

2021-03-21

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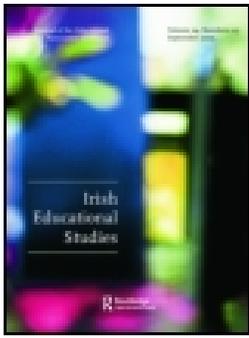
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10.1080/03323315.2021.1899017

Irish Educational Studies

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To cite this article: Shane A. Hanna & Stephen James Minton (2021): A meaning-centred, whole-school approach for responsible decision-making: The Logotherapeutic Framework, Irish Educational Studies, DOI: [10.1080/03323315.2021.1899017](https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2021.1899017)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2021.1899017>



Published online: 21 Mar 2021.



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A meaning-centred, whole-school approach for responsible decision-making: The Logotherapeutic Framework

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(Received 11 November 2014; accepted 10 December 2020)

This article briefly examines Guidance Counselling in the Irish context. An analysis of the current decision-making climate and context suggests that there is a need to develop responsible decision-making skills in students, as reflected in the new Junior Cycle Key Skills. A meaning-centred, whole-school approach to develop responsible decision-making is then proposed. The paper identifies the characteristics of self-control, self-insight, modelling, and goal setting as necessary attributes in responsible decision-making. Examined from a whole-school perspective, the significance of meaning, expectation, and perceived vision of failure is considered in terms of student and staff motivation. Building on the counselling framework of Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy and in light of changes to the provision of school guidance, The Logotherapeutic Framework for responsible decision-making (TLF) is offered as a whole-school approach to achieve educational and guidance counselling objectives. The article discusses how the features of the TLF contribute to our mental and physical health. The philosophical and empirical bases for the approach, potential classroom strategies, along with future research recommendations are examined.

Keywords: decision-making; responsibility; guidance counselling; meaning; self-control

The Logotherapeutic Framework (TLF) for responsible decision-making: an introduction

The Department of Education (DE 1996) considers decisions in the key areas of Personal and Social, Educational and Career to be at the core of what school guidance is. DE (1996) defines guidance as 'the full range of interventions which assist pupils to make such choices about their lives' (DE 1996, 4). A school guidance programme should include activities that help students:

on an individual/ group basis to explore their own thoughts and feelings about their present life situation, about the choices open to them, and about the consequences of each choice. (DE 1996, 4)

In 2011 the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) outlined the significance of the 'whole person' approach when addressing guidance needs. Guidance empowers individuals to make responsible decisions when faced with transitions, be

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they career, relationships or otherwise. This client-centred focus is echoed by the National Guidance Forum (NGF 2007).

The Department of Education and Science Inspectorate states that the aim of guidance counselling is:

to help students to develop an awareness of their talents and abilities; to explore possibilities and opportunities; to grow in independence and to take responsibility for themselves; to make informed choices about their lives and to follow through on these choices. (DESI 2005, 5)

Counselling can be offered on an individual or group basis and the objective of counselling is ‘the empowerment of students so that they can make decisions, solve problems, address behavioural issues, develop coping strategies and resolve difficulties that they may be experiencing’ (DESI 2005, 4). Similar to DE (1996) and DESI (2005), the NCGE (2012) also adopts this definition.

The whole-school approach to guidance (DES 2005) preceded the removal of the ex-quota provision of guidance counsellors from school staffs in Budget 2012 (Department of Finance 2012). This decision had ‘catastrophic consequences’ (Joint Managerial Board 2014, 3). As a result of the consequential diminution of students’ access to guidance (Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland 2013; Institute of Guidance Counsellors 2013, 2014; NCGE 2013; Mc Guckin and O’Brien 2013) the role of other members of staff and management in ensuring that students can avail of an appropriate programme to develop responsible decision-making was highlighted and is now imperative (Hearne and Galvin 2015).

Both the NCGE and the Council of the European Union (2008) advocate a ‘whole person’ approach to guidance counselling. The Logotherapeutic Framework (TLF) is a developmental, whole-school approach based on Logotherapeutic principles that complements existing guidance counselling structures in schools. A collaborative, developmental, guidance counselling approach with established common and future-oriented goals is in line with DESI guidelines (2009). A whole-school approach to guidance counselling based on the principles of Logotherapy had not been considered before the conception of TLF (Viktor Frankl Institute of Ireland 2014).

Young adolescents are explorers, curious and adventurous (DES 2010). Decisions such as where to explore, what activities to engage in and with whom to engage in them with are at the core of this transition to autonomy and independence. Such conscious and unconscious decisions are central to how adolescents establish their own identity. The proposed Logotherapeutic Framework contends that inherent to an individual’s capacity to make responsible decisions are the following attributes: self-control; self-insight; the ability to self-distance; the ability to consciously model our behaviour; the ability to set goals; the ability to look beyond ourselves; and the ability to find meaning in our lives (Figure 1).

In the absence of a nationally agreed curricular whole-school guidance framework as proposed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2007) TLF offers an approach through which classes with standard curricular objectives can supplement current guidance programmes without the reliance on one-to-one guidance (DES 2012a). TLF explicitly complements all six key skills in the Junior Cycle Framework: Managing

The Logotherapeutic Framework (TLF)

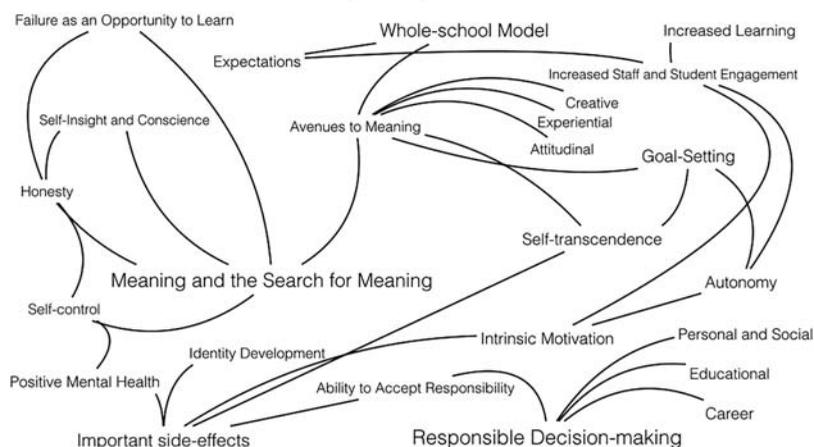


Figure 1. The Logotherapeutic Framework.

Information and Thinking; Managing Myself; Working with others; Communicating; Being creative; Staying well (DES 2012b).

Decision-making and Logotherapy: an overview

Logotherapy and Existential Analysis centres on life's meaning as well as man's search for this meaning (Frankl 1973a). According to Viktor Frankl, the founder of Logotherapy, meaning can be found through what we give to the world, what we take from the world (our encounters and experiences) and finally through the stand we take to an unavoidable fate (Frankl 1988). Frankl uses the terms Creative Values, Experiential Values and Attitudinal Values when elaborating on these three avenues to meaning (Frankl 1988). Man's fundamental drive to search for meaning he terms the 'Will to Meaning' (Frankl 1973a, 21). For consistency with Frankl's own language usage, the terms "man" and "he" are henceforth used to refer to persons of all gender identities. Freedom is only half of the story however, as 'freedom threatens to degenerate into arbitrariness unless it is lived in terms of responsibility' (Frankl 2010, 149).

Central to Logotherapy's avenues to meaning is what Frankl calls 'man's responsibility.' It is at this point that Logotherapy, education and guidance counselling meet. Frankl states that 'Logotherapy is ultimately education toward responsibility' (1973b, xvi) and 'in the end, education must be education toward the ability to decide' (1973b, xix). Through these decisions a person decides who they are and who they will become 'within the limits of endowment and environment' (Frankl 1973a, 43).

TLF offers a framework based on decision-making in line with Gelatt (1962), which would allow students, 'to explore their own thoughts and feelings about their present life situation, about the choices open to them, and about the consequences of each choice' (DE 1996, 4) and 'to grow in independence and to take responsibility for themselves' (DESI 2005, 5)

Making decisions: context and conscience

Traditions and values in modern society are changing. Religious and cultural values which previously existed to inform and guide people's decision-making are changing (Central Statistics Office 2011). A 'breakdown in the interconnections between the various segments of the child's life' can lead to youth alienation (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 231).

Blair (2004) expands the notion of youth, who have not clearly developed their own identities, developing symptoms of depression or other mental health problems as a consequence of behaving outside their own value system. This can be the case even if they are unaware of what that value system is. Logotherapy posits that in the absence of commonly held values, our individual conscience (our unique capacity to search for and find meaning) becomes critical:

man ... finds identity to the extent to which he commits himself to something beyond himself, to a cause greater than himself. This leads to a problem of choice and value. (Frankl 1973a, 20)

What Frankl terms an individual's conscience is self-insight, an insight that is critical to our ability to make responsible decisions. TLF offers a framework through which students can develop self-insight and decision-making skills as part of the current Leaving Certificate programme and in line with the Junior Cycle Framework (DES 2012b). By making decisions the individual decides who and what they will become.

Making decisions: error and responsibility

Logotherapy considers that man is free to choose. It also considers him responsible for the choices he makes. If we are to rely on conscience however, we must acknowledge that our conscience can err. Logotherapy recognises our ability to make mistakes, 'Lack of success does not signify lack of meaning' (Frankl 1973b, 107). Failure and other traumatic events can actually be opportunities for significant positive growth (Pennebaker 2011; Zoroya 2009). It could be argued that our current litigious culture has flourished from a noble seed that sought to increase corporate and individual responsibility. The reality however is that, due to litigation, responsibility has become something to fear (O'Brien 2014). TLF offers an approach that teaches students that it is acceptable to err and that in failing significant learning can take place. An ability to accept our mistakes and failures is an essential step toward learning to deal with responsibility.

TLF: honesty and self-control

Honesty with oneself is essential when developing self-insight. It is the point from which to begin the journey toward wisdom: *philo-sophia*. In Ireland, recognition of this journey is reflected in recent developments such as the introduction of the Junior Cycle Philosophy Short Course (NCCA 2016), competitions such as the Irish Young Philosopher Awards (Humphreys 2017) and the support for philosophy in schools by high profile figures such as President Higgins and his wife Sabina (Higgins 2017). While advocates for the inclusion of Philosophy as a stand-alone subject in the Irish system (Finlay 2013) precede such developments, TLF focuses

explicitly on how educational objectives might be achieved through a whole-school framework grounded in Logotherapy.

Ancient philosophy was a spiritual exercise and it can be seen to ‘resemble moral exercises like a twin’ (Hadot 1995, 127). It is appropriate therefore to regard ancient philosophical practices to be in line with logotherapeutic principles. Meditation and Journals, techniques included in TLF, were used by the Stoic philosophers and have since become popular in modern psychology (Evans 2013; Hadot 1995)

The importance of honesty when exploring one’s past has been equally recognised when participating in exercises such as Expressive Writing (Pennebaker 2011). Frankl states that what is greatly needed is ‘to have ‘the courage to be’ alone ... [to] periodically spend some time on the *vita contemplativa*’ (Frankl 1978, 73). What is equally important is the development of self-control that takes place when dedicating a certain period of time to such an exercise. Students who engage in the writing tasks, such as Expressive Writing, are developing critical skills in self-control.

Failures in self-regulation and self-control have been associated with an array of personal and social problems in Western societies (Baumeister, Heatherton, and Tice 1994; Moffitt, Poulton, and Caspi 2013; Mischel 2014). In the age of smart phones and social media, Frankl’s warning about the dangers of uninhibited sharing of emotions appears almost prophetic:

they exhibit ‘incontinence,’ one might say, in that they can not restrain their emotions, they can not refrain from expressing them and sharing them with others (Frankl 1978, 74)

Responsible decision-making regarding what is appropriate to share on social networks can be considered good ‘guidance’ and this is where responsible decision-making and self-control merge.

A significant body of literature now exists exploring the correlation between self-control as exhibited in children and their later life outcomes. It suggests that children who exhibit poor self-control are more likely to struggle financially in adulthood; are more likely to suffer from substance dependence; perform more poorly in school (a precursor to adult poverty); and are more likely to engage in criminal or antisocial behaviour (Mischel 2014). It also appears that children who demonstrate high levels of self-control are more likely to be satisfied with their lives as adults, while children who demonstrate poor levels of self-control are more than three times as likely to attempt suicide. In the school setting, children with poor self-control are more likely to deplete teachers’ energy for teaching other pupils and may even contribute to teacher’s job dissatisfaction and attrition (Moffitt, Poulton, and Caspi 2013). In the longer term, children who exhibit poor self-control also grow up to be the least skilled parents of their own children, ‘one of the highest costs of self-control may be the poor start it creates for successive generations’ (Moffitt, Poulton, and Caspi 2013, 357).

Critical to TLF however, is the fact that self-control can be developed through relatively simple means (see Gino et al. 2011; Muraven, Baumeister, and Tice 1999; Mead et al. 2009; Mischel 2014). Hadot considers the ancient philosophers’ use of journals and meditation as an attempt ‘at mastering one’s inner dialogue, and mental concentration’ (1995, 101).

By mastering ‘one’s inner dialogue,’ the conscience and self-insight that is so critical to responsible decision-making is now fused with the development of self-control. A strength and limited resource model of ego-depletion (Muraven, Tice, and

Baumeister 1998) has dominated and influenced research on self-control in fields such as psychology, human neuroscience and behavioural economics (Inzlicht, Schmeichel, and Macrae 2014). The model, however, has been contested and challenged (Inzlicht and Schmeichel 2012; Inzlicht, Schmeichel, and Macrae 2014; Baumeister and Vohs 2016). Baumeister and Vohs' recent concession (2016) that a more integrative model accounting for factors such as motivation, attention, subjective beliefs and expectations is necessary, echoes what is proposed in TLF:

exercising self-regulation of one or two sorts of behaviour causes discernible improvements on seemingly unrelated tasks (that also involve self-regulation). (2016, 82)

This is particularly the case when combined with strategies for self-monitoring (Muraven, Baumeister, and Tice 1999). Developing skills in self-control enables students to make more informed, responsible and goal oriented decisions. The effectiveness of programmes that develop conscience, self-insight and self-control in combatting recidivism are worth noting (Pennebaker 2011; Shrum 2004; Rogers, Kell, and McNeil 1948).

Expressive writing: a sample TLF activity where meaning and self-control meet

In 1986 Pennebaker and Beall discovered that writing about a traumatic event can significantly improve both one's physical and mental health. This task has since become known as Expressive Writing. Since then, the results have been positively replicated across a variety of demographics across hundreds of studies (Frattaroli 2006; Pennebaker 2011). It appears the disclosure is therapeutic in itself and can therefore be considered a cost-effective therapeutic intervention (Graf, Gaudiano, and Geller 2008; Frattaroli 2006). Research also indicates that participants enjoy Expressive Writing with an almost zero per cent attrition rate (Graf, Gaudiano, and Geller 2008; Pennebaker 1997). There does not appear to be evidence of its explicit use in Ireland even though its proven effectiveness in enhancing participants' mental and physical health, warrants further consideration as part of a whole-school guidance approach such as TLF.

Since 1986 many studies have investigated why Expressive Writing is an effective intervention. Andersson and Conley propose that it is due to the regained sense of control participants achieve by engaging in the task, 'expressive writing restores perceived control, thereby improving health' (2008, 151).

In light of the work of Muraven, Baumeister, and Tice (1999) it is reasonable to assume that the very act of writing and being disciplined enough to write for a certain length of time over a certain period would increase perceived self-control. Research into why Expressive Writing is effective neglects one critical element however – the role of meaning. At its most fundamental level, writing could be considered a meaningful task, one of Frankl's three avenues to find meaning. Pennebaker, Colder, and Sharp (1990) found that respondents reported that writing was helpful not because of catharsis or letting go, but because it allowed them to gain insight, a key objective in TLF and a key attribute necessary to regulate self-control. Regarding meaning Pennebaker and Seagal state:

In essence, this gives individuals a sense of predictability and control over their lives. Once an experience has structure *and meaning*, it would follow that the emotional effects of that experience are more manageable. (1999, 1243) [italics added]

Refusing to admit things, even to ourselves is damaging to our health (Pennebaker 2011; Evans 2013):

major life events are far more difficult to comprehend ... In trying to understand ... we will attempt naturally to ask ourselves why this happened and how we can cope with it. (Pennebaker and Seagal 1999, 1250)

Expressive Writing is thus a form of inner dialogue, an exercise of the will to meaning. Schutte et al. (2012) confirm the effectiveness of Expressive Writing and highlight the very logotherapeutic concept that engaging in meaningful tasks produces positive side-effects. Andersson and Conley similarly refer to Expressive Writing's ability to reframe an event in 'meaningful terms' (2008, 148). Pennebaker and Seagal conclude that 'translating distress into language ultimately allows us to forget or, perhaps a better phrase, move beyond the experience' (1999, 1251).

Frankl and psychologists call this self-distancing or self-detachment. 'When one formulates one's personal acts in writing ... What was confused and subjective becomes thereby objective' (Hadot 1995, 211). By finding a personal meaning students learn to accept what has happened and can now move beyond it. This is a critical step to take in terms of our psychic hygiene and is reflected in the positive outcomes of Expressive Writing.

At no point do any of the studies cited above refer to Frankl or Logotherapy. In personal correspondence with Jamie Pennebaker (2014), he confirmed that his Expressive Writing does overlap with Frankl's ideas. Expressive Writing is thus a marriage of meaning, self-insight and self-control and is in keeping with the Leaving Certificate English aim of viewing writing not simply as an instrumental skill but as an interpretative and creative activity 'through which specific meanings can be placed on experience' (NCCA n.d., 8). The exercise could be considered a 'private, pleasurable and personal activity ... using a personal voice' and is therefore also in line with the new Junior Cycle English Learning Outcomes for Writing (NCCA 2015, 15).

While Expressive Writing should not be considered a panacea (Frattaroli 2006; Andersson and Conley 2008), the fact that it is significantly less resource-intensive than current one-to-one guidance means that it could be employed as part of a developmental and preventive guidance programme in consultation with the Guidance Counsellor (Lam and Hui 2010). Expressive Writing has therefore the potential to be an appropriate and meaningful tool in a whole-school approach to guidance counselling, such as TLF.

Hyper-reflection and self-transcendence

Hyper-reflection means excessive attention (Frankl 1988, 100) and is a central concept in Logotherapy. It is a tendency toward exaggerated reflection and self-observation (Frankl 2004b) resulting in the disruption of a person's ability to complete everyday tasks. The performer becomes excessively concerned with watching and analysing themselves. Pennebaker, without reference to Frankl, offers a succinct definition but also validation and empirical evidence of this concept:

when people are depressed, they tend to focus on their own emotions at a pathological level. They ruminate on their feelings of anxiety, sadness and worthlessness while paying less and less attention to the world around them. (2011, 108)

Poetry, as an art form which focuses on intense emotion, is a perfect place to illustrate to students, not just this concept, but also the means to break this pathogenic cycle. Further independent evidence of this concept can be seen in Stirman and Pennebaker (2001), and Turpin and Fuhrman (2012). A number of studies demonstrate how ‘I-word’ usage can predict depression and even suicidal tendencies (Ickes, Wicklund, and Ferris 1973; Pyszczynski and Greenberg 1987; Rude, Gortner, and Pennebaker 2004). This phenomenon can be highlighted through the Leaving Certificate English course. TLF offers a framework through which students can be creative and have new and meaningful experiences by focusing outwards.

Frankl (1988) extends his theory to what he calls the western phenomenon of mass hyper-reflection. This is observable in cultures that are intent on always watching and analysing themselves. The ‘selfie’ may be the best example of this in contemporary culture. This inward focus however, can have a negative impact on mental health (Ickes, Wicklund, and Ferris 1973; Pennebaker 2011).

Written mid-way through the twentieth century, Erich Fromm could not have imagined how the internet and social networks now offer the masses the allure of fame, ‘If the meaning of life has become doubtful ... then fame is one means to silence one’s doubts’ (1994, 43). Online, an individual’s unhealthy focus on themselves means responsibility, and at times dignity, is sacrificed at the altar of public opinion and Facebook ‘likes.’ TLF offers a further strategy through which students can learn to use the internet in a responsible fashion.

Finding meaning and the consequences of engaging in meaningful tasks

Meaning differs from person to person, but also from moment to moment. Frankl (2010) explains the meaning of the moment by using a chess analogy. Without knowing the context of the game of chess, a question such as ‘What is the best chess move?’ appears ludicrous. So too, when people looked for a general meaning of life amidst all the suffering of Auschwitz, the question appeared incongruous:

We needed to stop asking about the meaning of life, and instead to think of ourselves as those who were being questioned by life – daily and hourly ... Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfil the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual. (Frankl 2004a, 85)

Pennebaker’s unpublished analysis of function words in situations (2011) proves how important the ‘task’ aspect of life is. When people are task-focused, they don’t pay attention to themselves:

In sports settings, the language is more upbeat and lacking in introspection ... This is probably the allure of sports – they serve as an escape from the self ... (Pennebaker 2011, 245)

The participants on whom Pennebaker has ‘eavesdropped’ are exercising experiential values by participating in sports, but they are also experiencing others through meaningful encounters. The result is that they are less prone to excessive rumination and hyper-reflection. It is at this point that ‘meaning’ and ‘task’ merge, particularly with regard to setting goals, ‘nothing is more likely to help a person

overcome or endure objective difficulties or subjective troubles than the consciousness of having a task in life' (Frankl 1973b, 54). TLF directs students towards possible avenues for meaning should students appear apathetic or bored. Individuals with meaningful goals that transcend themselves show increased resistance to problems and stress (Melton and Schulenberg 2008). The traditional Junior Certificate CSPE Action Project implicitly acknowledged this fact (Nugent 2006).

TLF encourages students to select positive role models, exercising their conscience and engaging in an inner-dialogue that will assist them to make responsible decisions about how they will behave and who they will become. As students' own consciousness is awakened, students become less affected by the unconscious influence of negative role models around them (Bandura 1977).

The significance of looking beyond ourselves, our personal wants, needs, or gains, clearly has social implications. Heyman and Ariely (2004) offer a distinction between social norms and market norms. The authors suggest that participants work harder for a cause (a social norm) than for cash (a market norm). If true, this has significant implications for the educational, career and personal aspirations encouraged within a system that focuses on testing, salaries and competition. The real 'cost' therefore, of developing an education approach in line with market demands, is that this approach neglects the development of social responsibility.

The paradox is that a prosocial capacity can only be nurtured by developing students' individual conscience thus enabling them to make responsible, prosocial decisions. Many successful models of responsibility are task based, focusing beyond the individual (Hellison 2003; Hellion and Walsh 2003; Hammond-Diedrich and Walsh 2006). Future-oriented tasks guide our behaviour and help us to establish our own value system. The benefits of volunteering and peer tutoring, tasks that look beyond the self, but have no 'market value' are widely recognised as helping adolescents create their own value system and identities (Johnson et al. 1998; Wray-Lake and Syvertsen 2011; Hammond-Diedrich and Walsh 2006). Positive mental health is not therefore dependent on our position or role within a market system but is instead inextricably linked to having a task or a purpose beyond oneself.

TLF: recognising the individual

By developing an individual's capacity to make their own decisions, educators are developing critical life skills (see Zimbardo 2009; Ariely and Loewenstein 2006). Humans have a fundamental need to belong to something larger than themselves (Baumeister and Leary 1995) and many schools pride themselves on 'school spirit.'

Thus the meaning of the human person as a personality points beyond its own limits, toward, community; in being directed toward community the meaning of the individual transcends itself. (Frankl 1973b, 70)

School communities must recognise and respect the individual personalities of students. At the core of any whole-school, developmental guidance counselling approach is the individual, recognising the potentials and experiences that are unique to each student and consequently responding to each student's individual concerns and needs (Aluede, Imonikhe, and Afen-Akpaida 2007). The effects of deindividuation are well-documented (Zimbardo 2009). Teachers who are involved in a

whole-school guidance counselling approach must change their repertoire ‘from holding a generalised view of students to respecting students’ individuality’ (Lam and Hui 2010, 220).

An approach that stresses the utilitarian value of students as ‘future’ participants in a work force neglects the unique human attributes of each student. Indeed ‘however insignificant or irrelevant that purpose may be to the worker’s personal goal ... when there is no purpose, work becomes absurd, alienating, or even demeaning’ (Ariely, Kamenica, and Prelec 2008). Frankl expresses a similar view, but expands this concept further:

The more standardised a machine is, the better it is: but the more standardised a person is, the more submerged he is in his race, class or characterological type ... the more inferior is he from the ethical standpoint. (Frankl 1973b, 73)

This theory is developed to its most frightening end by Philip Zimbardo (2009) who explores the portentous consequences of being anonymous within a system. Hoffman (2000) argues that a school that drives competition and merit among students may do so at the expense of promoting justice and caring.

By offering a means to engage apathetic or bored students, TLF develops each student’s independence and responsibility by encouraging them to think for themselves. Of relevance also is the erroneous view that our job is actually what ‘identifies’ who we are:

... if the function of schooling is centrally conceived as the preparation of students of the labour market, we can hardly be surprised if motivation to learn generally correlates with students’ estimates of their future marketability. (Elliott 2005, 239)

TLF highlights opportunities for meaning beyond the workplace so students can avoid the degradation of becoming an instrument of labour (Ariely, Kamenica, and Prelec 2008) and avoid the negative mental health implications that are so often seen in the unemployed (Murphy and Athanasou 1999).

Meaningful side-effects

A meaningful task is something that is intrinsically motivating. It is worth noting at this point that extrinsic rewards may have significant negative consequences, particularly for younger students:

Although rewards can control people’s behaviour ... the primary negative effect of rewards is that they tend to forestall self-regulation. In other words, reward contingencies undermine people’s taking responsibility for motivating and regulating themselves ... they may be having a substantially negative long-term effect. (Deci, Koestner, and Ryan 1999, 659)

Schools must create an environment where intrinsically meaningful tasks are available to students. Logotherapy posits that happiness and peace of mind, can only be obtained by completing a meaningful task or as a result of our ethical behaviour, but never if they become objectives in themselves. Happiness in itself should not therefore become a political, societal or even a personal goal. While appearing

disparate, Maslow's growth-motivated theory of self-actualisation converges with Frankl's theory if one assumes that growth is tropistic. By forgetting oneself and having a meaning or task to fulfil, one grows towards it. In achieving the task, therefore, self-actualisation occurs not by design, but as a consequence.

Happiness and pleasure are similarly established as soon as one has fulfilled a meaning or realised a task (Frankl 2010). Setting ourselves emotional goals such as happiness paradoxically appears to have the opposite effect, leaving us even more unhappy and even lonely (Mauss et al. 2011, 2012). Happiness thus ensues but it cannot be pursued. Ryan, Huta, and Deci (2008) also validate Frankl's assertion. Edith Weisskopf-Joelson (as cited by Frankl) expresses the danger of a society that places such a value on happiness:

our current mental-hygiene philosophy stresses the idea that people ought to be happy, that unhappiness is a symptom of maladjustment ... [the unhappy person] is not only unhappy, but also ashamed of being unhappy. (2004a, 118)

Weisskopf-Joelson's sentiment has now become a positive mental health message, 'It's okay not to feel okay,' and the rallying cry at an annual event attended by thousands of students: Ireland's Cycle Against Suicide (Flaherty 2014). Aside from highlighting this important mental health message, TLF offers a means to engage students in meaningful tasks and consequently the means to achieve significant yet tangential, positive side-effects.

The case for increased responsibility

Logotherapy argues that therapists and educators should not spare young people the tension that is caused by giving them responsibility, 'if therapists wish to foster their patient's health, they should not be afraid to increase the burden of one's responsibility to fulfil the meaning of one's existence' (Frankl 1973a, 72). Longitudinal studies on self-control have demonstrated that one factor which improved self-control was to work as a supervisor 'responsible for subordinate employees' (Moffitt, Poulton, and Caspi 2013, 358). Ariely and Wertenbroch (2002) have similarly demonstrated that by making students responsible for their own deadline submissions, the effects of procrastination (and therefore late submissions) can be reduced.

A positive amount of tension is thus essential for mental well-being. In the absence of a positive tension, 'such as that tension which is aroused by a meaning to fulfil' (Frankl 1988, 48), young people will look elsewhere and create their own tensions through positive tasks such as sport or through less positive avenues by seeking less healthy thrills and kicks (Frankl 2010).

Being given responsibility, such as that which is thrust upon a person during a shared traumatic event, generally leads people to grow, to become more selfless and to look beyond themselves (Pennebaker 2011). Students must be taught how to deal with responsibility and a fundamental method of doing so is to give responsibility to them. This responsibility allows each individual to be recognised as unique and helps them grow and define who and what type of person they will become. Zimbardo (2009) and Milgram (1965) offer portentous insights into the consequences of disburdening 'oneself of individual responsibility' (Frankl 1973b, 72). Frankl's experiences in the concentration camp predate what Milgram and Zimbardo would later

prove in the laboratory. Schools must create an environment in which the expectation is for students to behave responsibly, and not otherwise. Journal writing and If–Then strategies provide two complementary means through which teachers can assist students to become responsible for their own behaviour (Gawrilow, Gollwitzer, and Oettingen 2011; Mischel 2014).

In a similar way to how we can exercise self-control at the critical moment just before our emotions take over (Ariely and Loewenstein 2006), so too it appears that by being reminded of our responsibility or of a moral code just before we make a decision, this can significantly influence whether we behave responsibly, by cheating, or not (Mazar, Amir, and Ariely 2008). In an atmosphere of disappearing values and traditions, students must therefore be reminded continually of their responsibility. TLF offers one method of doing so. Consequently, giving students more responsibility does not decrease the responsibility of the teacher but instead increases it, as teachers and schools must now provide opportunities for students to engage in meaningful tasks (creative or experiential).

Conclusion

The objectives of TLF are grand. Aspirations must, by their very nature, be so:

if we take man as he is, we make him worse; if we take him as he ought to be, we help him become it. (Goethe as cited in Frankl 1973a, 23)

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the primary hindrance to the learning of 15 year-olds was ‘(a) low expectations of teachers;’ (OECD 2003, 43). Gallup (2013) concluded that without student engagement, learning cannot take place. Without an explicit emphasis on student engagement, school reform will fail. Student engagement is an important antecedent of student achievement, yet teacher engagement is a prerequisite for student engagement, ‘Engaged students make an emotional investment in learning ... Without emotional investment, cognitive engagement is missing’ (Gallup 2013, 10).

TLF offers an approach with the potential to intrinsically motivate through meaningful tasks, leading to increased staff and student engagement – both prerequisites for student achievement.

If students are to behave in an intrinsically motivated manner, they need to feel confident and have a sense that they have some control over their learning. They also need to have a sense that the work they do is meaningful ... as students begin to lose the sense that they are agents responsible for their actions they may start to become work avoidant. (Seifert and O’Keefe 2001, 90)

TLF offers a framework through which students can be given more responsibility for their own decision-making, by assisting them to set their own meaningful goals (career, personal and educational). In so doing students develop self-control, autonomy and the ability to self-regulate, all crucial attributes of responsible, prosocial behaviour (Moffitt, Poulton, and Caspi 2013; Ryan, Huta, and Deci 2008):

Teachers who employ interesting, novel and meaningful tasks and emphasise the process of learning are more likely to have students who are willing to engage cognitively with the

work ... Students' perceptions of teachers as being nurturing and supportive of learning are strongly connected to students' sense of competence and control. It is in this context that teaching is, first and foremost, an exercise in human interaction. (Seifert and O'Keefe 2001, 90)

TLF offers a means to better understand the complementary, fluid yet significant interplay between self-control, self-insight, autonomy and meaning when making responsible decisions. When staff and students are engaged in meaningful tasks, the performance of both increases. Higher engagement predicts higher performance (Gallup 2013).

It should be acknowledged that TLF is not a panacea but it does offer a potentially important framework. Students become responsible for themselves, increasing the positive 'tension' between what they are and what they wish to become. Students can define themselves by looking beyond themselves and engaging in meaningful tasks and goals which, critically, they will have set for themselves, while acknowledging that goals are strived towards but may not always be attained. This knowledge enables students to deal with deficiencies in a more positive way, enabling them to cope with adversity, not by suppressing their emotions but by learning how to transform them.

TLF offers a less resource-intensive approach through which education and guidance counselling objectives can be achieved in a variety of subject areas. Logotherapy and Existential Analysis is a synthesis of philosophy and psychology (Ponsaran 2007). TLF is an application of this philosophy and psychology to the school environment for the first time. TLF offers activities and practices that students can use without being dependent on a teacher or guidance counsellor. Some students may wish to discuss material raised in their writing exercises in later appointments with the guidance counsellor. In some cases, it may be appropriate to refer students to outside agencies.

Considering that no guidance counselling framework, approach or resources grounded in Logotherapy exist in the Irish Secondary setting to date, this research was experimental and traditional methods of gathering either qualitative or quantitative data were therefore not possible. The method adopted was to undertake an extended literature review to identify if TLF objectives could be achieved. TLF lends itself to evaluation using instruments which assess, for example, purpose in life (e.g. Crumbaugh and Maholick 1964) and self-control (Tangney, Baumeister, and Boone 2004). Such assessments can be used to identify students who may benefit from interventions which focus on meaning-orientation, the development of self-control and the setting of future-oriented goals. Further examination of the effectiveness of the approach through self-reporting, teacher-reporting and parent-reporting, can then take place to establish correlations between exhibited behaviour and attainment in relation to test and/or reported scores thus establishing a measure of the effectiveness of both the assessment instruments and the selected interventions. Having completed this research, a practical evaluation of the design and of the effectiveness of TLF is now necessary.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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