REVISTA ESPACIOS

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Demotivation as a factor in the academic performance of EFL students in the Catholic University of Santiago de Guayaquil, Ecuador

La desmotivación en el desempeño académico de los estudiantes de EFL en la Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil, Ecuador

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Contents

ABSTRACT:

Students´ views on demotivating factors were examined on a multi-faced quantitative and qualitative basis, by surveys, interviews, and round-tables. Both student and teacher views were solicited. The lead demotivating factor identified was in relation to IT and audio-visual equipment, but there was a varied picture regarding teacher behaviour, with several different aspects identified. A list of actions was proposed to address the factors identified.
Keywords: demotivation, higher education, university, teaching, learning, English

RESUMEN:

El estudio pretendió descubrir los factores desmotivadores en los estudiantes de inglés en la Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil, y terminó con la propuesta de acciones a realizar para reducir sus efectos. Se incluyeron encuestas, entrevistas y mesas redondas, con la participación tanto de estudiantes como docentes. Estas técnicas cualitativas y cuantitativas garantizaron mayor rigurosidad científica y, por ende, más confiabilidad de los resultados. Los factores descubiertos por este estudio, debidamente analizados, permitirán, a través de las acciones recomendadas, una reducción en el índice de estudiantes con desempeño académico deficiente.
Palabras clave: desmotivación, educación superior, enseñanza, aprendizaje, inglés.

1. Introduction

1.1. The problem to be investigated

In the university`s EFL classes there is a wide variation in students` final grades at all levels of English, a systematic analysis had never been undertaken of the reasons for this dispersion, and no strategy had been planned for addressing the relatively low level of attainment of a percentage of the EFL students. The justifications for the investigation were

- The university responsibility to help its students perform optimally, and to eliminate obstacles and difficulties holding them back.

- The university should work efficiently and effectively, getting the best results possible, ensuring students are well prepared for success in post-university life.

- The university should work intelligently, continually analysing processes, and changing operations identified as imperfect so far as practicable.

- The beneficiaries would be students, who would receive a better education, and also teachers, who would be made aware of any negative or inefficient teaching strategies they were employing, and indeed the university authorities, who would be better able to plan changes in processes, resource provision, etc.

1.2. Literature review

To approach a definition of the concept of demotivation, it is necessary to differentiate it from absence of motivation, or, "amotivation". According to Deci and Ryan (1985), amotivation is the relative absence of motivation, which is not caused by the absence of initial interest, but the experience of feelings of incompetence or impotence when confronted by an activity. Ten years later, Ryan defined amotivation as the absence of intention to act as a result of not valuing an activity. (Ryan, 1995).

The concept of demotivation, according to Dörnyei (2005) refers to specific external forces which reduce or diminish the motivational base for behaviour. That is, if a motivational element is pushing forward, the corresponding demotivational element is opposing it as a negative force. Interestingly, studies undertaken on the theme of motivation tend to offer a degree of focus on amotivation, but hardly any on demotivation. Motivation itself is a term accorded varying meanings by different authors in different contexts, leaving an absence of clarity and some confusion. For the present study`s purposes, the following simple definitions were adopted: that motivation is anything which increases the will to do something, amotivation is the absence of such will, and demotivation is any element which reduces the will to do something.

1.3. Demotivation in the Teaching and Learning of Foreign Languages

A study undertaken in the Qingdao University of Science and Technology in China in 2009 includes a brief review of five previous investigations (Yan, 2009):

Christophel and Gorham (1995, 1992) asserted that demotivation results from actions by the teachers

Oxford (1998) identified four types of demotivating factor: the relationship between teacher and students, the attitude of the teacher toward the subject matter and teaching materials, conflicts of style between teacher and students and, lastly, the nature of the activities in the classroom. Thus, the role of the teacher as a demotivating factor is clearly recognised, among many others which may be present.

Chambers (1993) highlighted teachers ascribing blame for demotivation to students, and *vice versa*. Additionally, they underlined the importance of communication and cooperation between students and teachers.

Ushioda (1998), reported that interviewees attributed successes in their learning process o their own personal factors, but any absence of success to external factors, such as the teaching approach of the educational institution.

Dörnyei (1998) identified nine demotivating factors:

- The teacher (personality, commitment, competence, methodology)
- Very large class groups or those of an inappropriate level
- Frequent changes of teacher
- Reduction in self-confidence (resulting from experiences of failure of lack of success),
- Negative attitudes towards the language being learned
- Being under an obligation to study the language
- Interference from other languages
- Negative attitude on the part of the community towards the language in question
- Fellow students` attitudes

1.4. Variables

The only dependent variable was the performance, or achievement, of pupils studying EFL at all levels in the Catholic University of Guayaquil. The independent variables **were** the demotivating factors indicated by the students.

1.5. Hypothesis

The question put was: in the view of the students of all levels of EFL at the University, what are the principal demotivating factors, in learning English?

The factors included in the hypothesis were based on soft evidence gained from discussion and comment in class and between EFL teachers, and informal behavioural observation:

"The principal demotivators in the learning of English as a foreign language are (a) absence of adequate audio-visual equipment, (b) course books which appear not to be relevant, (c) suboptimal performance by teachers, (d) inadequate infrastructure, (e) students lacking maturity or sense of responsibility".

 In more detail, the factors listed were proposed for the following reasons:

(a) The students are "digital natives", accustomed to making full use of IT and audio-visual resources, with high expectations of such resource provision. Whether or not their wants under this head objectively exceed their needs or the needs of the teaching / learning process is irrelevant, as the project seeks to establish what they see as demotivating,

(b) The course books utilised are from US and UK publishers, reflecting Anglo-Saxon culture, and revealing a distance from Ecuadorian culture. The aim was to establish whether, in students' eyes, this was demotivating,

(c) Several antecedent surveys have shown students claiming, that some teachers' strategies, teaching styles, abilities and behaviours are demotivating. Given the varied characteristics of individual students in a typical EFL class and teachers given reasonable flexibility as to how they teach, it would be surprising if this were not to be seen as a factor,

(d) Classrooms are often full and facilities under pressure. While a good teacher, able to create a good teaching/learning atmosphere, can perform successfully in such circumstances, it is possible that some students-as-customers may have a negative perception,

(e) While students may criticise teachers' styles, abilities and strategies, it is also evident that some students are not in class to work, and demonstrate immature behaviour or attitudes. It is a fortunate teacher who does not have some students falling into this "more challenging" category, but the harder-working, or more motivated or capable student also notices each time he/she is kept waiting for others to catch up or sees progress hindered by unhelpful behaviour on the part of some students. The project would ascertain to what extent this was seen to be off-putting or demotivating.

1.6. Evidence-based Scientific Approach

In formulating the hypothesis, the investigators were conscious of the risk attached to failure to test plausibility. The majority of such investigations have simply identified the factors by carrying out inquiries among students, and/or teachers, statistically analysing the results, and then listing the principal demotivating factors identified. This approach is unsatisfactory as it is not supported by evidence as to the accuracy or correctness of the respondents` comments. Respondents to a survey assert what they wish to assert. Such assertions may or may not be accompanied by the belief that they are true. Statements of belief may reflect a sincerely-held belief, or wish for something to be so. Or comments may be based on a hope that they will bring about a desired result, such as the removal of a teacher, or that new course books are purchased. Therefore, not complete confidence should be placed in the named factors.

There are other considerations which may prompt a belief that factors identified in surveys may not necessarily be significant demotivating factors. For example, some respondents give untruthful responses to surveys because they do not want to provide replies which are "unacceptable". This is the theory of the "spiral of silence" (Noelle-Neumann 1991) which holds that many respondents do not provide their true opinions for fear of being excluded or isolated by other group members as a result of making comments outside the group`s conventional or common wisdom. There is an increasing body of well-known examples to support this theory, such as the unexpected result of the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom, the referendum on the subject of independence for Scotland, the referendum in Colombia regarding an agreement reached with the FARC guerrilla group and, of course, the presidential election in the United States in which Donald Trump was victorious. In each case, the opinion polls` results were wide of the mark, which has been in large measure, although not entirely, attributed to this phenomenon.

It is not, however, to be taken that there is no value in such opinions or assertions. But, the only scientific way to achieve a higher level of confidence in the value of the results is to trial them. If changes are carried out to the factors highlighted by the respondents as demotivating factors - the independent variables - and there is no change in the distribution of the students' final grades - the dependent variable - it may reasonably be concluded that the factors indicated by the respondents are incorrect. And if, on the other hand, grades improve following the changes, it may be concluded that they are probably correct. One cannot go beyond "probably", as there are always other factors changing in an academic environment which may affect the position.

2. Methodology

2.1. Multifaceted Approach

At the start, an analysis was undertaken of all the final grades attained by EFL students at the university, covering all EFL levels and all teachers for the academic year preceding that of the investigation

A formal survey was undertaken of a representative sample of 335 EFL students of the Languages Centre of the Catholic University of Santiago de Guayaquil, asking them to indicate their agreement or disagreement with a list of possible demotivating factors. In general terms, these factors were grouped under the headings of:

- teacher
- students
- classroom physical environment
- learning materials
- evaluation process

Within each of the above categories were listed a variety of detailed proposed demotivating factors, with the students invited to indicate their view on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".

1- A quantitative analysis was carried out of the results of the survey to establish which proposed factors met with the highest degree of agreement.

2- A more informal and less structured series of round table conversation were arranged with samples of EFL students in which there was "light-touch" guidance as to the topic to be covered, but with more time to bring up, discuss and probe opinions, ideas and suggestions in some depth.

3- A qualitative analysis was done of the results of the round table interviews, with focus to a lesser extent on the frequency of comments and to a greater extent on their range.

4- An analysis was then made of the quantitative and qualitative results in order to arrive at an overall indication of which demotivating factors were prioritised by the respondents and whether, with reference to the project hypothesis, there could be said to be a consensus or whether there were significant variations in the factors selected as between different subgroups.

5- The final stage of the investigation consisted in preparing a list of recommendations for changes to be made, which focussed upon the areas indicated as problematic in the surveys.

All the above stages are explained in greater detail below.

2.2. Analysis of Grades

A report was produced showing the final grades obtained by EFL students at the end of the preceding academic year, including the total population of such students, and all EFL levels, from English 1 (basic) to English 6 (advanced), and students from all of the university faculties required to take EFL as a compulsory course as a precondition of graduating.

The graphical analysis employed concentrated on the distribution of the final grades, as distinct from the absolute grade levels. This was in order to avoid the issue of grade difference due to some teachers marking more strictly, and some more generously. The grades in question are a composite of classwork, homework, the process known as "tutorias", which refers to a compulsory element of the carrying out of investigations on set topic(s) by individual or groups of students, culminating in the production of written reports also presentations, and, finally, the taking of oral and formal written examinations. Given this range of activities, there is significant scope, even within the written examinations, for teacher subjectivity in grading. This is within a context of considerable flexibility for teachers in terms of how they are to evaluate their students. Evaluation strategies are seen as an important topic for a further investigation with close linkage to the present project.

2.3. Field Research

The field research was undertaken in the University during the summer of 2017, and focussed on the views of the principal actors, namely the students. There are other actors in the scenario, namely, the teachers, university authorities, students' parents and family members and, indeed, the government, and the social and cultural characteristics of the area. All of them may exert an influence on the learning / teaching process and, by way of their actions, or lack of actions, their priorities, attitudes or pressures, may create obstacles or demotivating factors affecting the EFL students. There is no need here to illustrate and list these; suffice to say that, for reasons of budgetary limits, time availability, and with an eye to the feasibility and practicability of formulating recommendations for actions which would be capable of implementation and taking effect within the short term in order to facilitate the follow-up investigation, (as to which, please see below) the investigation was limited to the group most closely and directly connected, namely the students.

2.4. Survey Design and Derivation

The survey model was developed by way of consideration and analysis of preceding investigations, with the intention of maintaining a degree of continuity and comparability. The selection of survey models on demotivation is limited in comparison with those dealing with motivation. The available models derive from distant countries with different cultures to that of Ecuador. Indeed, it was not possible to locate a survey relating to this theme in the

context of higher education within the Latin American region. The examples investigated included projects in Saudi Arabia, Finland, China, South Korea, Japan and Iran.

A five-point Likert scale was employed in the survey. There is a range of opinion as to the relative merits and demerits of four, five, six, seven or more point Likert scales. The five-point was chosen for the reasons that the relative popularity of this model would permit greater ease of comparison and also that the researchers felt comfortable with the notion that respondents should not be obliged to agree or disagree with a proposition when in reality they had no particular view on it or perhaps felt that it could be argued either way. The survey was worded in Spanish because it was responded to by the whole range of students from basic to advanced and it was essential that they should all be fully able to understand the precise meaning of each asserted factor. For the same reason, the round-table conversations with students were also conducted in Spanish.

A brief pilot was arranged, with a small number of students from a spread of EFL levels, to ensure that all questions were understood, that the demotivating factors listed were clearly worded and not open to misinterpretation, and that the instructions for use of the 5-point Likert scale were followed correctly. This stage resulted in some minor alterations to the final format to be used in the survey.

The "universe" was all the students who had taken "regular" EFL courses in the Language Centre in the academic year in which the project was undertaken, excluding the minority who had taken intensive classes. The former are spread over 16 weeks at 3 hours per week, whereas the latter are available to a small number of students who, for logistical or timing reasons, need to take the course in a compressed timescale, covering the same ground and the same total hours as the normal courses, but utilising lessons of 4 or 5 hours each. The latter courses were considered to be sufficiently different in terms of the challenge to students as to be excluded from the present investigation. Intensive courses are a topic worthy of their own separate investigation.

In terms of selection of respondents for the sample, the relative advantages and disadvantages of random and quota have been well documented and do not need to be rehearsed here. The sample selection mechanism for the survey was driven by what was feasible and practicable, given the restricted timescale available. A randomised approach was considered to be impracticable in the view of the fact that previous surveys undertaken on such a basis at the university had produced a low response rate among the students selected, and, given the highly-dispersed nature of the population in all the university`s faculties, any follow-up strategy to prompt for responses would not have been feasible. Therefore, a form of quota approach was used, driven by (a) the need to poll students from all EFL levels taught, from basic to advanced, and, (b) the need to ensure representation of classes taught by a range of teachers. These two requirements were reflected in the methodology of selecting classes complying with the requirements, visiting them while they were in session and asking all students present in the class to complete the forms, while the researcher waited. This had the advantage of achieving a representative sample, with high response rate. A disadvantage was that only students actually present could be polled, so absent pupils - who possibly may have contained a disproportionate percentage of the demotivated - could not respond. The sample did not attempt to be representative for gender, age, or faculty of origin, in view of the fact that the university´s grading database does not offer reports on such splits.

The total population of relevant students was 2586 and the sample size was calculated on the basis of a 5% margin of error and 95% desired level of confidence. On this basis, a sample size of 335 resulted.

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3. Results

The formal survey consisted of 42 assertions as to possible demotivating factors, and respondents were invited to grade them on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from Totally Disagree to Totally Agree. They were grouped into 5 headings:

Teacher

In keeping with the general approach of antecedent investigations, the largest group of proposed factors was ascribed to teachers, with a total of 18 out of the total of 42. It seemed reasonable to do so in view of the teacher´s prominent role in the teaching/learning process. The factors listed touched on the knowledge and ability of the teacher, the teaching style, his/her attitude and level of enthusiasm, relationship with the students, and the general atmosphere generated within the classroom.

Student

This group of 10 factors was seen as the opportunity for respondents to indicate difficulties or problems experienced by the students on their own account, in relation to fellow students in class, and difficulties in regard to the EFL subject *per se*.

Classroom environment

Four factors were listed under this head. The term "environment" referred to the physical characteristics of the classroom, in relation to size, convenience and equipment.

Course content and materials

This section, containing three listed factors, invited comment on the course books, non-course book activity, and use of cell phones for educational purposes.

Evaluation process

Seven factors were listed here. They focussed upon the two main activities of student evaluation which were compulsory, that is to say, that of the formal examination, which is largely written, but with an oral element, and also the perhaps misleadingly named "tutoría", which is research activity, to be undertaken individually or in groups, with a requirement to produce written reports and also formal presentation to the class. The third element of evaluation, which is classwork and homework, was not specifically referred to, as there is a much greater level of flexibility and choice available to the teacher in how to manage this activity, and therefore variation in practice, and so little light would be shed by inviting students to agree or disagree with particular factors in this connection.

A graphical analysis of the results was undertaken. In keeping with the view taken as to the provisional nature of the results, it was necessary to avoid spurious statistical accuracy in the analysis. Consequently, simple bar charts were employed, showing, for each listed assertion, the number of respondents indicating each of the five points on the Likert scale. These showed which factors were supported, those which were not supported, and those in which there was a balanced spread between disagreement and agreement.

Six round table conversations were held, each with groups of six EFL students, representing all EFL levels taught, so as to match the character of the survey sample. Each conversation was approximately 60 minutes, and was recorded and transcribed in full. In contrast to the formal survey, the conversations were qualitative rather than quantitative in focus, with participants being given a light-touch guide as to the themes to be covered. These were the same main headings as those of the formal survey. A "saturation point" approach was adopted and the conversations were terminated when it was felt by the researcher that no new aspects or views were being raised. A listed analysis was prepared of the main demotivating factors identified by the students, arranged under the five main theme headings indicated.

4. Conclusions

4.1. Overall conclusions

The two sets of findings from the quantitative and qualitative inquiries were then brought together. A different approach was taken to the comparatively detailed statistical analysis employed in most previous investigations on demotivation. This was a hybrid approach, and, given the investigators' view that responses to the inquiry were an amalgam of true statements, opinion, positions proceeding from respondents' varied personal agendas and also the spiral of silence previously referred to, and that the results were to be subsequently

tested by making appropriate changes and then measuring the results of those changes, there was no point at the survey stage in pursuing a level of disproportionate statistical accuracy. And while it is possible to apply certain quantitative analysis approaches to a qualitative inquiry in order to measure frequency of repetitive points made in discussion responses, it was considered to have limited value here in view of the fact that the investigation had already included a formal survey targeted at the same population, which was analysed quantitatively.

The following were the factors found by the respondents to be priorities, as conveyed by way of the two parts of the inquiry. The order of the list reflects that of the order in which the main themes were raised in the two inquiries, rather than an order of priority:

(a) absence of adequate audio-visual equipment

The factor with the greatest level of agreement in the formal survey, and which received significant backing in the conversations, was the students' perception that there was inadequate provision in terms of Wi-Fi, computers, and audio-visual equipment. Students appeared to favour a higher level of usage of digital material, using their cell phones and laptops or tablets to seek information, as well as the use of videos for variety. This is a somewhat broadened-out demotivating factor than that specifically of the audio-visuals indicated in the hypothesis.

(b) course books which appear not to be relevant

This proposition was not supported by the responses to the formal survey, with considerably more students in disagreement than in agreement. However, there was greater support for the affirmation that "insufficient complementary material is used in class, only the books". That is to say, the books were not seen as fully stimulating and motivating and that teachers were seen as not providing sufficient alternative activity. However, it was indicated by participants in the conversations that the books were old, with out-of-date references, and that it would be helpful to have digital versions.

(c) suboptimal performance by teachers

There were mixed results in the part of the survey dealing with teacher behaviour and teaching strategies, with no consensus surrounding any individual proposition. This topic is of course fairly subjective and much depends on the individual pupil`s point of view and preferences, or abilities. Students expressed concern about various different factors. For example, some said that teachers spoke too much English during the class, while others considered they spoke too much Spanish. Similarly, some thought they set too fast a pace, and others that they advanced too slowly. In the conversations, views were advanced that some teachers appeared to be demotivated themselves, and lacking in enthusiasm. Clearly, the identification of factors which demotivate teachers is a separate topic from student demotivators, and merits investigation, but, although it might be supposed that a demotivated teacher may act as a demotivating factor for students, and this was listed as one of the propositions, the formal survey did not see general support from students for this as a factor.

Echoing discussion surrounding part (a) of the hypothesis, round table respondents said that some teachers did not make enough use of the digital technology available. This is an important point because upgrades to the technology would not serve a purpose if teachers did not utilise them. On the other hand, teachers may quite legitimately hold differing views as to the level of digital activity desirable to achieve a successful learning/teaching experience and indeed different views to those held by students on this point. They might also consider that their level of use of digital activity would be contingent upon improved provision.

(d) inadequate infrastructure

This topic referred to the physical environment of the classrooms, apart from technical and IT equipment. There was support for the propositions that this was demotivating insofar as several classrooms were very full, which was uncomfortable. The type of furniture in some classrooms, consisting of conventional tables and separate chairs, appeared to be

acceptable, but some classrooms were equipped with chairs incorporating individual small work surfaces and, although many of them were new, they were considered uncomfortable.

(e) *students lacking maturity or sense of responsibility*

The students did not support any of the proposed factors, however, there was considerable support for assertions that they did not have opportunities to practice hearing and speaking English outside the classroom and the difficulty of studying it in their free time. Even if a proportion of students may not have family members or friends who can speak English, there are nevertheless many opportunities to watch films in English with or without subtitles on Netflix, You Tube, etc., along with all manner of other internet resources and platforms, including many English language television channels, and so it does appear that there are students who are held back by their lack of drive or immaturity, so that they do not learn unless obliged to do so in class.

In light of the above comments, it was concluded that the demotivating factors in the hypothesis were validated to a reasonable extent, although not totally. With the hypothesis reasonably validated, it is possible to detect links with results of previous studies:

- The work of Gorham and Christophel (1995, 1992) attributed student demotivation to teachers` actions and behaviour.

- The investigation by Oxford (1998) identified four types of demotivating factors: the relationship between teacher and student, the teacher, the teacher`s attitude toward the EFL topic and the teaching material, conflicts of style between teacher and students, and the nature of classroom activities. This result required the recognition of the status of teacher-as-demotivator, among many other possible demotivators.

- The investigation by Chambers (1993) undertaken in the University of Leeds, in the United Kingdom, found teachers blaming students and vice versa. It also established the importance of communication and co-operation as between teachers and students.

- In the qualitative investigation by Ushioda (1998), respondents attributed their learning successes to their own personal abilities, but any failures were seen as being due to external factors, such as the institution´s teaching framework.

- The study by Dörnyei (1998) identified nine demotivating factors:

- The teacher (personality, level of commitment, ability, methodology),
- Very large groups or those with an inappropriate level of knowledge,
- Frequent changes of teacher,
- Reduction in self-confidence (due to experience of failure, or lack of success),
- Negative attitudes toward the language being taught,
- The compulsory nature of the language course,
- Other language(s) interference,
- Negative attitudes toward the culture from which the language in question derives,
- Fellow students` attitudes or the course textbook.

In many respects, the results of the present investigation accord with those of previous ones, indicating that there is a range of generic demotivating factors which transcend cultural differences. Nevertheless, studies carried out in the `90`s could not take fully into account the impact of digital technology two decades later.

4.2. Recommendations

The recommendations were intended to support and improve the teaching/learning process in the Language Centre, and provide the basis for scientific testing of the factors asserted. The following listed actions were an initial brief indication. In all cases, in the course of preparation of the corresponding action plan, they were to be worked up into greater detail, with a view to being costed and incorporated into the Language Centre´s development programme.

To address the lack of adequate audio visual equipment:

- an inventory should be taken of existing equipment

- unsatisfactory equipment must be replaced
- the existing Wi-Fi system should be extended to provide full coverage
- existing programmes of equipment maintenance must be reviewed
- training must be provided for teachers in use of such equipment to enable maximum utilisation

To address the absence of relevant course books:

- a review needs to be undertaken of available course books to replace existing
- mechanisms should be established for periodic review of appropriateness of books in use
- changes should be introduced to assist teachers in employment of alternative materials and activities in class

To address suboptimal performance by teachers:

- A continuing training programme should be arranged for teachers, on multiple themes, with particular emphasis on classroom management skills, on the needs of pupils requiring specialised support, and consultation of teachers can be carried out to seek their proposals for training topics.
- University-wide mechanisms for provision of equipment for students with special needs to be reviewed
- An investigation should be undertaken into the methods and tools employed for evaluation of student progress to ensure they are appropriate to present-day requirements
- Classroom practice observations by academic co-ordinators can provide the opportunity of supporting individual teachers who may be displaying signs of stress or difficulty.
- An investigation should be undertaken into the factors causing demotivation among teachers.

To address inadequate infrastructure:

- a review should be undertaken of the arrangements and layouts of all classrooms with a view to changing the furniture and facilities to provide greater flexibility in use and also to improve illumination and decoration.
- A meeting can be held with the Faculty of Architecture & Design to coordinate studies by the faculty´s interior design students to provide advice and help.

To address students´ lack of maturity and responsibility:

- A group of pilots can be undertaken by different teachers to test the appropriateness of the existing application of compulsory attendance requirements in classes, in which the requirement would be relaxed, and accompanied by varying levels of computer platform support. The aim would be to observe the effect on student behaviour of granting them an increased level of independence and responsibility for their learning.

In view of the fact that development and change is continuous in any complex organisation that aspires to process improvement, and that such activity does not stand still just because an investigation is taking place, the project`s conclusions are a snapshot at a particular point in time. Nevertheless, the proposition and intention remain that the indicated demotivation-factor-related actions be instituted and that when they have been substantially implemented, and a reasonable time period for "bedding in" has passed, further work be undertaken, namely, analysis and comparison of students` grades achieved in the corresponding academic year with those achieved prior to commencement of the investigation, and a conclusion as to whether the demotivating factors provisionally identified in this investigation are wholly or partly validated. If considered appropriate, a further investigation may then be undertaken.

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