

Teachers' Soft Skills: Evidence-Based Strategies for Professional Development in Lifelong Learning

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to examine how teachers' soft skills contribute to their professional development, with attention to the role of lifelong learning strategies in sustaining and enhancing these skills. Lifelong learning has become a cornerstone of contemporary education policy, requiring teachers not only to continuously update subject knowledge but also to adopt adaptive, learner-centered approaches (Scheerens et al., 2020). However, traditional models of professional development remain fragmented and often prioritize technical or curricular competences over transversal soft skills. This imbalance creates a critical gap, as teachers increasingly face classrooms shaped by diversity, digitalization, and complex socio-emotional demands. Addressing these realities requires systematic integration of soft-skill development into professional learning frameworks. This theoretical study explores how such integration can be achieved by mapping teachers' perceptions of essential soft skills – including emotional intelligence and self confidence, digital literacy (AI), creative and intercultural expression, self development and critical thinking, and communication and teamwork. Based on scientific literature and document analysis, a model for developing soft skills will be created. Building on these findings, experimental training modules will be designed as open educational resources and piloted with teachers in order to evaluate their effectiveness in promoting soft skills.

Preliminary evidence shows that embedding soft-skill training within lifelong learning pathways strengthens professional motivation, resilience, and satisfaction, while also aligning teacher development with broader European education priorities (Kunter et al., 2013). The study will contribute evidence-based strategies for transforming teacher professional development into a sustainable and future-ready system.

Keywords

Lifelong learning, teacher professional development, soft skills, evidence-based strategies.