

International Journal of Human Sciences Research

Acceptance date: 07/05/2025

DEVELOPING HUMAN SKILLS AS A STRATEGY FOR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH: A THEORETICAL ESSAY

Nara Neila Rocha

Psychologist who graduated from the University of Fortaleza (UNIFOR) in 1998 and specialized in Human Resources Management at the State University of Ceará (UECE) in 2001. This article is derived from her specialization monograph, defended at UECE State University of Ceará (UECE) Fortaleza - Ceará

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Abstract: The development of human skills, also known as soft skills, has become essential in organizational and educational contexts, especially in the face of contemporary transformations in work and learning relationships. This theoretical essay aims to reflect on the importance of these skills for personal and professional growth, discussing their conceptual basis and proposing methodological guidelines for their development. Based on an interdisciplinary literature review, the contributions of authors such as Philippe Perrenoud, Daniel Goleman, Edgar Morin and Paulo Freire are addressed. The conclusion is that the integral development of the individual requires formative approaches that integrate cognitive, emotional and relational aspects. **Keywords:** soft skills; human competencies; personal development; lifelong learning; contemporary education.

INTRODUCTION

Faced with the demands of a world in constant transformation, it is becoming urgent to rethink the training of human beings as a whole. The so-called soft skills - such as empathy, resilience, leadership and communication - have emerged as crucial abilities for both professional success and personal fulfillment. This study seeks to understand the strategic role of these skills in the contemporary context, based on a theoretical approach grounded in different areas of knowledge.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

HUMAN COMPETENCIES AND INTEGRAL DEVELOPMENT

Human competencies can be understood as the articulation of knowledge, skills and attitudes, according to the CHA model (Perrenoud, 1999). These competencies go beyond technical knowledge and require a reflective and autonomous attitude towards the complexities of everyday life. Education, in this sense, is called upon to promote meaningful and transformative learning.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Daniel Goleman (1995) argues that emotional intelligence - expressed in self-awareness, empathy and emotional regulation - is a determining factor in professional performance. The development of these skills requires environments that favor positive emotional experiences and constructive coexistence practices.

HUMANISTIC EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Authors such as Morin (2000) and Freire (1996) reinforce the idea of an education that focuses on human beings in their complexity, criticality and capacity for transformation. Continuous learning, or lifelong learning, becomes a condition for survival and growth in an ever-changing world.

METHODOLOGICAL GUIDELINES

Although this study is theoretical in nature, it is possible to identify pedagogical and organizational practices that are effective in promoting human skills. These include:

1. Thematic workshops aimed at socio-emotional development, inspired by Freire's (1996) dialogical proposals;

2. Mentoring and coaching programs with a focus on self-knowledge, based on contemporary approaches to people management (SENGE, 2006);
3. Use of active methodologies, such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and Design Thinking, as discussed by Moran, Bacich and Zerbini (2020);
4. Creating spaces for feedback and active listening, in line with the practices learning organizations (SENGE, 2006);
5. Promoting a culture of continuous learning, with a focus on collaborative and reflective environments (PERRENOUD, 1999).

DISCUSSION

The literature shows that individuals with well-developed human competencies are more resilient, collaborative and engaged. According to Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence is directly associated with the capacity for cooperation and effective leadership. Neff (2011) points out that self-compassion - as part of emotional self-knowledge - favors resilience in the face of challenges and frustrations. In addition, Gilbert (2014) links compassionate communication practices with greater emotional balance and a willingness to engage in constructive relationships. In the organizational field, Senge (2006) states that environments that value human development tend to generate greater engagement and innovation.

Developing these skills encourages autonomy, creativity and the ability to deal with diversity and uncertainty. More than just a competitive edge, soft skills have become an integral part of citizenship training.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

By recognizing the centrality of human competencies, this article reinforces the need for educational policies and organizational practices that encourage the full development of the individual. This recognition implies the formulation of pedagogical and institutional guidelines that encourage not only technical mastery, but also emotional intelligence, empathy and critical thinking. Based on the literature reviewed, it can be said that training initiatives focused on human skills contribute to healthier, more inclusive and innovative environments - both in educational institutions and in organizations.

Personal growth and professional performance are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Therefore, educating for human skills is not just a pedagogical choice, but an ethical and strategic requirement in the face of the challenges of the 21st century. In a world marked by rapid technological, social and environmental transformations, the development of skills such as empathy, critical thinking, resilience and collaboration is essential in order to train citizens capable of contributing to a fairer, more inclusive and sustainable society. This educational approach is in line with the principles of the four pillars of education proposed by the UNESCO - learning to know, to do, to live together and to be - promoting an integral education that prepares individuals not just for the job market, but for life in its fullness (UNESCO, 2010).

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