

How Yoga can improve the quality and effectiveness of the relation between students and teachers. Impact on student's motivation

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Abstract: This paper is the result of a very personal and extra professional experience: based on a long personal and deep observation of the motivation process and the student's behaviour evolution, this paper shows how we can obtain soft and major modifications in the students motivation by using Yoga tools in classical pedagogy.

Key words: Pedagogical experience, student's motivation, human behaviour exploration, Yoga,

1. Introduction

1.1 ENSEIRB learning overview

1.1.1 Pedagogical reform necessity

Since a few years, a deep pedagogical reform is engaged in our engineering school. All the scientific, electronic, and other engineering fields of the ENSEIRB program will have to be step by step reformatted. Indeed, technical progress increasingly faster and the diversification of the applications, require a global redefinition of the courses.

1.1.2 Perverse effects of the reform

Because of many simultaneous changes in contents, duration of the courses and so on, this reform can give to the students from time to time an impression of "undulation" or difficulty in affirming a coherent and homogeneous pedagogical program. Moreover, the reduction, within the framework of the reform, of the obligatory attendance time at the school, does not have the expected effect: the student doesn't use the spare time for personal work as hoped, but for more leisures...(cf § 1.1.3)

In front of this phenomenon, the students (and also the teachers) are sometimes diverted, show incomprehension and are no more motivated. Before finding a new equilibrium point, we have to explain and explain again to everybody the stakes of this reform.

1.1.3 The student's behaviours

In parallel, we have noticed for a few years a global change of student's behaviour. Consequently, the teachers are in front of a new kind of public and do not know how to manage behaviours which are not familiar.

First, we can say from written tests performed at the arrival of student in our school, that 1/3 of our students are into the school by conviction and choice. The second 1/3 are in our school by chance but could have interest in any other thematic engineering school (mechanical, chemical, architecture and so on.). And the last 1/3 is here because they do not know what to choose or they did not have the choice (due to selection exam results)

Secondly, the time dedicated to home work has drastically decreased due to the evolution of the civil society the students of today are solicited by different leisure, games and other extra activities. As becoming a competent electronic engineer requires a heavy work and a high level of knowledge, we have to solve a quite difficult paradox.

Thirdly, we observe since 1995 some major evolutions in student's behaviour: We can quote the modifications of the cycles of attention of the students. Two main tendencies appear:

- Reduction of the long cycle of attention (inherent in human being and normally about 45 min with 1 hour): on a traditional course of 1 hour, we observe a progressive unhooking of the audience faster than before.

- Multiplication of the short cycles of attention. These one duration cycles from 6 to 7 minutes, are also inherent in the human being. They have appeared however more openly since a few years. They are concretised by successive unhooking and accosting during the course, phenomenon improperly qualified of "zapping" by some. These typical human behaviour are well known by neuro linguistic programming specialist [7].

At least, we also observe a global disaffection for theoretical lessons: This phenomenon is confirmed by national statistics. There is a global loss of motivation for the scientific curriculum. Economical, commercial studies seem to be now more attractive for this new generation of students.

1.1.3 Stakes of tomorrow

If we want to be attractive and competitive for all the students (and not only the first 1/3 motivated students), we have then to think about these phenomenons: all the problems of the stakes are summarised with one key sentence: how to motivate and interest the students (and the teachers)?

The quality and the effectiveness of our future Teaching depends on our ability to answer this question.

1.1.4 Supply and demand

According to the exposed elements, it appears that we have to think about this new student's behaviour reality and to adapt our pedagogy in order to improve our technical efficiency and to make our student motivated as well as possible.

As published in different previous WSEAS conferences, we have obviously tried different pedagogical approaches like "pedagogy by project" [1], "e-learning" and so on. And we obtained interesting results.

But, one of the complementary possible ways of investigation is to "play" with psychological aspects of the teaching process: The two past years, a first

approach has been done, using the Hermann diagram [2] as a psychological tool to globally optimize the interest and the motivation of the students. Some other comparable and powerful approaches often used in private company to improve the commercial or manufacturing efficiency, can also be suitable for pedagogy purposes : They all use a human behaviour modelling [7], [8] with some particularities. But, even if there is some differences, all these approaches obviously converge towards the same goal : to better know oneself in order to enhance your motivation potential and your communication ability.

Looking deeper at the individual evolution of student's behaviour during the full classroom courses, I became convinced that something was possible by first changing my own behaviour and my own approach of the teaching process. Even it is quite difficult to translate in written words a deep internal human experience, I try here to explain some major improvements I obtained by these human changes.

2. Yoga basis

I discovered Yoga discipline by my own with the friend of mine. The aim of this paper is not to make advertisement for this kind of activity or to make the apology of Asian culture and art. I am not a specialist. There are many books [3] and papers [4] about the different traditional yoga [6] or sophrology or NLP, coaching tools [5] helping you to improve your personal or professional development. I just would like to share a small part of my own experience: at the beginning, it was just a personal need for mental and physical relaxation. After some years of practice, I discovered time after time the power of Yoga: It is more than a sport, an art or relaxing technique: it can really become a way of life. It is difficult to give a summary of what it is because there no rational and scientific definition and you have to feel it by yourself: listening to your deep inside, listening to the world, be conscious of what happen into the present, do not prejudge, do not compare, to lose the beliefs, no judgment, to give up the ability to judge to enter in the world of felt. Just only to feel what happen inside and outside could be a short description of the Yoga approach.

From my personal experience of Yoga practice, I learned a lot of thing about me: in particular about

beliefs, scale of value, mental processes, concentration, and energy locks, and so on.

And I decided to look at my professional life with “news eyes” and humility.

3. Listening and reporting

3.1 Listening to the students

Since a few years, I introduced some open session in small working group in the second year of study. Through a “talk techniques” training, it is also for me the opportunity to have free discussions and to get a feed back about student’s needs, hopes and behaviour.

During these rich and interesting meetings, some typical recurrent and fundamental questions or assertions appear each year:

- About the French educational system: We are working for the note of examination since we are babies. How could you make possible to work for something else?
- We are judged on the exam results...
- I am not able to remain concentrated during one hour and more.
- The course given by such or such teacher is null or obsolete.
- This course is not useful
- I am there to give pleasure to my parents.
- I am not self confident...

3.2 Listening to my colleagues

My colleagues (and me also) are in front of a new student generation. By many discussions between us, I felt that we were not accustomed to the new student’s behaviour. We do not know how to act, what to do, to “catch” the student’s attention.

A classical easy answer (that I gave also sometimes) is to say: the students are “null”, “they are not motivated”, or “it is the fault of the system”.

Behind theses assertions, we can guess some nostalgia, fear or sadness about the behaviour evolution. And So what ?

3.3 Becoming conscious

Listening to the students and my colleagues and taking into account my own experience, I became conscious that I had also the same questions in

myself. At this moment, I became convinced that sharing my yoga experience with my students and colleagues could be helpful to improve the efficiency of the courses, the quality of relationship and thus the student’s motivation.

4. How to transpose Yoga in the field of electronic teaching.

4.1. Some key sentences

Among so many things we can learn from yoga, here are the key sentences I have used and transposed for my job as teacher:

“We can not change our environment: We can only change our perception of our environment”

And consequently: “You can not change your student. The only thing you can do is first changing yourself and the perception of the students.”

“Our body is like a multi sensor system: but all that we received through our sensors is not the Reality: it is a brain representation of the Reality; it is the Reality filtered by our sensors and our own values reference system”

“To be there into the present”: we can not decide to be mentally present but we can only note when we are not. To become aware that we are not in the present brings back to the present.

The brain is often busy with psychological “stories” in many daily situations. This brain activity causes energy losses and this energy is thus, not usable for the moment present. In an other way, we could say “Yoga can help to improve our physical and mental availability for the present”.

“Who are we?” : We often make a confusion or an identification between who we are deeply and our feelings. We are not our emotions and feelings. In the same matter, we are not our job. They are like dissociated objects, we can look at.

“All the situations present are perfect since it cannot be differently”. It does not means that you must stay passive or that you don’t have to change anything. But the unconscious effect of such assertion is the level of psychological fear decreases by itself.

“3 seconds for peace”: Short breathing exercises (pranayama) you can do when you want in your car or at your office for example is a good way to restore deep internal connection between your brain and your body and to recover mental concentration and serenity.

4.2 Yoga daily attitude

Even it is never easy to change our behaviour, I tried to experiment some of what I learned for myself.

Thus, here are some examples of what you can say to the students:

Working only for the exam is a source of bad stresses: Find and discover pleasure in your work and work for own pleasure. The exam result will be a natural consequence. Don't believe me, just test this mental attitude.

After an exam: you succeed in your exam, congratulations, it is very well because you have understood the course... But If you fail, it is also good: you have a big improvement potential.

When a student is not confident: You are not your exam result. Do not confuse your deep inside and your work or your emotion. If you fail at your exam, it does not mean that you are null but that your work was not good. The teacher does not judge you, but only your work.

When you observe some concentration defaults: take a pause between courses to have connection with yourself through a short breathing training. Moreover breathing exercises called “kapalabathi” or “bastrika” release energies and stresses often locked in abdominal region. Other yoga postures (asana) make it possible to slacken the tensions often located in the jaws and throat region. The energies thus released are available to improve your concentration potential.

When the students are noisy during classical courses, there is big mental dispersion, zapping and energy losses:

Just become conscious that you are not mentally there and thus you will be there and back connected to the present. Please don't believe me, just try it if you want.

When students (or colleagues) are very aggressive and critic with the usability of a course: Do not critic anymore the contents of the courses, there is always something interesting and positive for you in each courses even it represent 10% of the total course. Just try to discover it by an open attitude.

Mirrored question: Instead of giving directly a technical answer to a students question, send the question slightly modified back to the student: In 90% of the cases, he has himself the answer.

Here are some examples of what you can say to your colleagues:

To a disappointed colleague who easily will say that the students are now bad because of the global educational system, or because of different external reasons instead of thinking about his own behaviour: Try first to change your behaviour. An established relationship is like a wire connecting two people A and B. If there a tension between A and B, where is located the constraint? I do not know exactly: on one side, in the wire or everywhere between the two extremities? The only thing I know is that I can only remove the constraint from my side. So, start by your self.

To a desperate colleague in front of a high absenteeism rate: “ I have only a few students in my course : the students are null or I am null”. If I have one student for my lesson, it is perfect but If the classroom is full, it is also perfect. Do not worry about that... Because, if you worry, your behaviour will unconsciously change and you will give a bad lecture to the present students. You must know that during a “knowledge transmission process”, 20% pass through the words and 80% through the behaviour (gesture, eyes, voice texture, and so on.) And like a vicious circle, the next time there will be fewer students.

Many other examples could be given from the daily life or professional life. For many people, this “yoga attitude” is not spontaneous because of our initial unconscious conditioning and our education. For everyone interest in, it is thus a daily fight to make, time after time, this approach as natural as possible.

5. Results

The bigger satisfaction I obtained with this approach is a better connection and understanding with my students: maybe a kind of complicity and mutual respect. Obviously, it is quite impossible to scientifically measure the impact of the approach. What is sure is that good relation between the teacher and the students make the transmission of the knowledge easier and more effective. A good testimony of effectiveness is to see students staying in the room after the end of a course for extra questions or discussions. Using this approach, we can make the 2/3 less motivated students of a promotion happier to be in our school. Thus, the global human environment of work is improved for everybody and the motivation too.

I remember twenty years ago, a manager of the TRT French radio communication company told me, like a joke :”In a industrial company, there is no technical problems, there is only human problems.” With the passing, and the experience, I understand now perfectly this sentence which replaces the human being in the center of all the concerns. Better is your deep self-knowledge, better will be your comprehension of others and their motivation processes.

6. Conclusion

We showed in this paper that the traditional teaching methods do not match anymore with the actual students needs. As we can not change the students, we must adapt our pedagogical approach to them: Including human and psychological aspects seems to be a good way (among others) to improve the efficiency and the quality of our teaching. Through a personal experience, we showed that it was possible to improve motivation and effectiveness. Even the work is never ended, even there is always something to do, and the most important is to never forget that human being is the key of its own motivation.

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