


Rationale for Embedding Soft Skills in Teaching and Assessment in Higher Learning Institutions

Philipo Lonati Sanga 
Institute of Adult Education, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Abstract

The digital age has witnessed the educational systems preparing students for employability with 21st-century skills, which comprise skills and abilities for success in society and the workplace. To this effect, one of the most significant discussions in higher education in Tanzania and elsewhere is the quality of university graduates. Graduates demonstrate deficiencies in mastery of essential competencies referred to as soft skills. Universities can play a significant role in soft skills development, but implementation in the classroom has faced diverse challenges that have obstructed effective teaching and assessment. One alternative solution is embedding soft skills within the extant program curricula because the academic infrastructure is already in place, so only some few additional resources may be required. Guided by Attribution Theory, this paper presents findings from the thematic analysis of semi-structured in-depth interview responses from university teacher educators working with a public university. By and large, the paper unveils that teacher educators recommend that soft skills play a fundamental role in shaping graduates' personalities and enhancing social competencies. Nevertheless, teacher educators find themselves in dilemmas while pursuing teaching and assessment strategies that improve the furtherance of soft skills.

Keywords: soft skills, graduate competencies, lifelong learning skills, teaching and assessing soft skills, assessment for learning

Introduction

Soft skills significantly develop the student's personality, potentially enhancing their career prospects (Albert & Husni, 2023). In this progressively competitive and changing world, every academic institution strives to develop its employees and upgrade their performance to enhance the positive impact on its students (Al-sa'di et al., 2023). Irrespective of the technical skills required, it is imperative to develop various soft skills such as problem-solving, interaction, and communication skills to utilise technical knowledge and skills in a workplace effectively. Al-sa'di et al. (2023) further accentuate that soft skills are intangible assets that characterize and qualify an individual's personality to meet the requirements of workplace competence. By acquiring these soft skills, teacher educators, for instance, can elevate their overall effectiveness and adaptability in the constantly changing educational landscape.

Soft skills are usually self-developed and may include positive thinking, good interpersonal skills, communication skills, time management, self-confidence, and problem-solving, including analyzing a problem, setting goals, and thinking through an action's long-term and short-term consequences. Additionally, some literature suggests that hard skills contribute to only 15% of one's skills success while the remaining 85% is supported by soft skills (Albert & Husni, 2023). Eventually, soft skills are believed to give the youth a great chance to be successful in a competitive environment and increase their employability potential.

The current paradigm shifts in education and labor market policies in many nations have compelled education institutions,

notably higher learning institutions, to consider producing more quality graduates. The shifts could be attributed to factors such as a change in the global economy prompted by globalization, technological change, increased employment competitiveness, and the growing complexity of customers and clients in most businesses (Bridgstock, 2009). It is extensively documented that even organizations that tend to focus only on where their new employees go to university have learned that intelligence quotient (IQ) alone will not make them successful anymore. For instance, how they conduct themselves, how they express themselves, and how they interact with others are all as crucial, if not more important, than the person's score on an intelligence test. Consequently, higher learning institutions are obliged to undergo pedagogical transformations, such as creating more room for a self-regulated learning environment to bring about active learning (Kumar & Sharma, 2018). In response to such a paradigm shift, as Simbolon (2023) accurately points out, students should be equipped with critical, creative thinking, problem-solving, communication, initiative, and ethics and be instilled with a lifelong learning culture. The soft skills approach accentuates the holistic development of human capital to produce skilled students. Soft skills allow students to become versatile, think critically and innovatively, and have moral excellence in real life after stepping out of the school context. Thus, higher learning institutions and colleges have an active role in executing this pedagogical transformation required for the digital age, thereby helping students develop for life and the future in a digital era and economy.

Nonetheless, in many higher education institutions, it is still debatable what constitutes quality graduates and which

attributes of a graduate are indispensable to cultivating those fundamental skills in students. Hernández-March (2009) has argued that in today's knowledge-based global economy, a nation's competitive power depends on the stable supply of highly qualified human resources and an efficient transfer of knowledge, skills, and values from educational institutions to the real life of work. That is why many higher education institutions are currently concerned with the graduate employability agenda. Accordingly, such institutions are constantly reviewing curricula and rethinking the attributes their graduates ought to possess to appeal to employers across multiple work contexts and disciplines.

In Tanzania, research shows a significant divergence between the quality of graduates employers expect and those produced by colleges and universities, as attested by public and private sector employers (Kalufya & Mwakajinga, 2016; Munishi, 2016; Sanga, 2016). It is further contended that employers complain that neither graduates have adequate knowledge and skills in their areas of expertise nor are they conversant with current issues. These graduates lack innovativeness and communication skills, notably the inability to express themselves orally and in writing, as well as a poor command of the English language (Kalufya & Mwakajinga, 2016; Munishi, 2016). Such factors further lead to a lack of confidence at work, leading to a likelihood of delivering poor service. Despite the growing global demand for individuals with both significant intelligence quotients and emotional intelligence, students and teacher educators are not given any systematic training on soft skills. Teachers at various levels of education tend to use their own experiences in helping students cultivate relevant competencies for lifelong learning and survival. Yet, occasionally, teachers face various dilemmas in their pursuit of implementing certain non-traditional teaching and assessment strategies. This paper explores university teacher educators' opinions of the necessity and possibility of teaching and assessing soft skills for quality university graduates.

Conceptualizing Soft Skills

Although educators share specific common issues when they define soft skills, there is still no tangible consensus regarding the meaning of this catchphrase. For instance, Waggoner (2006) asserts that soft skills encompass a wide range of interpersonal skills such as courtesy, respect for others, work ethics, teamwork, self-discipline, self-confidence, conformity to norms, language proficiency, and communication skills. 'Soft skills' refers to a person's cluster of personality traits, such as communication, personal habits, and language, that characterize their relationship with others. The non-academic aptitudes allow students to execute hard skills like interpersonal communication, critical thinking, work ethics, and creativity.

Shakir (2009, p. 310) claims that "While there are no specific skills that are listed as "Soft" skills. Soft skills [incorporate] generic skills, including non-academic skills such as leadership, teamwork, communication, and lifelong learning." Corroborating with the present study's findings, the concept of soft skills seems to be dynamic and either not universal or not fully agreeable even in places where it is used (Waggoner, 2006; Zhang, 2012). The variations of this concept include 21st-century competencies, 21st-century skills, survival skills (Wagner, 2010), emotional intelligence (Kagan, 2019), employability skills (Bridgstock, 2009; Hernández-March, 2009), key competencies, core skills, essential skills, transferable skills, workplace know-how, and social survival skills.

Teaching and Assessment of Soft Skills

Despite the arguments by some educators, such as McKnight (2004), that soft skills are acquired through inculcation, developed early in life, and are difficult to exercise and replace with others, many educators support the idea that soft skills are part of a lifelong learning journey. Therefore, teacher educators are responsible for creating conducive learning environments to foster the growth of soft skills among their students (Schulz, 2008; Waggoner, 2006). This is possible by establishing

appropriate alignment among teaching, learning, and assessment processes (Sanga, 2016). One educational implication of human behavior theory is that merely teaching skills cannot induce meaningful learning behavior. They provide appropriate assessment as an extrinsic reward that fosters and shapes learning (Zhang, 2012). This study builds on the postulation that quality education depends on the complementarities of teaching and assessing hard and soft skills. Hard and soft skills should be mutually inclusive in producing quality graduates (Hsieh et al., 2012; Schulz, 2008; Zhang, 2012).

Higher Education and Soft Skills in Tanzania

It is noted that Tanzania is constantly making educational-related reforms that may directly and indirectly impact the quality of university graduates (Munishi, 2016). Such reforms are available in Tanzania's Development Vision 2025, the Education and Training Policy of 1995 and its revised versions of 2014 and 2023; the Technical Education and Training Policy of 1996; and the National Higher Education Policy of 1997. These national strategies echo global concerns, such as goal number four of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 2030). It is significant to underscore that the reforms above have positively and negatively impacted the education sector. Therefore, at the university level, poor implementation of the reforms may either explicitly or implicitly hamper acquiring relevant employable skills among graduates. Accordingly, the above-noted and other efforts by Tanzania were expected to prepare more labor and market-responsive graduates. Contrary to that expectation, Tanzania's employers are still concerned about the alarming lack of relevant job competencies among university graduates (Munishi, 2016).

The impact of globalization, coupled with technological changes in education, is constantly being felt and demands concrete responses. The response may compel changing the teaching and assessment approaches at universities and focusing on producing more skilled human resources to meet the challenges of the global labor market (Kalufya & Mwakajinga, 2016). The new economy mentality requires innovation, training, reinventing education, and entrepreneurship among the workforce. One of the goals of Tanzania's higher education is acquiring physical and intellectual skills, which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of society. The legislative duty of Tanzania's higher education is to prepare the required human capital through relevant manpower training, abilities, attitudes, skills, and knowledge, as education is one of the top priorities of national strategic plans in Tanzania.

It is assumed that after finishing a university education, graduates should be capable of successfully transitioning from these institutions of higher learning to become productive workers, self-reliant entrepreneurs, good citizens, and responsible and selfless leaders. Further, after graduation, the graduates can develop additional skills through training and experience that could further boost their opportunities, capabilities, and chances in life.

Despite the efforts of the government to create many job opportunities every year, graduates who seek employment stay for many months and even years before securing their first employment or establishing self-employment. Many studies and anecdotal evidence suggest that graduates' unemployment in Tanzania may be mainly caused by many factors, which include anomalies in the education system, lack of appropriate career skills, overemphasis on the formal sector of the economy, and inadequate information related to employment opportunities (Kalufya & Mwakajinga, 2016).

Research Questions

This study provides tentative responses to two research questions, namely:

1. What are the university teacher educators' opinions of the necessity and possibility of teaching and assessing soft skills for quality university graduates?
2. How are teacher educators' initiatives of teaching and assessing soft skills dwindling?

Attribution Theory

Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1986) concerns how individuals interpret events and how this relates to their thinking and behavior. A three-stage process underlies an attribution: (1) the person must perceive or observe the behavior, (2) the person must believe that the behavior was intentionally performed, and (3) then the person must determine if they believe the other person was forced to perform the behavior.

Winner focused his attribution theory on achievement. He identified ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck as the most critical factors affecting attributions for achievement. Attributions are classified along three causal dimensions: locus of control, stability, and controllability. The locus of control dimension has two poles: internal versus external locus of control. The stability dimension captures whether it causes change over time or not. For instance, ability can be classified as a stable, internal cause, and effort can be classified as unstable and internal. Controllability contrasts causes one can control, such as skills or efficacy, from causes one cannot control, such as aptitude, mood, others' actions, and luck.

In summary, attribution is a three-stage process: (1) behavior is observed, (2) behavior is determined to be deliberate, and (3) behavior is attributed to internal or external causes. Achievement can be attributed to ability, effort, level of task difficulty, or luck. In terms of teaching soft skills, the Attribution Theory can be used to explain the fact that graduates performance in various job positions will depend on four factors (Table 1), namely graduates' ability (possession of relevant soft skills), efforts (individual graduate's behavior of working hard), level of task difficulty (how hard is the task the individual is expected to accomplish), and luck. While the internal locus of control influences the first two factors, the last two depend on the external locus of control. Thus, while soft skills preparation may be imperative to our graduates, it is essential to admit that mere possession of soft skills is insufficient to determine graduates' employability and productivity.

Table 1
Components of Attribution Theory

		Locus of causality	
		Internal locus of control (Within)	External locus of control (Outside)
Locus of stability	Stable	Ability	Task difficulty
	Unstable	Effort	Luck

Note: <http://www.wcu.edu/facctr/mountainrise/archive/vol3no2/html/waggoner.pdf>. Copyright 2006 by Waggoner.

Methodology

Research Participants and Data Collection

Eight teacher educators were purposively selected from one department in which courses and programs are available to provide graduates with supposedly soft skills such as leadership, communication, marketing, collaboration, and negotiation. In this department, teacher educators directly involved in teaching relevant courses were arranged according to their teaching experience at the university. Then, the top eight 'senior teacher educators' were picked. This qualitative study focused on exploring the university teacher educators' opinions of the necessity and possibility of teaching and assessing soft skills for quality university graduates. The thematic analysis of semi-structured in-depth interview data was corroborated with data from the empirical literature review.

Data Analysis

Data analysis from the in-depth interviews and empirical literature was preceded by reducing the data into two major themes (rationale for teaching and assessing soft skills and dilemmas associated with teaching and assessing soft skills) and their respective sub-themes. Then, the task was to determine the quality of data obtained to determine if it was worth spending time and effort on analysis. This was done by clustering similar topics and sorting out major topics, unique topics, and "leftovers" (Fernandez, 2018).

Results and Discussion

Rationale for Teaching and Assessing Soft Skills

This study has established that soft skills play an important role in shaping a person's personality and enhancing the development of appropriate competencies for career and lifelong learning. Another central thesis in this paper is that soft skills complement and not supplement hard skills. As an illustration, within further learning and employment contexts, good hard skills alone are no longer sufficient for gaining a position in a desired field and advancing through the hierarchy of any chosen field. Thus, soft skills have equal importance alongside hard skills. However, soft skills should not disguise a person's lack of expertise in a particular field. Despite the significance of soft skills in life, university students are not systematically taught such skills by their teacher educators. In most cases, teacher educators defend themselves for neither teaching nor assessing soft skills in many ways as one teacher educator reflected the way they were prepared at the university:

When I look back to my university years, we were not taught how to teach soft skills to our students. Even when teacher educators came for assessment during our field practice, it was not an assessment but rather judging what we were doing wrong...no comments on improving teaching. Therefore, the little we help students in developing soft skills is out of what we struggle with on our own.

Soft skills have the potential to determine and predict an individual's success (and failure) in further learning and employment. Hard and soft skills are both important, but there are instances in which one of them tends to mark the difference. The opportunity accruing to hard skills is essentially realized through the command over soft skills (Azmi et al., 2018). For example, when confronted with admitting new students or recruiting new employees, heads of schools, university admissions, organizations' human resource officers, or other personnel use interviews to determine whether the applicants fit the school or organization. The prospective students and employees are thus expected to possess and prove to have a competitive edge that distinguishes them from other candidates who may have similar hard-skills qualifications (Schulz, 2008). Metaphorically, while hard skills provide you with an opportunity to run the race, your soft skills get you noticed as a competent athlete. This study realized that even when they do not specifically teach and assess soft skills, some teacher educators attempt to impart these skills to their students in diverse ways, as one teacher educator admitted:

Our university, just like many other universities, tends to compete to produce students who are competitive in many aspects upon graduation. Promoting non-academic skills facilitates the success of our students' life after school. Therefore, I find myself being busy with planning lessons that can provide students with something beyond the academic content that is usually overtly examined.

Soft skills release the competencies necessary for the transfer of learning. Practically, employers prefer to recruit candidates who will be productive from the very beginning. Likewise, heads of schools and universities would prefer to admit students who

can manage both their university studies and personal life as effectively as possible throughout their school and university life. To achieve this effect, individuals must not only possess knowledge and skills that are specific to their own discipline or occupation but must also possess knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are positively transferable to many other fields and occupational situations. In relation to enabling the transfer of learning, one teacher educator exposed:

To be honest, I regularly insist on students' punctuality, active class participation, group cooperation, and many other good habits. Further, I usually notice that students with such good habits learn most subjects easily. They tend to quickly realize the link between various concepts and issues. Unfortunately, however, I have never had a specific formal way of assessing my students' levels of these soft skills.

Literature, as corroborated with anecdotal evidence, indicates that there are certain circumstances in which individuals with low proficiency in hard skills are given chances for further education and employment once they have testified their potential for acquiring the pertinent deficient skills upon recruitment. Productivity in organizations, for instance, is chiefly dependent upon *what* and *how* employees do with what they already have. This is one scenario in which dispositions like effective communication, critical thinking and problem-solving, leadership, morality and professionalism, teamwork, and dynamism play a decisive role and mark a significant difference in the prospects of a potential candidate. Few teacher educators are manifestly using multiple strategies to conduct lessons that can provoke students' active engagement in classes. To this effect, they employ strategies such as: supervised small group discussions followed by individual presentations, debating sessions on controversial issues, portfolio recording, and project implementation. One teacher educator recounted:

When I prepare my lesson and teach in the class, I normally think about whether my students will be helped to cultivate the right knowledge, skills, and attitudes as expected in this globalized world. As a result, sometimes I try to plan teaching sessions that are more engaging such as excursions, buzz group presentations, and creative writing.

Dilemmas Associated with Teaching and Assessing Soft Skills

It is incontestable that the traditional assessment methods dissociate the assessment of soft skills. Thus, competence-based education should consider the assessment of complex competencies instead of lingering on the mere assessment of basic knowledge and skills acquired from the subject matter. When education is increasingly becoming competence-based, innovative assessment strategies are required to assess holistic competence acquisition of students more effectively. There should be an appropriate alignment between learning, teaching, and assessment, and the three should be based on the same principles (Sanga, 2016). Despite the growing global demand for individuals with great intelligence quotients and emotional intelligence (Kagan, 2019), students are not given systematic training on soft skills. As such, there is no clear understanding of soft skills. Most university teacher educators tend to use their own experiences in helping students cultivate relevant competencies. Yet occasionally, in their pursuit of implementing certain non-traditional teaching and assessment strategies, teacher educators find themselves in various dilemmas, as illustrated in the subsequent paragraphs.

Technical and Professional Barriers

Findings suggest that most interviewed teacher educators did not have specified standards for soft skills students must meet. Similarly, most teacher educators appeared to possess inadequate skills for teaching and assessing soft skills. Even the assessment of the cognitive domain through traditional tests, which cannot measure intrapersonal and interpersonal traits, proved

problematic for many teacher educators. Comprehensive assessment of students' competencies needs well and regularly trained teacher educators who can use multiple assessment tools to measure student achievement. For instance, one teacher educator who is a teacher educator remarked:

Much assessment in this university does not explore the deeper thinking processes of learners expected by Bloom's taxonomy. We were taught at college that the three domains [cognitive, psychomotor, and affective] must be achieved; sadly, we were not exposed to practical ways of assessing the affective domain. We seriously need workshops and seminars to be trained on integrating the affective domain in our assessment practices.

The above transcript exposes two main sources of the technical and professional barriers. The first is the silence of teacher educators' preparation curricula regarding teaching and assessing soft skills. When teacher educators are not trained in teaching and assessing soft skills specifically, how would you expect them to carry out such a sensitive task? Secondly, teacher educators face the scarcity of in-service training opportunities deliberately organised and funded by the university and other relevant organs.

Time Constraint

Classroom assessment entails a great deal of the lecturer's time and effort. Yet, as already reported in the preceding section, teacher educators are neither trained nor prepared to face this demanding task. Further complications emanate from the fact that it is unclear whether soft skills should be taught and assessed as standalone or embedded themes in the existing subjects. However, many teacher educators supported the belief that dealing with soft skills puts additional pressure on the maximum number of subjects prescribed in the curricula. This would snatch teacher educators' limited time for implementing the already existing curricula. One comment, however, was raised as an alternative if teaching and assessing soft skills is to be realistic. Five teacher educators commented that some courses contain many topics that are less relevant in this global age. Thus, substituting these obsolete topics with either themes related to or integrating soft skills into the already existing themes could mitigate the fear of time constraints.

Deficiencies in Institutional Policies and Regulations

Interview responses disclosed that there was no official institutional support when teacher educators, through their initiatives, attempted to create an environment through which students could develop desirable soft skills. Every lecturer is faced with pressure to complete the syllabus. It seems the university managements have less interest in cultivating soft skills in students when this implies compromising the time required for covering the syllabus. What matters most to university management is the position of the university in the ranking competitions – and soft skills have seemingly less to do with the ranking criteria.

In summary, the findings indicate that the teacher educators' little work for teaching and assessing soft skills receives minimal support from university management, if any. For example, teacher educators recalled being deprived of the little funds they requested from the institution for class activities such as local excursions. In general, institutional policies, regulations, and procedures are not explicitly and adequately supportive of teaching and assessing soft skills among students.

Excessively Large Classes

Large class size was pointed out as another dilemma because the teaching and assessment of soft skills require a manageable class size for the lecturer to apply multiple teaching and assessment approaches and get to know students more closely. One can imagine the challenge of employing multiple teaching and assessment approaches to a class of 2,500 students which was found to be the case with the large classes in the case university.

While the government and university management are interested in big classes, teacher educators suffer the consequences and are obliged to teach and assess as effectively as possible. More interestingly, teacher educators are normally held accountable in case of any anomaly in the performance or quality of their graduates. Strikingly, there is evidence from literature, for example, Lambert (2023), that class size is not an apparent deterrent to embedding soft skills in teaching and learning. Thus, Lambert's articulation that 'teaching soft skills requires more hands-on-and interactive learning' (Lambert, 2023, p. 382) has nothing to do with class size.

Implications

The findings from this study induce several implications for educational stakeholders and the education sector at large. The following are some implications:

1. Acquiring soft skills for university students is imperative. It has been argued that there is a need to teach university students holistically to acquire the soft skills demanded for lifelong learning and survival in this era.
2. Evidence from the field suggests the possibility of integrating soft skills successfully into academic curricula. Despite all the obstacles, teaching soft skills can be integrated into the subjects without any formal professional development or training or with limited resources.
3. The quality of teacher educators is the single most important factor for quality education at any level. To this effect, the curriculum for teacher training should be revisited to incorporate the strategies for teaching and assessment of soft skills.
4. Students need to be more actively involved in learning activities to master soft skills that consist of high-level thinking, social-interpersonal, leadership, and problem-solving skills to increase knowledge mastery, improve understanding, and strengthen their learning.
5. Higher learning institutions or teaching units deserve to be provided with adequate, relevant facilities for classroom and outdoor activities. For instance, classrooms, science and language laboratories, sports fields, and libraries should be well-equipped with diverse modern materials to create a stimulating learning environment for students to easily relate what is learned and what actually happens in society.

Reflection on the Attribution Theory suggests that possessing relevant soft skills may not necessarily suffice to determine the quality of graduates when it comes to employment in various socio-economic sectors. The quality and productivity of employees are attributable to both their dispositional factors and external factors, such as the task's difficulty level and other institutional factors.

Conclusion

The findings suggest that teacher educators know that soft skills are necessary and should be overtly taught and assessed in schools. Further, individual teacher educators are struggle to apply the teaching and assessment skills they believe to be helpful in cultivating soft skills among their students. Unfortunately, the impact of these few teacher educators is thwarted by various dilemmas such as technical and professional barriers, inhospitable institutional policies and regulations, time constraints and huge classes.

The negligence of integrating soft skills in classroom activities may threaten the quality of graduates and education in general. Soft skills can be integrated with existing courses without creating unnecessary new ones. Institutional support for innovations and respecting teacher educators' initiatives is indispensable. For instance, teacher educators must exercise their autonomy in classes by using multiple teaching methods and assessing students. One question is still pending further investigation: How best can we ensure our university graduates acquire the soft skills relevant to their employability and further studies?

References

- Albert, A., & Husni, A. (2023). Developing soft skills in teaching PAI. In *BICC Proceedings Bukittinggi International Counselling Conference*. 1, 76–84. <https://doi.org/10.30983/bicc.v1i1.29>
- Al-Sa'di, A., Parin, Y., Ahmad, E., Panjabi, R., McPhee, C. A., & Guler, O. (2023). Assessing educators' soft skills: Developing a self-assessment instrument. *Administrative Sciences*, 13(9), 3-21. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci13090208>
- Azmi, I. A. G., Hashim, R. C., & Yusoff, Y. M. (2018). The employability skills of Malaysian university students. *International Journal of Modern Trends in Social Sciences*, 1(3), 1–14.
- Bridgstock, R. (2009). The graduate attributes we've overlooked: Enhancing graduate employability through career management skills. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 28(1), 31–44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360802444347>
- Fernandez, L. (2018). Qualitative interview analysis: The use of systemic functional linguistics to reveal functional meanings. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research FQS*, 19(2). Retrieved from <https://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/2663>
- Hernández-March, J., Martín del Peso, M., & Leguey, S. (2009). Graduates' skills and higher education: The employers' perspective. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 15(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13583880802699978>
- Hsieh, S. C., Lin, J. S., & Lee, H. C. (2012). Analysis on literature review of competency. *International Review of Business and Economics*, 2, 25–50.
- Kagan, J. (2019). *Hard skills*. <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/h/hard-skills.asp>
- Kalufya, N., & Mwakajinga, L. (2016). Employability of graduates from higher education institutions in Tanzania. *Institute of Social Work Journal*, 1(2), 51–68.
- Kechagias, K. (Ed.). (2011). *Teaching and assessing soft skills. 1st second chance school of Thessaloniki (Neapolis)*. MASS Project.
- Kumar, G., & Sharma, V. (2018). 21st century soft skills: Pedagogy for the digital age. In G. Gupta & S. Dey (Eds.), *Transforming management education*. New Delhi Publishers.
- Lambert, D. C. (2023). Soft skills don't have to be hard: Embedding soft skills instruction in Moroccan secondary schools. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, 13(1), 379–396. <https://doi.org/10.5590/JERAP.2023.13.1.25>
- McKnight, D. (2004). An inquiry of NCATE's move into virtue ethics by way of dispositions (Is this what Aristotle meant?). *Educational Studies*, 35(3), 212–230. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326993es3503_2
- Munishi, E. J. (2016). Factors contributing to lack of employable skills among technical and vocational education (TVET) graduates in Tanzania. *Business Education Journal*, 2(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.54156/cbe.bej.2.1.90>
- Sanga, P. L. (2016). Implications of teacher educators' practices in assessment for student learning in Tanzania. *Makerere Journal of Higher Education*, 8(1), 3–24. <https://doi.org/10.4314/majohe.v8i1.1>
- Schulz, B. (2008). The importance of soft skills. *Language and Communication*, 146–154. Retrieved from <https://ir.nust.na/jspui/bitstream/10628/39/1/The%20Importance%20of%20Soft%20Skills-Education%20beyond%20academic%20knowledge.pdf>
- Shakir, R. (2009). Soft skills at the Malaysian institutes of higher learning. *Asia Pacific Education Review*. Asia Pacific Press Edu., 10(3), 309–315. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-009-9038-8>
- Simbolon, B. (2023). The analysis of postgraduate students' soft skills and their learning participation amidst COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Advanced Educational Research*, 8(1), 1–4.
- Waggoner, J. (2006). Nothing hard about soft skills in the college classroom. <http://www.wcu.edu/facctr/mountainrise/archive/vol3no2/html/waggoner.pdf>

- Wagner, T. (2010). *The global achievement gap*. Basic Books.
- Weiner, B. (1986). *An attributional theory of motivation and emotion*. Springer-Verlag.
- Zhang, A. (2012). Peer assessment of soft skills and hard skills. *Journal of Information Technology Education*, 11, 155–168.
<https://doi.org/10.28945/1634>

Received: 01 January 2024
Revised: 01 February 2024
Accepted: 22 February 2024