The Increasing Value of Life Skills in the Digital Age

Digital Skills for African Youth Forum

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What are Life Skills and Why Do they Matter?

- Many '21st Century Skills' like social skills, critical thinking, problem solving, self-control, creativity, persistence are far from new

   "*Only a wise person can solve a difficult problem.*"

   * African proverb on problem-solving

- Linked to youth success in the workforce, health, violence prevention, and other areas of life, according to extensive research evidence (USAID YouthPower Action, 2017)

- As technology advances, these skills are becoming increasingly important in the current and future workforce

What is the Link to Technology?

- Routine, repetitive tasks are rapidly becoming automated across a wide range of sectors and occupations (Oxford Martin School, 2016)

- The result is that workers increasingly must solve nonroutine problems, often in teams

- Such transformation creates increasing demand for life skills in the workplace

- For example: social skills reduce coordination costs within teams, allowing workers to specialize and work together more efficiently (Deming 2015)

How are Life Skills Developed?

Six Evidence-based Guiding Principles for building life skills among adolescents and youth (USAID YouthPower Action, 2017):

1. Promote experiential learning (through a combination of challenge, experience, practice, and reflection)
2. Address skills in combination rather than in isolation, recognizing how they interconnect
3. Promote strong relationships between adults and youth and among youth themselves (includes youth contribution and shared power)
4. Promote positive adult practices (e.g. modeling, constructive feedback, scaffolding, positive reinforcement)
5. Provide a safe, caring, supportive, and stimulating environment
6. Promote integration of learning contexts (e.g. family, community, school, workplace)

Questions

- Think of an amazing learning experience you had before age 20. What did it entail and who was involved?

- Drawing from your experience, what are the best ways for youth to learn life skills?

- How can the learning of life skills and new technology skills be integrated most effectively?

Recommended Reading

- Lippman, Laura et. al, "Key 'Soft Skills' that Foster Youth Workforce Success: Toward a Consensus Across Fields," USAID Workforce Connections, 2015.

- Gates, Sarah et. al, "Key Soft Skills for Cross-Sectoral Youth Outcomes," USAID YouthPower Action, 2017.

- Deming, David, "The Growing Importance of Social Skills in the Labor Market," National Bureau of Economic Research (U.S.), 2015.

- Oxford Martin School, Citi GPS: Global Perspectives & Solutions, "TECHNOLOGY AT WORK v2.0: The Future Is Not What It Used to Be," 2016.

- Soares, Fernanda et. al, "Guiding Principles for Building Soft and Life Skills Among Adolescents and Young Adults," USAID YouthPower Action, 2017.

- Kautz, Tim et. al, "Fostering and Measuring Skills: Improving Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Skills to Promote Lifetime Success," National Bureau of Economic Research (U.S.), 2014.