

THE ROLE OF LIFE SKILLS IN THE CURRENT SOCIAL CONTEXT IL RUOLO DELLE LIFE SKILLS NELL'ATTUALE CONTESTO SOCIALE

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Abstract

This work analyzes Life Skills in a National Context, referring to the indications of the European Council and the World Health Organization (WHO). In particular, the focus of the article is represented by the importance of Life Skills to build an identity of personal and social success. Success is determined by the adequate use of Skills to address the problems and challenges of a life in constant motion. The analysis of skills is analyzed through an evaluative research aimed at proposing a usable model of training and continuing education, even in different contexts. The research results highlighted the need to enhance the acquisition and development of Life Skills, in order to promote psycho-physical well-being in individuals.

Il presente lavoro analizza le Life Skills in un Contesto Nazionale, facendo riferimento alle indicazioni del Consiglio Europeo e dell'Organizzazione Mondiale della Sanità (OMS). In particolare, il focus dell'articolo è rappresentato dall'importanza delle Life Skills per costruire un'identità di successo personale e sociale. Il successo è determinato dall'adeguato utilizzo delle Skills per affrontare problemi e sfide di una vita in continuo movimento. L'analisi delle abilità viene analizzata mediante una ricerca valutativa atta a proporre un modello spendibile di Formazione ed Educazione continua, anche in diversi contesti. I risultati della ricerca hanno evidenziato l'esigenza di potenziare l'acquisizione e lo sviluppo delle Life Skills, al fine di promuovere benessere psico fisico negli individui.

Keywords

Life Skills, Education, Training

Life Skills, Educazione, Formazione

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Introduction

In the current social and cultural scenario, skills occupy a prominent place and are increasingly in demand in the world of work. Competence, with reference to the definitions of the European Council, is seen in terms of responsibility and autonomy and is understood as the ability to concretely spend both personal and social knowledge and skills (Balboni P. E. 2018). Competence is linked to knowing how to do, it does not refer only and exclusively to the possession of knowledge, but to the translation of the same into practical use even in new and / or unforeseen situations and that is why they must be constantly developed and updated (Aiello P., Di Tore, S., 2013). The concept of Competence, according to what is detailed by the European Commission, can be divided into basic competences and key competences. The former are indispensable for personal development, employability, social inclusion and active citizenship. In this regard, the European Parliament defines basic skills by referring to information and communication technologies (ICT), foreign languages and social skills. (European Commission 2006). Key competences are related to basic competences, but develop in a lifelong learning perspective that goes from early childhood to adult life, through formal, non-formal and informal learning in any context such as family, school, work and other communities (Velasco, V. 2015). Some key competences are described below:

- Literacy competence: it is the ability to understand, express and interpret concepts, facts and opinions, it is the ability to communicate effectively with others, in an appropriate and creative way;
- Learning competence to learn: it is the ability to reflect on oneself, to work with others positively and to remain resilient. It involves the ability to learn to learn and to cope with uncertainty and complexity to support one's physical, mental and emotional well-being;
- Multilingual competence: is the ability to use several languages in an appropriate and effective way;
- Mathematical competence: is the ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking to solve a series of problems in everyday situations;
- Digital competence: it is the ability to use digital technologies in a safe, critical and responsible way, it implies computer literacy, communication and collaboration; (Aniskin, V. N., Korostelev, A. A., Lvovna, B. A., Kurochkin, A. V., & Sobakina, T. G. (2020).
- Citizenship competence: it is the ability to act as responsible citizens.

Skills, called Skills, are not innate, but must be learned and practiced; (Le Boterf, G. 2008).

For semantic clarity, a distinction between knowledge, skills and competences is proposed below (Fig. 1):

Knowledge	Skills	Competences
Knowledge refers to the information that is learned through teaching.	Skills refer to the ability to apply knowledge to solve problems.	Competences refer to the ability to combine personal and social knowledge, skills and abilities to solve problems in other contexts.

(Fig.1 Distinction between knowledge, skills and competences)

In detail, Soft Skills and Hard Skills stand out. Soft Skills refer to a dynamic combination of cognitive and metacognitive, intellectual and practical skills. Soft skills allow you to adapt and take appropriate and effective attitudes to face life's challenges (Amon, S., Shamaï, S., & Ilatov, Z. 2008). They allow a successful life and it is therefore necessary that the Educational System gives them the right value.

The European Commission identifies Soft skills in:

- Personal effectiveness skills: refers to self-control and resistance to stress; flexibility, self-confidence, creativity and lifelong education;
- Relational and service skills: it implies communication skills and refers to interpersonal understanding; Cooperation with others and Communication.
- Ability to achieve: refers to achievement, efficiency, quality and precision;
- Cognitive skills: refers to analytical thinking.

Hard skills are divided into two basic types: generic and specific. The first, generic, are technical skills related to particular jobs. Specific hard skills are present in specific work sectors, referring to specific forms of work. In other words, Hard Skills refer to what to do, while Soft Skills refer to how to do it. (European Commission 2018). When we talk about Skills we cannot fail to refer to Life Skills, that is, the skills for Life. The first reference to Life Skills dates back to the Ottawa 1986 Charter, which establishes and defines the Psycho-Physical Well-being of the Person (WHO 2003).

The Charter proposes a unitary vision of man and not a sum of separate parts and in the same way the social organization is a unitary whole; therefore everyone must be enabled to have full well-being and fully enjoy their health potential (Jensen, B. 2019). This equity is obtainable thanks to the synergistic intervention of the various organs of the company such as: the Government, the Educational System, the Health System, the Mass media. Subsequently, in the 90s, the WHO deepened the concept of Life Skills by proposing to improve the psycho-social well-being of children and adolescents through the learning of skills necessary for the management of social relationships and emotions (WHO 2003). According to the WHO vision, Life Skills represent a factor of protection and promotion of the health of the individual.

1. The importance of Life Skills

Life Skills are linked to the concept of empowerment, that is the process that can be social, personal, psychological, cultural through which it is possible to express needs, identify suitable strategies to satisfy one's needs and / or solve problems and acquire greater control with respect to decisions affecting one's health (WHO 1994). Life Skills allow individuals to effectively face the demands and challenges of life, they are innumerable, the WHO identifies ten fundamental ones that must be included in training and wellness promotion programs:

- Decision Making: refers to making decisions, that is the competence that allows you to face decisions in different situations and contexts of life;
- Problem Solving: refers to Problem Solving, that is the competence that allows you to positively face various problems, which if left unresolved can be a source of stress and mental and physical discomfort;

- Creative Thinking: contributes to both decision making and problem solving, allowing you to evaluate and create possible alternatives, managing to face the different situations of everyday life;
- Effective communication: refers to knowing how to express oneself, verbally and otherwise, effectively and adequately;
- Critical thinking: refers to the ability to objectively analyze information and experiences,
- Skills for interpersonal relationships: refers to the ability to interact and relate to others in a positive way, this implies knowing how to create and maintain meaningful relationships;
- Self-awareness: refers to the knowledge of oneself, one's strengths and weaknesses, one's desires and needs.
- Stress management: refers to recognizing the causes of stress in everyday life and controlling them;
- Empathy: refers to the ability to understand others, it allows you to improve social relationships by facilitating acceptance and understanding of the other;
- Management of emotions: refers to the emotional capacity to recognize emotions in oneself and in others, to be aware of one's emotions and to be able to manage them adequately (Gardner, H. (2006).

The Life Skills, therefore, refer to three macro-areas:

- Emotional: self-awareness and management of emotions;
- Relational: empathy and effective communication;
- Cognitive: problem solving, critical thinking and decision making.

For the promotion of well-being, Life Skills play an important role, in fact they contribute to our perception of self-esteem and self-efficacy. Developing life skills means having greater self-awareness with respect to one's abilities, what one knows how to do and one's talents (Cinque, M 2013). Therefore, it is evident how life skills influence mental well-being from which the motivation to take care of oneself and to prevent mental distress starts. (Ausubel, D. P. 1978). Using life skills means having the personal, social, relational and cognitive tools suitable to be comfortable with oneself and with others. Given the importance of Life Skills, parents, teachers, educators, sports coaches and all the educational figures that revolve around the child and adolescent, have the task of developing life Skills and finding the qualities and skills of the students (Bandura, A 1972). Life Skills must be promoted in every moment of life, they are acquired with constant practice, in every formal, non-formal and informal context. Therefore, possession of Life Skills allows the individual to have a successful life in society, to live his life as a protagonist and to adapt to unexpected and sudden changes such as those that are defined as Human Transitions. (Balboni P. E. 2018). In fact, the historical period that humanity has lived through from 2020 to today has been characterized by a global pandemic crisis due to the Covid-19 virus, this sudden and unexpected crisis has brought with it countless changes to which, even forcibly, the humanity has had to adapt. Referring to literature, Baumann talks about the transition from a solid company to a liquid company where the only certainty is uncertainty, precisely because it is a constantly changing society and therefore in a continuous state of uncertainty. Therefore, Life Skills allow you to transform crises into opportunities, to acquire a new vision to engage new resources and respond to your needs adequately. (Batalla-Busquets, J. & Pacheco-Bernal, C. 2013). To effectively deal with sudden and epochal human transitions, we need to focus on what are the transversal skills, this implies the ability to adapt and open up to change, to have the aptitude to learn to learn and be predisposed to extend the boundaries of our knowledge.

(Ausubel, D. P. 1978). In addition to school, the family and peer group can contribute to the acquisition of Life Skills, to live in a liquid company (Binkley, M 2010). With regard to adult training for the acquisition of skills for professional and personal development, reference is made to the three intertwining contexts: formal contexts such as the university system, non-formal and informal that refers to learning in life everyday, through experience (Castoldi, M. 2009). It is through the lifelong learning process that the individual acquires and develops knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes. In fact, the current labor market requires more and more specific skills and preparation and to bridge the gap between the skills acquired at school and the skills required, reference is made to adult education, which takes place thanks to the synergy of formal contexts, not formal and informal (Batsunov, S.N., Derech, I.I., Kungurova, I.M., Slizkov., E.V. 2018). Having reviewed the importance of Life Skills in the current socio-cultural context, characterized by sudden and unexpected changes, we propose, below, a research aimed at evaluating the knowledge that one has of the subject matter (Boda G. 2008). The research aims to promote a Continuing Education project, which is a model that can be concretely used in different educational contexts, to provide the individual with the appropriate tools to deal with changes. Transitions in some ways can be irrelevant and daily, for others, however, they have the characteristic of being sudden, epochal and significant, for which it is necessary to possess and know how to use Life Skills to face the changing circumstances of life to which we are unpredictably exposed. (Dalibozhko, A., German M., Krakovetskaya I. (2018). With reference to the last transition that the whole of humanity has witnessed due to the pandemic crisis from Covid-19, given the difficulty with which the world has faced this crisis, with this research we want to analyze the knowledge of Skills at a global level with respect to the theme of human transitions, investigating a segment of the population, taken as a sample (Diaz, T. 1995).

2. Objectives

Two objectives have been identified: one generic and several specific objectives. The generic goal of the research is to have a clear reference framework for the knowledge and possession of Life Skills, in order to invite educational systems to implement a Continuing Training Path. The specific objectives are as follows:

- Having a clear reference framework to be able to implement a complete and continuous training, capable of guaranteeing individual and social well-being;
- Having a universal reference model when it comes to skills, so that they can also be used when moving to another country;
- Improve the preparation of people with deficient and / or insufficient skills;
- Promote Health and Competent Behavior;

3. Methodology

The methodology followed follows a qualitative-quantitative approach. In particular, starting from an analysis of the educational setting and context, the reference sample of the research was almost eleven thousand subjects, identified among first and second grade secondary school pupils and their families. Pupils were taken into consideration to evaluate the level of transmission of Life Skills in the school and adults to evaluate possessed and / or missing Life Skills. The research tool used was the questionnaire. The subjects were given a self-filled questionnaire, according to precise

rules for its construction. For methodological clarity, it should be emphasized that the qualitative choice of personal data, behaviors, preferences / opinions of the subjects involved, was made by the researcher on the basis of his interpretative criteria. Quantitative processing supports the significant elements identified by the researcher. The applications were made, completed and delivered online through a digital tool such as the "Google form". The questionnaire for adults consists of 13 multiple choice questions. The questions are listed:

Survey

Indicate your age range:

1. 25-35
2. 36-45
3. 46-55
4. 56-65

Do you know life skills?

1. Yes, I know them well
2. Yes, I've heard of them
3. No, never hear
4. If you have previously answered yes, please list two

In your opinion, are soft skills and life skills two different concepts or are they two synonyms and represent the same skills?

1. Yes, they represent the same concept and skills
2. They have some features in common
3. They are two different concepts

Which of the following skills and abilities do you think are indispensable and essential? (maximum 2 answers)

1. Self-awareness
2. Management of emotions
3. Stress management
4. Empathy
5. Creativity
6. Critical sense
7. Make good decisions
8. Solve problems
9. Effective communication
10. Effective relationships

Do you generally find it difficult to initiate and maintain conversation?

1. No Difficulty
2. Mild Difficulty
3. Fair Difficulty
4. Considerable Difficulty

Are you usually socially isolated?

1. No.
2. Never
3. Seldom
4. Sometimes
5. Often

What kind of work are you typically able to do (even if unemployed, retired or engaged in unpaid housework)

1. Full time
2. Part-time
3. Secure work
4. None

Have you ever proposed examples of positive lifestyles, for example by placing health education at the center, understood as personal and collective psycho-physical well-being?

1. Yes
2. No.

Do you feel disoriented when faced with a difficult situation?

1. No.
2. Never
3. Seldom
4. Sometimes
5. Often

Are you able to use new technologies in a functional way?

1. No.
2. Never
3. Seldom
4. Sometimes
5. Often

Have you ever thought about attending a professional training course?

1. Yes
2. No.

Have you ever attended a Professional Training Course?

1. Yes
2. No.

If you answered yes, did your experience allow you to spend the skills acquired in other contexts?

1. Yes
2. No.

4. Results

The sample of almost eleven thousand people obtained an average score of 468 points on the collaborative problem solving scale, lower than the OECD average of 500. Specifically, 63% of students reach the minimum level of competence identified by the OECD, while only 3.9% of students reach the advanced level and over a third of students fall below the minimum proficiency level. Adults 58% reach the minimum level, 1.9% reach an advanced level and more than a quarter do not reach the minimum level. The research highlights the need to enhance the acquisition and development of Life Skills, in order to promote psycho-physical well-being in individuals, which, thanks to a continuous and complete training project that involves the individual in every phase of his or her existence, are put in the condition of being able to live their own life as a protagonist (Pellerey, M.2004). There is a need to promote training courses that aim to encourage: 1) Positive lifestyles; 2) Respect for the environment in order to have a better quality of life; 3) Strengthening motor and sports activity; 4) Identification of diversity as a value; 5) Promoting the correct use of new technologies. The Evaluation Research presented highlights the importance of Life Skills for dealing with life circumstances and their influence on the psycho-physical well-being of People. Therefore, their acquisition and development must be constantly supported by an Educational System that takes care of the person, through continuous training, from childhood to adult life. (Braslavska O. V., Rozhi I. G. 2020).

Conclusions

In conclusion, this research work analyzes and underlines how much Life Skills are significant, in the Life Project, in terms of Wellbeing and Health. Life Skills can be Learned, Developed and Cultivated from a personal perspective that extends to a lifetime; in this regard, what is called Permanent Education in pedagogy intervenes. According to the Lifelong Learning approach, learning is not limited to age, but sees the whole span of life, offering the possibility of Learning, Developing and Improving the Skills and Skills necessary for the self-realization, adaptation and inclusion of the person. Life Skills occupy a role of primary importance for the realization of the Life Project, it is therefore necessary that all educational institutions develop this principle. The family and school represent the first places of learning for children and adolescents; therefore, they are the

ideal place to implement Life Skills learning interventions, to foster the scholastic and social inclusion of all children, even those considered at risk. school is educationally strategic for the learning of Life Skills and the training of future human resources in the social and working world. In the practice of daily life, in addition to knowing how to do, knowing how to be, knowing how to relate effectively to others is fundamental. Therefore, with a view to preventing socio-cultural discomfort, the development of Life Skills appears to be necessary and educational institutions are called upon to promote their learning starting from the WHO Program: Life Skills Education. WHO identifies the age group between 6 and 16 years, as the more suitable to start learning Life Skills, being the period in which possible risk behaviors have not yet crystallized. Subsequently, learning must continue throughout the life span in formal, non-formal and informal contexts as Life Skills are necessary in all stages and contexts of life. Currently, given the continuous and unpredictable human transitions, it is more evident than ever the need to have adequate and flexible Life Skills thanks to which it is possible to transform the crisis into an opportunity. Furthermore, there is a continuous technological development, in relation to which it is necessary to learn and possess the right skills to adapt to changes, without undergoing them, but managing to take one's sociocultural space to build one's own successful identity. Therefore, the development of Life Skills attributes flexibility to the life project in order to support and promote the enhancement of the quality of life and personal self-fulfillment. In conclusion, we can put forward the hypothesis, for future research, of enhancing Life Skills through a path of Continuing Education, which sees the man able to face, serenely, the changes or even better the transitions, to which he is inevitably and unpredictably exposed.

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