# **Purpose in Life and Professional Life Project in College Students**

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### Abstract

The objective of this study was to determine the relation between the level of purpose in life and the level of dominion obtained by the students in the construction of a professional life project; after the implementation of a course based on the Logotherapy approach, which lasted a total of 64 hours. The areas worked were self-discovery, unicity, freedom, responsibility and self-transcendence. Logotherapeutic techniques of Socratic dialogue, role playing and cinema-logotherapy were used. The objective was to redirect the work carried out with students of the Bachelor Degree in Education at a Public University in the State of Yucatan, so that they could be aware of themselves, discover their potential and find their mission in life to give meaning to their chosen profession. The design of the study was preexperimental, pretest-post-test, without control group; and the meaning of life test was administered to identify the level of Purpose in Life of the students. A rubric was used to evaluate the professional life projects that were developed by the students. The results showed that there is no relation between the level of Purpose in Life and the development of the professional life project, since the strengthening of the Purpose in Life did not necessarily imply the development of a professional life project in accordance with the potentials of the students, neither they managed to establish clear goals and specific commitments to achieve their goals.

Keywords: Education, Logotherapy Purpose in Life, Professional life project, Young people

### INTRODUCTION

Higher education needs to develop a new model of education, based on a student-centered approach; therefore, it is necessary to make profound reforms as well as to extend the access policies to the diversity of people; to renew the contents, methods, practices and means of transmission of knowledge which must be based on new forms of collaboration between the community and the different sectors of the society

#### (UNESCO, 1998).

In this regard, Mexico faces important challenges in education, which involves improving the quality of educational services; to increase the levels of academic achievement, to reduce dropout rates and to provide equal access opportunities to education for children and underprivileged young people, and from indigenous families (Organization for cooperation and economic development, 2010).

The need to strengthen the Mexican educational system is stablished in the National Development Plan (2013-2018), as well as the need to provide the students with a quality education, which promotes their integral development, through innovation and the development of their human potential, and enabling them to write their own success story.

Higher education should be directed towards the development of competencies required for democratic, social and economic development, therefore, each student must obtain a solid mastery of disciplines and values corresponding to different professions (SEP - 2013-2018 education sector program). As well as to focus their efforts on providing learners the appropriate conditions for the full development of their potential, values, ecological awareness and citizenship. To strengthen the learner's skills in the management of their affections and emotions; and to contribute in the development of their values (SEP - sectoral education program, 2007-2012).

From this perspective, the Autonomous University of Yucatán focuses its efforts in developing the potential of students in the five dimensions of a human being, physical, emotional, cognitive, social and value-attitudinal. Its purpose is to contribute to a comprehensive training proposed in its educational model for the Integral Education (MEFI, 2012).

Therefore, institutions of higher education (IES), need to develop programs focused on addressing the holistic development of young people's recently admitted to the University, as well as to support them in their adaptation and proper transition in the educational program.

Consequently, it is important for young people to have a professional project that provide them with direction and guidance in their studies.

In this regard, Rojas (2004), says that education should focus on helping people identify their strengths, personal resources and values, enabling them to build a professional project, based on the development of their potential; likewise, according to Alejos and Sandoval (2010), it is a pillar that guides the training and development of human beings.

Along this line of thought, the school plays a relevant role in the training of students, since it must provide spaces for the development of attitudes and values that allow the learners to find a purpose in their life, as Frankl (2004), says that the meaning of life, also known as the purpose in life, represents a guide for the full development of man, and as a motivation or reason that drives people towards the achievement of a particular purpose.

So, when young people manage to find a purpose in their lives, activities are meaningful for them, they feel motivated and capable of stable commitments and respond to the construction of their professional life project, where the dreams, aspirations, goals, objectives and specific actions are structured and reflected, thus giving direction to the studies and promoting their proper decision making.

Studies carried out with college students show that people who have a purpose in their lives, perceive themselves as capable and responsible for their own lives (Magaña, Zavala, Ibarra, Gómez and Gómez, 2014), which can be seen through the establishments of goals according with their values (Kashdan and McKnight, 2009).

Also, Damon (2009), says that young people who have defined their purpose in life, find true relevance and significance in their academic experience, as well as in the tasks and demands of the academic institution. So that the students should have support networks, as well as personal tools to facilitate the

planning of their life in the future, with greater personal awareness and clarity in their purposes (Druet, Chan and Seville, 2013).

In a way that, it is precisely during the youth when self-determination is manifested in the lives of young people, leading to the choice of a profession, which constitutes one of the most important moments in their lives and in the development of a project of life (D'Angelo, 1986).

A life project is therefore a key aspect that guides, both the formation of the individual, as well as their human development. Since it represents an alternative in the lives of young people, which allows them to consider real goals and objectives towards a defined direction and which facilitates achieving them. (Alejos and Sandoval, 2010).

Therefore a professional project aims is: that students increase their degree of self-knowledge as well as exploring the closest career fields to the studies developed in general and finally determine the professional objectives, personal and material resources required for the developent of their project (Gallegos, 2005).

In this regard, the learners will be able to design a project of professional life, according to the level of self-discovery, so that they will be able to set goals based on their interests, skills, attitudes, values and knowledge acquired to guide their academic and professional development, especially in the early stages of their studies; which will also contribute to their integration and adaptation to the college environment.

Therefore, Purpose in Life is a motivator in the life of the people that allows them to guide their lives through establishing clear goals based on the development of their talents for the development of a project of professional life. The purpose of this paper is to determine the relation between both constructs, based on the teaching of a course designed with the logotherapy approach.

### **OBJECTIVES**

#### General Objective

To establish the relationship between the purpose in life level and domain-level obtained in the rubric to assess the development of the professional life project, after attending a course based on the logotherapy approach.

#### Specific Objectives

To identify the Purpose in Life level of students recently admitted into a Bachelor's degree in Education at a public University in the State of Yucatan.

To design a rubric to assess the level of domain obtained by the students in the construction of a professional life project.

### METHODOLOGY

#### A. Type of Study

A type of descriptive transactional study was used, consisting of measuring, evaluating or collecting data on different concepts, characteristics, dimensions or components of a phenomenon to investigate and that can be put under analysis (Hernández, Fernández and Baptista, 2006)

#### B. Design

The study design was of the type pre-test/post-test without a control group, which consisted of first administering a stimulus test or trial treatment, later on, the treatment test was administered again and at the end the stimulus was given a subsequent test called post-test. The use of this type of design, has an advantage, the existence of an initial reference point that provides information about the conditions under which the group was before applying the treatment (Hernández, Fernández and Baptista, 2010).

### C. Sample

The sample was composed of 24 students from the Bachelor of Education in a public University of the State of Yucatan. 83% (20) were female and 16.66% (4) were male and their ages ranged between 17 and 31-year-old (Hernández, Fernández and Baptista, 2010).

## INSTRUMENTS

### D. Test on Purpose in Life

To determine the level of purpose of life we used the instrument Purpose in Life (life purpose), Crumbaugh & Maholick (1969), translated and adapted to Spanish by Noblejas de la Flor and whose purpose is to detect the level of purpose in life in the people. This instrument was based on the logotherapy approach by Viktor Frankl (1994), with a reliability of. 85, as reported by Crumbaugh (1973) and .92 when corrected by Spearman-Brown. It should be noted that in accordance with the objectives of the study, only the first part, 20 items, with polarity profiles and each item the subjects should classify and rate their degree of agreement or disagreement, using the seven points scale, where the number four position is considered as "neutral" and in positions one and seven different descriptive terms are used (see Appendix A).

### E. Rubric for the construction of the Professional life project

To assess the construction of the Professional life project, developed by the students who participated in the course, a rubric of four levels of performance was designed with their respective scores, as following: outstanding (90-100 points), satisfactory (80-89 points), sufficient (70-79 points), uncredited (0-69 points) (see Appendix B).

### F. Course based on the logotherapeutic Approach

The course was designed and delivered based on the perspective of logotherapy, with a total length of 64 hours, distributed in one hour and thirty minutes' sessions, the schedule was from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m., and these areas were addressed: self-discovery, uniqueness, freedom, responsibility and self-transcendence; and logotherapeutic techniques were used such as the Socratic dialogue, role playing, Cinema-logotherapy, Bibliotherapy and guided imagery. Through such techniques they aimed at directing the work done with young students recently admitted to a Bachelor's degree in education at a public University of the State of Yucatan, in order to strengthen their purpose in life and thus facilitating the construction of their professional life project.

### G. Framing

The course was developed according to the approach of logotherapy, a purpose-centered psychotherapy which represents a positive and optimistic philosophy that provides support and protection to human beings. (Lucas, 2004, cited in Druet, Chan and) Durán, 2014), it is a strong motivator in the lives of the people and helps them to overcome obstacles and respond positively to life even in the most adverse circumstances. Finding a mission in life allows individuals to have clarity in their purposes, to strive to achieve their goals and to move forward even in the different situations they may face.

For this reason, the purpose of the course was that the participants will make contact with their resources, qualities, values and self-knowledge. The course was predominantly experiential, because from the experiences of the participants and each one of their companions, they were able to recognize themselves and reaffirm their self-concept, as well as to realize their willpower to achieve their goals and overcome the obstacles inherent to their stage of development and chosen career. They also found a purpose in their lives and in their careers, which facilitated the construction of their professional life project.

Studies carried out with college students, show that the strengthening of the purpose in life is strongly linked to their goal setting and thriving to achieve their dreams and ideals (Druet, Chan and Durán, 2014); It is precisely during the young years that the construction of a project of professional life becomes a real catalyst that promotes the academic and professional development of the students.

### H. Techniques

Logotherapy techniques were used during the course, including the Socratic dialogue, including questions to promote reflection, in order to guide the participants to self-discovery and to make responsible decisions. The role playing technique was also used, in which the students adopt a different role and act in situations that would enable them to reflect and realize the importance that Purpose in life has in people's lives. Finally, the Cinema-logotherapy technique was used; by watching fragments of films or videos the participants were able to analyze and reflect on situations that carried a message for their lives.

### **II.** FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results after the course was completed are presented below. The course was developed for recently admitted students to the Bachelor studies in Education in a Public University in Yucatán.

A table of contingencies was designed to present the findings from the administration of the Purpose in Life instrument (PIL) and the rubric on Professional life project. Subsequently Chi-squared statistical analysis was performed to find the relationship between these variables.

Figures and Tables

In the analysis of table 1, it can be observed that 8,33% (2) of the students with purpose in life, obtained a satisfactory dominion level and 4,16% (1) a level of sufficient dominion; whereas 12,5% (3) of the students with uncertainty obtained a level of excellent dominion in the development of their professional life project, which indicates that even when they presented uncertainty, they managed to construct a professional project based on the knowledge of their potentials as well as to identify a mission in their professional studies.

The above results show that in this study, the level of purpose in life is not directly related to the construction of the project of professional life that students developed, however, to determine this relationship non-parametric statistics of Chi-square, test was used, and the results are presented in table 2.

	Scores		Le	evels of	dominion	l			
Diagnosis	In the rubric	acco		rding with the rubric				Total	
		Outs	tanding	satisf	factory	suffi	cient		
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Purpose in Life	90-100	12	50					12	50
Uncertainty		3	12,5					3	12,5
Purpose in Life	80-90			2	8,33			2	8,33
Uncertainty				5	20.83			5	20,83
Purpose in Life	70-79					1	4,16	1	4,16
Uncertainty						1	4,16	1	4,16
	Total	15	62,5	7	29,16	2	8,32	24	100

Table 1.

Level of Purpose in life in relation to the level of dominion obtained in the professional project

*Note: f= Frequency; %= Percentage* 

As it can be seen in table 2, there is no relationship between the purpose of life level and the domainlevel obtained by the evaluation rubric of the professional life project developed by the students; These results indicate that the purpose in life of the participants did not lead them to build a Professional life project consistent with their potentials, as they were not able to establish clear goals and specific commitments to achieve them.

	Table 2.		
	Value	gl	Sig. asymptotic (bilateral)
Pearson Chi-square	5,531 <sup>a</sup>	2	063
Likelihood ratio	5,595	2	061
Linear to linear association	3,394	1	065
N valid cases	24		

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Level of Purpose in life in relation to the level of dominion obtained in the professional project.

\**P* - value > 0.005

Since it was also found that there were students who, although they showed uncertainty in your purpose in life, managed to establish goals, and even they made commitments to achieve each of them.

These results differ to those found in the study by Druet, Chan and Durán (2014), in the State of Oaxaca, who reported that the strengthening of the purpose in life in college students, was strongly associated with the goal setting and striving to achieve their ideals

#### **III.** CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study disclosed that even when college students showed a purpose in their lives and were able to identify their strengths and areas of opportunity, it is also true that the purpose of life is not directly related with the way in which they build their professional life project, since the goals established were unclear and the actions and commitments to fulfill them were also vague.

However, quite the opposite happens with those students who showed uncertainty in their purposes, as they were able to build a professional project with clear goals, specific actions and made commitments to achieve each one of the goals. They also presented creative and innovative projects that reflected their interest and motivation to help others, contribute to their education and being able to contribute with their expertise for the benefit of future students, in such way that they managed to identify their mission to study a degree in education.

The above conclusions made evident that the students managed to make contact with their strengths and values, as well as to identify a purpose in life, nevertheless, it is necessary to strengthen their self-confidence and to help them learn to believe in their skills. During the course, they participated and they were committed to the activities, however, they always mentioned that they were not sure that their projects were acceptable.

In conclusion, the Higher Education Institutions need to focus on strengthening the students Purpose in Life during the first semesters of the Bachelor's degree, as well as to support them in the development of a project of professional life that provide them guidance and direction, in order to guarantee their permanence in the institution and adequate adaptation to the college level. The lack of self-confidence also affects the establishment of support networks and appropriate interpersonal relationships with their peers and it may lead to their failure and even to drop-out school.

### APPENDIX

### Appendix A Test of the purpose of life (PIL)

Name:	Date
:	
School: Semester: Age:_ Sex: M F	

Instructions: In each of the following statements circle the answer that best reflects your perception. Observe that the numbers always go from one extreme to the opposite: "Neutral means that there is no preference for any of the two judgments; try using this response as little as possible".\_\_

1. Usually I am:

	Co	ompletely bor	ed	Neutral	V	ery enthusias	stic
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
•	Life always	seems to me	:				
		Interesting		Neutral	Comp	oletely mono	tonous
ſ	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
	In my life:						
	I do not h	ave objective	s nor goals	Neutral	I have	very clear g	cals and
						objectives	
ſ	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
•	My persona	l existence:					
		. 1	naaning nor	Neutral	It is full of	meaning and	l purpose
	It does n	ot have any r	nearing nor				1 1
	It does n	ot have any r purpose					1 1
	It does n	•		4	5	6	7
•	It does n	purpose		1	5	6	
•	1 Every day:	purpose	3	1		6 xactly the sa	7

To hav	To have never been born		Neutral	To live m	any lives lik	e this one
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

### 7. After retiring:

	I will do some interesting things		Neutral		thing the rest always wante	•	
Γ	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
. I	n the achiev	ement of go	als in my life	e:			
	I have not	accomplishe	d anything	Neutral		omplished a log achieve the	-
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
N	Ay life is:						
	Empty	and just full o	of despair	Neutral	Is full o	f interesting	things
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
). I	f I died toda	ay, I would f	eel that my	life:			
	It l	nas been valu	able	Neutral	It has 1	not had any v	value
	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
. V	When I thin	k about my l	ife:				
	I often	wonder why	I do exist	Neutral	I always	find a reasor	n to live
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. 1	The way in v	which I see th	ne world, in	relation to r	ny life:		
	I am cor	npletely conf	fused	Neutral	It fits wit	h the meanir	ng of my life
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I	am a perso	n:					
	V						
		ery irrespons	ible	Neutral	Vei	ry responsib	le
	1	$\frac{1}{2}$	ible 3	Neutral 4	5 Ver	ry responsibl 6	le 7
<b>.</b> F		1	3	4			
I. F	Regarding fi	2	3 an, I believe e to decide	4	5 Man is cor limitation		7 and to the
<b>4.</b> F	Regarding fi	2 reedom of m bsolutely free	3 an, I believe e to decide	4 that:	5 Man is cor limitation	6 npletely bou is of his herit	7 and to the
	Regarding fi Man is a	2 reedom of m bsolutely free about his lif	3 an, I believe e to decide e	4 that: Neutral	5 Man is cor limitation e	6 npletely bou s of his herit	7 and to the tage and
	Regarding fi Man is a 7 Regarding d	2 reedom of m bsolutely free about his lif	3 an, I believe e to decide e 5	4 that: Neutral	5 Man is cor limitation e 3	6 npletely bou s of his herit nvironment 2 dy and I am	7 and to the tage and 1
	Regarding fi Man is a 7 Regarding d	2 reedom of m bsolutely free about his lif 6 eath:	3 an, I believe e to decide e 5	4 that: Neutral 4	5 Man is cor limitation e 3	6 mpletely bou as of his herit environment 2	7 and to the tage and 1
5. F	Regarding fi Man is a 7 Regarding d I am rea	2 reedom of m bsolutely free about his lif 6 eath: ady and unafr 6	3 an, I believe e to decide e 5 aid to die	4 that: Neutral 4 Neutral	5 Man is cor limitation e 3 I'm not rea	6 npletely bou s of his herit nvironment 2 dy and I am dying	7 and to the tage and 1 afraid of
5. F	Regarding fr Man is a 7 Regarding d I am rea 7 Regarding su I seriousl	2 reedom of m bsolutely free about his lif 6 eath: ady and unafr 6	3         an, I believe         e to decide         e         5         aid to die         5         out it as a	4 that: Neutral 4 Neutral	5 Man is cor limitation e 3 I'm not rea 3	6 npletely bou s of his herit nvironment 2 dy and I am dying 2	7 and to the tage and 1 afraid of

#### 17. I believe that my ability to find meaning, purpose, and/or mission in my life is:

Excellent	Neutral	Practically zero	

	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
18. N	Ay life is:					· · · · ·		
	In my ha	nds and unde	r my control	Neutral	Out of n	ny hands and		
					controlle	ed by external	factors	
	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
19. 7	o face my	daily tasks is	5:					
	A strong	pleasure and	satisfaction	Neutral	A painful and boring experience			
	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
20. I	've discove	red:						
]	The lack of mission or purpose in life			Neutral	Clear goals	s and successf in life	ful purposes	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
L					I	1	•	

### PART B

Instructions:

- 1. Write a paragraph about your goals and wishes both professional and personal.
- 2. To what extent are you reaching these goals?

### Appendix A

Rubric for the construction of the Professional life project

Scores	Performance level	Description
		Did not deliver the product, or the products do not meet the
0-69	Poor	minimum requirements, therefore there is no evident analysis of
		strengths, values, resources and areas of opportunity that allow
		them to develop a project of professional life.
		Strengthen their meaning of life, through the analysis of their
70-79	Enough	strengths, values, resources and areas of opportunity that allow
		them to develop a project of professional life.
		Strengthen their meaning of life, through the analysis of their
80-89	Satisfactory	strengths, values, resources and areas of opportunity that allow
		them to develop a project of professional life.
		Strengthen their meaning of life, through the analysis of their
90-100	Outstanding	strengths, values, resources and areas of opportunity that allow
	C C	them to develop a project of professional life.

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### **AUTHORS' PROFILE**

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BA in Education by the Faculty of Education of the Autonomous University of Yucatán, Mérida, Yucatán, México, Degree received in 2009

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- Druet, D.N., Guerrero, W.G. y Romero, A.C. (2017). Fortalecimiento del sentido de vida en la construcción del proyecto de vida profesional en jóvenes universitarios. In Guerrero, W.G., Alcocer, V.E. and Pascal, L. (2017). Políticas públicas y administración en educación y formación. Ejemplos en países Latinoamericanos, Caribeños y Europeos. Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán - Ediciones de la Noche. Pp. 177-190. ISBN: 978-607-9490-41-6
- Druet, D.N., Chan, C.G. and Cisneros, C.I. (2016). Investigación acción-participativa para atender el desarrollo humano de trabajadores administrativos y manuales de una Universidad. /Participativeaction research to attend the human development of the manual and administrative workers in a University. In Lopez, G.G., Alamilla, M.P., Druet, D.N. and España, N.J. (2016). Sociedad, Desarrollo y Comunidad. Published by: CEPSA. Mérida, Yucatán. Pp. 53-66. ISBN: 978-607-7824-96-
- Druet, D.N., Guerrero, W.G. y Mijares, G.C. (2015). Sentido de Vida como Herramienta en Orientación Vocacional. (Sense of life as a tool for career orientation) ACADEMICUS. Vol. 1 Number 7. Pp. 59-68. Oaxaca. ISSN: 2007-5170.

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Among her academic productions are books chapters and arbitrated, indexed articles in the area of education and counseling. Some of them are listed below:

- Druet, D.N., Guerrero, W.G. y Romero, A.C. (2017). Fortalecimiento del sentido de vida en la construcción del proyecto de vida profesional en jóvenes universitarios. In Guerrero, W.G., Alcocer, V.E. and Pascal, L. (2017). Políticas públicas y administración en educación y formación. Ejemplos en países Latinoamericanos, Caribeños y Europeos. Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán - Ediciones de la Noche. Pp. 177-190. ISBN: 978-607-9490-41-6
- Druet, D.N., Guerrero, W.G. y Mijares, G.C. (2015). Sentido de Vida como Herramienta en Orientación Vocacional. (Sense of life as a tool for career orientation) ACADEMICUS. Vol. 1 Number 7. Pp. 59-68. Oaxaca. ISSN: 2007-5170
- 3. Guerrero, J, Adan, S; Vermont, M; (2016) Interacción comunitaria de los estudiantes de la licenciatura en enseñanza del idioma inglés como cuentacuentos (pp.151-166).

Professor Guerrero is member of the academic group of education and counseling at the UADY; She has been accredited Desirable Professor Profile PRODEP.