



Soft skills on the teaching-learning process: empirical, methodological analysis and educational perspectives

Las habilidades blandas en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje: análisis empírico, metodológico y perspectivas educativas

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ABSTRACT

The development of soft skills is a fundamental pillar of contemporary education, directly impacting students' academic performance,

motivation, and professional preparation. This article reviews how interpersonal skills such as leadership, communication, teamwork, and resilience impact formal and informal learning, with special emphasis on recent studies conducted in higher education. Statistical correlations are analyzed, and their methodological relevance for curricular integration and teacher training is discussed. The results demonstrate a significant and sustained correlation between soft skills and academic performance, favoring students' professional success and socioemotional well-being. Furthermore, current challenges are identified, along with recommendations for implementing educational policies aimed at comprehensive development.

RESUMEN

El desarrollo de habilidades blandas constituye un pilar fundamental en la educación contemporánea, afectando directamente el rendimiento académico, la motivación y la preparación profesional de los estudiantes. Este artículo revisa cómo competencias interpersonales como liderazgo, comunicación, trabajo en equipo y resiliencia impactan el aprendizaje formal e informal, con especial énfasis en estudios recientes realizados en educación superior. Se analizan correlaciones estadísticas y se discute la relevancia metodológica para la integración curricular y la formación docente. Los resultados demuestran que la correlación entre habilidades blandas y rendimiento académico es significativa y sostenida, favoreciendo el éxito profesional y el bienestar socioemocional de los estudiantes. Además, se identifican retos actuales y recomendaciones para implementar políticas educativas orientadas al desarrollo integral.

Keywords / Palabras clave

Soft skills, teaching-learning, learning outcomes, pedagogy, educational perspectives

Habilidades blandas, enseñanza – aprendizaje, resultados de aprendizaje, pedagogía, perspectivas educativas

Introduction

The concept of soft skills has become particularly relevant in higher and secondary education, being considered by international organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Economic Forum, and the AAC&U as a key competency for the 21st century. Unlike technical (hard) skills, soft skills include emotional intelligence, resilience, leadership, communication, conflict management, and adaptability (Cardenas-Otavalo et al., 2025).

Soft skills, also known as interpersonal or socio-emotional skills, are those abilities that facilitate effective and positive interaction with others and with the environment. These include effective communication, teamwork, problem solving, creativity, empathy, leadership, and emotional intelligence. Not only do they complement technical skills, but they also have intrinsic value for everyday and professional life, making them an essential element of comprehensive training (Zumba-Hidalgo et al., 2021).

Several studies show that these skills are essential for responding to the challenges of a changing society, where collaborative work, critical thinking, and professional ethics are valued in the workplace and in education. However, their development remains insufficient in many institutions, limiting students' employability and overall development. The objective of this article is to analyze the influence of soft skills in the teaching-learning process, describe methods of integration, and propose future lines of research to consolidate their curricular and professional relevance (Aguilar-Vargas et al., 2020).

Soft skills are an essential component of the teaching-learning process that transcends the mere acquisition of academic knowledge and specific techniques, promoting comprehensive human development. Currently, these interpersonal and socio-emotional skills are becoming increasingly important in education systems due to their positive impact on academic performance, student satisfaction and well-being, and preparation for the various challenges of professional and social life (Aguilar-Vargas et al., 2020).

The rationale for soft skills in education

Soft skills comprise a set of competencies such as effective communication, teamwork, empathy, leadership, resilience, time management, decision-making, and conflict resolution, among others.

These skills not only enable better social interaction inside and outside the classroom, but also form a basis for critical thinking, independent learning, and balanced emotional development. Unlike technical or hard skills, which are specific to a subject or discipline, soft skills are cross-cutting and applicable to multiple contexts (Ruhalahti & Heinonen, 2024).

In the teaching-learning process, these skills play a mediating and facilitating role. From a pedagogical perspective, the development of soft skills allows students to take an active role in their learning, participate with greater commitment in group dynamics, and manage their emotions to face academic challenges with resilience and confidence (Machado & Rivera, 2023).

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The importance of soft skills in education.

The importance of soft skills in the teaching and learning process lies in the need to develop well-rounded individuals who are capable not only of acquiring theoretical knowledge, but also of functioning effectively in personal, social, and professional environments. Today, the challenges of the 21st century require education to go beyond the transmission of content, integrating emotional development, adaptability, and social competence (Perez-Ximenez, 2025).

Educational Relevance in the 21st century.

The current context, characterized by a highly technological, corporate, and dynamic world, demands that citizens be flexible, creative, resilient, and capable of relating harmoniously with others. In this scenario, soft skills are considered essential not only to adapt to constant change, but also to transform those changes into opportunities for personal, social, and professional growth (Universidad Tecnológica del Perú, 2023).

Education in the 21st century must prioritize the development of these skills, promoting learning that goes beyond memorization and focuses on reflection, participation, and collaboration. This will produce individuals with the skills to understand themselves, manage their emotions, resolve conflicts, and contribute positively to society (Lozano-Fernandez et al., 2022).

Specific contributions to the teaching-learning process

They enable the creation of more humane, respectful, and democratic educational environments, where all students feel valued and listened to (Zelendon-Rodriguez, 2024).

They promote the creation of strong emotional bonds between teachers and students, which enhances motivation and commitment to learning (Perez-Ximenez, 2025).

They promote active participation and cooperative learning, facilitating the acquisition of practical skills and the development of collaborative projects (Zelendon-Rodriguez, 2024).

They improve adaptation to new and changing contexts, providing strategies for managing stress, frustration, and decision-making (Zelendon-Rodriguez, 2024).

Son fundamentales para incluir la diversidad y la equidad, al considerar las capacidades emocionales y relacionales de cada persona en el proceso educativo (Zumba-Hidalgo et al., 2021).

Impact on teacher training

The development of soft skills is not only relevant for students; it is also crucial for teachers. An educator who communicates assertively, manages their emotions appropriately, is empathetic and flexible, can lead the classroom in a positive way, resolve conflicts, and guide the comprehensive development of students. This, in turn, contributes to an innovative, inclusive school culture that is adapted to the current times (Universidad Tecnológica del Perú, Escuela de Posgrado, 2023).

Methodologies and strategies for the development

The promotion of soft skills should be integrated into school and university curricula through active and participatory methodologies. Some effective strategies include:

- Group and collaborative work to develop leadership, teamwork, and assertive communication (Zelendon-Rodriguez, 2024).
- Integrative projects that challenge creativity and problem-solving skills.

- Debate and discussion activities to strengthen critical thinking and respect for diversity of opinion.
- Feedback and self-assessment practices, promoting metacognition and emotional self-awareness.

Furthermore, the implementation of educational models based on social-emotional learning, such as service learning and gamification, have proven to be effective in acquiring these skills (Perez-Ximenez, 2025).

Repercussions in the professional and social spheres

Various studies have confirmed that soft skills are currently as highly valued as technical skills in the workplace. Companies and organizations seek professionals who are capable of leading, adapting to new challenges, working in diverse teams, and communicating effectively. Therefore, graduates who have mastered these skills have greater opportunities and success in the job market (ISPRING, 2024).

On a social level, soft skills training contributes to building more empathetic, supportive, and inclusive communities, where people can coexist and resolve conflicts peacefully and constructively (Perez-Ximenez, 2025).

Challenges on the implementation

Despite the benefits, it is important to note that the effective integration of these skills into education faces some challenges. Assessing soft skills is more complex than assessing academic knowledge and requires specific tools, as well as ongoing training for teachers. Furthermore, cultural context can influence the perception and priority of certain skills, making a contextualized and flexible approach necessary (Zumba-Hidalgo et al., 2021).

Influence in communication and participation

One of the most obvious impacts of soft skills in education is improved communication. The ability to express oneself clearly and listen actively promotes interaction between students and teachers, creating a more dynamic and stimulating classroom environment. This effective communication enhances collaborative knowledge building and peaceful conflict resolution, which are fundamental aspects of meaningful learning (Ayala-Corzo et al., 2024).

On the other hand, assertive communication helps students participate more frequently and effectively in debates, presentations, and group work, which increases their motivation and academic self-esteem. Likewise, teachers with strong soft skills are able to adapt their teaching styles to the emotional and cognitive needs of their students, making assessment and feedback processes more effective (Ladino Pulgarin et al., 2022).

Group work and collaboration

Collaborative work is another skill that promotes the effective inclusion of soft skills in education. By learning to collaborate, students develop skills to listen to and value different perspectives, manage differences, and contribute constructively to the achievement of common goals. This process improves their sense of belonging and social responsibility, which in turn reduces dropout rates and promotes school retention (Espinoza-Mina & Gallegos-Barzola, 2020).

In addition, group dynamics encourage critical thinking and creativity, which are important for both academic projects and everyday life. For example, by participating in multidisciplinary projects, students practice negotiation, leadership, and coordination, skills that increase their ability to solve complex problems effectively (Zambrano-Patino et al., 2025).

Time management and academic organization

Time management is a crucial soft skill for planning and executing academic activities. Students who develop this skill learn to prioritize tasks, meet deadlines, and organize their workload in a balanced way, reducing stress and improving their overall performance. Through proper time management, students can also integrate better extracurricular and personal development activities, contributing to their comprehensive education (Cardenas-Otavalo et al., 2025).

This aspect is especially relevant at higher levels of education, where autonomy and self-organization are essential for managing the complexity and independence required in university studies. Teachers can support this development by designing clear schedules, teaching organizational techniques, and promoting effective study habits (Ayala-Corzo et al., 2024).

Leadership and resilience for adaptation and academic success

Leadership involves the ability to positively influence others and to manage human and material resources toward the achievement of educational objectives. This soft skill is closely related to autonomy and the ability to make informed decisions, encouraging students to take an active role in their education (Zambrano-Patino et al., 2025).

Resilience, meanwhile, enables students to remain motivated and persevere in the face of obstacles such as academic or personal difficulties. Developing this skill is vital for reducing school dropout rates and strengthening confidence in learning, especially in highly demanding or uncertain contexts (Cardenas-Otavalo et al., 2025).

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Empathy and positive school climate

Empathy helps build positive relationships among all members of the educational community. When students and teachers practice empathy, respect, tolerance, and cooperation increase significantly, creating a healthy school climate that facilitates the learning process. This positive climate translates into less conflict, greater emotional security, and a favorable disposition toward experimentation and error, all of which are necessary for innovation and critical thinking (Zambrano-Patino et al., 2025).

Integration into educational practice and challenges

For soft skills to have a real and sustainable impact on the teaching-learning process, they need to be integrated across the curriculum and pedagogical practices. Strategies such as project-based learning, social-emotional workshops, group dynamics, and the use of interactive technologies are effective tools for developing these skills (Montaño-Bautista et al., 2024).

However, there are challenges that limit their effective incorporation. These include the lack of specific teacher training, the absence of standardized assessment mechanisms for soft skills, and the persistence of educational models that prioritize exclusively the acquisition of technical knowledge (Zambrano-Patino et al., 2025).

Another important challenge is the cultural and social diversity of students, which requires adapting strategies to the particular context

of each group in order to promote the equitable development of these skills.

Educational perspectives based on soft skills

Educational approaches based on soft skills point toward a comprehensive transformation of the teaching-learning process, focused on students' human, emotional, and social development. These approaches respond to the challenges of the 21st century, where technical knowledge is insufficient without solid social-emotional skills (Barcia-Menendez, et al., 2024).

Socioemotional Perspective

Social-emotional learning seeks to integrate emotional management, empathy, and ethical decision-making into the educational curriculum. According to UNESCO, these skills strengthen academic performance, coexistence, and the construction of more inclusive and sustainable societies. This perspective promotes an education that prioritizes emotional well-being and a sense of community (UNESCO, 2024).

Humanistic pedagogical perspective

The humanistic approach to pedagogy considers soft skills (such as communication, collaboration, leadership, and self-management) to be at the core of meaningful learning. It promotes person-centered educational environments, where students are the protagonists of their own development and teachers act as emotional and cognitive guides (Malaga-Mamani et al., 2025).

Digital and technological perspective

In virtual education and hybrid environments, institutions incorporate digital tools to strengthen skills such as adaptability, critical thinking, and effective communication. Strategies such as microlearning, gamification, and AI simulations facilitate experiential learning and self-regulation. This approach prepares students for changing work contexts, prioritizing human interaction over the mere transmission of content (Trascend - IT, 2025).

Curricular and Formative Perspective

Education systems are adopting curriculum models that integrate social-emotional development across the board, from early childhood education to higher education. Teacher training programs in social-emotional skills are being promoted so that teachers can serve as models of resilience, empathy, and positive leadership. This training approach improves the quality of learning and strengthens school life (Ministerio de Educación, 2025).

Perspective on employability and citizenship

Globally, organizations such as the World Economic Forum highlight that more than 50% of workers will need new socio-emotional skills by 2030. In this context, soft skills-based education connects academic training with employability, promoting critical, ethical, and collaborative citizens with the ability to adapt and think creatively in the face of social and technological challenges (Trascend - IT, 2025).

Materials and Methods

The research underlying this article was mixed method, with a quantitative focus, based on a systematic review and field analysis conducted between 2024 and 2025. A representative sample of 122 marketing students at a higher education institution was selected, with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. The data collection instruments included structured questionnaires with Likert scales to measure soft skills and academic performance. The reliability of the instrument was ensured through expert validation and the calculation of Cronbach's alpha (0.945).

Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS software, employing Pearson's correlation (r), linear regression analysis, and ANOVA methods to examine the relationship between dependent and independent variables. The surveys were administered anonymously to ensure the accuracy of responses and minimize self-perception bias, with questions inquiring about confidence in expressing oneself, teamwork skills, conflict resolution, and time management.

Results

a) Correlations y statistic relations

The statistical model showed a strong positive correlation between soft skills and academic performance ($r=0.847$), with an explained variance of 71.7% (adjusted R squared). The coefficient indicates that for each additional point on the soft skills scale, the academic average increases by 0.1983 points. The regression model was statistically significant according to ANOVA ($F=309.395$, $p<0.001$), confirming the relevance of soft skills as a predictor of student performance (Cardenas-Otavalo et al., 2025).

In the group dimension, confidence in expressing ideas showed a positive correlation with the ability to explain concepts clearly ($r=0.748$, $p<0.01$) and adaptation in collaborative roles ($r=0.645$, $p<0.01$). Consideration of group opinions showed a significant relationship with conflict resolution ($r=0.644$, $p<0.01$), while efficient time management was linked to the planning and organization of academic activities ($r=0.714$, $p<0.01$) (Zambrano-Patino et al., 2025).

b) Influence on educational and professional dimensions

The development of soft skills has a direct impact on cognitive learning, self-efficacy, and emotional management, both in students and teachers. Research shows that 100% of students with high levels of soft skills achieve better grades and results in group projects, as well as greater motivation and lower dropout rates. In addition, soft skills account for 75% of long-term professional success, compared to 25% related to technical skills (Cardenas-Otavalo et.al, 2025).

c) Impact on interaction and school climate

Teachers who promote soft skills report more inclusive, respectful, and motivating school environments. There is an increased sense of belonging, autonomy, and creativity. In collaborative projects, students develop leadership, resilience, and emotional management skills, which are vital for dealing with conflict situations and making strategic decisions. (Zambrano-Patino et al., 2025).

d) Summary table: principal correlations

Table 1*Correlation between soft skills and associated factors*

SOFT SKILLS	CORRELATION WITH PERFORMANCE (r)	ASSOCIATED FACTORS
Communication	0,748	Clear explanation, participation
Collaborative work	0,644	Conflict resolution
Time management	0,714	Organization and planning
Leadership and resilience	0,727	Adaptation, decision- making

Note: The table shows the correlation between soft skills applied in the teaching process and factors associated with education.

The integration of soft skills reveals a multiplier effect, supported by Social-Emotional Learning Theory (Durlak et al., 2011), which indicates that the development of emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills is the basis for academic and professional success. UNESCO (2024) emphasizes that mainstreaming these competencies into the curriculum increases emotional and personal well-being, as well as preparing students for a dynamic and demanding job market (Zambrano-Patino et al., 2025).

Several authors point out that a lack of soft skills can lead to social isolation, negatively affecting students' physical and mental health, self-esteem, and life purpose. The gap between what the workplace demands and what the education system offers is still significant. Mina and Barzola (2020) confirm that many companies report difficulties in finding graduates with strong social-emotional skills, which hinders young people's adaptability and employability. (Cardenas-Otavalo et al., 2025).

The modern teaching-learning process requires active methodologies such as Project-Based Learning, group dynamics, the use of digital technologies, and gamification, which promote the intentional

development of soft skills. Evidence indicates that participation in collaborative and leadership activities encourages reflection, critical thinking, and creativity, which are essential for educational innovation and the resolution of emerging problems (Montaño- Bautista et al., 2024).

However, there are methodological and structural challenges. The traditional education system prioritizes the assessment of cognitive skills, relegating soft skills to the background. In addition, objective measurement and longitudinal tracking present difficulties; the use of self-assessments can introduce bias and subjectivity, so experts recommend combining quantitative and qualitative instruments to obtain more accurate results (Zambrano-Patino et al., 2025).

68 International literature points to relevant contextual differences. For example, studies conducted in Vietnam and China show that the perception of the impact of soft skills on academic performance varies according to the education system, discipline, and culture. This raises the need for comparative and longitudinal studies to understand how contextual differences influence the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic success. (Cardenas-Otavalo et al., 2025).

Table 2

Digital strategies for developing soft skills

Strategy	Suggested Tool	Enhanced soft skill
Gamified challenges	Kahoot!, Classcraft	Adaptability, teamwork
Personalized microlearning	LMS with adaptative AI, MiaT+	Self-management, critical thinking
Interactive rubrics	Google Classroom, Moodle, MiaT+	Communication, critical thinking
Virtual communities	WhatsApp, Discord	Collaboration, communication
Simulations and role-play	Articulate 360, VR/AR	Decision-making, leadership

Note. The table shows the activities that can be used to develop soft skills in the educational process.

The table shows an effective alignment between teaching strategies, technological tools, and the development of soft skills, placing innovation and active learning as pillars of current training.

Integration of strategies and tools

Gamified challenges using tools such as Kahoot! and Classcraft not only encourage motivation and participation, but also reinforce adaptability and teamwork, essential skills for life and the modern workplace. Gamification has been shown to increase student engagement, allowing for learning from mistakes in safe and collaborative environments.

Personalized microlearning, using LMS platforms with adaptive artificial intelligence such as MiaT+, allows content to be tailored to individual pace and needs, promoting self-management and critical thinking. This personalization optimizes learning time and reinforces autonomous development.

Interactive rubrics in environments such as Google Classroom, Moodle, and MiaT+ are essential for clarifying expectations and providing immediate feedback. They facilitate formative assessment, strengthening communication and critical thinking, as students are active participants in the assessment process.

Virtual communities, using applications such as WhatsApp and Discord, encourage collaboration and effective communication. These tools transfer learning to the digital-social space, allowing for constant interaction, the exchange of ideas, and the construction of academic support networks.

Simulations and role-play, using resources such as Articulate 360 and virtual/augmented reality (VR/AR) environments, offer immersive contexts for decision-making and leadership. The experiential learning gained from simulations facilitates the transfer of social and technical skills to real-world contexts.

Pedagogical Impact and trends

These combinations strengthen active learning, facilitate students' comprehensive development, and respond to the challenges of education in the 21st century. Instructional design based on soft skills promotes adaptability to technological changes and the development

of cross-cutting skills demanded in the professional world, fostering resilient and collaborative citizens.

Education systems must move toward the continuous and systematic integration of soft skills, incorporating active methodologies, educational technologies, and strategies that promote reflection, autonomy, collaborative work, and emotional management. In addition, it is necessary to develop educational policies that prioritize teacher training and education, together with the creation of objective and adaptive assessment tools.

Table 3

Influence between soft skills and learning aspects

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SOFT SKILL	ASPECT LEARNING AFFECTED	OF	OBSERVED INFLUENCE
Communication	Participation and expression of ideas	and	Improved clarity and interaction
Collaborative work	Problem solving and group dynamics	and	Increased cooperation and conflict management
Time management	Academic organization and planning		Greater efficiency in tasks and projects
Leadership	Decision making and autonomy	and	Encourages initiative and adaptation
Emotional resilience	Dealing with frustration and adaptation	with and	Reduced dropout rates and greater persistence
Empathy	School environment and coexistence		Greater respect and tolerance

Note: The table shows the influence of soft skills on aspects of learning.

The table shows the impact of each soft skill on essential aspects of the teaching-learning process. From a scientific perspective, this evidence is part of a growing body of research that highlights the fundamental role of social-emotional skills in enhancing both academic performance and the overall development of students.

Communication not only promotes participation and assertive expression of ideas, but also fosters the creation of collaborative environments in which the exchange of opinions is carried out with respect and clarity. This results in increased motivation and improved learning quality, as documented by several authors who point out that assertive communication is a key competency for effective interaction in heterogeneous classrooms (Ayala-Corzo et al., 2024).

Collaborative work is evident as one of the most relevant soft skills for problem solving and conflict management in the classroom. By encouraging cooperation, a sense of belonging and commitment is strengthened, which reduces dropout rates and improves academic persistence (Cadillo-Leiva et al., 2021); furthermore, collaboration enhances the development of critical and creative thinking, which are essential elements for tackling academic challenges and current professionals (Ayala-Corzo et al., 2024).

In terms of time management, this skill contributes to effective organization and task planning, both of which are essential for achieving academic goals. The ability to manage study time and projects improves self-efficacy and reduces stress, aspects that are closely linked to academic success, as demonstrated in various studies (Cardenas-Otavalo et al., 2025).

Leadership and resilience are soft skills that promote autonomy, informed decision-making, and the ability to cope with adversity, factors that positively influence students' adaptation to new contexts and the dynamics of project-based or collaborative learning. The development of these skills is also linked to lower dropout rates and higher levels of self-efficacy (Zambrano- Patino et al., 2025).

Finally, empathy plays a fundamental role in improving the school climate, promoting attitudes of respect, tolerance, and emotional well-being, which are essential for learning to take place in a positive environment. Empathy facilitates group cohesion and helps students feel valued and motivated to actively participate in their educational process (Machado & Rivera, 2023).

In summary, scientific evidence supports the idea that deliberately integrating soft skills into pedagogical models is a fundamental educational strategy for promoting effective learning and the comprehensive development of students. Its impact is evident in significant improvements in academic results, social-emotional well-being, and preparation for the world of work.

These findings suggest an urgent need for educational policies and curricula to incorporate the development and assessment of soft skills in a cross-cutting and systematic manner to ensure that students not only accumulate knowledge but also develop the skills necessary to apply it effectively in real and complex contexts. In addition, there is an urgent need to strengthen the continuing education of teachers so that they can implement innovative pedagogical strategies geared toward this purpose (Lozano-Fernandez et al., 2022).

Conclusions

The evidence gathered allows us to affirm that soft skills are a central component in the teaching-learning process and in professional training. The positive and significant correlation with academic performance and professional success validates the urgency of mainstreaming these skills at all educational levels, from the curriculum to teacher training and adaptive assessment.

The development of soft skills not only improves academic performance but also prepares students to successfully face the challenges of professional, personal, and social life, facilitating the transition to the labor market and consolidating inclusive well-being. Soft skills are indispensable for optimizing the teaching-learning process, as they facilitate communication, collaborative work, personal organization, resilience, and the creation of inclusive and motivating educational environments. Their development promotes not only academic success but also personal growth and preparation for professional and social life. The development of soft skills in teaching and learning processes is not just an educational trend, but an urgent need to train individuals capable of responding to the challenges of today's world. Their systematic inclusion in the curriculum and teaching practice ensures the preparation of well-rounded, committed, and happy individuals, benefiting both the individual and society.

The available academic evidence highlights the need for educational policies that promote their integration into the curriculum and teacher training in these skills, as well as the development of rigorous and adaptive assessment tools that allow for the identification of progress and areas for improvement. This ensures a comprehensive education

focused on the development of competent, resilient individuals who are committed to their environment.

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