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TEACHING AS ATTRIBUTION – HOW 3227 STUDENTS OF 56 SEMESTERS EVALUATED THE LECTURES OF THEIR PROFESSOR¹

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Abstract. *As a contribution to the current discussion of the position and the role of professors at universities in Europe a phenomenological-humanistic approach will be outlined. This approach has been applied to the feedback data by 3227 German students evaluating their lectures of one professor from 1969 to 1998. The survey data were collected by the technique named "Semantic Differential" developed by Osgood and elaborated by Hofstätter. Interestingly, a remarkable pattern constituted by students' attributions to their learning processes with the authors emerges from the late sixties to the late nineties. Some perspectives of this pattern will be discussed in context of contemporary leadership theories and the applied theory of experiential learning" originated by Kolb et al. Fabula docet: The professors if charismatic attributed or not should confess and profess themselves as teachers and human individuals in like manner.*

The discussion concerning the benchmarks and other measured of the quality of training at German universities and colleges has a remarkable tradition. Many decades ago the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer in his very ironically way described the shortcomings at his alma mater, and at our time The German Council of Sciences (Wissenschaftsrat) stated in its 10 theses according to the current situation at our universities: "It lacks of the institutional and the personal responsibility for teaching... The overt disfunctions and the public critics against the universities ask for relevant internal and external techniques of evaluation... Concerning his career the engagement and

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¹ This contribution is part of a more detailed presentation of the author's understanding application-oriented teaching to be published in the near future. The surveys on this study based will be finished wintersemester 1997/98

achievement in teaching students do hardly pay off for the individual scientist. They offer neither higher reputation nor financial gratification. The process and the perspective of this current societal discourse are still going strong".²

"CREATIVITY AS AN EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGE"
- TOWARDS THE FOUNDATIONS OF THIS EVALUATION

Twentyfour years ago the author of this contribution published an article titled "Creativity as an educational challenge" explicitly understood as a blueprint for his own work as teaching scientist.³ From this early perspective he has provisionally evaluated his professional role within his field. Understanding teaching and other modi of learning from the phenomenological - humanistic bias, they start from the intentions, experiences and meanings of the individuum.

As modern technologies and techniques tend to reduce man and his world to computerized units, this philosophy as an annotated qualitative approach tries to perceive the total variety of the cosmos of life - but permanently exposed to the traps of subjectivism.

Many aspects of the business in learning and training today resemble a voyage with uncertain arrival. At the beginning of each course and each learning unit, it is uncertain whether each aim of a lesson will ever be accomplished. Every time the attention, motivation, competence and many other requirements of social learning have to be stimulated and enforced as if it was the first time. This challenging uncertainty of day-by-day beginning in our learning business serves as a paradigm of the universal human being itself. In this context, Martin Buber advised every teacher to accept this "indiscriminate confusion" and confront it with his whole personality and life history. He calls such teachers a "great character".

In this sense learning and life should be understood as an unity - carried out within the limits of an open dialogue. Human education should unite the formal learning objectives with the experiential perception of every day. Learning organized as lectures and exercises does advance to a meaningful business of the individual learner but easier written than done.

Because of the loss of time and space, the globalization of our senses may lead to a contact with the farthest and estrangement of the nearest, personal encounter and dialogue will reach the value of an existential-cultural rank that goes beyond learning in well-known organizations of learning. Instead of exchanging individual experiences in dialogue with other, today many inhabitants of the quoted "Global Village" better trust the virtual feedback by internet, cyberspace or traditional mass media (cf. Virillo 1996).

To evaluate the experiential perceptions of our partners in learning business, we, 30 years ago, consciously selected an assessment technique elaborated in the tradition of introspection and retrospection but methodologically controversial. Starting from scales for

² cf. Der Spiegel, "Alles alte Hüte", Nr. 35/1997, 76-77

³ cf. Ottmar Kliem, Kreativität als pädagogische Aufgabe, in: Die neue Hochschule, Ausgabe Oktober, 1974, 9-15, sowie ders., Auf dem Wege zur Führungskraft? in: Neue Hochschule, 1988, Nr. 4, 13-17

evaluating teachers' performances by Ryans (1960) and the world-wide-known research on semantic differentials by Osgood (1957) and Hofstätter (1957, 1966), we arranged those 15 polarity profiles that enable the students to state their experiences in relevant lectures and exercises. We elected this assessment because it can be easily handled and also emphasize the affective relations between the individual student and his evaluative objects resp. the associative peculiarity of this interaction - following the advice of Fuchs and Schäfer (1972) to adapt the relevant semantic differential to the defined problem instead of using a standard semantic differential - or trust William James often quoted sentence: "Which theory is the best, best the one you like best".⁴

ABOUT THE LEARNING BUSINESS AND THE PARTNERS INVOLVED

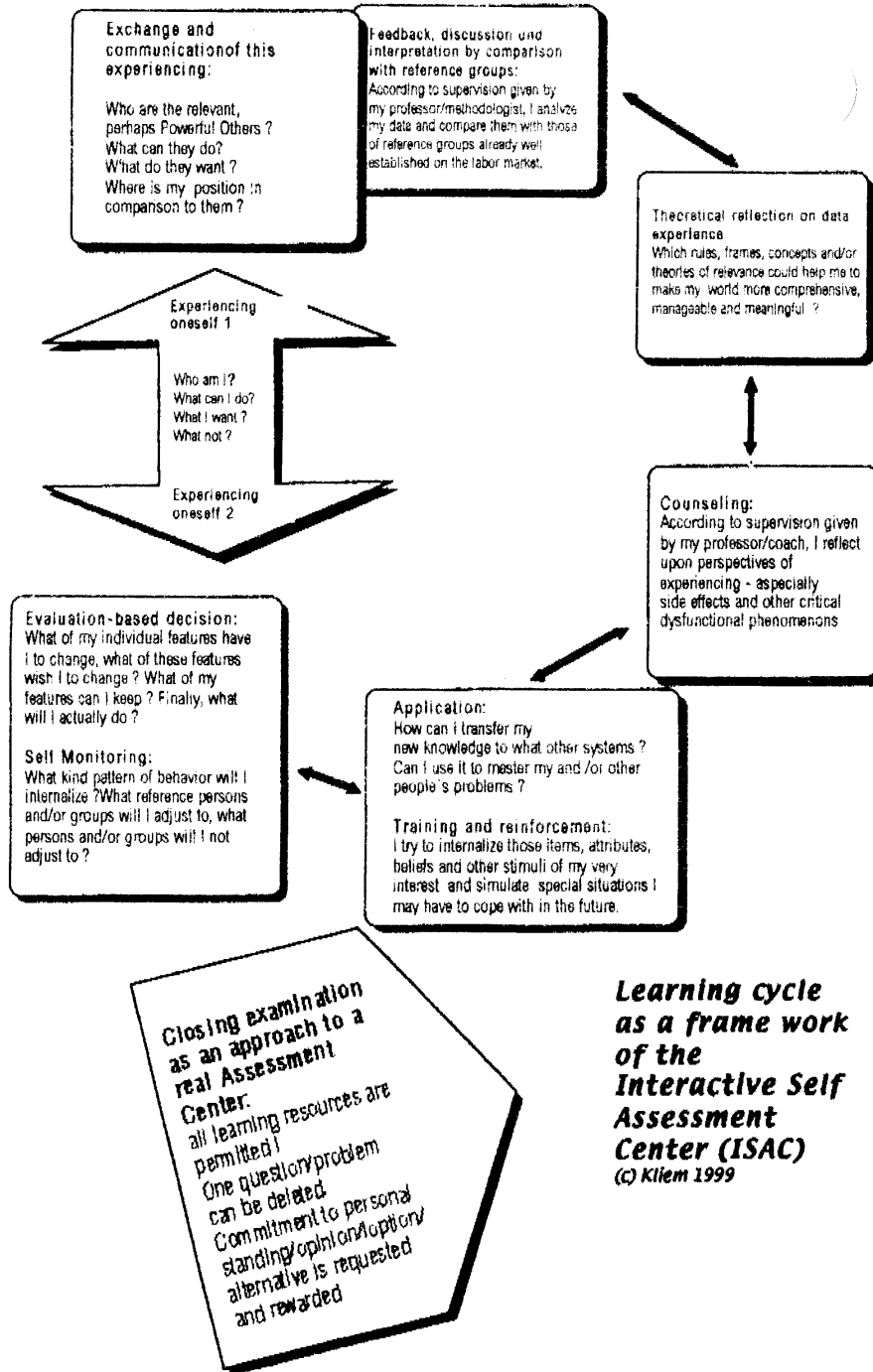
Since the wintersemester 1969/70 we have periodically requested our students to describe their perceptions by the scale's criteria "How I personally experienced our common lectures with Professor Kliem this semester?" Because of the fact that nearly all students had to participate in written and oral exams headed by the author, a strict anonymity has been announced and also met. Until summer semester 1998 3227 students enrolled in majors as philosophy of science, psychology, personnel management, history and leadership studies form our samples - the largest one consisted of 112, the smallest 12 young persons. In addition all participatns could note critical comments on past lectures. Because of the large amount, sometimes the samples were selected by chance.

Specific information on these samples offer those data we collected by special assessment techniques called Possibilites for Instrumented Learning (PIL). By defintion PILs are not personality tests or achievement tests revealing an individual screening profil but special techniques to enable "experiential learning": Semantic differentials simulations, checklists, critical incidents, projective stories, synectics exercises, modeling audio-demos and other activating learning media. Recently, we integrated these media into a frame work called Interactive Self Assessment Center (ISAC) whose circle of learning is borrowed from the popular applied theory of experiential learning by David Kolb and fellows. Considering current problems on the labour market and the intended unity of learning and life the vicinity of ISAC to Assessment Center (AC) in not only a matter of terms. With regard to the contents - this notice should be sufficient - the actual lectures presented by the author deal with life relevant skills like "empowerment" or simply "fitness for life".

Because of the fact that nearly all the sample groups did participate in final exams and more than 90 percent of students did evaluate their respective lectures, we can outline some remarkable patterns as basis for the discussion of the results of this survey.

⁴ We will not extend these discussion concerning possible correlates of leadership. Basically these research reports serve as hints and perspectives.

Chart 1



STABLE PATTERNS OF STUDENTS FOR MANY SEMESTERS

First of all our partners in learning business gather information intuitively and evaluate it affectively. In tradition of C.G. Jung and I.B. Myers we define this cognitive style as Intuition/Feeling. Just the same pattern of cognitive orientation over many semesters reveals the author's individual data of the DES. I instrument equally used with students in his lectures. The comparison of these data shows a striking similarity that could presume something like a "cognitive congruence" (e.g. Intuition: $t = -.743$, $df = 347$, $p = .458 > 0.05$).

Second, our partners in Learning business significantly believe that they could extensively direct their own life. They are convinced that the locus of most of their actions would be inside their own volition, motivation and competence ("Internal locus of control" originated by Julian Rotter). Interestingly, this sometimes rigid belief system is matched with an ironic life orientation that has nothing in common with fanatic attitudes and habits.

Third, they scored comparatively low on the Self Monitoring Scale by Marc Snyder which means that they prefer sticking to themselves instead of playing many roles in one situation.

Fourth, in simulations they significantly tend to choose solution patterns for problems which derive from democratic leadership philosophies and transfer them to most of relevant situation arranged. This "ideology suspicion" could limit the flexibility and adaptability demanded by the "reality of work" today.

Fifth, our young people understand themselves as "Searchers for meaning". Starting from a remark of Leszek Kolakowski that the epistemological question for individual reality will be answered in practical not in philosophical engagement. In this perspective reality means searching for meaning, therefore, we consciously voted for an instrument located in the tradition of projective techniques explicitly exploring unconscious patterns of personality.

We used a sentence completion test named SocSet originally developed for this aim and regularly presented before we started our actual lectures. This test based on a salutogenic but non-pathogenic conception of personality designed by the late Aaron Antonovsky. In search for meaning (dimension: "meaningfulness") every last sample does not differ from the total student sample ($t = -0.36$, $df = 535$, $p = 0.72$). This pattern as an indicator of personality strength dominates in all samples we have scrutinized until now.

DISCUSSION AND PROSPECTS OF THESE DATA

Comparing the far distant samples of the winter semester 1969/70 with those of the summer semester 1998 ($p:0.05$), most students attributed their impressions of their lectures by open-mindedness, engagement, imagination and opening horizons. This agreement with only five attributions is, however, remarkable: the first sample consists of students enrolled in teachers' studies, the last one of students of engineering, the former students entered a profession before starting their studies, the latter ones only passed high school successfully. Besides, at the end of the sixties, quite another "zeitgeist" than today drove around the young generation. Meanwhile, additional attributes complete the old pattern of impression: reality mindness, honesty, cheerfulness, relaxation, fascination,

honesty, consultation, colorfulness, friendliness, fascination, sympathy and finally trust. This ascription of "positive" attributes proved to be equally very stable for many semesters. Many personally written notes support this current benevolent pattern.

Chart 2 (c) Kliem WS 1969/70

My fair feedback:

"How I personally experienced our common lectures with Professor Kliem this semester?" (Sample: 3227 students from 56 Semesters since WS1969/70)

Attributing a	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Attributing b	S.D.
(1) far from reality	1				5.6			close to reality	0.48
(2) open minded	1	2.0	3	4	5	6	7	closed minded	0.25
(3) honest	1	2.0	3	4	5	6	7	hypocritical	0.30
(4) sad	1	2	3	4	5.7	6	7	cheerful	0.29
(5) relaxed	1	2	3.0	4	5	6	7	stressed	0.70
(6) colored	1	2.1	3	4	5	6	7	colorless	0.28
(7) bored	1	2	3	4	5.6	6	7	fascinated	0.19
(8) engaged	1.8	2	3	4	5	6	7	detached	0.28
(9) advice giving	1	2.1	3	4	5	6	7	at a loss	0.30
(10) having no ideas	1	2	3	4	5	6.0	7	having many ideas	0.32
(11) full of confidence	1	2.1	3	4	5	6	7	without any confidence	0.28
(12) paths finding	1	2.1	3	4	5	6	7	blind alley finding	0.33
(13) hostile	1	2	3	4	5	6.3	7	friendly	0.18
(14) optimistic	1	2.1	3	4	5	6	7	pessimistic	0.37
(15) not sympathetic	1	2	3	4	5	6.2	7	sympathetic	0.24

At first sight the direction of this attribution reminds of a central dimension of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) by Bernard Bass and Bruce J. Avolio (1990) well-known in the personnel training business - especially of the items constituting the sub-dimension "Transformational leadership" (e.g. charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration). This neighborhood will be underscored by a comparison with the MLQ-dimensions like "contingent reward" resp. "management by exception" (both stand for "transactional leadership") and "laissez-faire" (stand for non-leadership).

These and other studies by Bass, Hater, or Avolio or Conger and Kanungo show that charismatic resp. inspiration oriented leadership rank higher than an "individualized consideration" and an "intellectual stimulation" in reference to any "leadership success" defined. First of all these authors define "charismatic leadership" as "attributional phenomenon" by the members of organizations. According to their conception leaders are labeled as "charismatic" if they could convey a "vision" to their followers which could be shared in the near common future. Because of this aim which is transcending the status quo, charismatic people have to expose themselves to risks, to pursue uncommon activities or/and use strange methods. Charisma fails when these outstanding people have to serve as managers or administrators: "Routinization of charisma" as Max Weber described many decades ago.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

There is obviously a special relationship between students and their professor that seems to be very person-centered and which has the tendency to renew itself with every new semester. It is a relationship between young "seekers for meaning" and an academic teacher who is looking for an authentic unity of learning and life. This relationship evolves typical traits of transformational leadership anchored by charisma and personal authority. Besides, an interesting coincidence of cognitive styles has been observed.

Data like these are always flattering for the initiator. But their side effects are always costly - not only proved by international leadership research, too. Considering the striking rise of bureaucracy in our learning organizations, teachers like that, trainers and other persons with charismatic glamour often represent a distinct personified scandal: in the same degree these "artists in motivation business" cognitively and affectively stimulate their "community", they unintentionally provoke a contradiction and rejection of those who won't or cannot share the "community of meaning". Every teacher or trainer with similarly collective ascriptions should realize that.

Comparing these data with his programmatic outline dated from 1974 the author can be pleased with his performance as a teacher. He did not miss his intended aims; sometimes he could arouse genuine interest of many young people for the interface personality versus culture. Some colleagues believed to discern a kind of "school", others believed the author had founded a "church" of his own... Definitely not: Gratitude and modesty should also remain his admirer for coming semesters.

SUMMARY AND OUTLOOK

- Learning is always a business of reciprocity! Motivation and competence of all partners define the quality of this enterprise. Learning means to be able to formulate questions, experience feelings, prove courage for standpoints, bear sorrow and defeat, enjoy success and happiness. Questions may often be more important than answers. Learning is a chance to deploy personal growth and empowerment. Individualized learning can also be realized in large groups. Trust, patience, endurance and tolerance are unalterable prior conditions. Learning on the whole means perception, insight, understanding, reason, exercise and application.

- Learning means theory. It structures, evaluates and transcends observations, experiences, opinions and other facets of the human life. Nothing is more useful than a good theory.

- Learning means thinking and acting within interrelated systems. Solving one problem can unintentionally induce side effects and new problems in subsystems or other related systems.

- The professor should confess and profess himself as a teacher and a human individual. He should make clear how he intends to manage power and authority. He should have the courage to introduce his own and his students' experiences of life to the lectures to be held. He should not only accept his students as partners in the learning business but should accept them as whole persons. This premise concerns the students in the same way. If both partners in the learning business act and react honestly and spontaneously, they will gain more than by a traditional transfer. At best the individual

involved in this kind of open dialogue will grow beyond its make-believe limits.

– Ultimately the habit of partners in the learning business defines the quality of common learning. The output will be very efficient and relevant for personal growth and organizational development if the partners are able to pursue a systemic unity of learning and life and transcend the objectives of learning defined by formal curriculum. And this habit that goes beyond the fashionable discussion about learning organization, new leadership, skill training, empowerment or tacit knowledge will be demanded not only from this professor and his students in their – perhaps favourable – majors but from other professors and students in other disciplines as well. And this is most certainly accomplished quite often.

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NASTAVA KAO ATRIBUCIJA - KAKO JE 3227 STUDENATA 56 SEMINARA OCENILO PREDAVANJA SVOG PROFESORA

Ottmar Kliem

Kao prilog aktuelnoj raspravi o položaju i ulozi profesora na evropskim univerzitetima, u radu se izlažu osnovne postavke fenomenološko-humanističkog pristupa. Ovaj pristup je primenjen na podatke dobijene od 3227 nemačkih studenata koji su u periodu od 1969. do 1998. godine ocenjivali predavanja jednog od svojih profesora. Pregledni podaci su sakupljeni tehnikom nazvanom "semantički diferencijal" koju je ustanovo Osgood, a razradio Hofstätter. Zanimljivo je da studentske atribucije nastavnog procesa od kasnih šezdesetih do kasnih devedesetih slede jedan obrazac koji je vredan pažnje. Neki aspekti ovog obrasca biće razmotreni u kontekstu savremenih teorija rukovođenja i primenjene teorije iskustvenog učenja čiji je tvorac Kolb sa saradnicima. Fabula docet: profesori, bilo da su im pripisani atributi harizmatičnosti ili ne, u svom iskazivanju i profesionalnom nastupanju treba da u istoj meri demonstriraju i svoje nastavne i svoje ljudske kvalitete.