

Utilizing Life Orientations Method in Education to Develop Soft Skills and Organizational Development among Graduating Students for Career Readiness and Job Preparedness

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Abstract

Values are the foundation of all our thinking and behavior. We grow up in a home that is characterized by values (“bad” values are also values). No matter in what kind of traditional or modern form of family we grow up, we are shaped by it. In addition, peer groups “determine” what we consider important and what we are to think and do, and play an important role in shaping our values. With these values came Life Orientations Method (LIFO) where the leadership style of an individual is being applied in the workplace learning experience and environment. The LIFO Styles also describe behavioral preferences, not competencies. Participants are not labeled, judged, or limited by their survey results. Labeling someone with a personality type can become an excuse for substandard performance. ("I'm no good at that. I'm just not that type of person.") In LIFO Training, differences in behavior are described quantitatively, not qualitatively. There is no reference to good or bad, right or wrong, strong or weak. Qualitative or categorical judgments often lead to oppositional thinking— "my way" vs. "your way"— which can promote conflict, impede teamwork, and make people less willing to change their behavior. The leadership styles are Supporting Giving, Controlling Taking, Adapting Dealing and Conserving Holding. Students who are graduating are encouraged to undergo LIFO training. The study revealed that before LIFO training, the students' leadership styles are neutral and all of which revealed are Controlling Taking after LIFO training. Soft skills are also included in the study and to become ready to venture into the real world, the relationship between leadership styles and soft skills are interrelated. Ten soft skills were identified variables in the study. These are team building, interpersonal communication, leadership development, problem solving, change management, strategic planning, performance appraisal, time management, diversity training, and executive coaching.

Keywords: Life Orientation, Training and Professional Development, Soft Skills Training

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Introduction

Life Orientations (LIFO) Method is a method that helps individuals, teams, and organizations improve communication skills, productivity, and results by working more effectively together. The method supports people to value and manage their strengths and those of others in order to achieve greater satisfaction and better outcomes. It takes advantage of people's strengths to create high performing organizations that deliver results and creates an exchange between people where they celebrate their differences so that they all feel comfortable and do well together.

In a study conducted by the Student Development Office of Jose Rizal University, it has shown that the students need to improve their soft skills. Data for this study were gathered with the use of LIFO Orientation Test and Soft Skills Questionnaire. Collected data were statistically analyzed with the use of percentage, weighted mean, and t-test.

A proposed program was designed for the graduating students. LIFO evolved to Life Dynamics Systems Thinking where the 9As are used. These are ascribe, analyze and accept, acquire and assess, activate and apply, aspire and associate. This approach leads to the understanding on how people work, how they receive information, and how they deliver information. The goal is to get the community of learners talking, providing feedback to each other, and working together to understand their differences in order to make the most of not only their behavior, but also around them. This helps in identifying the individual's personal strengths, values and goals. In this scenario, education leads to a holistic approach encompassing psychological, social, intellectual and emotional aspects of knowledge, learning, application and sustainability towards organizational and quality solutions in education, training and development.

In LIFO workshops, participants practice new skills that enhance productivity, communication, and teamwork, and they work together to develop practical action plans to use these skills to attack immediate, real-world problems.

Mixed methods are being used. A proposed program was designed for the graduating students. LIFO evolved to Life Dynamics Systems Thinking where the 9As are used. These are ascribe, analyze and accept, acquire and assess, activate and apply, aspire and associate. This approach leads to the understanding on how people work, how they receive information, and how they deliver information. The goal is to get the community of learners talking, providing feedback to each other, and working together to understand their differences in order to make the most of not only their behavior, but also around them. This helps in identifying the individual's personal strengths, values and goals. In this scenario, adult education leads to a holistic approach encompassing psychological, social, intellectual and emotional aspects of knowledge, learning, application and sustainability towards organizational and quality solutions in education, training and development. Data for this study were gathered with the use of LIFO Orientation Test and Soft Skills Questionnaire. Collected data were statistically analyzed with the use of percentage, weighted mean, and T test.

The primary method of inquiry that was used in this study is a questionnaire that is being outlined as the Life Orientation Leadership Style Survey. It is a questionnaire that contains seventy two (72) items about leadership traits. It entails 4 point-Likert

type scale ranging from 4 to 1. These points indicate the degree of severity according to which ending is most like you (4) and the least like you (1).

Another questionnaire as outlined contains thirty (30) items covering soft skills e.g. team building, interpersonal communication, leadership development, problem solving, change management, strategic planning, performance appraisal, time management, diversity training, and executive coaching. The respondents also needed to identify demographic elements such as age, gender, year-level and course. It entails a 5 point- Likert scale ranging from 0 to 4. From 0 (low) to 4 (very high)

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it has been discovered that after the Life Orientations Training, the graduating students belong to the leadership orientation of Controlling Taking. Most students are in favor of excellence in the workplace. Most students are controlling taking because they believe that there is a need to manage their subordinates to be able to demand courtesy and respect. In addition, as training progresses, the true behavior of a Filipino student greatly manifests in his/her attitudes, behavior and personality profile that is having a controlling taking leadership style is positive and not negative. LIFO training respects individual differences and that strengths are given importance in all aspects. All of an individual's characteristics are strengths. The graduating students learn to behave towards each other in ways which seem best to satisfy different psychological and physiological needs for self – fulfillment. This behaviour pattern becomes our natural or 'preferred' orientation toward other people. This preferred orientation represents the source of strengths which, when we are able to understand and develop them, can be even more productive in satisfying our needs. The combination of behavioural orientations which make up our behavioural style is not however, infallible in satisfying our needs. When our strengths are carried to excess they can be counterproductive. They become in fact, our weaknesses. There are costs to excessive use of our strengths, but we usually start by refusing to recognize them. This tendency for our strengths to be used in excess becomes most counterproductive as our environment is affected by conditions of stress and of conflict. Through the LIFO model, we can unlock ourselves from styles of behaviour which frustrate our basic goal of self-fulfillment. With the goal of improving individual and team performance, LIFO - program does not stop with explanations or diagnostics, or promote dead-end labelling of people. Instead, participants practice proven techniques that change behaviour and they develop practical action plans for applying these new techniques on the job. LIFO is the official language in training and development among the students of Jose Rizal University. With LIFO and LSDT, graduating students have created uniformity in terms of translating behaviors into words and actions as these are manifested in their training abilities and capabilities where there is consistency, relevance, regularity, and constancy.

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