

Moral dispositions in supply chain managers. A review from your career paths

Disposiciones morales en administradores de la cadena de suministro. Una revisión desde sus trayectorias profesionales

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to understand the moral dispositions of agents that manage different branches of the supply chain; in this sense a sociological perspective is recovered that focuses the professional trajectories of the agents as a comprehensive category that allows to articulate their current administrative practices and their formative and experiential antecedents. On the theoretical construction of the object of study sociological concepts are integrated administrative and those who belong to professional ethics so are recovered authors such as Bourdieu, Drucker and Duart among others. Methodologically, the documentary analysis technique was used at a first moment of construction and an instrument with open and closed questions was subsequently designed (Likert scale), regarding the treatment of the data, the multiple correspondence analysis was used and the main results detail a strong relationship between the moral dispositions of the agents according to their professional and academic trajectory. The main conclusions that emerge highlight the importance of the held by agents in the administrative field and their corresponding moral provisions, thus providing information that can be valuable in decision making in logistics companies.

Professional ethics, Administration, Social trajectories

Resumen

El objetivo del presente artículo es comprender las disposiciones morales de agentes que administran diferentes ramas de la cadena de suministro; en este sentido se recupera una perspectiva sociológica que focaliza las trayectorias profesionales de los agentes como una categoría comprensiva que permite articular sus prácticas administrativas actuales y sus antecedentes formativos y experienciales. En la construcción teórica del objeto de estudio se integran conceptos sociológicos, administrativos y aquellos que son propios de la ética profesional por lo que se recuperan autores tales como Bourdieu, Yurén, Drucker y Duart entre otros. Metodológicamente se utilizó la técnica de análisis documental en un primer momento de construcción y posteriormente se diseñó un instrumento con preguntas abiertas y cerradas (escala de Likert), respecto al tratamiento de los datos se utilizó el análisis de correspondencias múltiples y los principales resultados detallan una fuerte relación entre las disposiciones morales de los agentes en función de su trayectoria profesional y académica. Las principales conclusiones que se desprenden resaltan la importancia que reviste la posición que ocupan los agentes en el campo administrativo y sus correspondientes disposiciones morales, de esta manera se aporta información que puede ser valiosa en la toma de decisiones en empresas logísticas.

Ética profesional, Administración, Trayectorias sociales

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Introduction

The supply chain is made up of a series of processes that directly or indirectly affect the supply needs and can include links such as supply, production, storage, distribution and customer service, among others. However, the administration or management of this chain, as in much of the economic-administrative sciences, involves the development of activities in which those concepts related to the so-called professional ethics are involved.

This article does not intend to analyze the management of the supply chain or discuss the professional ethics associated with it from an administrative or philosophical perspective, but is part of the recognition that there are social practices that subjects perform in different processes associated with the administration of such an important function of the companies and, beyond issuing a value judgment to such practices, it is of interest to study what provisions are presented and what relationship they have with the trajectory of the subjects involved in the process.

In this sense, beyond lecturing on what should be, so characteristic of professional ethics whose aim is the regulation of activities, attention is focused on being, which leads to consider as an object of study the moral dispositions that Somehow they are imposed by a certain society in a specific context, that is, historical and contextual.

In this way, the article aimed to understand the moral dispositions of agents that manage different branches of the supply chain, in this sense a sociological perspective was recovered that focuses the professional trajectories of the agents as a comprehensive category that allows to articulate their practices administrative procedures and their formative and experiential background.

The research questions were, what are the moral dispositions of specialists in the supply chain? What relationship does the academic and professional trajectories of the specialists have?

To achieve the stated objective and answer the research questions, the present article was organized in various sections, such as theoretical-conceptual referents.

Where Bourdieu's theoretical commitment is mainly recovered, for whom the practical meaning is the concretion of the objective and of the lived sense, as well as conceptual referents of Yurén, Duart and Drucker regarding professional ethics concretely in organizations; a second section establishes the methodological resources used and that corresponds to multivariate analysis as a technique for the construction of analytical classes and the corresponding interpretation of their moral dispositions; Subsequently, the section corresponding to the analysis of results is presented, where the relationship between the trajectories and the dispositions of the surveyed agents is identified; a fifth section corresponds to the conclusions, where the importance of the trajectories and the moral dispositions, as well as those regularities and discrepancies detected and; finally, the contributions that come from the research reported here are issued and of course some recommendations to deepen the subject.

The way of approaching the object of study provides elements that rescue objective techniques as a means to study subjectivity, in this case professional ethics, in the social agents under study, which presupposes a not only relational approach, but also with employment of relational techniques even when the scope of the present study was exploratory.

Theoretical-conceptual references

Professional ethics can be conceptualized as that cluster of both objective (knowledge) and subjective (beliefs, values and action plans) that guide professional practice in a given field (Yurén, 2013). In such a way that, for the author, there are three dimensions present in professional ethics. Ethics in the profession, morality and moral behavior of the professional.

The ethnicity in the profession is referred to the result of a historical process of a certain professional field, in this way, the subjects to submit to a set of tacit or explicit prescriptions in a certain profession have to have an effect of reproduction in their practices social networks with more or less adjustments in the initial conditions to which they were submitted. So that this condition for individuals is a reference to know what is prohibited or allowed.

On the other hand, morality implies those procedures that a professional uses at the moment when situations of the contradictory type are presented in terms of values; regarding internal procedures, there is deliberation, reflection and those judgments associated with justice. Such procedures are appropriate for the individual throughout his career in different spaces and temporalities that form his own moral point of view.

Finally, the moral behavior of the professional puts into play those capacities of self-regulation that imply, among others, those processes of self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-determination that in some way regulate the moral principles of the individual as a way of being and way of living. Such behavior implies putting into play internalized ethics and morality.

In addition to the above, Duarte (1999) states that ethical construction has a strong subjective load itself, which, based on the meaning of the experience, gives rise to a perception of reality by the subject, in this way the author conceives three dimensions of ethics, a personal dimension, a structural dimension and a relational dimension.

In the first dimension the subject is conceived as a person within the framework of an institution and therefore does not act in isolation; in the structural dimension said subject is part of a collective where dialogue and consensus are priority elements to build a community and; finally, in the relational dimension, the shaping of a culture is sought where both the individual and the group relationships to which it belongs are important. In the perspective of Duarte, we can glimpse the importance of the individual perspective of the subject and also the collective perspective in which he finds himself inserted in his professional practice.

Now, Turriago recovers Drucker to establish that the foundations on which business ethics must be structured today are (Turriago, 2009, p.19):

1. Clear definition of what the relations of interdependence are.
2. Universal and general rules of conduct collected, for example, in codes of ethics or conduct.

3. Identification of appropriate behaviors that avoid erroneous procedures.
4. Construction of ethical organizations that have clearly defined what is good behavior and, on this basis, build harmonious, constructive and mutually beneficial interpersonal relationships.

The perspectives on professional ethics reviewed above are similar to each other, recognizing the individual as an agent of change at least partially, and where the importance of context and the relationships that exist between agents, as well as a practice of professional ethics in congruence with the previous points, they are of special interest. In this way, the context plays an important role in such conceptions, in the first instance because it conformed, in another temporality, the current perceptions of the agents, but also because it establishes a kind of regulation of their current social practices.

In addition to the above, the theoretical position of Bourdieu (1979) establishes that social practices are the concretion of the objective sense attributed to the objective conditions and the subjective sense regulated by what the agent has lived; so, for the author, the production of subjectivities or the sense of the lived is closely related to objective conditions. Schematically, the same author proposed what is called the formula of practical meaning (Bourdieu, 1979, p.99).

Field+ [habitus + capital] = social practice

From this perspective, the understanding of the social practices of the agents refers to the objective conditions in this case of the professional field with the intention of identifying the habitus or dispositions of said agents that in some way determine those. Now, Giménez (1997, p.6) establishes that the habitus conception recovers the cognitive, axiological and practical planes since "it has a multidimensional character is both eidos (system of logical schemes or cognitive structures), ethos (moral dispositions).

Hexis (register of postures and gestures) and aisthesis (taste, aesthetic disposition) "overcoming in this way the dissociation between the intellectual, the affective and the corporal.

It is important to establish that the research that gave rise to the present article is exploratory, so it was decided to recover the concept of ethos or moral disposition instead of habitus, since only some elements of the Bourdieusian theoretical commitment were recovered it would have been very risky to talk about habitus.

Methodology

In the first methodological moment the technique of documentary research was recovered, as a scientific procedure that implies the systematic treatment of inquiry, collection, organization, analysis and interpretation of information or data of a certain topic (Alfonso, 1994), was the point of departure of the methodological strategy selected here. The phases developed were the researcher and the systematization, through the reading, analysis, reflection and interpretation of the information, the articulating axis that guided the research were the moral dispositions of the agents and the corresponding professional field.

From the results of the documentary research, the theoretical-conceptual proposal was made explicit and the second methodological moment consisted in the design of a survey with three sections: general data, professional trajectories and three interpretive categories (social perspective, ethics and performance, as well as identity and training) under a Likert scale modality with a rating scale from totally agree to totally disagree (see table 1). A total of 26 surveys were applied to postgraduate students with an emphasis in commerce and international logistics. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was 0.786 and was calculated using the SPSS software.

Category	Indicator	No. of items
Social Perspective	Cooperation	3
	Social responsibility	3
	Service spirit	3
Ethics and performance	Ethics and professional development	3
	Ethic formation	3
	Ethical qualities	5
Identity and training	Continuous training	3
	Identification with profession	3

Table 1 Structure of the instrument.

Source: *Self Made*.

In the third methodological moment, analytical classes were constructed based on the proposal established by Bourdieu for whom a social space conceived as multidimensional can be constructed in an empirical way, discovering the factors of differentiation such as the powers or the forms of capital that operate, with certain degree of efficiency, in that particular space, these factors are those that facilitate or hinder the struggle for the scarce goods of that universe.

Thus, the agents are distributed throughout the social e-space, in the first dimension according to the global volume of capital they possess, in the second dimension according to the composition of their capital, that is, according to the relative weight of the various types of capital in the totality of its capital, especially economic and cultural, and in the third dimension according to the evolution over time of the volume and composition of its capital, that is, according to its trajectory in the social space (Bourdieu, 2001, p.106).

With these methodological elements, capitals such as the cultural and the experiential were detected, as well as elements that allowed to configure the trajectory of the agents such as previous employment and current employment, organization turn and position occupied in it. With these inputs, the analytical classes and the corresponding classification of agents were constructed in an objectivist exercise of social practices.

Finally, in the fourth moment and once the social classes were constructed, the answers were processed from the multidimensional analysis whose particularity is that it has objective and subjective dimensions; Specifically, we opted for the technique called multiple correspondence analysis since it seeks the interdependence between variables or categories, facilitating their interpretation through the perceptual maps generated from such interrelation or interdependence (Hair, Anderson, Tathan & Black (1999).

This methodological strategy made it possible to relate the analytical social classes and the moral dispositions of the social agents that make them up. The results and their respective analysis are presented in the following section.

Results

The constructed analytical classes were five and then describe:

Class A. Formed by those agents whose trajectory has been ascending currently occupying department heads (previously held operative positions) and they work in government services mainly as well as in distribution and manufacturing to a lesser extent, the total of the class has academic training according to the management of the supply chain.

Class B. These agents have a downward trajectory since they held positions of head of department and general management and now serve as teachers or in operational positions mainly in the education sector, this class has similar academic training, although not in all cases.

Class C. It is characterized by having practically the same trajectories, that is to say they maintain the same operative positions that they currently occupy, the organizations for which they work do not belong to the same line of business. They present an academic profile according to the management of the supply chain.

Class D. The class presents ascending trajectories, although in the mainly educational field with current teacher position and have the academic profile suitable for the functions associated with the supply chain.

Class E. It is characterized by those agents that at this moment are not working, although they have experience in manufacturing and production processes mainly, they are considered to have a downward trajectory due to their working condition.

Once determined the social classes, proceeded with the analysis of the perceptions of the agents for each of the categories of social perspective, ethics and performance e, identity and training.

Social Perspective

In terms of cooperation, classes A, B, C and D are inclined to consider the opinion of others to solve important problems alluding to the profession.

However, they prefer an individual job when they are not sure that a collective work is of higher quality; while class E is in full agreement that listening to others and teamwork encourage the resolution of problems but also encourages quality work, so they consider that institutions that do not promote this practice incur a error.

Regarding social responsibility, no significant differentiation was identified in the perceptions between the classes, however, some marginal differences were presented, such is the case of class A that expresses its agreement that the most important thing is the scientific scope and technological, regardless of the consequences, not for class E for whom this position is totally inadmissible, in the same sense that they assume the need to participate in the solution of social problems.

On the other hand, class B is inclined to consider that, as agents, the solution of social problems corresponds to them, similarly class D presupposes the same although with certain traits of doubt about it, finally class C is much more inclined to doubt that a good professional is one who ignores the problems of the society in which he lives.

Regarding the spirit of service, a greater dispersion is observed, although the perceptions of the classes are similar for A, D and C whose members tend to consider that a job well done is not very useful if it does not contribute to helping others, however they are not sure that they have selected their careers to be useful to people, on the other hand, these same classes maintain positions that contradict the fact that in their profession it is more important to help others than to reach the success.

Regarding this last conception, classes B and E are more inclined to be totally in agreement, as well as the fact that a good job contributes is useful if it contributes to helping others and in this sense they tend to argue that they studied their career to be useful to others.

In general terms, it is observed that as far as the social perspective, there are not very marked differences in the social classes constructed with respect to the perceptions regarding cooperation and social responsibility, however, in the case of the spirit of service if differences are identified, such is the case of class A, C and D which, in addition to accumulating more capital, are those with stable or ascending trajectories, the agents of these classes manifest antagonistic positions in relation to the spirit of service.

On the contrary, classes B and E who have downward trajectories and a lower volume of capital are those who are more inclined to give greater importance to the spirit of service.

Ethics and performance

Regarding ethics and personal development, similarity was identified in the perceptions of classes A and B for those who totally agree that professional success is important as long as it allows them to be a better person, in addition they partially assume the risk of being wrong in order to improve their professional activity and tend to disagree that the most important thing of the profession is to earn money and prestige. In relation to class E, the agents say they are not sure about the fact of making mistakes in order to improve their professional activity, the professional success associated with being a better person and the emphasis on making money and prestige in the professional practice. The agents of class D manifest an intermediate position between those established by E and the block made up of A and B. Regarding the class C, the agents state that they fully agree to accept the risk of being wrong in order to improve their professional activity.

Regarding ethical training, class A is more inclined to agree that ethics training can contribute to confront conflicts in the professional field and in the fact of trust in those agents who consider knowing a lot about the exercise of your profession. Classes C and D agree on the need to develop other skills in addition to those of a technical nature, as well as the fact of perceiving distrust of those who say they know everything about their profession, the latter is more emphatic in the class D.

With regard to class B, they fully agree that ethics may be necessary to face conflict in the professional field but are not so sure of showing distrust by those agents who claim to know everything about the profession. Finally we have class E, for whose agents they totally agree that technical skills are not enough for a good professional exercise.

Now, regarding the ethical qualities, the agents' perceptions tend to be more homogeneous than in the other cases in this section, however.

Some proximities between the classes and the perception of the agents are highlighted greater differences are identified. Classes A and D have certain similarities in agreeing (greater proclivity for D) and totally agree (greater proclivity for A) in that the fact that doing the right thing from a professional point of view allows the agents of these classes to be at peace with themselves, although they present antagonistic positions (never and almost always) in that they can dispense with the values of the profession to exercise it.

Classes B and E are very close in their perceptions and argue that they always tend to transmit their own values through professional practice, however you present strong contradictions (totally in agreement and totally agree) regarding the fact that it is essential to have in account the ethical aspects in the exercise of the profession, also partially agree, with the classes A and D in the fact be totally in agreement in being at peace with themselves when doing the right thing and the fact of never do without their values in the exercise of the profession.

Finally, class C is more inclined to assume that sometimes you can dispense with the values of the profession and share the perception with class E above all to agree on the need to gain the trust of the people with whom you work with honesty.

In general, in this section of ethics and performance, it is observed in the different dimensions addressed that there is no regularity in the perceptions of the agents of the different classes, as it happened partially in the social perspective.

However, it is observed that in those agents currently perform their functions in the educational field who manifest greater proclivity to valorize the importance of ethics in their practices, as well as act according to their values and principles in the practice of the profession and, tend to recognize the importance of developing other types of skills in addition to those of a technical nature.

Identity and training

In this section, two indicators were developed, continuing education and identification with the profession. Regarding continuing education class A is inclined to state in a general way that it is not necessary to be continually prepared to solve new situations and problems in the profession even though in some cases they perceive that if it is necessary to update themselves. Classes B and E express their total agreement to establish that they enjoy when they have to learn something new, as well as to invest time to update their knowledge in the profession, although they are partially in agreement that the resolution of new problems in the profession does not demand a continuous preparation. On the other hand, class C has relative similarity with the perceptions of these classes, although to a lesser extent. Regarding class D, he agrees to enjoy learning something new and to use part of his time to update himself, which is why they tend to agree with the need to prepare to solve new problems in the field of education the profession.

Finally, in the case of identification with the profession, the percipients are relatively homogeneous and differ in specific points. Class D tends to perceive that the profession is a domain of identity for the members of the community who practice the profession, while the classes A, B and E express their total agreement with regard to the satisfaction they receive from having elected the profession and the identity that represent for the members of the profession, although the class E in the latter case claims not to be so sure of it. With regard to class C, in addition to sharing the perceptions of classes A, B and E, he fully agrees that it is easier to develop the work if there is an identification with the inherent activities (closer perception with class B.

In general terms, in this section it is observed that the dispersion in the dispositions of the agents of the different classes is not as heterogeneous as in other aspects, only there were particularities that were already addressed previously.

Conclusions

The methodological strategy of constructing social classes in an analytical way through the analysis of the volume and structure of capital (institutionalized and experiential cultural).

From them, analyzing their moral dispositions of the agents, allowed to identify some features that suggest the importance of the position occupied by the agents in the administrative field and these provisions.

In this sense, the sociological commitment allowed in this research to articulate the meaning of the lived and the objective sense, in order to recover the trajectories, at least partially, of those professionals in the supply chain, the experiences and analyze the corresponding moral dispositions. In other words, this fact allowed analyzing the subjectivity from objective conditions.

With this background, based on the empirical evidence detected, the relation that keeps the result of the historical process in ethics is established as Yurén proposes, such is the case of those agents with a downward trajectory with respect to the professional field who now occupy positions associated with teaching, who present moral dispositions more related to the service in contrast to those agents with ascending trajectories who have contradictory dispositions regarding the spirit of service.

But simultaneously the structural dimension established by Duarte is evident, since agents tend to collectively assume moral dispositions, whether they are dedicated to academic activities or to the activities of the profession, each group of agents tends to appropriate certain provisions.

On the other hand, there is evidence of the personal dimension in the sense that agents are prone to transmit their values through professional practice, however, these provisions make sense in terms of context, for those agents with downward trajectories but not this happens with those agents with ascending trajectories, so it can be assumed that each agent exercises its self-regulatory capacities in a different way depending on the context and, obviously, on the trajectory.

Although the relationship between the moral dispositions of the agents and their trajectory in the professional field of the supply chain was identified, the obtained results suggest that the classes constructed do not keep consistency in their dispositions since.

In some of the analyzed aspects, share perceptions with different classes, sometimes with auquellas with ascending trajectory, other occasions with descending trajectories or relatively isolated from the rest.

Contributions and recommendations

The contributions derived from the present article can be considered in two senses; in the first one, it provides elements for approaching the study of professional ethics from a sociological perspective, by recovering elements of subjectivity based on objective conditions; for which the proposal articulates theoretical-conceptual referents of contextual and above all relational character.

The second contribution is that it provides informative elements that can be valuable in decision making in logistics companies in the field of professional ethics.

Although the conclusions presented here account for the articulation between the theoretical bets recovered and the context included in the moral dispositions, it is important not to forget that this research was exploratory, so it will be necessary to deepen and broaden the research with the purpose that, when moving to other levels of depth, you can have more generalizable conclusions.

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