

EDUHEM 2018
VIII International conference on intercultural education and
International conference on transcultural health: THE
VALUE OF EDUCATION AND HEALTH FOR A GLOBAL,
TRANSCULTURAL WORLD

LIFE PROJECT: DEBATE ON THE MOTIVATIONAL
CONSTRUCT, FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF RESEARCH

Astrid Sofia Suárez Barro (a)*, Alfredo Rojas Otálora (a)
*Corresponding author

(a) UNAD, National University, Open and Distance ECSAH, School of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities
*Email: astrid.suarez@unad.edu.co

Abstract

The concept of Life Project is widely used in different contexts and scenarios, but very little documented and argued from the ontological, epistemological and methodological. The objective of this article is to contribute to the ontological and epistemological conception, proposing the Life Project as a motivational construct of the human being, within the framework of the Social Sciences and especially the Psychology of Development and Education. The antecedents that support the proposal are in two directions: one of type historical review of the concept and another of empirical type. The documentary and investigative sources, show Project of Life, as an event that represents a mental construct that is present in the human being from very early in his life and begins as a social proposal that is required to the individual through the simulation of roles in the children's game, but that is marking the need to establish a Plan; that is, it is organized as a complex motivational structure and that demonstrates the interaction of the subject with its ideals, which requires self-analysis, self-control, self-control and self-management (planning, managing resources and evaluating the evolution of the project), from a scale of values and attitudes, and whose goal is the permanent search for levels of stability, quality of life and well-being, to generate their constant self-realization.

© 2019 Published by Future Academy www.FutureAcademy.org.UK

Keywords: Human development, life project, life plan, motivation.



1. Background: historical journey of the concept

The Life Project is a concept that in its historical trajectory has been described and characterized by authors with different approaches. In this exercise of evaluation and critical systematization of the literature associated with this topic, it has been found that this concept arises from a humanist perspective of Psychology and Philosophy, without being the only one that recognizes and studies it. Although in some proposals is not the concept with the same name, if you talk to other nominations, but that its content, meaning and meaning, are referred to "Life Project" and are presented as historical background of the concept studied.

Tolman and Lewin (as cited in Reeve, 2010), pointed out that mental events are what motivate conscious and deliberate action. The first mentioned that the behavior "smells on purpose" and the second affirmed that humans have goals and proposed a model, in which the need was related to the intention, the tension and the approach or avoidance. Lewin introduces the concept of valence, as an exchange value, and that is the positive or negative value that the subject gives to the objects of the medium in which it is found.

Then, in the reconstruction of the timeline of the concept, it is in the 60s, Miller, Galanter, & Pibram (1960), with models of motivation to achieve goals, from the need to create a plan. This model is known as TOTE, Test, operate, test goes out and in which the flexibility of change of the proposed and alternative plans is appreciated, but the proposed goal is achieved.

Rogers, on the other hand, with his person-centered theory, gives relevance to the rationality of human behavior, when he seeks to achieve his objectives, proceeding with an order and subtlety of great complexity. The same Frankl (1984), who in his work "Man in search of meaning", gives importance to the search for meaning, as a motor of life for the subject and the enlightened encounter to diminish the discomfort and suffering and increase the awareness. This theory has given rise to an important school of existential psychology called logotherapy.

In the theories of evolutionary development, the concept is also implicit. especially in relation to the scope of proposed goals. In Freud (1920), for example, in the stages of evolutionary development of man in the psychosexual, we talk about the search for maturity and the main thing is to satisfy his ability to love and work, to achieve maturity and balance. On the other hand, Erikson (1980), in his theory of Psychosocial Development, proposes the conflicts of each life stage, and that make the man is doomed to the achievement of goals, and are very important of identity, intimacy and generativity that correspond to the productive stages of man. In this way they would relate to the life project through these conflicts and their overcoming. Also, Maslow, with the proposal of the pyramid of Hierarchy of needs (Maslow & Lewis, 1987), states that there are, actions, ordered, oriented to satisfy the needs, until reaching the self-realization with the scope of goals and objectives that allow it to transcend.

From a more contemporary perspective, there are authors such as the American Carol Riff, who speaks of "purpose of life", as part of the dimensions of Psychological Wellbeing, in which it refers to the need of the human being to set goals and objectives, they direct their decisions, emotions and actions, so that their life makes sense. Also, Veenhoven (1991), who when talking about happiness raises seven essential factors to reach that level, enhancing the planning of vital projects including factors such as love, creative work, sense of perspective, helping others, sports, flexible organization and being happy in itself.

That is, in both authors, is placed as a support to achieve levels of satisfaction and transcendence associated with well-being and happiness, having plans designed and prepared by the person as part of the process.

It can be observed as background, that both the psychoanalytic perspective, as well as the humanist one. the existentialist, the cognitivist and the constructive and interactionist, show in common that in the subject there are forces that motivate him and impel him to organize his plans and goals as part of his development; and that it is in adolescence, the evolutionary stage of great conflicts, where a structuring of the vital plan begins, which is perfected and modified according to the circumstances of the following stages maintaining its structure as a central motivational element of the individual in his life adult.

2. Object of Study: Construct Life Project

With this historical frame of background of this concept, authors are found, that in a more direct and clear way, define what is Project of life. The authors consulted in documents and to whom the concept or definition of what Project of Life was taken are: Batista- Gutiérrez, Rodríguez Arteaga, & Díaz-Domínguez (2008), Berra-Bortolotti & Dueñas (2015), Casullo (1995), Cornejo-Villegas (2015), D'Angelo-Hernández (1998, 1999, 2000), Donas-Burak (2001), Fernández-Sessarego (2016), Franco-Silva & Perez-Salazar (2009), Gómez-Urrutia & Royo-Urrizola (2015), Gómez-Vargas, Galeano-Higuaita, & Jaramillo-Muñoz (2015), López (2001), Palomino, Ríos, & Samuiod (1991), Rojas Otálora & Hernandez-Garzón (2011), Rojas-Wilches, Rivera-Velandia, Sánchez-Forero, & Escandón-Sandoval (2011), Vargas-Trepaud (2005).

The definitions of the theoretical construct are reviewed from the authors' point of view and allow an analysis of three essential points proposed by the authors: 1- the concepts or essential elements of each definition, 2- the level of synthesis in the conceptual proposal and 3- the category generated within the definition. The realization of this analysis allows us to show the points of encounter and disagreements found and generate assumptions about the tendency that may exist in the authors before the construction of what is Life Project. This analytic-deductive exercise is based on a conceptual theoretical matrix.

Table 01. Example Conceptual Theoretical Matrix: Construct Life Project

Definition / Concept	Concepts or essential elements in the definition	Level of synthesis of the definition	Generated categories
When we talk about "project of life", it is usually associated with a project of study and / or specific work, well defined, in which the formation of the family, although it occupies an important space, is not everything and in addition, it is thought for a stage well after adolescence. "Pregnancy in adolescence What is the problem?"	Study or work project. Future. Later stage adolescence. Little importance of the family.	Low	Structure / Dynamic system
The life project is what a person intends to do in different areas over time, with the intention of developing. It is a permanent construction that is nourished by the decisions made every day, which are opening	Online process of time. Dynamic and changing process. Permanent construction, Purposes. Intention of development.	Medium	Process / Structure / Dynamic system

or closing possibilities to achieve the proposed goal.	Proposed goals.		
The project of life is a form of strategic planning of the personality that in the pedagogical plane allows to develop the actions in the direction of the educational teaching process, which becomes a philosophy of work, day to day, present and future.	Strategic planning. Life philosophy. Work philosophy. Temporal dynamics: present, and future.	Medium	Process / Structure / Dynamic system
The construction or elaboration of a life project is part of the affective and intellectual maturation process, it means "learning to grow". This supposes the possibility for each subject to complement four basic tasks: 1- Be able to guide their actions based on certain values. Living is essentially an ethical enterprise. 2- Learn to act responsibly: it means basically taking charge of the consequences of one's decisions, recognizing that one is not alone, that there are others with whom one must live. 3-Develop attitudes of respect: be able to share and learn to accept differences, expect from the other and oneself what we can really give, accepting individual and group possibilities and limitations. 4- A life project must be based on knowledge and information: on the subject himself, his interests, aptitudes and economic resources; about the possibilities and expectations of the family nucleus of belonging; and about the social, economic, cultural and political reality in which we live.	Internal / external process Orientation of actions. Autonomy. Self-responsibility Decision making. Psycho-affective development as a platform for the construction of the Life Project. Multidimensionality and social interactionism. Eco-systemic and ecological approach (micro, meso and macrosystem)	High	Dynamic process Identity / Values / Ecosystem multidimensionality Self realisation
Life Project: It is a construct in developmental psychology that comprises a complex scheme of goals oriented goals; that arises from the values internalized by the individual based on their needs, individual characteristics and social expectations; and that are configured as a motivational structure that guides the behavior of said individual. This structure is elaborated and modified according to the changes that are generated by the same fulfillment of the goals and by the changes in the circumstances that surround the development of the individual.	Constructo Personal structure Domain of the future. Decision making. Self evaluation and Auto Organization.	Medium	Structure / System Self realisation

According to the analysis carried out, it can be deduced that the concepts show an approach from the conceptual and little from the empirical.

It is important to note that the investigative exercise was done with 25 documents, in which 31 definitions were found. in which there were authors who, in the same document, presented several concepts

and in others the timeline of their study versus the construct was seen, in order to make extensions and conceptual complements, compared to what was studied.

As for the level of synthesis, there are 23 definitions with a Medium level, seven (7) with a High level and one (1) with a low level. The low level refers to proposals that are not articulated to define the construct and only enunciates Project of life as a general idea, that does not have a support that clarifies its constitution and construction.

The medium level, evidences concepts with a grammatical and content structure, that describes what the Life Project is, and with some clarifying elements, about how, when and why it is constructed. The high level applies to definitions that starts from what is a life project and includes as support, factors that specify an integral image of the concept.

3. Documentary review as sources of evidence

In this discussion document will be taken as a source of evidence, the documents consulted and in particular, the categories generated by the theoretical analysis that is made of the definitions and which are consolidated in the following table.

Table 02. Categories generated in documentary analysis

Category	Description	Definitions
From the structural: Process / Structure / Dynamic system	It embraces all the definitions in which the Life project is perceived, as a structure or a human system that guides the construction of the Life Project and indicates the mechanisms for its dynamic, flexible development and under a temporal reference.	12
From the axiological: Identity / Values	It includes all the definitions that in their content sustain the Project of life in an internal component of the subject: identity and values.	6
From the humanistic: Self realisation Ecosystem multidimensionality Intention / Will	The definitions that define the Life Project come from the capacity of decision and the will of the individual, They place the management from the "me" and the autonomous behavior for the proposal of goals, the management of the resources for the reach of the same, with the satisfaction to achieve it, from their own potentialities. It includes family dimensions (micro), school, neighbors (meso) and the social context (macro), for the attainment of their life plan.	11
From the organizational: Strategic planning // Task / goals and achievements	They converge the definitions in which the authors highlight the Life Project, as a strategic process to achieve goals and achievements through precise tasks for the process.	1
From Positive Psychology Sense of well-being and happiness	They concur in the definitions in which they see the Life Project as a means to achieve a state of well-being and personal satisfaction with the achievement of goals.	1

When reviewing the categories, we find that those that predominate in the sample are From the structural: Process / Structure / Dynamic system and From the humanistic: Self-realization / Ecosystem multidimensionality, with twelve (12) and eleven (11) definitions in each of these , and the category From the axiological: Identity / Values has a total of six (6), while the categories From the organizational: Strategic planning // Task / goals and achievements and from Positive Psychology: Sense of well-being and happiness. It only has one frequency. The analysis of the categories allows us to perceive how the project of life project is conceptualized from different perspectives. On the one hand, the tendency to be taken instrumentally or as a tool to achieve something, and emphasizing an established route, standard or guidelines to achieve goals and objectives starting from the resources and circumstances that the person has to achieve it. In this category value is given to the Life Project is a process with which you get what the person wants to be, do or have; that is to say, it is the "why ... or the means to ...".

On the other hand, the tendency of a group of authors who see the Project of life, from a humanist perspective in which the human being is highlighted as an active, dynamic subject, with the ability to decide the best between options and with the free will to do what. This perspective looks at the man with dominion over himself, his environment and the circumstances, to achieve the best results. It is not a rigid predetermined man, but flexible and changing, which is the center of the process and in constant affirmation is made by the foundations of its values and the maintenance and evolution of its axiological component, which refers to the values and their Identity.

The other categories, although with few definitions that are located in them with a central theme, are very important, since they focus on satisfaction, feeling of well-being and happiness, which is one of the objectives of the project and the other is related to the planning and the tasks as a way to the result, and it is striking that the theme of planning has little reference, because it is very central in the theme of life project.

4. Life Project as a dynamic, flexible and motivational-based construct

The evaluation of the different perspectives reviewed and the groups of organized categories, allow to find basic aspects in the Life Project proposals, and from this analysis it can be concluded that the proposals include many additional elements to those that arose in the 50's and 60's of the last century, when there was a very cognitivist boom, as well as those of previous years when a markedly behavioral perspective had been given (Reeve, 2010).

Based on the analysis carried out and integrating the revised theories in the background of this article and focusing on the previous proposals of the authors, the authors propose a Life Project concept that integrates and broadens the perspective reviewed. For the authors Project of life, it is proposed as a dynamic, flexible and motivationally based construct, as argued below.

The Life Project is considered a construct, because it can be defined as a processual and continuous entity of construction, deconstruction and permanent and successive reconstruction according to the experiences and the meaning that is given to it by the individual. Construct talk ensures linking the Life Project with meaning we attribute to experience.

The authors approach, at this moment, the category construct from the theory of the Personal Construct of George Kelly, which allows conceiving the Life Project as the conformation of a personal reality that would be subject to various individual constructions, which can be understood as a process by which life is anticipated, evaluated and given meaning as a continuum full of stations, stops, reboots, projections and goals, impregnated with meanings for the subject that constructs it.

The condition of "construct" is based, in addition to considering the project of life, as a hypothetical entity used, but difficult to define within a scientific theory. It is very common to use it in diverse contexts and discourses, but it is not a directly manipulable or tangible phenomenon, and it can be categorized and susceptible of being founded, measured and studied, as a system.

Taking into account the perspective of the Life Project as a construct, it is necessary then to review other complementary theoretical visions. One of them is the psychodynamic and psychoanalytic perspective, in particular, Erikson's (1980) model from psychosocial development, with partial goals of overcoming conflicts. Another is the neuropsychological perspective, which includes the concept of Luria's (1974, 1977) functional systems and that of executive functions (metacognitive executive functions and emotional executive functions), of later authors such as Fuster and Happaney, Zelazo, & Stuss (as cited in Ardila and Ostrosky-Solís, 2008).

From this theoretical frame of reference, the construct arises, then with the following elements, to argue the characteristics of dynamic, flexible and motivational basis.

- Flexible structure: Scheme of integrated elements in a systemic way that relate and affect each other through their interactions. These elements are organized during the process of the development of the individual based on the basic needs of internal origin and their adjustment and organization with the characteristics and demands of the different contexts.
- Dynamic process: Condition of evolution with changes that are oriented to goals and fulfillment of partial tasks or objectives and that in turn allow the generation of new goals or objectives, according to what is considered as improvement actions to potentiate and strengthen your life project. This factor integrates the organizational aspects of the individual and in this context the exercise of metacognitive executive functions that are oriented towards "problem solving, planning, inhibiting responses, developing and implementing strategies and working memory" becomes very clear (Ardila and Ostrosky-Solís, 2008, p.5).
- Humanistic Values and Aspects: This aspect mainly includes eudemonic aspects or development and personal growth or self-realization and that in a certain way are related to the overcoming of conflicts as in Erikson's (1980) model that focuses goals or conflicts by stages and that closes with the conflict integrity of the self vs. desperation and that raises the reflection on the life of the individual, standing as a goal of closing the whole process of the Life Project.
- Motivational Aspects: This element includes factors of subjective and social well-being, oriented a little more towards the hedonic aspects or of enjoyment, although linked to long-term development issues, and importance is given to the emotional executive functions that "they refer to the ability to satisfy basic impulses following socially acceptable strategies" (Ardila and Ostrosky-Solís, 2008, p.5).

- Contextual integration: This aspect includes contextual factors that fit the concepts of epigenesis and the ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner, so that the demands of different environments and the needs and experiences of the individual allow the understanding of the structuring of the Project of life.

5. Conclusion

The review of a historical and investigative journey on a concept or definition of the Life Project, shows diverse positions from the theoretical point of view, in which some define it clearly and directly and others do it indirectly.

The categorical analysis of the concepts reviewed was carried out in three levels of knowledge proposed for the state of the art by Gómez Vargas et al. (2015): 1) Recovering information to describe, 2) Recover to understand and 3) Retrieve information to reflectively transcend. The exercise was carried out in three phases and each of them contributed substantially. In the first level, a compilation of the definitions of the Life Project has been made in a Spanish-speaking medium in a way that describes the trend of the definitions. In the second level, when applying categories and validations, it is possible to understand the state of the definition and, therefore, of the theories of the Life Project. And the third level is achieved by raising the need to structure a more complete theory that generates a more complete definition of the Life Project.

This exercise concludes that the definitions are guided by the interests and personal approaches of the authors and that there are few empirical advances. From this we can see the interest and commitment of the authors to propose the Life Project as a flexible, dynamic construction based on motivation.

It is proposed as "Constructo", because it is considered an entity that must be categorized to be studied as an open and interactive system, which is constructed procedurally in an internal-external dynamic, in a meaningful way for each subject.

It is also possible to delineate this construct as dynamic, flexible and motivating, which has as essential elements for its construction and study: a flexible structure, a dynamic process, values and humanistic aspects, motivational aspects and contextual integration. All of the above, seen as an open system that is related to the psycho-emotional development of the human being and the evolution of his executive functions.

References

- Ardila, A., & Ostrosky-Solís, F. (2008). *Revista Neuropsicología, Neuropsiquiatría y Neurociencias*, 8 (1), 1-21.
- Batista-Gutiérrez, T., Rodríguez Arteaga, C., & Díaz-Domínguez, T. (2008). El Proyecto de vida Universitaria: Reflexiones desde los fundamentos del proceso de Gestión pedagógica del Colectivo de año en las Universidades cubanas. *Pedagogía Universitaria*, 11(4), 26-38.
- Berra-Bortolotti, M., & Dueñas, R. (2015). *Revista Mexicana de Orientación Educativa*. 12(28), 42-48.
- Casullo, M.M. (1995). *Proyecto de vida y decisión vocacional*. Buenos Aires: Paidós.
- Cornejo-Villegas, M. (2015). Elaboración del Proyecto de vida basado en valores en estudiantes del colegio Amoretti. *Aportes metodológicos, filosóficos y culturales en Psicología*, 13 (1), 26 - 43.
- D'Ángelo-Hernández, O. (1998). Proyecto de Vida y Desarrollo Humano Integral. *Revista Internacional Crecemos*, 6(1), 1-31.

- D'Angelo-Hernández, O. (1999). Investigación y desarrollo de proyectos de vida reflexivo-creativos. *Revista Internacional Creemos*, 16 (1) 31-39.
- D'Angelo-Hernández, O. (2000). Proyecto de vida como categoría básica de interpretación de la identidad individual y social. *Revista Cubana de Psicología*, 17 (3), 270-275.
- Donas-Burak, S. (2001). *Marco epidemiológico conceptual de la salud integral y el desarrollo humano de los adolescents. Adolescencia y juventud en América Latina*. Cartago: Libro Universitario Regional.
- Erikson, E. H. (1980). Elements of a psychoanalytic theory of psychosocial development. *The course of life: Psychoanalytic contributions toward understanding personality development*, 1, 11-61.
- Fernández-Sessarego, C. (2016). *El Proyecto de vida como protección Jurídica*. Retrieved from: <http://www.revistapersona.com.ar/Persona75/75Sessarego.htm>
- Freud, S. (1920). *Más allá del principio del placer. Obras completas*. XVIII, Buenos Aires, Amorrortu.
- Franco-Silva, F. J., & Pérez-Salazar, L. (2009). Proyecto de Vida y territorio. *Investigación y Desarrollo*, 17(2), 412-433.
- Frankl, V. E. (1984). *Search for Meaning*. Mount Mary College.
- Gómez Urrutia, V., & Royo-Urrizola, P. (2015). Nuevas subjetividades y proyecto de vida: jóvenes universitarios de la VII región del Maule, Chile. *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, 1, 90-101.
- Gómez Vargas, M., Galeano-Higuita, C., & Jaramillo-Muñoz, D. (2015). El estado del arte: una metodología de investigación. *Revista Colombiana de Ciencias Sociales*, 6(2), 423-442.
- Miller, G. A., Galanter, E., & Pribram, K. H. (1960). *Plans and the structure of behavior*. New York, NY, US: Henry Holt and Co.
- López, M. (2001). La Adolescencia como autoconstrucción. Desarrollo del autoproyecto de vida. In Dallal & Castillo, E. (Ed). *Caminos del desarrollo Psicológico* (pp. 231-261). México: Plaza y Valdés.
- Luria, A. (1974). *El cerebro en acción*. Barcelona: Ed. Fontanella.
- Luria, A. (1977). *Las funciones corticales del hombre*. La Habana: Ed. Orbe.
- Maslow, A., & Lewis, K. J. (1987). Maslow's hierarchy of needs. *Salenger Incorporated*, 14, 987.
- Palomino, M., Rios, G., & Samuiod, J. (1991). Proyectos de vida y rehabilitación de delincuentes. *Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología*, 23(1), pp. 71-85.
- Reeve, J., (2010). *Motivación y Emoción*. México: Ed. McGraw-Hill.
- Rojas-Otálora, A., & Hernandez-Garzón, D. (2011). Evaluación de características de calidad de vida en estudiantes de la UNAD, en el CEAD Barranquilla, Colombia. XII Congreso Virtual de Psiquiatría-Interpsiquis, Palma de Mallorca, España.
- Rojas-Wilches, S. B., Rivera-Velandia, L. T., Sánchez-Forero, F. A., & Escandón-Sandoval, A. Y. (2011). Representaciones sociales sobre Proyecto de Vida. *Desbordes*, 2(6), 11-22.
- Vargas Trepaud, R. (2005). *Proyecto de Vida y Planeamiento estratégico personal*. Lima: Edición del autor
- Veenhoven, R. (1991). Is happiness relative? *Social Indicators Research*, 24, 1-34.