Fostering Essential Life Skills in Schools: Teachers' Perspectives on Challenges and Areas for Improvement

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Abstract

As education systems increasingly seek to prepare students for rapidly changing life and work demands, attention to the development of essential life skills in everyday school settings has become increasingly important. This phenomenological study explores teachers' perspectives on fostering these skills in schools, drawing on the World Economic Forum's (2020) ten core skills framework. Using purposive sampling, 12 secondary school teachers participated in the study. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed using thematic analysis. The findings indicated that teachers perceived variation in students' acquisition of essential life skills, with students demonstrating relative strengths in some skills while experiencing considerable difficulties in others. Teachers attributed these differences to multiple interacting factors, broadly grouped into structural, instructional, and student–family dimensions. Structural factors included educational policies, curriculum design, school type, physical school conditions, and socioeconomic inequalities. Instructional factors included teaching methods and techniques, connections between learning and real-life contexts, teacher competence and professional development, and teachers' professional dispositions. Student–family factors included students' motivation, readiness, and individual characteristics, as well as family involvement. Teachers highlighted the need for diverse teaching and learning approaches, less crowded curricula that allow greater space for life skills, stronger teacher education and professional development, greater family support and education, policies that integrate life skills into educational priorities, and greater encouragement for students to engage with and develop these skills.

Keywords: Educational Policy; Future Skills; Secondary Education; Skill Development