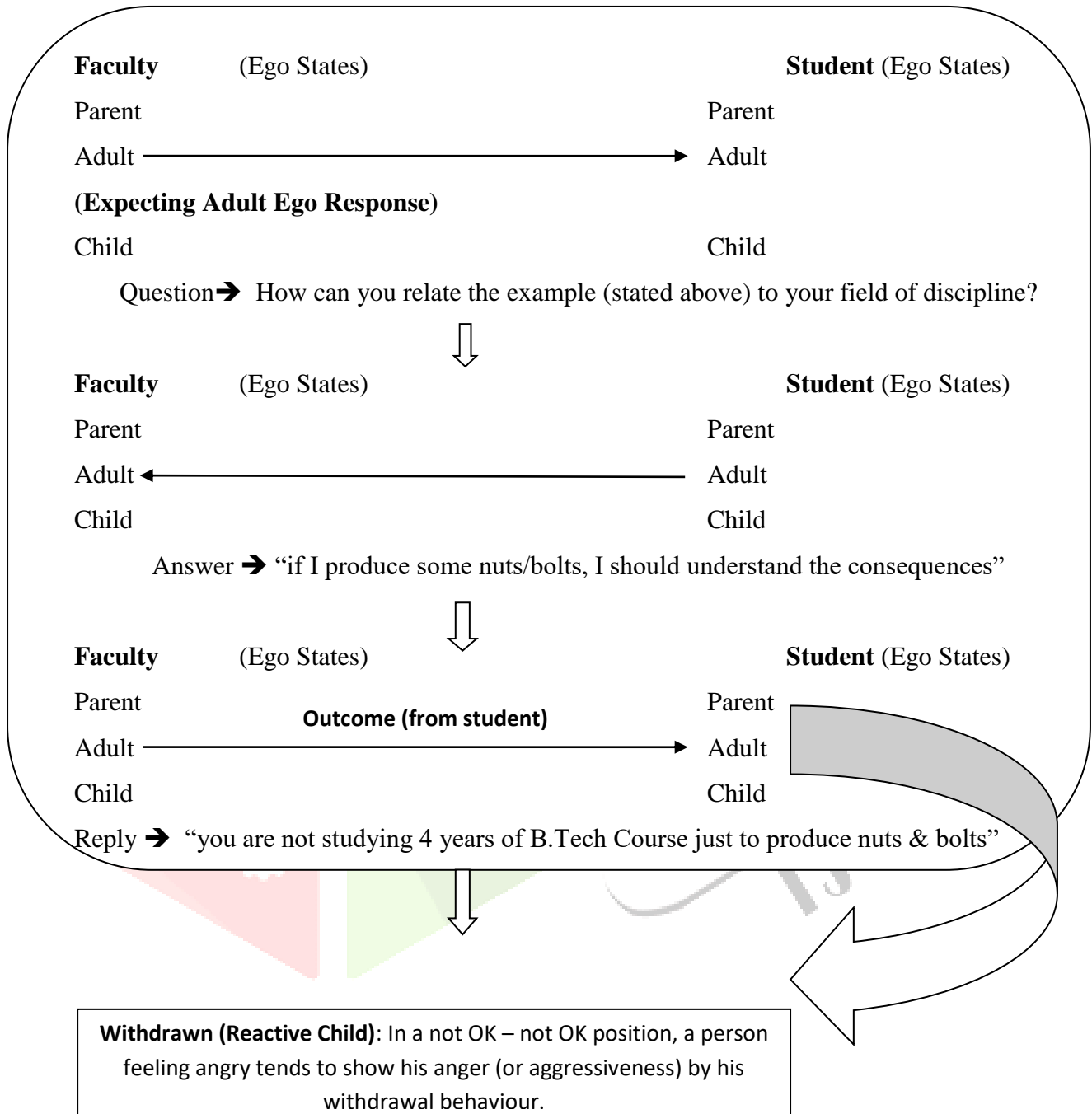
- “India buys low quality spare parts from Ukraine and East European countries. At times, it even buys spare parts that have outlived their utility, thus creating conditions for frequent MiG crashes,” Vladimir Barkovsky, deputy general designer of MiG Corporation, told IANS on the sidelines of the MAKS-2001 International Airshow held in the Moscow suburb of Zhukovsky.

Source: <http://news.indiamart.com/news-analysis/russia-blames-india-5258.html>

Let us not cross examine the validity of the above statements but analyze the essence. The spare parts may cost a little less, but ultimately you pay a much higher price when pilots lose their lives as a result of the crashes and suffering becomes a curse to the dependents. After narrating this example, I was questioning a student, *how he can relate this example to his field of discipline*. He then started by saying that, *“if I produce some nuts/bolts, I should understand the consequences”*. I immediately made a remark (on the lighter side) saying that, *“you are not studying 4 years of B.Tech Course just to produce nuts & bolts”*. This statement made all the students laugh at him and the student ego was hurt. From then on he was silent till the end of the class. I called him after the session and enquired from him about his in-activeness. I was puzzled to understand that my lighter-side of statement made him feel inferior and thus upset with his participation in the class. I sent the student with a bit of counselling and then I dig myself to understand the cause & effect of his feelings. During the process of self-introspection the following Self-Analysis was done.

Self Analysis by using Transactional Analysis

SITUATION

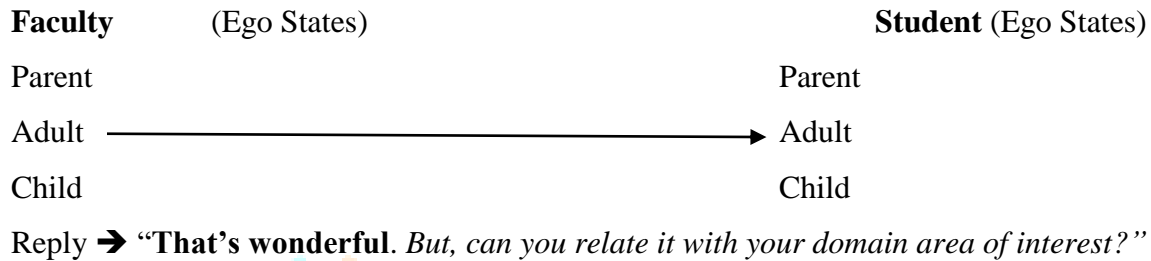


The above situation is only a mere reflection of what the student had experienced in the class. The faculty can assume the subsequent behaviour from that particular student:

- a. He may not get up to answer the faculty’s questions in future
- b. He may dislike the faculty
- c. His motivational levels fall down
- d. All the above may have an impact on other subjects or on other faculty members

The Solution: (From Faculty Point of View)

How can the above situation be avoided? When the faculty understands that the student has not answered to the expectations of his Adult Ego State, he can adapt to the Student by being in “**Resilient (Adaptive Child)**” position. This situation is characterized by functional adaptation. The person assesses the situation and adapts himself to suit it. This is the effective contingency behaviour.

Resilient (Adaptive Child)

This method of adaptation has the following benefits:

- a. The student feels happy to note that his point of view is correct
- b. The student next thinks to put his opinion on the right track
- c. The student will be motivated to answer the questions from other faculty
- d. Other students get motivated to answering questions

The Solution: (From Student Point of View)

The Students should not only read technical text books but should take time to read books relating to Emotional Intelligence and Interpersonal styles/skills. *Student should realize that real personality development happen when the student is able to cope his thoughts and actions during adversity, criticism, dislike, hatred and failure. **When a student plans to enter an organization he should not only be happy to experience better conditions of employment but he should also prepare to accept BITTER CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT.** I believe, there are scores of research opportunities left isolated in academic institutions to understand the Academic Structure, people, systems & technology and how these shape the personality of the students without isolating the needs of Organizations.*

Conclusion

1. The above situation and analysis is very simple and doesn't require this amount of drafting. However, if we go into the details, each faculty experiences 'n' of situations with his/her students. However, not much attention is given to understand that "**sometimes**" if a student ego state is hurt, the faculty (unintentionally) is producing or encouraging students with low self-esteem.
2. Most of us are involved in effective interpersonal communication with sensitive people. We learn about empathy but do not practice empathetically. We do not "**listen to understand**" but "**listen to reply**". We cannot control the ego states of others however *we have every opportunity to identify and adapt our ego states*. This can only happen if we have a personal examination on our interpersonal skills. This small exercise if practiced with deep sense of commitment will lead to better interpersonal communication skills and thus foster healthy interpersonal relations not only in the academic institutions but also in Organizations.

