

ANALYSIS OF THE PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOFT SKILLS IN FUTURE EDUCATION: TRENDS AND RISKS

ANÁLISE DAS PERSPECTIVAS DE DESENVOLVIMENTO DE COMPETÊNCIAS TRANSVERSAIS NA EDUCAÇÃO DO FUTURO: TENDÊNCIAS E RISCOS

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ABSTRACT

In today's world, the importance of values and behavioural skills (soft skills) is becoming increasingly evident for both professional success and personal life. Increasing globalisation in recent decades has made the demands on these skills more complex, as professionals increasingly work in multidisciplinary and intercultural teams, speak multiple languages and operate in diverse geopolitical contexts. The purpose of the study is to conduct a comprehensive literature review on the development of soft skills in future education, identify the main trends that influence the development of these skills, and identify potential risks associated with their integration into educational programs. The article also aims to provide recommendations for educational institutions and teachers on how to effectively implement soft skills in the learning process. Methods - to achieve the research objective, a literature review was conducted, scientific articles, books, reports and other sources related to soft skills and their role in education were collected and analysed. International experience in introducing soft skills into curricula was also studied. The results of the work showed the unevenness of educational responses to these challenges in different countries, which became apparent during the analysis. Education in the area of soft skills development has undergone little change, which is worrying given the importance of these skills in shaping values and behavioural patterns. The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical need to develop skills such as consideration for others and collective responsibility. This has become not only a necessity but also a matter of survival, highlighting that well-being depends on collective efforts where everyone has a role to play. In the context of the pandemic, it has become clear that education should not only focus on academic knowledge, but also on developing students' ability to influence the world and society in a positive way. Conclusions - Integration of tourism best practices into soft skills curricula can be an important area of focus. This will allow students not only to acquire knowledge, but also to develop skills of adaptation, cooperation and effective communication in different cultural contexts.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Critical thinking, Adaptability, Teamwork, Interpersonal communication, Adaptation to changes, Leadership qualities.

RESUMO

No mundo de hoje, a importância dos valores e das habilidades comportamentais (soft skills) está se tornando cada vez mais evidente tanto para o sucesso profissional quanto para a vida pessoal. O aumento da globalização nas últimas décadas tornou as exigências em relação a essas habilidades mais complexas, já que os profissionais trabalham cada vez mais em equipes multidisciplinares e interculturais, falam múltiplos idiomas e operam em contextos geopolíticos diversos. O objetivo do estudo é realizar uma revisão abrangente da literatura sobre o desenvolvimento de soft skills na educação futura, identificar as principais tendências que influenciam o desenvolvimento dessas habilidades e identificar os potenciais riscos associados à sua integração nos programas educacionais. O artigo também visa fornecer recomendações para instituições educacionais e professores sobre como implementar efetivamente as soft skills no processo de aprendizado. Métodos - para atingir o objetivo da pesquisa, foi realizada uma revisão de literatura, coletando e analisando artigos científicos, livros, relatórios e outras fontes relacionadas às soft skills e seu papel na educação. Também foi estudada a experiência internacional na introdução das soft skills nos currículos. Os resultados do trabalho mostraram a desigualdade das respostas educacionais a esses desafios em diferentes países, que se tornou evidente durante a análise. A educação na área de desenvolvimento de soft skills sofreu poucas mudanças, o que é preocupante, dado o valor dessas habilidades na formação de valores e padrões comportamentais. A pandemia de Covid-19 destacou a necessidade crítica de desenvolver habilidades como consideração pelos outros e responsabilidade coletiva. Isso se tornou não apenas uma necessidade, mas também uma questão de sobrevivência, destacando que o bem-estar depende de esforços coletivos, onde todos têm um papel a desempenhar. No contexto da pandemia, ficou claro que a educação não deve se concentrar apenas no conhecimento acadêmico, mas também no desenvolvimento da capacidade dos estudantes de influenciar o mundo e a sociedade de maneira positiva. Conclusões - A integração das melhores práticas do turismo nos currículos de soft skills pode ser uma área importante de foco. Isso permitirá

que os estudantes não apenas adquiram conhecimento, mas também desenvolvam habilidades de adaptação, cooperação e comunicação eficaz em diferentes contextos culturais.

Palavras-chave: Inteligência emocional, Pensamento crítico, Adaptabilidade, Trabalho em equipa, Comunicação interpessoal, Adaptação à mudança, Competências de liderança.

Introduction

The modern world, in particular in the context of globalisation, requires us to recognise the crucial importance of skills such as emotional intelligence, critical thinking, adaptability, teamwork, interpersonal communication and leadership. Soft skills are becoming the basis for successful professional functioning (Ridei, 2021). In this regard, international youth training is becoming more relevant than ever as globalisation affects all aspects of life. Products, markets, science, technology, education and the labour market have been globalising in recent decades. While this process has accelerated significantly, and while it seems to have slowed down a bit, it remains a crucial factor, even in the face of climate change and the need to move towards a greener development model (Ma'Ruf, Anggeria, Siregar, Sinaga, Aminah, Rahmi, Siregar & Kaban, 2024).

Higher education has already accelerated its internationalisation, as evidenced by trends such as the growth of international students, exchange programs, double degree agreements, the establishment of subsidiaries abroad, English language courses and international accreditations (Dean, 2017). These processes contribute to the development of critical skills, such as teamwork, interpersonal communication, adaptability and leadership, which are indispensable in today's globalised world.

The Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated the need to prepare young people for the challenges of globalisation, including the development of soft skills (Golod, Tolchieva, Bilyk, Romanenko, Boiagina & Biriukova, 2022). Educational institutions should continue to integrate activities aimed at strengthening language and cultural skills, critical thinking, adaptability and other soft skills among students and teachers. This can be achieved through international exchanges, the use of digital

media, and the development of strategic plans to integrate international experience into the educational process.

Finally, teaching soft skills, such as active listening, the ability to discuss with people of different cultures, religions and beliefs, curiosity and empathy, will be a key element of the education of the future (Dzhym, Saienko, Pozdniakova, Zhadlenko & Kondratenko, 2023). These skills are critical to developing the next generation of leaders who are able to interact effectively in a complex and rapidly changing global environment.

Literature review

In the context of soft skills acquisition, Pvidaichyk, Vynogradova, Pavlyuk, Hrabchak, Savelchuk & Demchenko (2022) describe the role of skills such as emotional intelligence, critical thinking, adaptability, teamwork, interpersonal communication, adaptation to change and leadership, which are becoming increasingly important in modern education and work. Although there is a significant amount of literature on soft skills development, the overview of key skills in the context of education and work shows that insufficient attention is paid to the rapid changes in the modern world. These changes cover all aspects of life - from environmental and economic to social, educational and labour (Kulichenko, Sotnik & Stadnychenko, 2018).

According to Kaldygozova (2024), soft skills are distinguished by their “transferability”: unlike hard skills, which are often industry-specific, soft skills can be effectively applied in different contexts and sectors. They even facilitate the transition from one industry to another, which makes them extremely important in the context of uncertainty and rapid change that characterises the modern world (Redko, Riznyk, Nikolaiev, Yatsenko & Shuplat, 2024). In this context, Odynets (2024) adds that in an environment where economic and management sciences are facing a crisis due to the underestimation of life aspects, and where the climate crisis and geopolitical fissures are intensifying, the importance of soft skills is only growing.

Soft skills, as defined by Eleje, Onuigbo, Metu, Ejinkonye & Enemouh (2024), are the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. These skills are key to both personal and professional development. They include a variety of qualities and are often referred to as social or emotional skills that help people succeed in the workplace (Scheerens, Van Der Werf & De Boer, 2020).

According to (Anastasiadou & Taraza, 2019), while hard skills focus on the technical abilities required to perform specific tasks, soft skills determine how effectively a person can apply these abilities in different settings. Hard skills are usually acquired through formal education, internships or certification programs, while soft skills are developed through interaction, experience and reflection (Anggal, 2022).

Recent research in the field of education has found that soft skills play a crucial role in preparing young people to be effective in a globalised world (Asiyai, 2020). Experience and observations confirm the need for comprehensive development of both hard skills and soft skills to ensure successful career and personal growth in a fast-paced and changing world.

Materials and Methods

Study Design, Setting, and Sample

The study was designed as a literature review to explore current trends and risks associated with the development of soft skills in education. For the analysis, 45 publications covering different countries and educational systems for 2019-2024 were selected.

Data Collection

The data was collected by reviewing scientific articles, books, reports and conference materials covering the development of soft skills, their integration into educational programs and international experience in this area.

Study Instrument

The research tool was a system of categorisation and analysis of the collected information, which allowed us to identify key trends and risks in the development of soft skills.

Statistical Management

The data was analysed using qualitative content analysis, which allowed us to identify the main challenges and opportunities related to the integration of soft skills into the curricula of different countries.

Results

The development of soft skills in education is crucial for the formation of employability. According to Atstsauray, Hadiyanto & Supian (2024), employability should be developed as early as the education stage, with a particular focus on developing behavioural skills, attitudes and values related to soft skills. It is not enough to limit oneself to workshops that focus only on listening, empathy, creativity or the art of communication (Chingara, 2019). Accordingly, it is necessary to build into educational models practical elements that stimulate active student engagement, such as internships and various missions of a humanitarian, social or civic nature.

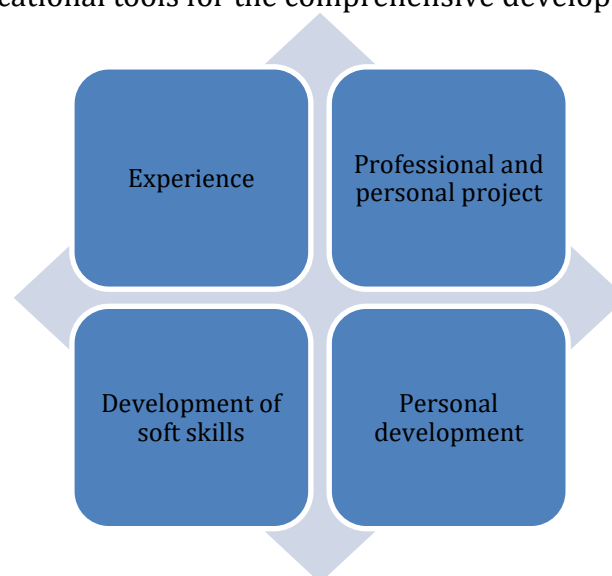
Involving students in these types of activities will help develop self-confidence and responsibility. It is also important to give students the opportunity to make mistakes so that they can learn from their own experiences. In a related work, Costa, Murphy, Pereira & Taylor (2018) argue that more theatre, dance, visual arts and music classes, as well as a wide range of physical exercises and creative workshops, should be included in educational programs. In addition, it is important to support reflection on career guidance, combining self-discovery (identifying talents, values, desires and projects) with practical observation of professions (through surveys, interviews and debates) (Dlamini, 2022).

This approach makes it easier to project oneself into the future, allowing each student to choose their path more confidently, taking into account their talents and capabilities. The development of soft skills receives significant attention among future university applicants during their general secondary education. The relevant conceptual foundations are laid out in the "New Ukrainian School" Concept and the "Concept for the Development of Natural and Mathematical Education (Stem Education)," which are aimed at fostering critical thinking, creativity, teamwork skills, as well as problem-solving abilities and independent decision-making. These aspects of education help students better prepare for the challenges of the modern world and professional activities, where soft skills are no less important than academic knowledge (Martyniuk; Martyniuk; Pankevych; Muzyka, 2021).

Speaking about later employability, which is now a challenge, the development of employability needs to be implemented in higher education, using appropriate educational processes and tools (Gasva; Phiri, 2020). However, experience shows that higher education institutions and universities are often focused on academic research, which is not always relevant to the real needs of the labour market. Instead, it is important to support each student in expanding their employability.

The main educational tools remain unchanged (Fig. 1):

Figure 1 – Educational tools for the comprehensive development of students



Source: authors' own development.

However, these components should be used with a greater workload and with increased requirements for the choice of options, missions and courses, allowing each student to “colour their CV” according to their own professional project (Jasti, Venkateswaran & Kota, 2021). This will help to create coherence between the educational path (research and life experience) and the subsequent career. This consistency will be crucial for successful employment, in addition to the diploma itself and the candidate's personal qualities. Soft skills are an integral part of the competency of secondary school graduates and continue to develop at subsequent levels of education, particularly in higher education institutions and during professional training. These skills include critical thinking, communication, teamwork, flexibility and adaptability, leadership qualities, and emotional intelligence. The development of these skills is a key factor for successful integration into modern society and the labor market, where the ability to interact effectively and solve problems is essential for professional growth and achieving personal goals (Martyniuk; Martyniuk; Pankevych; Muzyka, 2021).

The literature review helped to develop a set of criteria, or the so-called 'employability roadmap', to improve the effectiveness of learning (Kilag, Malbas, Miñoza, Ledesma, Vestal & Sasan, 2024). These criteria can cover about fifteen key points (Kranioti & Broni, 2023) that will determine how effectively an institution prepares students for the challenges of the modern labour market.

Thus, the development of soft skills is becoming not just an additional element of education, but a critical component of preparing students for the future, providing them with the necessary tools to adapt and succeed in a fast-paced and changing world (Table 1):

Table 1 - The main components for successful implementation in the profession

Component	Description
Employment integration	Incorporating employability into education and its strategic plan with a system for monitoring indicators.
The value of practical experience	The practice of alternating education and work in programs, the density and variety of internships.
Development of soft skills	Talent diagnostics, personalised support for students in achieving their priority goals, taking into account their projects.
Personal development and social life	The importance of sports, artistic, cultural, social and civic activities in the students' schedule and assessment.
Network.	Understanding the concept of networking, its value, various forms, ways of building, using and developing a network in professional and personal life.
Research.	Development of basic and applied research and its promotion among stakeholders (companies, students, scientific community).
Career center and business connections	Personalised resources for students, involvement of specialists, partnership agreements with companies, vocational training, and an observatory of professions and skills.
Professional project support (PPP)	Systems to support individual professional projects (personality tests, individual training, interviews with professionals), availability of online platforms for formulating PPPs.
Former students (graduates)	Formation of a formal body (alumni association), dynamics of relations with the educational institution, participation in the management of the institution, relations with teachers and students.
Entrepreneurship	Pedagogical methods, accompanying mechanisms (e.g. incubators), possible financing, support for family entrepreneurship.
Accreditation programs	In addition to increasing the value of diplomas, they provide access to professional networks that are conducive to employment.
International politics	Policy, pedagogy, academic and professional partners, exchange programs, the possibility of obtaining double degrees.

Ethics.	Standards of pedagogy, distribution among stakeholders, a system for reflecting on one's own value system.
Influence of the educational institution	The institution's strategy for influencing the territory, tools for measuring the impact on the environment, economy, employment, the region's image and its attractiveness to investors.
Teaching methods	A degree of active pedagogy that encourages students to seek knowledge independently and form their own path of development.

Source: authors' own development.

The topic of soft skills development in future education is closely related to increasing competitiveness in the labour market (Margalit & Pincavage, 2023). Future professionals need to be not only technically savvy, but also have developed soft skills. These include communication skills, creativity, teamwork, and adaptability to change (Chikuvadze, Zuva & Pagan'a, 2022). In particular, the ability of young people to innovate and approach problems creatively can ensure the long-term growth of their chosen industry.

It is obvious that in today's world of education, soft skills are becoming increasingly important for successful integration into society and professional activities. These skills include communication abilities, creativity, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, collaboration, adaptability and many other competencies that are key to successful interaction in various spheres of life.

In recent years, there has been a trend towards integrating soft skills development into educational programs. This is due to the rapid pace of change in the labour market, where not only technical knowledge but also the ability to communicate effectively, critically analyse and creatively solve problems are becoming increasingly important (Cheng, Wang & Liu, 2019). Modern employers prefer candidates with these skills, as they contribute to greater flexibility and the ability to adapt quickly to a changing business environment.

In the future, educational programs will increasingly focus on developing these skills using innovative approaches such as project-based learning, interdisciplinary projects, interactive and simulation-based learning methods (Chen

& Yang, 2021). All of this will contribute to the formation of well-rounded individuals capable of independent thinking and effective collaboration in a global environment.

Despite the obvious need to develop soft skills, there are certain risks associated with their implementation in educational programs. According to (Beraki, Tessema, Plecka & Abdourrahmane, 2022), the main challenge is the lack of readiness of traditional educational systems to integrate such skills. Many educational institutions do not yet have sufficient experience and resources to effectively implement methods aimed at developing soft skills.

Another risk, according to (Brownlie, Burke & Van Der Laan, 2024), is inequality of access to soft skills development opportunities. In some regions or educational institutions with limited resources, students may not receive the required level of training, which may lead to a decrease in their competitiveness in the labour market. This requires the implementation of policies that will ensure equal access to quality education focused on the development of soft skills.

Summarising the opinion of scientists, the development of soft skills in future education is critical for the formation of competent, adaptive and creative individuals who are ready for the challenges of the modern world (Chaiya & Ahmad, 2021). However, this process is associated with certain challenges that need to be taken into account when developing and implementing educational programs. Integration of soft skills should be a priority for the educational system to ensure that the younger generation is successfully prepared for life in a globalised and rapidly changing world.

Soft skills can be defined as a set of behavioural skills, attitudes and values that shape an individual's relationships with others and society, and contribute to the development of self-confidence. These skills are key to maintaining personal balance, well-being and success. Chanda (2022) identifies the main soft skills as: emotional intelligence, critical thinking, adaptability, teamwork, interpersonal communication, adaptation to change, and leadership.

Emotional intelligence allows an individual to interact effectively with others, understand and manage their emotions, which is especially important in

teamwork and leadership (Abimbola, Oyatoye & Oyenuga, 2020). Critical thinking helps to make informed decisions, analyse complex situations and adapt to new conditions (Culcasi, Russo & Cinque, 2022). Adaptability and adaptation to change help to respond quickly to new challenges while maintaining effectiveness in different situations (Chen, Chen & Yang, 2023; Tsekhmister Kotyk, Matviienko, Rudenko & Ilchuk, 2021).

Teamwork and interpersonal communication are indispensable for successful cooperation, ensuring well-coordinated teamwork. Leadership skills help not only to organise the work of others, but also to lead the team to achieve common goals.

However, there are also risks that traditional educational systems may not be able to keep up with changes in the labour market. It is important that curricula are adapted to modern requirements, including the integration of these soft skills, otherwise graduates may face difficulties in finding employment.

Thus, the analysis of the prospects for the development of soft skills in future education emphasises the need to transform approaches to education, find new approaches to vocational training and stimulate interest among young people.

Discussion

Summarising the literature analysis, we can say that in today's world, which is facing environmental, economic, social and cultural challenges, education should promote the development of soft skills to prepare new generations for complex and changing conditions. Therefore, the integration of soft skills into the curriculum is becoming critical to creating successful professionals of the future.

As part of the scientific discussion, it is worth paying attention to the study conducted by de Água, da Silva Frias, Carrasqueira & Daniel (2020). This study was the result of a thorough analysis and discussions among a wide range of educational stakeholders, including heads of educational institutions, teachers, experts, students and social partners from different countries. The discussion focused on two key questions: what knowledge, skills, attitudes and values do students need to be

successful in life and shape the future? How can these components be effectively transferred to students?

In a similar study by Caratozzolo, Sirkis, Piloto & Correa (2020), the authors emphasise the need for revolutionary changes in the educational professions. In particular, the researchers emphasise that education should contribute to the comprehensive development of the individual, maximising their potential and preparing them to actively participate in creating a future based on the well-being of both the individual and society as a whole.

Almeida & Morais (2023) emphasise that without a clearly defined purpose, the rapid advancement of science and technology can lead to deepening inequalities and resource depletion. Therefore, education plays a crucial role in shaping the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will contribute to building an inclusive and sustainable future.

One of the key aspects highlighted by Börner, Scrivner, Gallant, Ma, Liu, Chewning & Evans (2018) is the need to integrate soft skills into educational programs. According to the author, this includes defining broader educational goals that go beyond the traditional understanding of well-being and encompass social and environmental aspects, enabling students to become active, committed and responsible citizens and developing students' capacity for action, which contributes to the formation of an awareness of their own responsibility and the possibility of a positive impact on the world around them.

In particular, Almeida & Buzady (2022) recommend focusing on the concept of shared agency, where the student is seen in the context of his or her ecosystem, including fellow students, teachers, parents and community.

Szilárd, Benedek & Ionel-Cioca (2018) identify two main factors that stand out in creating a favourable learning environment, which are: a personalised learning environment that allows students to explore their interests, make connections between different areas of knowledge and develop their own projects in collaboration with others. In continuation of the idea, Mathur, Antony, Olivia, Fabiane Letícia, Shreeranga, Raja & Ayon (2023) add that a strong foundation in basic skills such as literacy, numeracy, digital and data culture is fundamental.

In the end, Mataka, Matee & Hokonya (2022) present an educational compass that identifies three key blocks of learning - knowledge, soft skills, attitudes and values - that must be transformed into skills that serve individual and societal well-being.

One of the key transformational soft skills is responsibility. This includes the ability to understand the consequences of one's actions, assess risks and take responsibility for decisions. Although adolescence is a period of vulnerability, it helps to build a sense of responsibility, which is the basis for the development of a mature personality. In the context of rapid technological progress and changes in society, responsibility is becoming an important skill that helps students navigate difficult situations and make informed decisions (Zadorina, Burchak, Panas, Ardelian & Apalat, 2023).

In the context of globalisation and interdependence, the world is facing numerous conflicts that require the ability to find common solutions and combine different points of view (Tsekhmister, Stetsenko, Volyk, Gumennykova & Sharov, 2023). Students need to learn to think globally, avoid jumping to conclusions and understand the possible interconnections between different aspects of social life.

The ability to reconcile tensions includes the development of soft skills: negotiation skills, the ability to resolve conflicts and promote peace (Kolesnik, Oliinyk, Komarivska, Kazmirchuk & Imber, 2023). It also involves the development of social and environmental responsibility, which is critical in a world that is constantly changing and facing various challenges. Learning about coexistence and effective conflict management can prepare students to actively participate in a society where they can contribute to social justice and environmental sustainability.

Thus, a student in a modern educational ecosystem must develop three key transformational skills: responsibility, creativity in creating new values, and the ability to reconcile tensions and resolve dilemmas. These skills are fundamental for successful integration into society and contributing to its development in the face of global challenges. Education should be aimed at developing soft skills, thus preparing students for active and responsible participation in building the future world.

Conclusion

This study is an in-depth analysis of the literature in the field of soft skills in education. Based on the literature review, the following important conclusions can be drawn:

The term “soft skills” has become widely used in the professional environment internationally, covering a set of values, qualities, attitudes and behavioural skills that are crucial for professional success. This term is particularly relevant in the tourism sector, where employers and recruiters are looking for professional skills that ensure successful job performance. These criteria include CVs, references, interviews and sometimes testing.

At the same time, human and behavioural values, often referred to as soft skills, include reliability and loyalty, efficiency, commitment, resilience, openness and the ability to be positive in different contexts, teamwork, respect for others, tolerance, kindness, ability to take responsibility and deliver results, balance, self-control, stress management, creativity and adaptability are key components of innovative thinking and the development of new values. These skills allow individuals not only to respond effectively to change, but also to actively initiate it. However, the term “soft skills” is too generalised to describe such a wide range of characteristics and does not cover educational processes that should help to consolidate knowledge, develop self-confidence, form positive attitudes and reflect on one's own values.

Therefore, to achieve these goals, educational programs should be adapted to include practical components that allow students to develop these skills. For example, projects, group work, volunteer initiatives and other activities can serve as a platform for developing responsibility, teamwork and creativity.

Assessment of these skills is also an important aspect of the educational process. Traditional assessment methods such as tests and exams may not be sufficient to adequately measure soft skills. Instead, portfolios, self-assessment, and feedback from peers and mentors should be used.

Therefore, education should be aimed not only at imparting knowledge, but also at forming a personality capable of self-development, responsibility and active participation in society. Such an approach will allow students not only to succeed in their professional careers, but also to make a significant contribution to the well-being of society and the sustainable development of the planet.

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