

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF INSTRUCTOR PUPIL-PILOT RELATIONSHIP

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Common complaints of the pupil-pilots, like headaches, air sickness and similar complaints psychological in origin, during the various stages of their flying training have some connection with Instructor/pupil-pilot relationship. The would-be pilots' efficiency and future career depend considerably on this relationship. It is not my intention to criticise any of the existing systems, but it is my earnest desire to make every one conscious of the psychological aspects of Instructors/pupil-pilot relationship which are so vital for efficient flying training.

Psychology of a Pupil-pilot

Before we go into the details of the subject, let us consider the psychology of pupil-pilots under training at our flying colleges. Mostly these young men come from the lower middle class to upper middle class although a few belong to rich families. Their educational standard is Matriculation/Senior Cambridge, but some may have completed their first year in Arts or Science colleges before they enter. With the new system, a few join the Flying colleges after an initial training at N. D. A. or N. C. C. Some others are from the ranks with one or two years service in the I. A. F. as airmen.

From the questions asked to these pupil-pilots at the time of their medical examination at C. M. B., it has been revealed that only one to two cadets out of every ten have their motivation as flying, whereas the remaining eight to nine take up flying career for various reasons. First and foremost of such reasons is "to be a commissioned officer," which along with the glamour of a Commission, includes also the mercenary side. Next comes the love of Air Force uniform, patriotism, and keeping up of the ancestral tradition. In short, the motivation of the majority of cadets at this stage is other than "Love for flying". There are only a few who have joined the Air Force purely because they are interested in flying.

It will be realised that motivation plays an important part in any kind of job or work. Motivation creates interest in the work and the interest thus produced increases the efficiency. Thus to achieve best results, the primary motivation of these youngsters has to be "Flying". It may be argued that there is a possibility of the motivation being altered by moulding the young mind and the young cadet may easily be influenced by his colleagues whose motivation is flying. Also, the introduction of N. C. C. may help these youngmen to be "Air-minded," but the results of these cannot be assessed at this stage.

Parents' Influence.

Flying is not so popular in our country, therefore, some parents are still reluctant to permit their sons to take up 'Flying' as a career, with the result that quite a few of these

youngmen join the Flying colleges against the wishes of their parents. Probably before these sons have left their homes, the parents have already instilled into them the dangers of flying or fear complex.

Thus, we have the young boy, leaving behind his parents at the age of 17—18, who is not yet fully mature physically and mentally joining the Flying college to venture on a new career in his life. Right from the start he has a certain amount of apprehension, a few complexes and probably a fright of the entirely new environment. These continue until he has adapted himself and acclimatized to the new mode of life. He is in no way an exception to our sensitiveness and even the slightest amount of shouting by the Instructors may upset him. A cadet having previous service experience or training at N. D. A. is a shade or two better off. After preliminary training on ground subjects varying from 6 to 8 weeks, the pupil commences his flying training.

In the meantime, those cadets who have entered against the wishes of their parents start getting letters from them to leave the College and return to their homes to take up another career. The frequency of such letters increases, particularly after a recent aircraft accident either at the College or elsewhere in the I. A. F. Thus, at these initial stages a mental conflict starts in the mind of these youngmen which puts off their concentration on flying and their performance in flying training deteriorates. It is a well-known fact that flying at all times requires a thorough concentration, especially during the initial stages. It is, therefore, important that the mind should be completely free from any kind of pre-occupation or mental worries and anxieties. If the mental conflict, as stated above, is constantly playing on his mind, his performance at the "Stick" would be hopelessly bad. This is the time when the common symptoms of headache and airsickness appear as psychological manifestations.

Qualities of a Flying Instructor

Flying Instructors' task involves considerable amount of responsibility. Since the pupils regard him as 'Ideal' in every respect and follow him during flying, on the ground, in and outside the Mess, he should be a man of ideal qualities or at least as near to it.

In any kind of training the three essentials are kindness, firmness and patience. In addition to these three qualities the instructor must be fully mature enough to understand his pupils and study their psychology. He must be a man who is temperamentally suitable for instructional duties and who is interested in teaching.

He should be above average pilot and Q. F. I. with full confidence in himself and with good flying experience as well as general service experience. His sense of judgment should be sound and he should not possess strong likes and dislikes. Similarly, he should be an Officer with stable personality who can easily adapt himself to the needs of the pupil. He should be a man who is capable of expressing himself clearly without any verbosity or vagueness and who does not indulge in swearing and showing off.

Responsibility of Medical Officer.

In his primary duty of "Care of the Flyer", the S. M. O. at the Flying college has a special responsibility. He has to keep a close watch on these young pupil-pilots and study carefully their personality and reactions to the new environment of Service life as well as flying training. He can take these cadets into confidence by frequent talks and interviews and help them to get rid of their apprehension and fear and other complexes. The pupil-pilots who have just started flying training may report to him sick with various complaints which may be psychological in origin. He has to reassure the cadets and create confidence in themselves.

At the same time, the Medical officer has to be in constant touch with the Instructors, C.F. I. and C. I. and should be able to discuss freely individual pupil-pilot's case. He can thus assist in fostering the relationship between the Instructor and the pupil-pilot. The M. O. could advise the Instructors on the cases of airsickness and similar psychological complaints and this sort of liaison, by experience has proved quite successful in the cure of such cases.

Conclusion

Good relationship between the Instructor and the pupil-pilot is very essential to obtain the best results at our Flying colleges. The Instructor must study each of his pupils and be able to understand clearly their problems and psychological background. Furthermore, considering that the present day Instructors are responsible to produce the ace-pilots of the future, it is important that they themselves should be of very high standard.

The Medical officer would be a great help in nurturing this relationship and in advising the Instructor on individual cadets and their difficulties. In doing so, he would also find the remedial measures. All these facts, no doubt, are known to most of us, but experience has shown that very few are put into actual practice.

Recommendations

1. Select the right type of Instructors who are interested in teaching and who are temperamentally suitable.
2. There should be an inducement given to the Instructors by way of extra allowance or similar reward given for producing above-average pilots.
3. F.I.S. Course for Instructors should include a short course of lectures on the understanding of human mind and its problems. Also a few lectures on "Morale" would help.
4. Medical officer at the Flying colleges should be an experienced, well versed in Psychiatry and Psychology. Alternately, a qualified Psychiatrist should be attached to the College.