CASE METHOD AND TRANSCENDENT MOTIVATIONS

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Abstract

A case discussion session leads to student insights related to intrinsic and transcendent motivation for participating in a social service program. Analysis shows that transcendent motivations were present to a lesser extent than intrinsic motivations in participating students. In order to assist students to develop greater transcendent leadership, different methods of social service training need to be explored, particularly those in which students can have closer encounters with the persons being helped.

KEY WORDS: Case method, intrinsic motivation, transcendent motivation, social service

INTRODUCTION

The 2015 Mission of Tecnológico de Monterrey [2005] states “...to educate people with integrity, with ethics, and with a humanistic vision...” The Social Service Program is among the strategies developed to fulfill this Mission. Through social service, whose motto is “A Way to Serve and to Grow,” Tecnológico de Monterrey aims to educate students in a holistic manner and to help students to become committed to the welfare of their community.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What motivations do the Tecnológico students have when they begin their social service activities? What level of interest and commitment do they have after completing the program? Do students espouse either or both intrinsic and transcendent motivations and to what degree?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are two main objectives for student participation in the social service program. First, that they become aware of the current situation in the country. Second, that they take a leading role as agents of change in priority areas they identify [Formación Social, 2005]. Two motivating verbs are part of the program’s motto: “To serve” and “To grow.” These motivations are “transcendent” because the service is oriented toward others. The motivations are also “intrinsic”. They relate to personal growth, added value, as an individual and as a professional.

Pérez-López [2002] stated that human beings express three different motivations for working.

a) in ‘extrinsic motivation” the motivation to carry out a concrete task is attributed only to the incentives offered by the organization. This motivation is based on a person’s urge to achieve a person-environment relationship as close to the person’s preferences as possible [Pérez-López, 2002].
b) In “intrinsic motivation” the person is motivated not only by extrinsic factors, but by intrinsic factors of the task as well. Therefore, motivation is tied, both, to results and to the people affected by the task.

c) In “transcendent motivation” the person is concerned about how he/she can influence others through the task (service). This results in individualized meanings. The meanings depend on what is being done, the reason for doing it, and for whom it is being done [Pérez-López, 2002].

Transcendent motivation in an anthropocentric organization implies recognizing the “other” as an end; actions are directed towards that “other one.” According to De Gasperin [2005] the responsibility of education resides in respecting human dignity, both, our own and others’. But who are “the others” and what are their connections to one’s self? Mardones [2005] explains that ethics result from the relationship with the other through such questions as: “Is that other one nearby or distant?” This view of human beings proclaims the relationship as key: “we are who we are thanks to others.” For Mardones [2003] the conscience of human beings is awakened by “the other.” In this process, the other person is also an agent of change. A relationship means that each party is involved with the other one. A human being becomes a person by through relationships. Relationships are essential to transcendent motivation.

The intrinsic, extrinsic, and transcendent motivations also have a relationship with moral reasoning. Lawrence Kohlberg identifies three periods in his theory of moral development [Patiño, 1994].

**LEVEL 1: PRE-CONVENTIONAL**

Daft [2001] explains that an individual in the pre-conventional level is worried about receiving external recognition and avoiding punishment. He obeys authority and evades consequences that affect his person. An individual in this level is solely motivated by personal interest. His orientation towards the world is to “take what can be taken.” He tends to be autocratic with others and he uses his position for personal gain.

A student at this level may decide to participate in the social service program using the following arguments:

**Stage 1**
Orientation to avoid punishment. “I will do the social service because otherwise I will not be able to graduate.” These students usually complete their hours of social service under time pressure just prior to graduation. Their only objective is to avoid the potential sanction of not being able to graduate.

**Stage 2**
Relativistic instrumental orientation. In this category students have interest only in the number of social service hours needed in their selected program. Everything else is meaningless including sharing with others their knowledge, abilities, and competencies. Such a student might reason: “If I enroll in the social service program, I will receive an official letter specifying and confirming the credit hours.”

This stage of moral development is connected to extrinsic motivations of the Pérez-López model [2002].

**LEVEL 2: CONVENTIONAL**

Daft [2001] defines persons at the conventional level as focused on fulfilling the expectations of good behavior as defined by his/her colleagues, family members, friends, or society. These individuals follow the rules and values of the culture. They adhere to the implicit and explicit norms. If the group does something illegal, they do the same.

A student at this level may decide to participate in the social service program using the following reasons:

**Stage 3**
The orientation of interpersonal agreement. The student wishes to project a good image in social and professional environments. For example: “If I get involved in this program, I am socially accepted since I show my commitment to society. Also, this participation can give me added value as a professional.”
Stage 4
The law and order orientation. This motivation reflects a cultural context of being respectful and committed toward current laws, regulations, and policies. Students would thus understand and respect institutional norms and policies. For example, “If I participate in the social service program, I will be in line with the academic regulations that I accepted when I enrolled at Instituto Tecnológico”.
This stage of moral development is in tune with the intrinsic motivations of the Pérez-López [2002] model and close to Stage 3.

LEVEL 3: POST-CONVENTIONAL

Daft [2001] established that leaders who are at the post-conventional level guide themselves by a series of principles universally recognized as correct or incorrect. Individuals at this level may even disobey rules and laws if these run counter to personal principles. The internalized values are turned into something more important that the expectations of other people. A leader at this level is a visionary, someone committed to serve others for a just cause.

A student at this level can morally justify his/her decision to participate in the social service program using Stage 5 & 6 arguments below. These stages involve a legalistic orientation and ethical principles. Student participation is motivated by giving back to society something of what s/he has received, as part of a social and moral contract. Also, contributing to the development of communities where individuals live with dignity and fairness can motivate the student. For a student who is at the post-conventional level, the “other person” becomes a moral objective. The fear of not graduating, not getting the required credit hours, and not obtain social recognition, is secondary. It is note-worthy, that some previous-stage motivations can co-exist with each other. The difference is the level of attached relevance. For example:

Stage 5
“I am interested in the social service program as a part of the student community of Tecnológico; it is my moral commitment to give back to society what I have received.” A possible relationship of this argument with stage 2 may exist. However, the reciprocity is at a higher level of commitment rather than in the mere exchange of one commitment for another.

Stage 6
“I commit myself to the social service program because participation will enable me to help develop more equitable communities for those less well-off.”

This stage of moral development connects specifically to the transcendent motivations of the Pérez-López model [2002]. See Figure 1.
FIGURE 1
HOW DIFFERENT MOTIVATIONS RELATE TO STAGES OF MORAL REASONING

METHODOLOGY

The research method used was qualitative. It was based on observations made during a case discussion session and analysis of student writings of their insights. Analyses were performed on these insights at both individual and group learning levels.

The subjects of this study were students from the three groups [class sections A B C] of the Professional Values course of Professor Florina Arredondo during the January through May 2005 semester. Prior to the class discussions, it was confirmed that the students had already completed or were completing their social service programs.

The discussion outline was: case background, discussion of possible alternatives, analysis of the implications of these alternatives, presentation of the epilogue of the case: what really happened, and future perspectives.

The students spontaneously expressed and shared with the group what they had learned. Furthermore, the students, during this session, reported and recorded in their personal logs what they considered to be significant learning.

The case discussed was the “Tarahumara Case”. A summary of the case follows. “Armando is an undergraduate student who previously had participated in missions in the Tarahumara Sierra. He had a very strong commitment to help members of the Tarahumara Indian Reservation located in the North Central part of México. The Tarahumara Indians live in extreme poverty. Armando’s college grades had dropped because of the time and effort he had put into the project. His father, his family, and his friends had told him he should not waste his time with social projects and that he should dedicate himself to his studies. Armando had to decide whether or not he should continue with the Tarahumara social project” [Arredondo and Molinar, 2004].

The discussion issue centers on two motivations, which seem to be in opposition to each other. Armando, while concerned about the conditions of poverty faced by the ethnic population (transcendent motivation), is asking himself if he should continue with the Sierra Madre project. One possibility is to postpone his social work in the Tarahumara Indian Reservation and devote his time and efforts to pursue his professional education (intrinsic motivation). The case includes information on the extreme poverty
conditions of the Tarahumara Indians, the experiences Armando gained while living and working in the reservation and on the projects he developed and implemented.

RESULTS

TABLE 1
Number & Percent of Motivation Types by Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOTIVATIONS</th>
<th>Group A</th>
<th>Group B</th>
<th>Group C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRINSIC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Learning Reports</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage [%]</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRANSCENDENT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Learning Reports</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the insight learning analyses within the three groups [class sections] (A B C), two types of students were identified: 1) Intrinsic Group: On average, 72% of the students in the three groups [class sections] reported insights resulting from the case which could be classified as intrinsic motivations; 2) Transcendent Group: On average, 28% of the students in the three groups [class sections] reported insights which could be classified as transcendent motivations. See Figure 2.

FIGURE 2
Transcendent & Intrinsic Motivations in Group A, B, C.
DISCUSSION

The “Intrinsic Group” relates to the theory of Moral Development. It was observed that the insights of students in this group were mainly in the second stage of the pre-conventional level and the third stage of the conventional level. These students sought to satisfy personal interest and possible added value to their professional preparation. An example of this type of response: “The social service project gives me added value for my professional background.” The percentages (in Table 1) do not mean that extrinsic and transcendent motivations were not present in this group of students. It only could be observed that they ranked second in their decision-making.

The “Transcendent Group” relates to the theory of Moral Development as follows: It was observed that insights of these students are oriented to Stages 5 and 6 of the post-conventional level. An example: “One should keep in mind others and try to help them by applying our professional knowledge.” The percentages do not mean that extrinsic and intrinsic motivations were not present in this student group, but that these motivations ranked second.

Finally, mixed motivations were also recorded: 6 in total. This classification was used when a student expressed personal satisfaction in helping others. An example: “Social responsibility for others is an important part of my personal fulfillment.”

To clarify this insight, it would have been necessary to ask the student: “If the social tasks you had to carry out do not contribute to your personal satisfaction, would you continue with the project anyway? Or would you leave the project?” The answers would detect what had greater weight: personal satisfaction or the service to others. Regarding mixed motivations, Etxeberría [2004] states that occasionally a person takes a just cause as a central value of his/her personal fulfillment. Mixed motivations were not included in the study because they could not be classified into a single type of motivation.

The results seem to indicate that the intrinsic “Growth” orientation directly influences student motivation to participate in the social service program. The transcendent “Service” orientation is a less significant motivator for participation. The results need to be seen in the context of the following limitation: Motivations were bases on student expressions of significant learning. The teaching/learning vehicle was a case study discussion session and not student direct experience.

CONCLUSION

The social service program at Tecnológico seeks to develop social leadership based on both intrinsic and transcendent motivations. Findings of this study indicate that transcendent motivations were present to a lesser extent than intrinsic motivations in three student groups. Developing greater transcendent leadership may require exploring different methods of social service; methods where the student has a closer encounter with the “other one” who needs help. A reciprocal transcendent relationship could be created between the student and his community leading to raising morality in society. This would represent an essential step toward achieving Tecnológico’s organizational mission.

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