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Life Skills and Values in Context: Proficiencies of Young People as a Foundation for Holistic Learning in Uganda

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Context:

- East African education has been predominantly academic-oriented
- Evidence and practice reveals that academic excellence alone is insufficient for preparing young people for life and work
- Critical issues: poor learning outcomes, skills mismatch, underperforming labour market in the region
- Governments are shifting toward Competence-Based Education (CBE) that nurtures social, creative and psychological competencies.
- In light of CBE reforms, the need to check life skills proficiencies among East African adolescents arose

Assessing LSV-the ALiVE way;

- Contextualisation of the measurement of life skills
- To present evidence-based recommendations for policy, enhancement of teacher and local capacities, system effectiveness and community engagement



Methods

Research Design

Household-based, citizen-led assessment using mixed methods — scenario-based tasks and performance-based tasks. Cross-sectional design across four East African territories (2022).

Study Population & Sampling

→ Target: In-school and out-of-school adolescents aged 13-17 in Uganda

→ Uganda sample: 11,074 adolescents for problem-solving, self-awareness & respect; 4,476 for collaboration

→ Sampling: Multi-stage — districts → enumeration areas → 20 households per EA → max 2 adolescents/household

→ Uganda coverage: 20 districts, 400 enumeration areas, 7,815 households



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Results



The skills gap

Comparison of Metrics: Uganda vs Regional Average





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Implications for Uganda

Problem solving-

- Over half of children/young present with average proficiencies at Level 2
- meaning they can see a problem but lack the multi-dimensional thinking required for complex problem-solving.

Respect:

- *The Gap:* 37.1% sit at Level 2, meaning they are aware of peer infringements but choose not to act or intervene.

Overall:

- Uganda consistently trails the regional average at the highest levels of proficiency, highlighting an urgent need for targeted, active-learning educational interventions.



Noteworthy Findings

Community and cultural factors could significantly affect life skills acquisition beyond formal schooling.

- Zanzibar outperformed Tanzania mainland territories and other countries on several indicators (Respect Level 4: 22.3% vs 5.8% Uganda)

Comparison with Existing Literature

Findings align with NCDC study on employability, IUCEA (2014), Labour Market Surveys, Care et al. (2018) which highlight lack of employability skills among East African graduates and in 90% of countries where there is hardly any implementation of skills policies transformatively.



Recommendations

1. Holistic systemic reform that focuses on capacity enhancements, community partnership, assessment reform is essential to support young people acquire and retain VALI
2. Expansion of assessment frameworks to include formative and performance-based assessment of life skills and values alongside academic learning is crucial to enable deliberate attention to supporting their acquisition.
3. Informal Partnerships and collaborations to support nurturing of these skills are crucial for reinforcing life skills and values acquisition beyond the classroom.



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The Contextualisation of 21st Century Skills

Assessment in East Africa

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- Demonstrates how to build agreed understandings of 21st century skills
- Highlights the intersection of culture, values and beliefs, with 21st century skills
- Includes case studies illustrating concepts introduced in the book

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