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The Person Centered Approach to Teaching and Learning as Exemplified in a Course in Organizational Development

Abstract

Recent strategies in the European Union encourage educational styles which promote the development of attitudes and skills as a basis for knowledge construction. The Person Centered Approach, developed by the American psychologist Carl Rogers and adapted in several innovative educational settings holds great promise in promoting experiential, whole person learning. In this paper we illustrate person centered education by describing several facets of an academic course on organizational development. Both the qualitative and the quantitative study confirmed that the vast majority of students learned significantly on the level of personal attitudes, social skills, and intellect.

Keywords

Person centered approach, organizational development, Bologna process

Der person-zentrierte Ansatz zum Lehren und Lernen – dargestellt an einem Kurs in Organisationsentwicklung

Zusammenfassung

Aktuelle Strategien der Europäischen Union ermutigen Lehrstile, welche die Entwicklung von Einstellungen und Fähigkeiten als Grundlage der Konstruktion von Wissen fördern. Der von Carl Rogers entwickelte und für verschiedene innovative didaktische Settings adaptierte person-zentrierte Ansatz erweist sich als vielversprechede Strategie, erfahrungsgestütztes, ganzheitliches Lernen zu ermöglichen. Im vorliegenden Beitrag werfen wir einen Blick auf person-zentrierte Lehre anhand einer universitären Lerhveranstaltung zur Organisationsentwicklung. Die überwiegende Mehrheit der Studierenden zeigte eindeutige Lernerfolge im Bereich der persönlichen Einstellungen, der sozialen Kompetenzen und auch der intellektuellen Lernziele, wie sowohl aus der qualitativen als auch der quantitativen Evaluierung hervorgeht.

Schlüsselwörter

Person-zentrierter Ansatz, Organisationsentwicklung, Bologna Prozess

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1   Introduction

> *"The educational system is probably the most influential of all institutions-*
> *outranking the family, the church, the police, and the government –*
> *in shaping the interpersonal politics of the growing person."*
> Carl Rogers (1977- Carl Rogers on Personal Power, p. 69)

Words are so limited to impart meaningful knowledge and to describe rich experiences because they are like maps. They can be used to describe experiences but they are not the experience themselves. However, it is the challenge of every writer to put into words what became known and experienced in his or her interaction with the world. With this in mind we believe it to be worth while to impart what really happens when the Person Centered Approach is applied in an educational setting such as in this class at the University of Vienna. We hope this paper can be an inspiration for professionals and students to find new ways of bringing meaningful learning, creativity, fun, and wisdom into the classroom through a transformational approach.

In education, key issues have always been that of deep and persistent learning that allows all participants to develop or grow as whole persons rather than just extend their knowledge on some subject matter or practice. Carl ROGERS (1977, p. 71-72) citing John Vasconcellos, a California State legislator who has been influenced by his ideas and is interested in educating the whole person said: "He (Vasconcellos) believes that cognitive skills should be combined with better knowledge of self and of interpersonal behavior."

To ignore the whole person while educating is to lose a golden opportunity to fulfill the true meaning of education, which is to enrich people's lives. In the movie Coach Carter, played by Samuel Jackson, a high school basketball coach goes to the point of canceling his team's participation on the two most important games of a winning season and was willing to lose the season and to quit his job to teach young men from a disadvantaged neighborhood that School is more than winning basketball and failing grades. School is about becoming a whole person, someone who can have good grades, win in basketball but more important someone who can listen to self and others, be sensitive, respectful, and kind to others so that they can have a better life as a human being. More recently, this requirement of taking the whole person into consideration while educating has explicitly been voiced in the course of the Bologna process that aims at modernizing education in the European Union and making it more accessible to a broad range learners. In particular, in the context of determining core competencies in our society (EAEA, 2004) is noted that: "There is a need for new curriculum. Traditionally the curriculum consisted of three elements: knowledge, skills, attitudes, which tends to value knowledge above skills, and skills above attitudes. Experience of life suggests different priorities: positive attitudes are key to a rewarding life and job, skills are also more important than knowledge. These priorities should be asserted in the development of new curriculum, which would raise the value of social capital, civil society and the role of non-formal learning."

Thus, we hope that this paper will contribute to the idea of how crucial it is to take the whole person into consideration while educating. This snapshot of practice and

research on Person-Centered Teaching and Learning in the context of an academic course on organizational development conducted at the University of Vienna as part of the masters program in computer science and business informatics provides an exquisite example how important the whole person's concept is for education. By sharing our experience with our readers we hope to facilitate further development that builds on these experiences and extends as well as transcends their and our current context.

In a nutshell, the basic hypothesis underlying Person-Centered Teaching / Learning can be stated as follows: Human beings are constructive in nature and strive to actualize and expand their experiencing organism to fulfill their potential in full. According to Rogers' Theory of Therapy, Personality and Interpersonal Relationships (ROGERS, 1959) the actualizing tendency can unfold itself best in a climate that is characterized by three attitudinal conditions: Congruence, also called realness, genuineness, transparency, authenticity, openness; acceptance, also called respect, unconditional positive regard; and empathic understanding, a deep understanding for the feelings and meanings of the other. These must be held and lived by facilitators and communicated to the learners such that they actually can perceive them and experience them as part of the teaching and learning relationship. This can hardly be achieved if an instructor looks down on his students and is primarily occupied with lecturing. In our view, modern learning technology can help much with the transfer of intellectual knowledge relieving instructors from excessive lecturing in so far, as a major degree of material can be put on the learning platform and provides a rich source of resources that students can explore in a problem- or task oriented manner. Time in face-to-face meetings can be used for real interactions among all participants: Topics can be elaborated in small groups, problems of common interest can be turned to cooperatively, students can give feedback to presenters of material, etc. Also, learning technology allows for sharing of results and discussions on individual contribution, presentation, differences, analogies, etc. such that students learn from more than their own project and thereby get a broader view on their work. However, our empirical studies show that this kind of education is superior only, if instructors are perceived by students as real, respectful and understanding (MOTSCHNIG-PITRIK and MALLICH, 2004). Otherwise, motivation goes down and students feel they profit less than in conventional courses.

The paper is organized as follows: In the next section we introduce the Person Centered style of teaching (better facilitating) and learning as framed by the renowned American psychologist Carl Rogers (ROGERS, 1961, 1983). Section 3 reports on the course process from its planning to actually conducting the course. The final evaluation and students' reaction are discussed in Section four, along with our experience and major learning resulting from the course. The final Section concludes the paper and points to issues for further thought and research.

2   The Baseline of Person Centered Teaching and Learning

Student-Centered Learning is a personally significant kind of learning that integrates new elements, knowledge, or insights to the current repertoire of the learner's own resources such that he or she moves to an advanced constellation of meaning and resourcefulness (BARRETT-LENNARD, 1998).

Student-Centered Learning can be characterized by the following goals:

- a participatory mode in all aspects of learning and decision-making, furthering self-responsibility;

- a climate of trust in which curiosity and the natural desire to learn can be nourished and enhanced;

- helping students to achieve results they appreciate and consider worthwhile and inwardly meaningful;

- uncovering the excitement in self-initiated discovery, which leads students to become life-long learners, fosters originality, and brings out the creative potential of the individual;

- helping instructors to grow as persons finding rich satisfaction in their interactions with learners and thus increase their personal resourcefulness;

- Increasing a person's capabilities to experience and explore his or her own processes, thus raising the awareness of meaningful ways of inquiry, in other words, learning how to learn. This generic meta-capability enhances the person's disposition to successful problem solving in new situations.

    (adapted form ROGERS, 1983, p. 3 and complemented by ideas from BARRETT-LENNARD, 1998, p. 187-188)

Research in the Student-Centered Approach proved (ASPY, 1972; CORNELIUS-WHITE et al., 2004; ROGERS, 1961) that students achieve superior results along with personal growth in terms of higher self-confidence, creativity, openness to experience, self-respect, and respect towards others and their environment, etc., if they learn in an atmosphere or climate in which the facilitator (instructor, teacher, etc.) holds three core attitudinal conditions and if they perceive them, at least to some degree (ROGERS, 1961):

- Realness, with synonyms such as congruence, transparency, genuineness, authenticity;

- Acceptance, else referred to as respect, unconditional positive regard, caring attitude, concern for the individual;

- Empathic understanding, a deep form of understanding of the meanings as well as feelings of the learner.

Concrete situations often are challenging for instructors to express the proper proportion among the three dispositions in the context of external requirements. Person-Centered courses depend not only on the instructor's plans but due to their

participatory mode bear in themselves the unexpected, the chance to learn from situations in the "here and now", that requires a large amount of internal flexibility as well as trust in both facilitator and students. Consequently, personal resourcefulness of the facilitator and his or her relationship with students has significant influence on the students' learning. This, along with the insight that facilitators equally learn in the facilitation experience, causes us to prefer the term "person-centered" rather than "student-centered". Person Centered Learning is a shared responsibility where human beings (teacher and student) meet to inspire each other and to bring the best out of them imparting knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experiences in a creative and fun environment. This maximizes teaching and learning bringing quality and creativity to the classroom.

We view our choice of the Person-Centered Approach (PCA) as baseline for blended learning as justified on multiple grounds: Firstly, it builds on a thoroughly researched psychological and educational paradigm (ASPY, 1972; CORNELIUS-WHITE et al., 2004; DERNTL & MOTSCHNIG-PITRIK, 2005; MOTSCHNIG-PITRIK & MALLICH, 2004; ROGERS, 1983). Secondly, it goes deeper than other approaches in deriving actions from a philosophy of being that is facilitative, constructive, and furthermore, considers the personal resources of the individual in relationship with others. In other words, it promotes congruent expressions based on a confluence of authenticity, acceptance and empathic understanding. Thirdly, as shown in a recent study (MOTSCHNIG-PITRIK, 2002) on the qualifications of business informatics graduates, the direction of personal development furthered by the PCA closely matches the personal profile that industry expects from graduates. This is further substantiated in the strategic EU-EAEA statement on key competencies (EAEA, 2004) as cited in the introduction. Finally, we view the open, self-responsible, and yet relationship focused tendencies inherent in the PCA as smoothly complementing the open spaces and free contacts enabled by current web-based environments.

3   The Course Process in Organizational Development

Being convinced about the added value of the Person Centered Approach to learning from extensive previous experience, the authors agreed to offer a course on organizational development within the Masters Program in Computer Science and Business Informatics at the University of Vienna. Planning proceeded via sending email messages and occasional phone calls.

Unlike most of Renate Motschnig's courses that run throughout the whole term, the course on organizational development needed to be blocked within one week since Antonio Santos was a visiting lecturer from San Diego, California. We believe that for international courses this is a typical situation. Sharing some steps from the preparation process thus may provide some insight for readers involved in conducting or organizing international courses.

In an initial course unit, Renate briefly introduced the course and interactive web-space (CEWebS, Cooperative Environment Web Services, MANGLER &

DERNTL, 2004) that included information about time, location, participants, and a literature list (compare figure 1), along with a course invitation (see below). After some email discussion, the facilitators agreed that students should be provided with a pool of useful references, including two articles, one on active listening and one on the power of administration, strongly suggested to be read. However, it was left open to the students to study or not the literature before the course started. In our experience there is something uncanny about students coming to class with their mind fresh because it opens up unexpected learning opportunities. Consequently, students could choose themselves whether to prepare for the course or come open to a whole new experience trusting that within their minds they had all the resources to choose in class based on their professional and personal lives what they would most need from such a course.

This list of resources might be helpful to you in capturing some of the aspects of our course. I hope our journey through this course will take us beyond the pages of books or other resources to a meaningful learning which can last and be useful to us for as long as we live. Learning is the most beautiful thing in life in which teachers and students hopefully will engage in a path that will open their minds to experience the best that life has to offer helping them to be active and not reactive, and to be productive in the real sense of the word. We are looking forward for our class.

References:

1. Bennis, Warren G. (1977) Organization Development. Its nature, origins, and prospects. Reading, Mass: Addison Wesley Publishing Company.
2. Rogers, Carl Ranson (1977) Carl Rogers on personal power. New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., xiii+299. (Part I - Chapters 5 and 7; Part II – Chapter 9: Part III – Chapter 11; Part IV – Chapter 12)
3. Shah, Idries (1968) The pleasantries of the incredible Mulla Nasrudin. New York: E. P. Dutton; also, London: Cape, 218 pp.; reprinted, 1993, New York: Penguin Arkana.
4. Plato – The last days of Socrates. (Translation 1954) Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin.
5. Santos, Antonio Monteiro dos (2003) Miracle moments – the nature of the mind's power in relationships and psychotherapy. Lincoln, NE: IUniverse, xiii+351

More books:

This section contained references to about 20 other books on various issues, mainly from philosophy, organizations, and psychology, from authors such as:
Glen Ellen, Burke, W.W., Bhagavad Gita, Buber, Martin, Cascio, W. F, Chin, R & Benne, K. D., Dyer, William G., Fromm, Erich, Maharshi, Ramana, Maslow, Abraham H., Ouchi, W. G. & Jaeger, A.M., Plato, Rogers, Carl Ranson, Shah, Idries, Steiner, Claude M., Taylor, F. W.

Resources on the internet:

«http://www.odnetwork.org/principlesofpractice.html»
«http://members.aol.com/odinst/index.htm»
«http://www.acrnet.org/about/cr-faq.htm»
«http://www.centerfortheperson.org/page9.html»

Movies:

Citizen Kane (1941) with Orson Wells;
Gandhi, 1982;
12 Angry Men (1957) with Henry Fonda;
Wall Strett (1987) with Michael Douglas

Figure 1: Course introduction and references

About two weeks before the course started, we sent out an invitation letter with some further information on the course.

Dear participant,

The course block is approaching rapidly. We intend to facilitate experiential learning, this means learning based on our previous and present experiences. Hence, there are just two articles, one on active listening and one on the politics of administration, we wish you to read as a starting point, mainly to provide you with an idea on the potential scope of themes. Otherwise, and most important, you can prepare for the course by thinking of concrete cases/problems/conflicts in team work, communication, decision making, leadership from your work- and/or study context that you are willing to share and elaborate cooperatively with the group. The experience during the course and the reading list under http://www.pri.univie.ac.at/courses/pm-gpo/ss05-1 will serve as inputs for a small team project to be finalized and uploaded onto our platform until 15/06/2005.

Looking forward to an innovative course, …

After thorough email dialogue we elaborated a preliminary proposal on the course topics (see figure 2) that, at this point, we did not share with students. The same applies to our course goals, summarized as follows:

Organizations develop, if people develop. We aim to facilitate significant learning on:

- interpersonal attitudes and relationships,
- taking responsibility for one's own learning and shared responsibility for the group process,
- history and principles of organization development
- dealing with ad hoc situations constructively,
- knowing and feeling about self and relationships with others,
- ability to work in teams.

Immediate preparation for the course.

On the day before the course started we worked out a gross coarse concept to be followed including:

- Introducing oneself
- Discussing with the group on
  - What to accomplish
  - In which way to accomplish
  - How to be evaluated
- Expectations of the professors – our proposal
- The building of the new syllabus: finding topics to work on in teams
- Discussing/suggesting how to work on topics

- Lectures on the Person Centered Approach and on the self

- Viewing and discussing a movie

- Team presentations to be videotaped

- Follow up encounter group with (about 7) participants who work on their PhD thesis

We agreed to view our inputs as a supply of topics and ideas, however, to listen to students' goals and expectations first in order to frame the actual course process and contents.

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1 Some History
Taylor's Scientific Management
Weber's Bureaucracy
Human relations approach
System's Approach:
Organizations are an open system inputs from within and without
Changes on one part of the systems affects the whole system
The whole organization is great the sum of its parts
1) Workers have diverse needs; 2) organization varies in terms of structure, culture
and other characteristics; 3) there is no one managerial strategy that will work for all people
all times.

2   The Person Centered Approach – Basics, Relationships, Active Listening
Carl Rogers, the father of PCA – some history
Applications of PCA to organization consultation; psychotherapy, and education
The actualizing tendency
The three conditions or skills: Empathy, unconditional positive regard, genuineness or
transparency.

3   The Self
What is the self?
The Ego and the Inner Self
The dynamics of the ego
Forgiveness – the undoing of the ego
The Inner Self
The interplay between ego and inner self in decision making, power, communication, and
leadership

4   Organization Development
The phases: Entry, Contracting, Diagnosis, Feedback, Planning, Intervention, Evaluation
Organizational Change: Chin and Benne proposal, Empirical Rational, Normative-
reeducative, Power coercive, Resistance to change
Conflict Resolution:
Team Building

Figure 2: Course topics

What to accomplish?

At the very beginning Antonio Santos introduced himself and showed interest in getting to know the other participants. This resulted in a series of brief intro-ductions of all others. Then Renate suggested collecting the students' ideas about what they wanted to learn and list them on a flipchart. From these and our own expectations we derived the following major topics to be covered:

- Power and leadership
- Communication
- Conflict resolution
- Team work
- Motivation
- History of organizational development
- The Person Centered Approach
- Understanding Self

In which way to learn?

Following the collection of topics, a lengthy discussion about team size came to a consensus once the participants suggested that rather than fixing the team size, participants assign themselves to topics such that most would be covered by teams of a meaningful size (3-5 persons). Antonio suggested that he could cover the remaining topics that were the history of organizational development and the part on understanding self. Furthermore, we agreed to elaborate the principles of the Person Centered Approach collaboratively, since almost half on the participants had been exposed to them in a previous course on Person Centered Communication (MOTSCHNIG-PITRIK & NYKL, 2005).

When we asked in which way students wanted to learn, various settings were suggested and one was rejected:

- ✓ role play,
- ✓ team work and presentation
- ❖ no written seminar work to be worked out and submitted about team's topics!
- ✓ discussions
- ✓ lectures
- ✓ viewing and discussing a movie (suggested by Antonio)

Consequently, we collectively decided to work with the settings suggested and to skip the requirement of submitting a seminar paper in the case that other meaning-ful evaluation criteria could be suggested.

How to be evaluated?

The resentment against writing a seminar paper smoothly led over to the next issue to be dealt with, namely the evaluation of the course. After some discussion on individual learning targets we agreed on a blended evaluation process to proceed in the final unit which would consist of the following elements, with equal weighting:

- Self evaluation

- evaluation of team members by their peers in the same small team

- evaluation of the team project and its presentation as a whole by participants other than those on the small team
- instructor evaluation (as an average between Antonio's and Renate's grade)

Course process

Since some participants were late on the second day, the course started with a discussion about coming late to class and meetings: What does coming late mean to the others? Should one explain the reason, be made accountable? Then we elaborated Rogers' core conditions of congruence, acceptance or unconditional positive regard, and empathic understanding. Subsequently, participants formed teams of three to four to engage in role play in order to practice and experience active listening. In this role play, one person shared a personal "story" while the other person was expected to engage, in sequence, in the following three activities:

1) disagree;

2) just listen without verbal response;

3) listen actively and provide a summary plus feedback in the end.

The third person was supposed just to observe the conversation between the other two participants. Then roles were switched such that each person could gain experience as the speaker, the listener, and the observer. After that the participants exchanged their experiences and Antonio asked a volunteer to share his or her experience with him while sitting on two chairs in the middle of the room, surrounded by other participants seated in a circle. This turned out to be an impressive demonstration of active listening. In the end, the smile on the volunteer's face confirmed his words when he shared that he felt fully understood.

In her final reaction sheet one students comments on the active listening exercise: "Furthermore, it was a good idea to have some practical exercise like the role-play we all did in groups of three. This exercise showed e.g. how hard it could be to be in the role of the 'observer', as the person in this role had to observe the dialogue of the other two team members and was not supposed to talk. It also made clear how strenuous it might be, to really listen carefully to another person, trying to catch every single word the other person is saying."

The next day started with briefly discussing the schedule for the remaining time and watching the movie "Wall Street." This is a movie about a rich and experienced business man, Geico, played by actor Michael Douglas, who takes under his wings a young man, Buddy, played by actor Charlie Sheen. Geico was in the business to make money and he did not mind using people to do so. Buddy was willing to do anything to fulfil the American Dream and did everything Geico asked him to do including violating the ethics of their work. By the end of the movie they turn against each and both end up in jail. We discussed leadership styles presented in the movie, the concept of power and different ways that power can be used, and how team functions. Some students were also interested in the good and bad concept side of ourselves always addressed in the Hollywood style of movies and how it can be applied to life in general.

In the afternoon of the third day the first team had their presentation on the topic of motivation. This presentation, which, like the others, was to last about twenty minutes, was done ahead of all others since two of the participants in the respective team could not be present on the fourth day, where the remaining presentations were scheduled. The team presented the results of a brief survey among participants, where they asked what motivated us and which factors contributed to being able to motivate others. They prepared a flipchart listing our motivational factors and continued with giving a slide show on three theories of motivation. An individual exercise, namely to name things we want to do, should do, and have to do, ended this team's contribution which provoked intense discussions on the sources of motivation and their relevance in everyday life, decisions, and behavior. While the slide presentation could have been improved, as discussed in the feedback phase, the team perfectly succeeded in involving and addressing the audience such that time passed very fast with intense group discussions.

Antonio's lecture on the self ended the third day. This was more a sharing done in Socratic manner than a formal lecture. The students were introduced to the concept of self and to the importance of understanding how the mind functions to foment mindfulness. The concept of self, ego and inner self (Santos, 2003) were explained briefly followed by a discussion of the student's understanding and of possible application of these concepts in their personal and professional lives.

One student refers to that part of the course in his reaction sheet: "I like that kind of lecture where all members of the group can input their own experiences whenever they think that it is important for the group. Most of all I enjoyed the topic of the ego and the inner self because I spend a lot of time in my life thinking about why I am reacting so emotional to some topics. The following up question is how to control these feelings because they consume a lot of power.

So the thoughts and experiences Mr. Santos shared with us made me thinking about it in a different way. Though the topic is not clear to me now it will help me on my way.

Thanks to every group member for sharing experiences."

Another studens reports in his reaction sheet: "Before our first meeting I was quite sceptical, although I already took part in that kind of workshop. It was held in German, though. Further I could not imagine what the agenda of the workshop will be like, whether we will be able to bring in our interest, and how such an experienced man will work with students. Antonio Santos has eliminated all my prejudices, by the way he held his workshop and integrated all our questions. He has brought in a load of stories of his life and often made me think."

While one student felt bored at times and wrote that "Mr. Santos spoke too long about one thing", a further student shares her experiences on the 'lecture' part in the following excerpt: "I liked very much, that [this course] was very different to other courses! I liked the views of Mr. Santos on various topics. In my view he was open from the first beginning and did not hide behind any facade."

Since no team was prepared to start the team presentation on the fourth and final day, Antonio gave his lecture on the history and principles of organizational development, emphasizing the principles of practice as can be found at: http://www.odnetwork.org/principlesofpractice.html.

Then, the four teams presented their inputs in most versatile and exciting, partly highly interactive ways.

The second team chose to deal with teamwork. They started their presentation with two proverbs that immediately caught the participants' attention: "No matter how great a warrior he is, a chief cannot do a battle without his indians." Source unknown, and "No one can whistle a symphony. It takes an orchestra to play it." Halford E. Luccock

The team continued by asking the audience to name hard and soft factors that improve team work. The factors were collected in a table on the flipchart and complemented by findings from literature. After discussing the difference between group and team, the moderating team engaged 6 volunteers in a life experiment. Who would perform faster in putting together a 35-piece puzzle, the group/team of five or a single person? Within the time limit of 5 minutes the single person finished first. This illustrated very impressively the extra effort required for coordination before performing well in cooperative settings.

Dealing with communication, the third team focused on presenting the communication model by SCHULZ VON THUN (1981). According to Schulz von Thun, any message is composed of and reveals four aspects: factual content, relationship, self-exposure, and intention. The team members engaged in role-playing of persons who, in turn, (over)emphasized one single aspect of the whole message in which the partner of a car driver said: "Hey, the semaphore shows green."

Inputs on ways of setting signals and on essential barriers in communication that should be avoided complemented that team's contribution and ended with an inspiring discussion on barriers.

The fourth team having chosen conflict resolution as their focus, started with presenting slides on issues involved in conflict: power, right, interest. One participant gave his personal reactions in response to the theory. In several points he succeeded in bringing up relevant, individual and critical issues and opened up ways to discussion with all participants. Then, one student introduced a computer game on mediation, in which two volunteers had the opportunity to engage as mediators in a conflictual dialogue. This also illustrated the opportunities as well as shortcomings of computer-mediated exercises and inspired dialogue on educational games.

Power and leadership were the focal topics of the final team. They presented on a juxtaposition of issues on administration and leadership, following the article of Rogers: The power of administration (ROGERS, 1978). After this more theoretical way of setting the scene, a vivid role play took place: An author of a book on modern leadership discussed issues on power, control, competition and society with an old fashioned, highly skilled manager. Only the time limit due to the end of the course could stop the heated conversation that evolved from the highly authentic expression of the 'actors'.

The students unanimously appreciated their active team contributions and reflected that they learned significantly from them. A student writes in her reaction sheet: "The team presentations were interesting and the possibility of watching the videos now is something really special. I think the presentations were especially interesting, because there was only little time to prepare and there was only little boring lecture, but more interactive exercises."

In a similar vein we read in another reaction sheet: "For me it was also a good idea to have some team- or group work done. Although most students already had a tough time schedule to fulfill (due to other courses or their daily work) they all showed effort to prepare good presentations."

Participant's evaluation

In the final unit, just less than one hour was left for the evaluation process. Renate set up a table on her PC whose screen was video-beamed to a white wall and recorded the grades along the criteria elaborated. First, students took turns in giving brief justifications for the grade they chose to assign to themselves. The honesty in which the students evaluated themselves was impressive. The grades that the students assigned to themselves ranged between one and three on a one to five scales where one denoted the best and five the worst (meaning not passing the course). In the second round, teams were supposed to evaluate their members. In this procedure the first team assigned a one to all their members and this pattern took over to the remaining teams. The third round also went fast and the individual teams were graded between one and two with some intermediate values in the case that group members slightly differed in their views. Finally, The facilitators took turns in proposing grades for the participants along with brief explanations. In cases of differing views (primarily between one and two) we computed the average.

Feedback round

At the end of the course we sat around in a circle and processed what happened in this course. Each student and each facilitator spoke about the nature of the course, the learning, the experience, and what the course brought to them personally and professionally. The majority of the students' reactions were very positive and most of all students felt that they actually had the power to affect every major decision about this class. We, facilitators and students, decided from the beginning to the end how the whole process would be. The facilitators' voice was not more heard than that of the students. Each voice in the room had equal weight in every decision taken by this class. One example was on deciding about the evaluation, where the facilitators had some preference for a written documentation of the teams' project work and the students decided against it. Their decision prevailed.

Person Centered group in an extension course for PhD students

Following the course in the masters program, nine PhD students (five of whom had also participated in the course on organizational development) met for a one-and-a-half day encounter. All participants except for one had already some encounter experience in the past. Although it was the first time the two authors co-facilitated

a group together, the atmosphere was highly trustful since the very beginning. This appeared to allow two participants to explore their feelings in a workplace conflict that had its roots in postings on the internet forum two years ago. There were truly painful and hard phases that were interleaved by other participants' exploration of personally and professionally highly important issues. People were genuinely interested in one another, the group was very intense till the end and we felt we used every minute in a meaningful way. The very end seemed to signal a new phase in conflict resolution and communication although only the future will show the evolution and consequences in the particular conflict. For all participants the encounter experience had been perceived as a powerful source of personal and interpersonal learning. To the facilitators, it meant a deep personal experience and simultaneously a living, real example of personal and organizational development.

4 Students' Reactions and Quantitative Results from the Online-Questionnaires

Reaction Sheets. We asked students to supply reaction sheets addressed to the facilitators. The web space to collect the reactions was initialized by the following text: "We appreciate your personal reaction (what you liked, disliked, and others) to the course on organizational development. In particular, let us know about those events and experiences that you perceived as most significant for you." While several excerpts from reaction sheets were already pasted into the text above, below we give three more complete samples.

A male student writes insightfully: "First I was not very happy about spending so much time on discussing the way of making the course. I first thought the teaching staff (was) not very much prepared for the course. I was not aware of (this at first) but then I realized that nobody can teach me anything. A teacher can only create the atmosphere where learning is easier for me. And that happened.

 I did not realize it at the first moment. I needed some time, but now I know it is just the same in business. I cannot make anybody work. I just can create the atmosphere where working is easier. And this is only possible when the employees are deciding. First I just wanted to know a checklist about how to develop organizations. Now I know that I cannot develop organizations. Just the people working there can. It was a very different way of showing me those things. I learned more than I first wanted to learn. Thank you!"

A female student shares the following: "What I appreciated the most was Mr. Santos' way of addressing the students. He showed a lot of respect and interest to each member of the group and tried to understand what the students were trying to express with their statements. Although I was a bit surprised by the structure and content of the lessons (I would have expected more theoretical input) I enjoyed the way the lessons were being held. I really appreciated that at the beginning of the lessons all students were asked what they want this part of the course to be like and that their wishes really were respected and adhered. [....] Moreover I was interested to hear that Mr. Santos knows/knew Carl Rogers in person and that he had conversations/discussions/interviews with him about several issues. All in all I

enjoyed this course, as there aren't many opportunities at university to attend courses like this and for me personally, I drew some lessons for me from what was said by Mr. Santos in this course."

Finally, a student expresses his experience in the following paragraphs: "In the past two years, I have learned and read quite a lot about communication and the person centred approach. In Mrs. Motschnig's courses about the Person Centred Approach, one thing became clear very soon. Not even the highest pile of books may tell you, how the person centred approach may 'feel'. Of course one can read all about the theoretical input and maybe read about experiences of other people too. But if you want to know what it is like, to be treated in a person centered way, you have to participate in a group, where this is not only appreciated, but also possible.

Therefore I am very thankful for having got the chance to be a member of this course and group, facilitated by Mrs. Motschnig and Mr. Santos. Although I do not know how to express all my impressions for the moment, I know that these four days were – and still are – a very important experience to me. With all the stories that were told, I learned a lot of new things about other people, their views of life, visions and dreams and of course about myself. The most stunning thing was probably, that I did not even recognize to 'learn' It just happened. You gave us challenging quests to fulfill and showed me therefore not only the meaning of teamwork and pressure of time, but also how life in organizations may look like.

In my view, the practical part could therefore be even more present, in future courses. Of course Mr. Santos presentations were very interesting and the density of information was very high. Sometimes however, this enormous density made it really hard for me, to be attentive sixty minutes in a row. A short break once in a while would have helped me to think about all the new information. Nevertheless and as already mentioned, this course was a great experience to me.

For me it pointed out, that every organization primarily consists of people, who try to work together in a more or less efficient way. As a part of a firm, it should therefore be not only my goal to support my colleagues in every way possible, but also to create a productive climate. A working organization consisting of people who will not communicate with each other, is worthless. I believe that the person centred approach has a very high potential to improve communication in working organizations. The necessity of teaching future specialists and executive staff about the person centred approach, is therefore undoubtedly very worthwhile. Thank you very much!"

Questionnaire

The online questionnaire has revealed some structured feedback on specific questions and thus complemented the qualitative results obtained from the reaction sheets. In this place we summarize the most important results and invite interested readers to inspect the tables in the Appendix for a more complete graphic description of the results.

Regarding interpersonal relationships and community building, the vast majority of students (17) found that it was easier or rather easier to build them than in other courses of the curriculum in computer science and business informatics. Yet, two

students found it slightly more difficult and one student was indifferent. A different but nevertheless positive result was achieved in the students' perception on the effect the course style had on teamwork. For 9 students there was no difference in the ease or difficulty to cooperate in teams in the course on organizational development. For one participant, team cooperation was slightly more difficult while 10 students reported it was easier or somewhat easier.

As expected, the course had a positive or rather positive influence on interpersonal relationships of the vast majority of students. Interestingly, however, there were four instances in which students perceived a rather negative effect on some (study colleague, working colleague, partner, parent), never all, of their interpersonal relationships.

The three course elements that the students found most meaningful were the discussions, the interactive parts, and the evaluation directly after the course. They were evaluated with 4.45, 4.40, and 4.05, respectively, an a scale where 5 meant very much and 1 not much. The self evaluation was rated with 3.05, meaning neutral, and showing that in this respect there is space for improvement and necessity for further investigation and thought.

Comparing individual aspects that motivated students to participate in the course on organizational development reveals some interesting results that we associate with the person centered style of the course. While all aspects were rated significantly above the neutral position of three, the three aspects rated lowest were "enhancing problem solving ability", "relevance for job", and enhancing practical skills", with rates 3.6, 3.7 and 3.75, respectively. Asking students to interpret this unexpected result revealed that the terms "practical skills" and "problem solving" had been associated to programming, a particularly practical issue in the context of computer science and something many expect to do in their initial job. – The four aspects gaining the highest ratings were "time for exchange", "atmosphere/working climate of the course", "engaging style in which the course was conducted", "collaboration with colleagues", all rated 4.6 on a scale in which 1 meant "does not apply at all"and 5 stood for "applies highly".

In order to be able to compare different course styles, we let students rate 23 criteria indicating aspects from which students may benefit from a course. The result thus mirrored the particular course situation. The lower rate was given to the aspect: "support by a web-based learning platform" (2.8) that did not have much influence in the intensive face-to-face phase that basically covered all essential aspects of the course besides backgroung information (see Section 3). Also, due to the blocked mode of the course, the learning with respect to "enhanced personal time management" (2.95) was almost negligible. Unlike in many traditional courses, the "materials and literature references" (3.15) played a minor part when compared with the face-to-face meetings that formed the essence of the course. The aspect from which students profited most was 'exchange and discussion with the instructor' (4.45), immediately followed by 'exchange and discussion with colleagues' (4.40) and 'active participation during the course' (4.40). Further profitable aspects were the "cooperation with peers" (4.2) and "considering situations from different points of view"(4.2).

Comparing the distribution of learning regarding three levels, namely intellectual knowledge, skills, and attitudes, the students estimated to have gained slightly more on the level of skills and personal dispositions that on the intellectual level. This result definitely is consistent with the course goals of both students and facilitators. The predominantly positive students' responses in the course context, then, may be seen as confirming the significant learning experience spanning all levels. It involved the whole person and allowed him or her to move forward in their actualizing process.

5   Discussion and Conclusions

This class was very intense as the reader can realize by the above evaluations and by the whole course description we presented before. Over and over again we come to realize how satisfying, how powerful, and how important is this kind of teaching methodology developed from the perspective of the Person Centered Approach. When you change the power differential in class, you realize that students and professors become something different. They become more than people playing different roles. They become whole persons with thoughts, feelings, and behaviors which are taken fully into consideration. In traditional methodology of education, which is heavily based in the cognitive aspects of students and professors, feelings and behaviors are somewhat ignored, if not completely. Professors and students become just their role and meaningful interaction between professor and students hardly happens. In this kind of PCA methodology, the professors then become facilitators or someone creating an environment where learning can happen fully. One student expressed it beautifully: "I realized that nobody can teach me anything. A teacher can only create the atmosphere where learning is easier for me. And that happened." The students become an active participant whose thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are appreciated and taken into consideration. And most of all they are empowered to become full participants and decision makers in the class process.

When we speak about a professor becoming a facilitator, we mean that the professor facilitator is someone who can listen carefully and emphatically what the students have to say, respects and takes into consideration the student's position on different issues, and does not become judgmental. He or she copes with the student as a person and he relates to the students as a person and not as someone just playing a role. It is important to notice that when you transfer power to the students, there is mistrust at first. They believe that there is a catch to it and that in the end the professor will have the final word as they have always experienced in the past. Some of the students can even think that the professors are not prepared for the class and that they don't know how to teach a class. When they begin to discover that the professors are really serious and practicing what they are saying, the students become overwhelmed with the freedom that they have. After this initial period, the students begin to develop a trust on the process and on the professors. However, this development of trust comes slowly with every word and every action on the side of the professors.

Few things we would change in future classes: One aspect that we learned and that we have been learning frequently with these classes is the importance of balancing lecture with some kind of practical activity which is tied to the lecture in some way. This change in modality from auditory to kinesthetic helps the students to integrate their intellectual learning into their experience. Once the learning becomes established in this way, the application of what the student learned becomes easier and more viable in the student's daily life. Therefore, we would increase this kind of activity in the future to make the classes yet livelier. Also, we intend to construct a web space in which we will include references and resources for easy access to relevant topics in organizational development and related themes. In this way, valuable information can be learned outside of the class such that the course time can be used for even more dialogue and sharing. We intend to direct the latter towards concrete job situations addressed by students or facilitators, in order to make the job relatedness of the course more explicit.

We would like to emphasize the importance of the combined technology of using the internet and face to face classes. The internet helps with work to be done before and after the classes because it provides important information and an opportunity for exchanges to happen between professors and students which otherwise would not happen. The dialogue before and after class can add a lot to the richness of the student's and professor's experience professionally and personally allowing for example the clarification of issues left unclear in class.

There is nothing more rewarding and more beautiful than to meet people face to face without facades and roles. Roles have its purpose in this life but when we hide behind them to protect the unprotected, we become boring and a puppet in our role's hands. We know that the whole of this experience cannot really be put into words because the experience is so much richer than the words that describe it. However, we made here an effort to transfer to you, the reader, how important it is to be a whole human being in class, with intellect, thoughts, feelings, meanings, spontaneous reactions, and personal experiences, and to encourage students to be whole beings in their own ways. In our experience this is the most direct way towards developing attitudes and skills along with knowledge, as postulated by international authorities for the development of a new curriculum.

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APPENDIX: Tables with quantitative data and descriptive statistics

Was it easier or more difficult for you to build positive interactions and relationships with other participants in the course on organizational development when compared with other courses in business informatics?
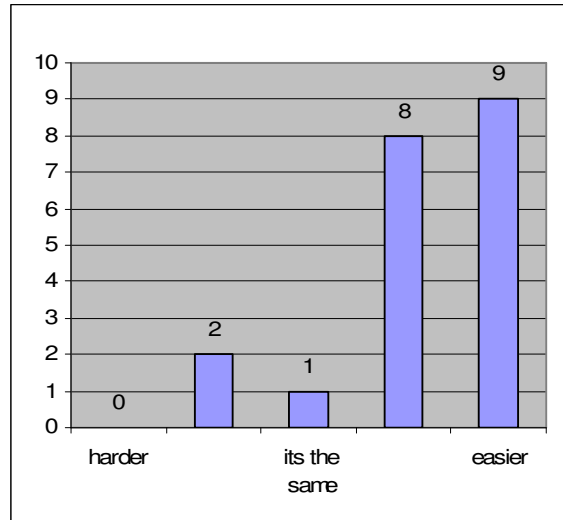

Table 1: Effect of the course on community building

Was it easier or more difficult for you to work in teams in the course on organizational development when compared with other courses in business informatics?
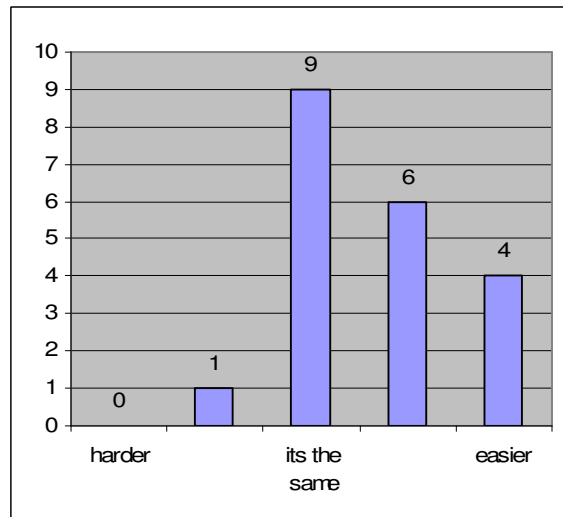
Table 2: Effect of the course on the difficulty or ease of the participants' cooperation in teams

Do you think that your participation in the course on organizational development has had an influence on your interpersonal relationships? Please, estimate the effects the course had on your interpersonal relationships.

	I don't have any	negative effect	rather negative effect	no effect	rather positive effect	positive effect
study colleagues	**0**	0	1	**0**	**5**	**14**
working colleagues	**3**	0	1	**3**	**6**	**7**
superior	**3**	0	0	**3**	**8**	**4**
friends	**0**	0	0	**0**	**4**	**9**
partner	**4**	0	1	**4**	**4**	**6**
parents	**1**	0	1	**1**	**4**	**6**
contact with others in general	**1**	0	0	**1**	**6**	**8**

Table 3: Tabular representation (top) and corresponding histogram (bottom) about the effects of the course on the quality of participants' interpersonal relationships

How meaningful were individual aspects/elements of the course on organizational development for you?
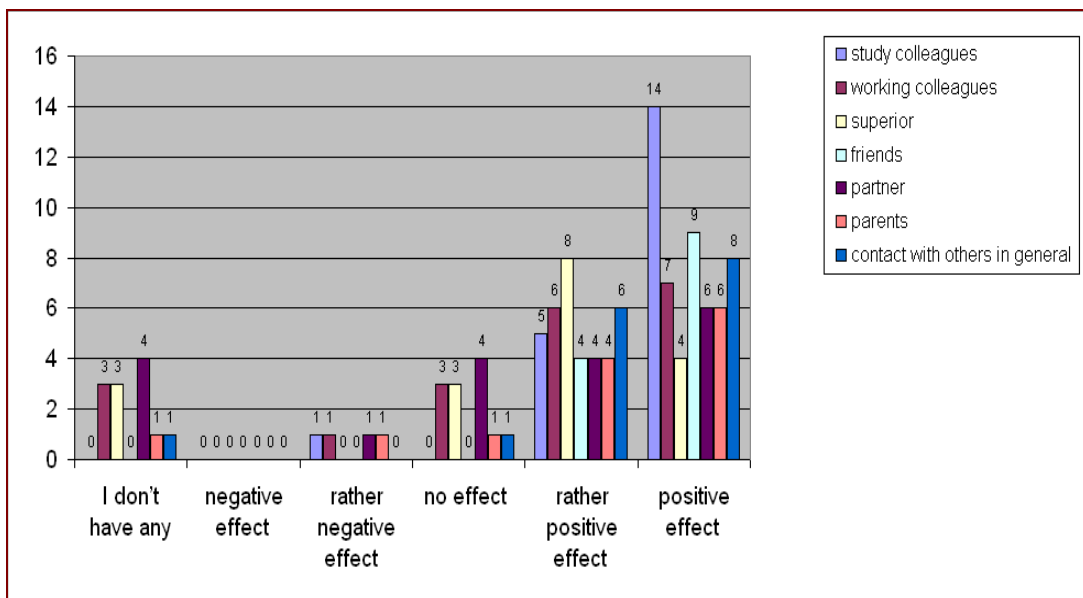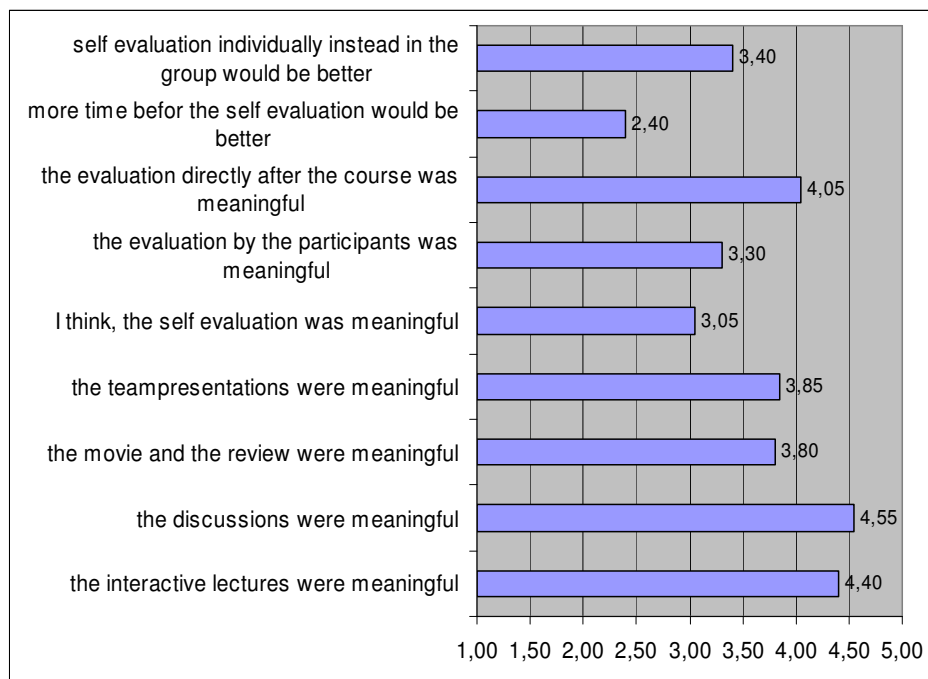

Table 4: Degree of meaning of individual elements of the course. Scales from 1 .. not meaningful to 5 .. very meaningful

There exist various reasons for participating in a course. Please indicate what motivated you to participate in the course on organizational development. I participated because ...

	Value
encouraging atmosphere	4,53
cooperation with peers was very collegial	4,53
time for exchange	4,60
active participation was possible	4,45
atmosphere/ working climate of the course	4,60
learning by autonomous activities	4,25
engaging style in which the course was conducted	4,60
collaboration with colleagues	4,60
motivating working atmosphere	4,30
instructor raises students' interest in the course content	4,40
my contributions were useful to my colleagues	3,85
enhancing practical skills	3,75
high practice orientation	4,05
possibility for autonomous contributions	4,35
engaging course design	4,40
relevance for job	3,70
professional competence	3,85
I like autonomous working	3,90
exchange with colleagues	4,15
self-initiative is rewarded	4,05
enhancing problem-solving ability	3,60

Table 5: Individual motivational aspects for students' participation in the course. Scales from 1 .. "does not apply at all" to 5 "applies highly"

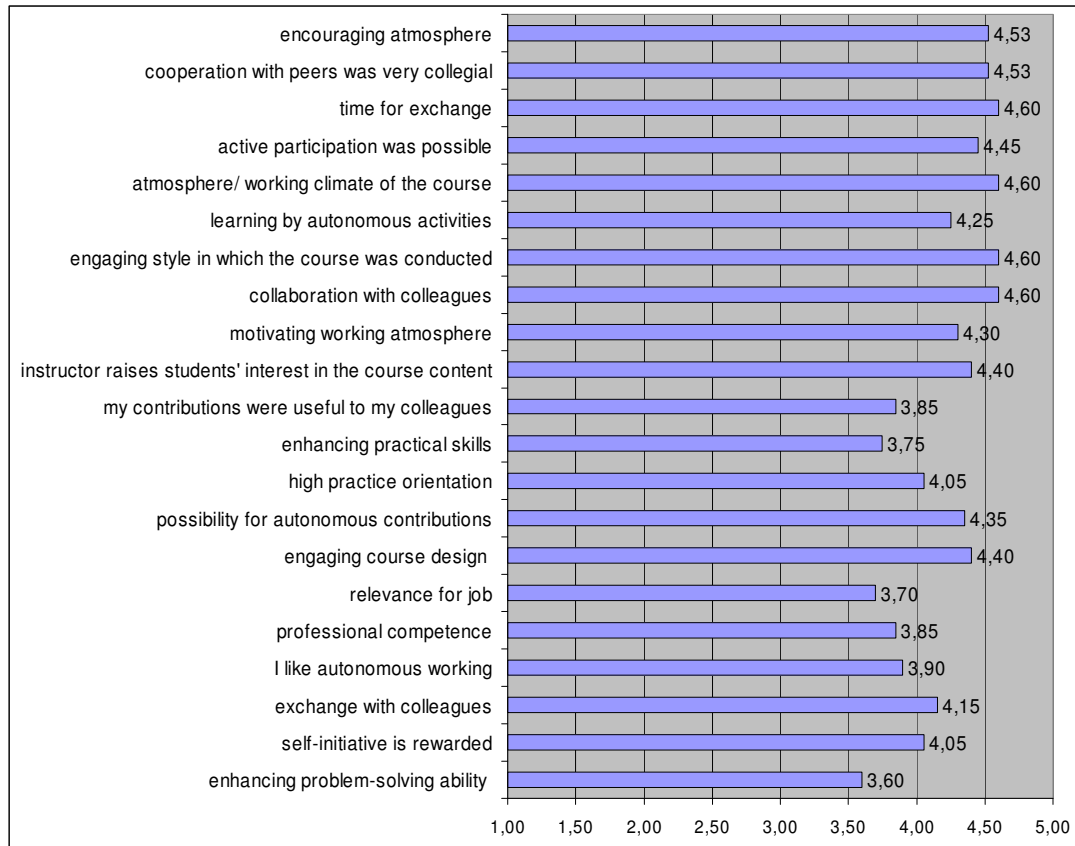From which aspects did you benefit in the course on organizational development?
In the course on organizational development I benefited from:

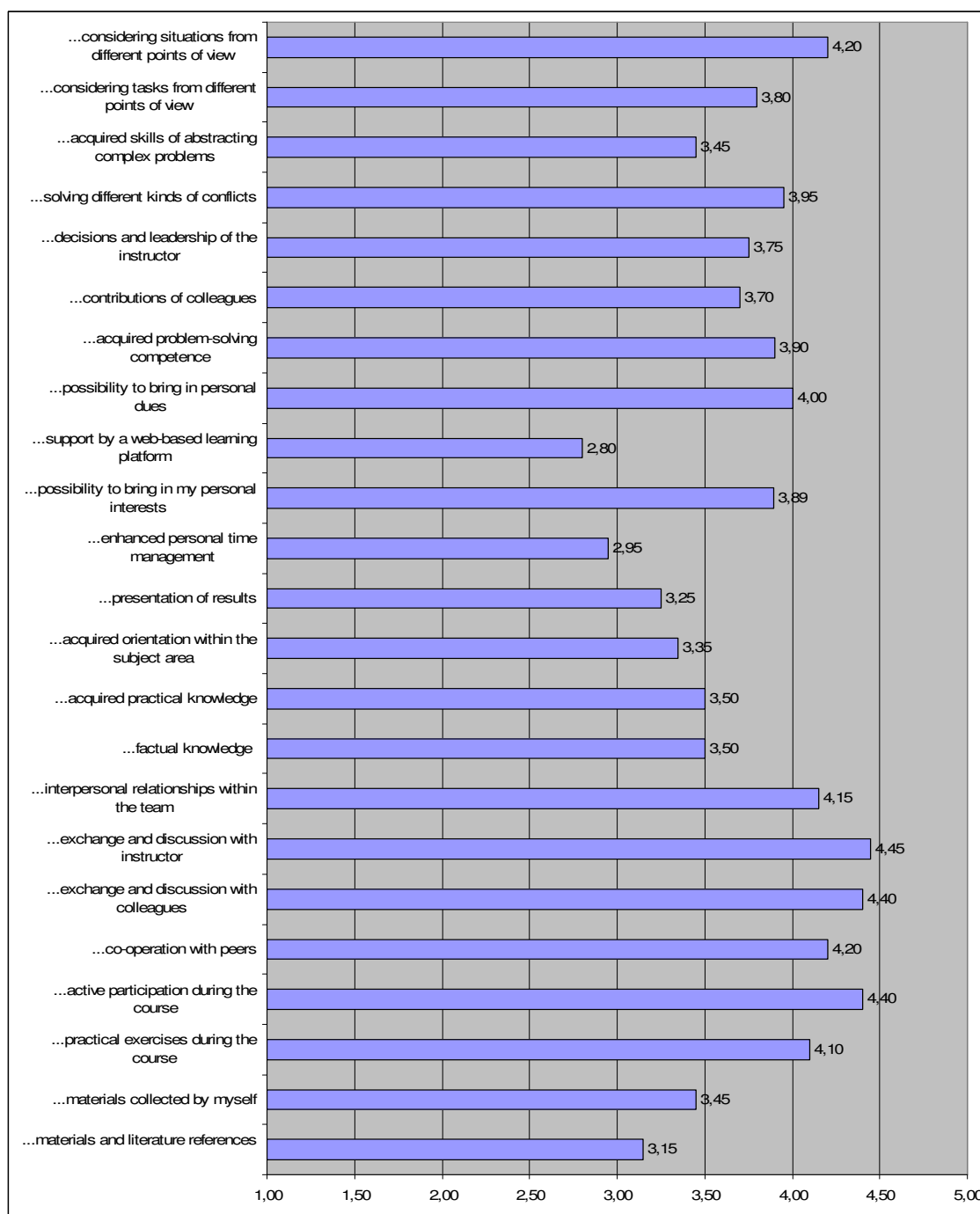| Aspect	Value
...considering situations from different points of view	4,20
...considering tasks from different points of view	3,80
...acquired skills of abstracting complex problems	3,45
...solving different kinds of conflicts	3,95
...decisions and leadership of the instructor	3,75
...contributions of colleagues	3,70
...acquired problem-solving competence	3,90
...possibility to bring in personal dues	4,00
...support by a web-based learning platform	2,80
...possibility to bring in my personal interests	3,89
...enhanced personal time management	2,95
...presentation of results	3,25
...acquired orientation within the subject area	3,35
...acquired practical knowledge	3,50
...factual knowledge	3,50
...interpersonal relationships within the team	4,15
...exchange and discussion with instructor	4,45
...exchange and discussion with colleagues	4,40
...co-operation with peers	4,20
...active participation during the course	4,40
...practical exercises during the course	4,10
...materials collected by myself	3,45
...materials and literature references	3,15

Table 6: Aspects from which students indicate to have benefited

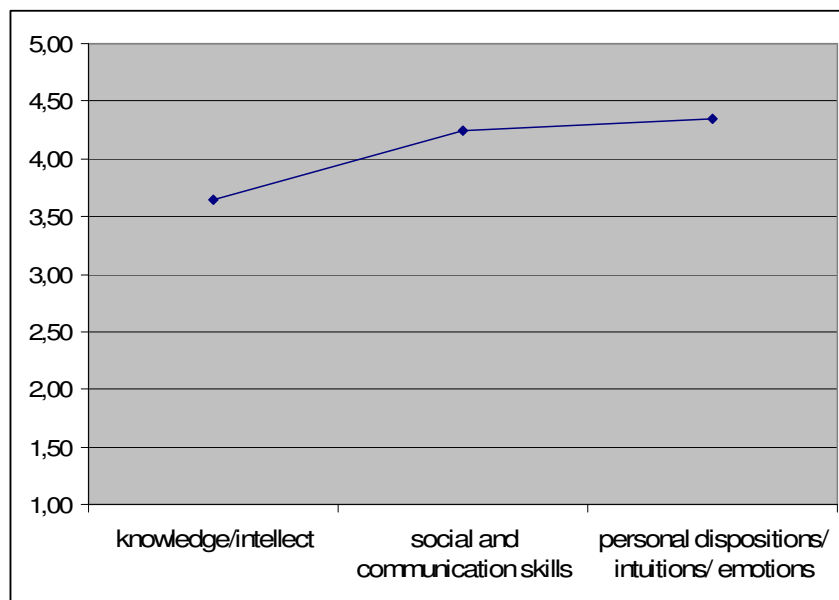Please indicate to what degree you have learned with respect to the three levels of learning

Table 7: Degree to which students estimate they have learned on the level of intellect, skills, and personality. Scales from 1 .. very little to 5 .. very much