'To Give is to Receive' The Merits of Ka-UPOD: An Investment with Bountiful Gains

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Abstract

'To give is to receive' is a phrase everyone is familiar with. For minor seminarians, it may be a way of life for them. Service and community life are critical in the early years in the training and aspiration of future priests. Supporting an integral formation, a contextualized Peer Facilitation Program entitled Ka-*UPOD* was facilitated to 20 minor seminarians in a 12-week duration. They underwent various modules that sought to enhance the vital aspects of their personalities. Aimed at establishing an eidetic description of the selected minor seminarians of their concept of the Peer Facilitation Program, this study employed the phenomenological approach in order to capture the essence of the program to the selections. While a journal is being maintained, a focus group discussion was also facilitated. The field texts were subjected using the Collaizi's method. The critical friend technique and member checking procedure were also employed in order to attain a triangular consensus of data. The study resulted with the Clover Leaf of Giving-Receiving model of the Peer Facilitation Program.

Keywords: peer facilitation, qualitative design, phenomenology, minor seminarians

Introduction

Valuing and promoting integral approaches to seminary formation, this study explores the richness and the gains that a contextualized peer facilitation program contributes to the participants. According to Husserl (1970) as cited in Wojnar & Swanson (2007), Phenomenology refers to the science of essence of consciousness focused on defining the concept of intentionality and meaning of lived experience from the person point of view. In this type of qualitative inquiry, the essence is the nature of the question asked. Meaning is the focus and the collective description is the product realized. As an important supplement to the scientific method, Phenomenology describes the individual's immediate experience.

The personal experiences are sources of data and the conclusions emerge at once. It enhances confidence that the merits of the study can be generalized, hence, can be applied to other settings and other people. Phenomenology may lead us into areas that might otherwise go unnoticed. The information may be useful enough to formulate further hypothesis. The use of interview is the mainstay of qualitative method. One of the modes of analysis in this method is thematization. According to Santis and Ugarizza (2000), a theme serves as the entity that brings meaning and identity to a recurrent experience and its variant manifestations. A theme therefore captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole.

Method

Design

The study employed the qualitative research design. According to Aliyev, Tekinalp, Ulker & Edizer (2012), qualitative research is a variety of scientific investigation that tries to answer questions, collect data, and produce findings. This type of research is particularly effective in getting culturally specific information about the values, thoughts, manners, and social contexts of specific people. Its focus is understanding the phenomena through a tableau of various human experiences. Specifically, phenomenological approach was utilized in order to know and understand the *noeses* of *Ka-UPOD* Program in the lives of selected minor seminarians. Phenomenology study refers to the science of essence of consciousness focused on defining the concept of intentionality and meaning of lived experience from the person point of view (Husserl, 1970 as cited by Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

Aside from collecting empirical data, that is data that are observable or experienced (Myers & Hansen, 2006), through quantitative measures, this study acknowledges the richness as well of delving into qualitative measures. Here the data explore the meaning of the particular experience/s. This method asks what is Ka-*UPOD* PF Program for the peer themselves. Having this qualitative design enhances confidence that the merits of this study can be generalized, hence, can be applied to other settings and other people. As an important supplement to the scientific method, the phenomenological approach can lead researchers into areas that might otherwise go unnoticed and is useful to formulate further hypothesis.

Selection

Patton (2002) as cited by De Guzman & Fabian (2008) posited that in qualitative inquiry no rules are used for sample size. The sample size depends on what one wants to know about the purpose of the inquiry, what is at stake, what shall be useful, what shall have credibility and what can be done with available time and resources." (p.244) The selections who underwent the program were asked to share the impact of *Ka-UPOD* program they have experienced for twelve (12) weeks. Twenty (20) selections, from 2nd – 4th year level and were enrolled during the time of the research in St. Pius X Seminary, took part in this study. Aliyev, Tekinalp, Ulker & Edizer (2012) defines qualitative research as an inquiry that focuses on studies that are in depth and therefore smaller samples can be used.

In essence qualitative research is an exploration of a research question or situation in depth. In this study, forty (40) seminarians met the criteria and they were randomly assigned in the experimental and control groups. The control group continued the usual seminary formation while the experimental group underwent the *KA-UPOD* Program for twelve (12) consecutive weeks. The selections from the experimental group were also asked to maintain a journal of their experiences during and after the program. They were given guide questions on how they see the meaning of the program in their lives and they also took part in the focus group discussions.

Procedure

The researchers provided the participants from the experimental group guide questions in order to gather information on how they view the implemented Peer Facilitation Program. The researchers also conducted a semi-structured interview as a follow up from what they have written in their journals. The interview was done in the most convenient time of the participants and the questions were done in English but the participants may respond through their local dialect and or with any language they were most comfortable with. Each interview was done at approximately 30 – 45 minutes. Moreover, this semi structured interview allowed the researchers to validate his interpretations with the context of the responses of the participants.

Data Collecting Tools

In order to gather data for the research, application forms with demographic information of the selections were collected from the selections. They were asked to maintain a journal, which answers the questions on the aide memoir. The aide memoir, validated by experts on the field, asked questions on how the selections view the Ka-*UPOD* program and how it affects their way of life. A focus group discussion was also facilitated as a follow-up from what they have written in their journals. The discussion was done in the most convenient time of the selections and the questions were done in English but they were given the option to respond through their local or vernacular dialect and or with any language they were most comfortable with. The focus group discussion approximately lasted for 30 – 45 minutes. This discussion allowed the validation of interpretations from the context of the responses of the selections.

Mode of Analysis

Merriam (1998) and Marshall & Rossman (1989) as cited by Maldonado (2011) contend that data collection and analysis must be a simultaneous process in qualitative research. They claim that qualitative data analysis entails classifying things, persons, and events and the properties that characterize them. The Coliaizzi (1978) method of phenomenology uses Husserlian phenomenology to describe the essential structure of a phenomenon in its analysis. Since the study focused in finding the meaning of the experiences of the selections in the Ka-*UPOD* Program, the Colaizzi's data analysis method would be the appropriate technique. This technique involved the following steps: First, the researchers collected all journal reflections and significant statements were extracted. Next, the statements were read over several times and meanings were then given. From the language of the participants (*emic)*, the researchers converted them into their language (*etic)*. Subsequently, the meanings were organized into theme categories.

These categories capture and unify the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole. The initial theme categories were subjected into preliminary analysis. In this stage, Calimag & de Guzman (2010) described that the researchers sought to describe 'how' (*noeses)* the phenomena expresses itself and 'what' (*noema)* the phenomenon is. Then, the researchers integrated the findings into rich and exhaustive descriptions of the lived experiences. The field texts obtained were subjected into cool and warm analysis. The themes were validated through cross-referencing the answers of the selections in the focus group discussion from the researchers' interpreted results of their lived experiences. Triangulations from different data sources such as the member checking procedure and critical friend technique were used for the justification of the themes.

Findings

From the experiences of the selections on a 12-week *Ka-UPOD* Program, significant meanings of the program emerged. These themes served as the meaning of the program to the selections. Moreover these would also reflect how the program affected their way of life.

Findings in this phenomenological study are illustrated in the *Clover Leaf of Giving – Receiving Model* (see Fig. 1) of the selections. The model emerged from the significant statements coming from their journal entries and responses during the focus group discussion.
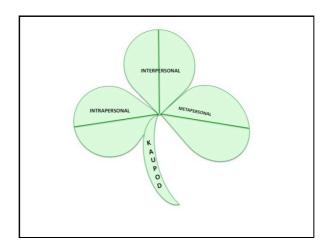
Fig. 1. Clover Leaf of Giving – Receiving Model

Ka-*UPOD* AS A CONTEXTUALIZED PEER FACILITATION PROGRAM
(Meaning and Explanation of the Program)

Ka-*UPOD* is the name that best signifies the meaning, context and relevance of the contextualized peer facilitation program. The program was named as such in order to make it more appropriate to the participants in terms of their formation and background. The program, being contextualized, indigenized and culture-based, banks on research evidences and empirical literature. Ashwin (2006) posited that those who facilitate the growth of others learn and benefit twice.

As construed in this paper, Ka-*UPOD* is the acronym for the following:

Ka- *companion* (kasama) [in]
U – *Understanding of Self* (Intrapersonal Self-Construal) [through becoming a]
P – *Peer* [for and with]
O – *Others* (Intrapersonal Self-Construal) [towards a]
D – *Divinization Process* (Metapersonal Self-Construal)

Ka-UPOD is the Hiligaynon term for companion (philippineculture.ph and kalibo.tukcedo.nl). Hiligaynon is the local dialect of the Capizeños. In several online translators (http://translate.sandayong.com and http://mymemory.translated.net), "ka-upod" is the equivalent of "kasama" in Filipino language or Tagalog. One of its synonyms is "ka**agapay**." The nearest equivalent of "ka**agapay**" in www.depinisyon.com is "kaakbay." In other online sources like translate.google.com.ph and tagalogtranslate.com, "kaagapay" means "standing side by side." Similarly, in tagaloglang.com, "kaagapay" means "hand in hand" and "support or reinforce." "Ina**agapay**an" is translated as "supporting [someone]." Clearly, "ka-upod" aptly describes the value and purpose of the program.

In a related note, "upod" as the root word of "ka-upod" takes several meanings. According to kalibo.tukcedo.nl, as a noun, "upod" means a companion. As a verb, it means "to accompany, go with or get along with." But as an adjective, "upod" connotes being worn out (tagalogtranslate.com). More appropriately, it could be interpreted through a candle with its wick burning and the solid wax slowly melting, getting worn out and becoming liquid as a metaphor.

The candle has given light while getting worn out. There is change. There is transformation. In giving light and getting worn out, the candle has fulfilled its nature and achieved its purpose or end. Though melted, the candle can still take many forms and remain useful in other ways. This latest syntax provides the meaning that Ka-*UPOD* carries in this study.

"Ka-upod" or a peer could be construed conversely as a companion, a friend or a buddy. Taken from the perspective of seminary formation, a peer serves as someone who undergoes training so that he can help in facilitating the adjustment, growth and development of his fellow seminarians. In the process, he contributes to the entire dynamics and holistic aspects of formation. Yet in the long run, he is the one who gains more – the one who learns and benefits twice.

With the foregoing statements, the program is now related to self-giving and self-emptying that leads to an individual's transformation as a person. Ka-*UPOD* then is but an expression of love among brothers who journey together in serving the vineyard of the Lord. Ka-*UPOD* takes a fuller meaning when interpreted based from its Filipino synonym "ka**agapay**." "Agapay" or support is very much near the Greek word "agape." As understood, "agape" is the deeper expression of love usually associated with the love of Christ to humanity. In the Bible, "agape" refers to the highest love among the other types of love.

Benedict XVI (2005) in his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love), describes "agape" as love that involves a real concern, care and discovery of the other person. This love seeks the good of the beloved; it is ready and willing for sacrifice. And yet this love must grow towards higher levels. Looking to the eternal is its definitive goal. Ka-*UPOD* as a peer facilitation program enhances specific variables but more than this, it creates a holistic impact to the integral dimensions of an individual, namely: intrapersonal, interpersonal and metapersonal self-construal.

Further, *Ka-UPOD* or "kaagapay" taken in a broader sense connotes a Christian understanding of LOVE ("agape"). An authentic follower of Christ takes this love as a journey (Benedict XVI, 2005), that is, an ongoing "going-out" of selfishness or closed inward-looking of self towards its freedom through self-giving (interpersonal), and therefore towards genuine self-discovery (intrapersonal) and indeed the discovery of God (metapersonal).

Ka-*UPOD* can even take a more theological interpretation. As "agape" can be used as a term for the Eucharist (Benedict XVI, 2005), Ka-*UPOD* is also a program that creates venues for participants to give themselves in service just as God has given himself to us bodily and in this manner God continues his work in the peer-seminarians and through the peer-seminarians.

Ka-*UPOD* is not simply an activity or a program. Like St. Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians (Chapter 13), Ka-*UPOD* is convinced that "If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, I gain nothing." The very foundation of Ka-*UPOD* is love.

Why Clover?

The clover has three leaves all connected to each other. They refer to the integral dimensions and effects of Ka-UPOD Peer Facilitation Program. Ka-UPOD serves as the stem from which the three dimensions are connected. The present formation year in St. Pius X Seminary where the study was conducted imbibed the theme "Seed to move mountains." The clover model explains the study that is in line with the formation theme as well. First, the clover figure looks like a seed sprouting. It is capable of growing and of many other possibilities. Second, it is the first time that a peer facilitation program was administered in St. Pius X Seminary. In a way, Ka-UPOD serves as the seed from which other programs and structures may develop. The horizon is great. The seed that refers to seminary formation refers to many connotations.

The "seed" refers to the gift of vocation to the priesthood. The seminary, coming from the word "semen", serves as the seedbed where the seed is plotted and grown. "Seed to move mountains" captures the significance of seminary formation. There is the seed of faith, the seed of vocation to the priesthood that could bring a person to endless horizons. Mountains could also connote several meanings. They could signify obstacles and impossibilities. But mountains are also places where God would usually communicate. Mountains can become opportunities where a person can encounter the Divine. Ka-UPOD goes hand in hand with the clover and with the theme of the present formation year.

The theme of the formation year 2012 – 2013 in St. Pius X Seminary is '*The seed to move mountains.*' This has biblical foundation from Luke 17:20 that says, "*If you have faith like the size of a mustard seed, you can tell a mountain to get up and throw itself into the sea.*" It is a mustard seed because from the start it is very tiny. But as time goes by, it grows vast and huge. Ka-*UPOD* is like a fertilizer mixed into the soil that adds nourishment to the entire seminary formation so that the seed may flourish well. Coupled with faith and moral values, Ka-*UPOD* nurtures the participants just like water and sunlight do to the plants. Ka-*UPOD* contributes significantly to the "multiplication of seeds and nourishment." Every aspect in the existence of the seed and the seed box is entrusted to the owner who is God. He directs what happens to his vineyard. This is the reason why Ka-UPOD always has the metapersonal dimension that relates itself to the entire whole.

Integrating the focus of the seminary during the time of the study, the interpretation of the answers on how the selections view the Ka-*UPOD* Program, three (3) themes surfaced, namely: 1) Intrapersonal; 2) Interpersonal and 3) Metapersonal. These three themes form the integral dimensions of an individual, which would have implications on how the selections connect it with their current status as seminarians.

Intrapersonal

This integral dimension of an individual pertains to one's realizations on the different aspects of his life. Moreover, this may also include their self-management in order to improve as a person and as a seminarian at the same time. The following statements show the verbalizations on this dimension:

"It helps me how to become a responsible person in time of cleaning, studying and praying."
"In brief, the PFP improved my character in the way of speaking, listening and acting."
"This program really help me in many things but the most I tried in this program is to make my   attitude good and how to facilitate in a good way."

The verbalizations show how the *KA-UPOD* program helped them improve their efficiency on tasks as seminarians.

Interpersonal

This dimension refers to the dealings of the selections with other people formally and informally. The selections being seminarians are exposed in many community activities. The verbalizations of the selections are given below:

"The program taught me to boost-up the self-confidence of others, to help them of their psychological needs."
"The program strengthens my bond of friendship to my classmates, friends and siblings."
"It helps me to understand other people of their problem because of the module about conflict resolution and understanding problems."
"I will share this to others my skills in facilitating so that they do not be shy on other people."
"Also I will encourage them to be a good influence to other people and the last but not the least I will share to them the good and the very willingful discussion of the speaker or the facilitator."

It is evident from the verbalizations that the selections view the *KA-UPOD* program as a means in improving their interpersonal skills.

Metapersonal

This third integral dimension of an individual involves the interconnectedness of all aspects in life. It also involves reaching a deeper level in one's relationship with the Divine Being. The following are the verbalizations of this dimension:

"By doing all the things I learned from this program… be a good model and sharing the true ingredients to become a responsible person."
"My learning on this program is very difficult but at the end it so very easy and I will try to teach the other people in other things so that they can be good Peer Facilitators."
"Applying what I learned and in that way I can start teaching others by being a good example."
"It's like this, the more you give yourself to others the more you will know yourself also and it will lead you to God where you can attain the true happiness."
"I know now that everything that will happen to me has a purpose which will lead me to my own happiness. Thanks to the Peer Facilitator Program!"

The verbalizations show that the selections are willing to participate in the plan of God in their lives by living what has been taught to them as seminarians.

Discussion

Sometimes it is ironic that when one gives, one seems to receive more. This means that According to Micari, Streitwieser and Light (2006), peer leaders may reap the greatest rewards.

'To give is to receive' is the phrase that explains in its simplest way the Ka-*UPOD*. The program initially required the participants to attend each session, as one has verbalized, '*My learning on this program is very difficult but at the end it so very easy.*' It shows that in the end, the time that they have invested, they have seen the bountiful gains which are evidenced on their perspectives on what Ka-*UPOD* is all about. As claimed by Micari, Streitwieser and Light (2006), peer leaders may reap the greatest rewards.

The interrelationship between the dimensions of the Intrapersonal Self- Construal, Interpersonal Self-Construal and Metapersonal Self-Construal is multifaceted. There are wide-ranging possibilities in terms of their operation and definition as linked to the impact Ka-*UPOD* Peer Facilitation Program. *Mirella Stroink and Teresa DeCicco (2011)* investigated the dimensions of interpersonal, intrapersonal and metapersonal which they termed as cognitive representations of the self that appear across and within cultures. These three dimensions are inter-connected.

The *Independent self-construal* involves a view of the self as a unique being that is separate and distinct from others. This type of self is thus defined by features and characteristics that set the self apart from others. This self-construal can be linked to the intrapersonal dimension of the seminarians which pertains to the uniqueness of oneself. Bernard Daley Zaleha (2013) termed this as *Independents* who seek to enhance the qualities that make them 'stand out from others.' As seminarians, the trail that they follow may be long and difficult, but their unique individuality allows them to be more tolerant of the challenges.

The *Interdependent self-construal* is characterized by a view of the self as situated within a specific social context. This type of self is defined by its relationships with specific others (relational interdependence) or its position within certain social groups (collective interdependence). This is similar to the interpersonal dimension of the study which refers to the *ideal self* that they need in their dealing with other people. When one enters the seminary, not everyone has the gift of charisma to people. This is one of the essential qualities that others struggle in order to succeed in their chosen vocation. Bernard Daley Zaleha (2013) referred this as *Interdependents*, who see themselves and other people as 'interconnected' and mutually dependent

The *Metapersonal self-construal* involves a view of the self as fundamentally interconnected with all of life. Therefore, this type of self is defined by its connection with all things, at a level of inclusiveness that extends well beyond the individual and his or her ingroups or relationships to include all of humanity and nature. Evidence for the metapersonal self-construal can be seen throughout psychology.

Piedmont 1999) argued that even world's religions share a consistent description of existence in which the self is seen as part of a fundamental unity underlying all things, including the self. The metapersonal self-construal have implications that are different but complementary to those of the independent and interdependent self-construals. Mirella Stroink and Teresa DeCicco (2011) and Bernard Daley Zaleha (2013), authors of the two studies, agreed to call the individuals as metapersonal, who see themselves as having 'a deep interconnection with all forms of life.' In the study, seminarians also sees the Ka-*UPOD* program as a means to help them not just to know and understand the will of the Divine Being but also to live His teachings as it reverberates in the different dimensions of one's individuality.

Conclusion

The Ka- *UPOD* program exemplifies many dimensions that a seminarian may need to develop in his chosen vocation; thus it also supports the programs integrated in the seminary formation. The formation program aims to develop the different aspects of an individual.

Moreover, the Ka-*UPOD* program highlighted the call for the seminarians, which is to give themselves selflessly to others, by developing oneself to its maximum potential through highlighting of one's uniqueness. Hence, the program paved the way for the participants not just to see the need to develop the two dimensions but also to see the deeper meaning of their existence and life in general.

Recommendations

For future researches, ask more open-ended questions so that participants may reflect about the experience in a more dynamic way. The themes that may emerge would further support the holistic impact that Ka-*UPOD* contributed to the participants. Furthermore, digest from the journal reflections how can the program be more integrated in seminary formation so that more applications may be made. In the process of making Ka-*UPOD* part of the seminary structure, proponents may be able to maximize or conceptualize topics that would address specific personality variables

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