



Research Article


The Power of Soft Skills: A Relevant Referent to Solve Troubled Situations in the School Space

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Abstract	Manuscript Information
<p>In a world that is moving a lot, disrupted by digitalization and which requires a great deal of adaptability, soft skills are a major notion at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This article presents a study of soft skills and proposes to continue the scientific development of transversal skills by critically questioning them. The strong emphasis on transversal skills in education, training, and work contrasts with the critical positions adopted in the scientific field towards this concept. The analysis of the conceptualizations carried out, according to the «daily» and «scientific» perspectives, in the school field and in the context of the training-employment relationship highlights different logics. Education is no longer limited to the acquisition of academic knowledge. Skills known as soft skills have become essential to thrive and take their place in an increasingly complex and interconnected society. Their various designations, their overlapping and the emergence of certain soft skills make the concept of soft skills a complex one.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ISSN No: 2583-7397 ▪ Received: 21-05-2025 ▪ Accepted: 11-06-2025 ▪ Published: 15-06-2025 ▪ IJCRM:4(3); 2025: 374-383 ▪ ©2025, All Rights Reserved ▪ Plagiarism Checked: Yes ▪ Peer Review Process: Yes
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KEYWORDS: soft skills, transversal skills, behavioural skills, troubled situation, school space.

1. INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century, characterized by new technologies and artificial intelligence, has changed the ways of doing and being of individuals, horizons are diversified and call for different skills, and new technologies, which provide access to the labour

market. Technical skills, hard skills, logically allow access to a job, or the reality of the field, and the emergence of jobs related to technological changes. The advent of new skills, known in English as “soft skills” and in French as transversal, behavioural, relational, and human skills, is a complement to meet the needs

of a changing world. Soft skills, thanks to their emotional and behavioral components, contribute to the improvement and optimization of technical skills, enabling them to remain effective in a constantly changing environment. Today, soft skills thanks to their strengths are criticized and solicited here and there, universities have made teaching subjects, companies have made a criterion for the selection of candidates, organizations have provided training to improve the profiles of the recipients. Indeed, soft skills occupy the forefront of the global stage.

With regard to the expectations and transformations that today affect the fields of education (weakening of the disciplinary logic), training (transition from a complete and methodical training logic to more individualized training paths) and work (evolution of occupations and forms of employment, development of a logic of employability), transversal skills are presented as points of support allowing the different actors to deal with them. However, the mobilization of so-called transversal skills in these different fields contrasts with the difficulty of conceiving them scientifically. How can a competence always link to a context, situation or class of situation be transversal to the latter? What does the diversity of formulations available to try to define them mean: we are talking about transversal skills, transferable, generic, key, basic, strong or even soft skills? How can skills be considered at the same time as general and transferable and linked to individual characteristics?

I. Introduction to soft skills

I.1. Definition of Competence

Competence is commonly defined as a sum of knowledge, know-how and being. These skills are interwoven and added together. The definition proposed by psychologist R.L.Katz [1] distinguishes three types of skills:

- Conceptual skills (analyze, understand, act systemically);
- Technical skills (methods, processes, technical procedures of a specialty);
- Human skills (in intra and inter-personal relationships).

For sociologist Guy Le Boterf [2]: “Competence is the activation or mobilization of several knowledge in a given situation and context”. In September 2006, the European Parliament defined competence as: a combination of knowledge, skills (abilities) and attitudes appropriate to a given situation. Key competencies are those that underpin personal development, social inclusion, active citizenship and employment.” Skills are acquired and developed throughout life, in the family, at school and at work. A skill can be shaped and developed through several methods and activities such as work placements, student activities, team work, training, the latter allow to develop qualities such as adaptability, creativity and empathy.

I.2. The concept of soft skills

The term soft skills is translated into English as “soft skills”, but soft skills are often referred to as “transversal skills” or “behavioural skills”. The different definitions of competence allow us to highlight three distinct concepts: knowledge, technical skills and flexible skills. Knowledge is defined as “a set

of reproducible knowledge or skills acquired through study or experience”. Technical skills, hard skills, refer to basic knowledge, technology, know-how, they can be assessed through diplomas, grades, references. Computer programming, data analysis, medicine for example are hard skills called “hard skills”. Transversal skills are soft skills that can relate to several trades as opposed to technical competence which refers to the same trade. The characteristics of transversal skills are human, knowledge of oneself and others, as well as interpersonal relationships. They relate to personal skills, referring to personal skills, social skills and methodological skills. Soft skills and hard skills are opposed; the former relate to behavioural skills and the latter to technical skills. Despite their opposition, soft skills and hard skills complement each other, in fact, linking the two skills allows a lasting success. Soft skills and hard skills are a winning tandem, the two skills work together. A person with a wide range of skills such as communication, emotional intelligence, team spirit will be better at tasks that require hard skills. Transversal skills are competences that are acquired throughout life and which enable the individual to be raised through the acquisition of multiple knowledge: personal, social and methodological.

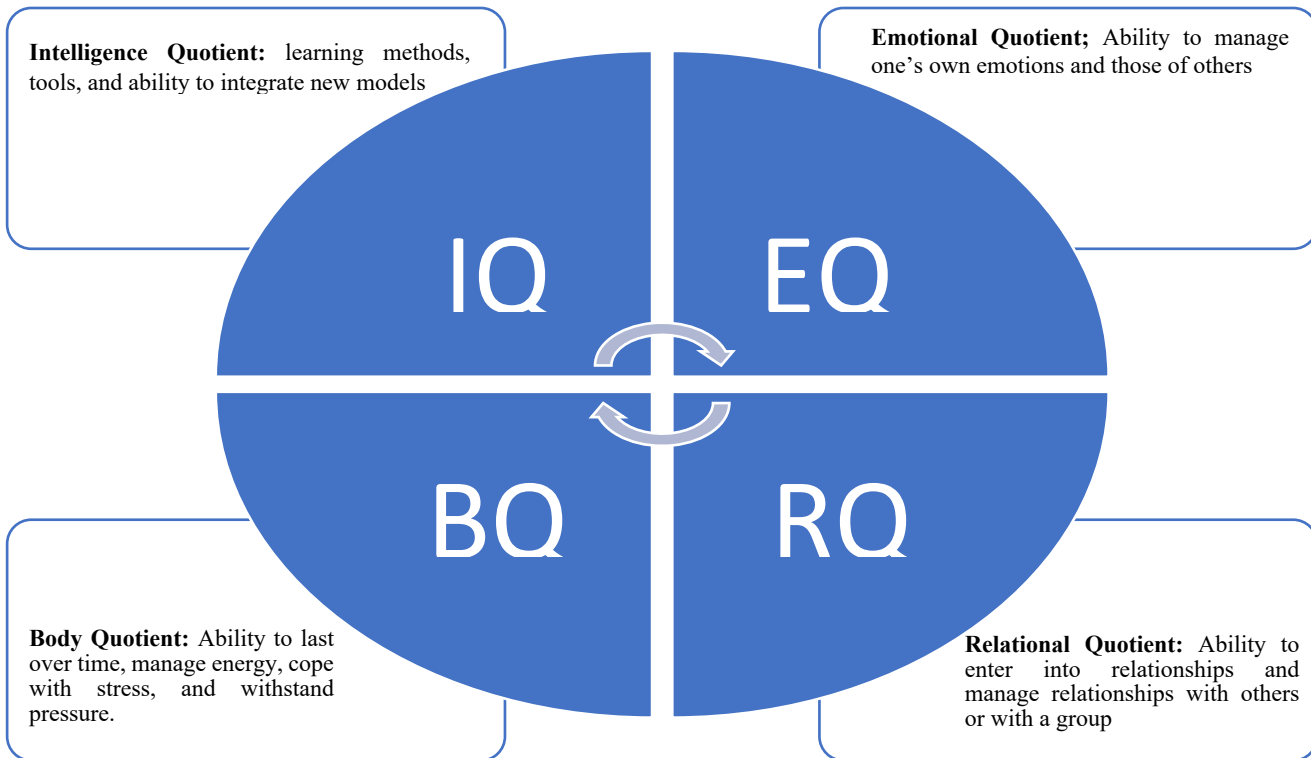
II. Soft skills

The set of soft skills are divided into three skill categories, personal skills, social skills and methodological skills.

II.1. Occupational skills

II.1.1. Emotional intelligence

Psychology professor Peter Salovey of Yale University and psychologist John Mayer of the University of New Hampshire [3], were the originators of the term “emotional intelligence” in 1990. Mayer and Salovey in 1997 [4] refer to emotional intelligence as “the ability to perceive and express emotions, to integrate them to facilitate thinking, to understand and reason with emotions, and to regulate emotions in oneself and others”. Emotional intelligence is defined by the psychologist and scientific journalist Daniel Goleman [5] as “the ability to regulate one’s emotions and those of others, to distinguish them, and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions.” In his book, “How do you turn your emotions into intelligence?” published in 1995, D. Goleman Daniel Goleman [5] demonstrates the importance of emotional intelligence for both social relations and professional success. In parallel to the logical-mathematical and verbal intelligence, the human being is endowed with emotional intelligence that refers to a set of emotional skills. Emotional intelligence is that form of intelligence that develops and enriches at any age, it strengthens well-being, relationships and performance. The emotional quotient (Q.E) measures emotional intelligence, it differs from the intelligence quotient (IQ), which measures logical-mathematical and verbal intelligence. Several tests are available to measure the emotional quotient (Q.E) including the EQ-i test.



A. The Test- emotional intelligence

The Personal Assessment of Emotional Intelligence Test (Table 1), published by Australian psychologist Nicolas S. Schutte in 1998 [6], assesses emotional intelligence as defined by Peter Salovey and John Mayer (1990) [3].

According to this model, emotional intelligence consists of three types of capabilities:

- The perception and appreciation of emotions in oneself and others (including empathy) and their expression;
- The regulation of emotions (in oneself and others);
- The use of emotions in problem solving (in which emotional events assist intellectual processing, allowing flexible planning, creative thinking, attention redirection and motivation management).

Table 1: Personal assessment test for emotional intelligence

		Not at all	Don't really agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to agree	Absolutely agree
1	I don't always understand why I react the way I do.	5	4	3	2	1
2	When I feel good, I can easily tell if it's because I'm happy, proud or relaxed.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I can easily find the words to describe what I feel.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I never base my life on my emotions.	5	4	3	2	1
5	Quand je me sens mal, je fais facilement le lien avec une situation qui m'a touché(e).	1	2	3	4	5
6	I can easily get what I want from others.	1	2	3	4	5
7	Most of the time, it's easy for me to understand why people feel what they feel.	1	2	3	4	5
8	When something touches me, I know immediately what I feel.	1	2	3	4	5
9	When I see someone stressed or anxious, it's easy for me to calm them down.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I find it difficult to understand the reactions of my relatives.	5	4	3	2	1
11	People easily come to me about their personal problems.	1	2	3	4	5
12	My emotions give me valuable clues about the changes in my life.	1	2	3	4	5
13	It is difficult for me to explain to others what I feel.	5	4	3	2	1

14	If someone came to me crying, I wouldn't know what to do.	5	4	3	2	1
15	I find it hard to listen to people complain.	5	4	3	2	1
16	I can easily know what others are feeling.	1	2	3	4	5
17	If I wanted to, it would be easy for me to make someone feel bad.	1	2	3	4	5
18	I find it difficult to deal with my emotions.	5	4	3	2	1
19	When I'm angry, I can easily calm down.	1	2	3	4	5
20	I often don't know the emotional state of people around me.	5	4	3	2	1

B. Interpretation of the emotional intelligence test

To calculate the intrapersonal emotional quotient, we add up our points in questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 12, 13, 18, 19.

If the score is less than 27: Managing your emotions is not your strong suit and it probably hurts you at home or work. You often have difficulty identifying exactly what you are feeling and why certain situations put you in a particular state. You tend to forget that the event that triggers an emotion (such as a colleague's remark) is not necessarily the root cause (which may be fatigue or an old complex for example). You also struggle to express how you feel. Either you repress your emotions or keep them to yourself, at the risk of being perceived as distant and difficult to grasp, or you externalize them by actions, such as cries or tears, instead of verbalizing them. In the first case, you probably tend to avoid conflict. In the second, your behavior sometimes seems excessive or inappropriate. Sometimes you lose control of yourself and say or do things that you later regret.

If the score is between 27 and 40: You are in the average: either you have a correct level – but no more – in all emotional skills (identify your emotions, understand where they come from, express them, regulate them appropriately to the context and use them to make necessary changes in your life), or you are very good at some of these skills but rather weak at others.

If the score is greater than 40: You are good at managing your emotions. You can usually identify precisely what you feel, for example, easily distinguishing frustration, sadness or disappointment. You also know where your emotions come from and can express them in a socially acceptable way. You wait for the right moment to say things and adapt your way of communicating with your interlocutor. These emotional skills allow you to defuse conflicts. You are likely to be perceived as being frank, binding and accommodating.

To calculate the interpersonal emotional quotient, we add up our points in questions 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20.

If the score is less than 30: You have trouble identifying other people's emotions when they are not expressed in a visible way (for example, by screaming or crying). This sometimes prevents you from adjusting to their mood and needs. You do not always understand their reactions, especially when they are different from yours. Be careful to remain tolerant!

You don't like people turning to you when they are in distress, because you're afraid of being Overwhelmed by their emotions, not being able to get out of them or not knowing how to react. You struggle to smile again, to comfort a grief or to appease an anger.

If the score is between 30 and 40: You are in the average: either you have a correct level in all emotional skills (identify the emotions of others, understand where they come from, listen to them and manage them), or you are very good at some of these skills but rather poor at others.

If your score is greater than 40: The emotions of others have almost no secrets for you. Most of the time, you identify them quickly, find their root causes, and this allows you to adjust to what your surroundings feel. You are certainly seen as someone to whom nothing can be hidden. You also understand that an identical situation can trigger very different emotions depending on the individual. You're not the type to run away or walk away when someone is not well. On the contrary, you offer an attentive ear to your surroundings and know how to console or soothe. As a result, people do not hesitate to turn to you if there is a problem. The EQ-i test measures the fifteen emotional skills classified into five blocks that represent aspects of emotional and social functioning, each block exploring three emotional skills. The five blocks and the competencies they comprise are as follows:

- **Self-perception:** self-esteem, self-realization and emotional self-awareness;
- **Individual expression:** emotional expression, self-affirmation, independence;
- **Human relations:** human relationships, empathy and social responsibility;
- **Decision making:** problem solving, sense of reality and impulse control,
- **Stress management:** flexibility, stress tolerance and optimism.

The emotional skills measured in this test can be equated with soft skills. Emotional intelligence provides a plural way to understand some problems related to human behavior such as interpersonal conflicts, the failure of people with high IQ or the inability of people to cope in situations while others do very well. Emotional intelligence skills include skills related to aspects of emotional and social functioning; the skills listed in the four studies above that are related to these aspects are emotional intelligence, understanding the needs of others, cognitive

flexibility, decision making, knowing oneself, and identifying resource people.

➤ **Understanding the needs of others:** This skill is empathy, the ability to understand, recognize and feel other people's feelings and emotions.

➤ **Mental flexibility**

The rapid evolution of existing occupations as well as the emergence of new ones requires a commitment to continuous learning, an ability to learn and the ability to train continuously. Mental flexibility allows to cope with different tasks, to think about different solutions for a given problem and to adapt in problematic situations. Thanks to this soft skill, reflection is always in action, it allows a reactivity of the thought in the face of new tasks by linking reflection with creativity. Mental flexibility allows us to challenge ourselves, progress and exist in a new world.

➤ **Decision making**

Decision-making is based on the general interest of the group and the project. Making a decision helps to carry out a project and attract people to you. Representing one of the essential skills of management in companies, soft skill decision-making makes it possible to establish priorities, which facilitates a good management of daily tasks and contributes to better productivity.

➤ **Self-knowledge**

An individual can know himself, to understand his intrinsic functioning in order to mobilize and invest himself optimally in daily situations, interactions, and commitments. Self-knowledge is "the knowledge that a person acquires about himself, in psychological or spiritual terms, during his life through his experiences". It provides a fair understanding of their skills, influence, and potential contributions. Self-knowledge is one of the pillars of emotional intelligence, it allows as a skill to strengthen other soft skills that the person wants to acquire. For the proper management of interactions with others, the individual must first understand their own thoughts, beliefs, feelings and actions. By understanding his strengths and weaknesses, his reactions to stress, it becomes easier to adapt his actions to his environment.

➤ **Identification of contacts**

It is a skill that stems from a good understanding of the skills, influence, and potential contributions of people in the community. This skill allows for better use of human resources for better collaboration and successful teamwork.

II.1.2. Leadership

Leadership reflects an individual's ability to lead individuals or organizations towards certain goals. The leader, with his positive attitude, communicative skills and ability to motivate others, always manages to get the best out of his teammates. He leads several fights for the release of his team's talents, for their development and success. The leader creates a climate of trust and symbiosis, foundations for cohesion and success in the group. It is aware of the importance of transversal skills in its management related to the management of its employees and its role as unifier of its teams around common objectives. The leadership competence is linked to the management competence

of people. in fact, thanks to his knowledge of the skills of his employees, the leader knows how to listen and take into account the opinions, expertise, and aspirations of each. It delegates tasks by highlighting the skills of each element of the group.

II.1.3. Adaptation to change

According to C. Darwin [7], "The species that survive are not the strongest or most intelligent species, but those that adapt best to change" Adaptability is an ability to accommodate changes quickly, it is to be able to accept the evolution of certain parameters over time and to be able to develop your own mode of adjustment. In this new era, where the world is constantly changing and change is accelerating, adaptability is seen as a key skill. Occupational adaptability is defined as: "all the resources and means available to an individual to explore opportunities, make decisions and plan actions to achieve professional objectives" [8]. An employee who knows how to adapt faces various situations from the simplest to the most complex and responds to them without difficulty by adapting its organization according to the situation, he is armed to face changes or even reinvent himself. The ability to adapt allows us to meet challenges without fear of the unknown in any context. Emotional intelligence is one of the most important foundations for professional adaptability.

II.1.4. Critical thinking

Critical thinking is defined as "the rigorous intellectual process based on doubt and deep reflection, to make decisions about what to believe or do". Critical thinking enables people to react thoughtfully to new problems and find solutions by providing constructive advice on work or information. To succeed in the different tasks, it is necessary to distinguish and prioritize information, to ensure its reliability in the huge existing flow that allows you to guard against unfounded rumours, misleading information. Critical thinking helps to deal with various situations by developing an innovative response.

The phases of critical thinking involve identifying problems, discovering ways and methods to adapt to them. Rational questioning, the evaluation of available information, and the confrontation of ideas to have one's own opinion are in the direction of taking the right decision to solve the problems. These soft skills must be channelled to avoid the transformation of this constructive approach into permanent criticism, a negative approach that is detrimental to problem solving.

II.2. Social skills

II.2.1. Teamwork

Teamwork and collaboration are defined according to the Government of Canada [9] site as follows: Teamwork and collaboration mean being part of a group and working collaboratively with other members to achieve a common goal related to work, A group is two or more people working together to achieve a common work-related goal. It may be a formal team such as a section or work unit, or an informal team such as a multidisciplinary group working together on a temporary project. It may be composed of people with different occupational groups

and levels. The important point is that this competence refers to situations where a person acts as peer or team member on an equal footing, with no higher authority or responsibility than other members of the group.”

Successful tasks require collaboration and cooperation to achieve common goals. The aim is to overcome the difficulties inherent in working in groups in order to maintain and improve group performance. Teamwork requires empathy and communication because it facilitates cooperation between people of different cultures, languages, opinions and backgrounds and reflects the universal dimension of this competence. The proper division of labour and mutual respect for roles contribute to the accomplishment of work.

The coordination skill is linked to the “teamwork” skill as it is the ability to organize one’s own work and connect it to the overall team’s work, which in parallel implies collaboration and empathy. Coordination includes participation in several activities, at the same time it imposes prioritization by prioritizing needs.

Coordination involves managing the individual work program in relation to other people’s workflows to move the work forward.

II.2.2. Communication

Communication is the interaction between two or more individuals to exchange information, emotions. Communication is essential to life in society; it is the foundation of human relationships. Effective communication requires some knowledge of how interpersonal relationships work and a mastery of communicative methods. Communication may be verbal or non-verbal, oral or written. Verbal communication based on language and the use of language allows exchange between two or more interlocutors.

Non-verbal communication is based not on words but on body language as a whole: facial expression, gestures, postures, gestural attitudes, looks, speech, voice, etc.

Verbal and non-verbal, communication has its rules, their proper application is a key to success in personal and professional life. From the point of view of social relations, good communication contributes to ease and improvement of exchanges with others, it allows the objective management of conflicts, it is the implementation of his emotional intelligence in the service of others. From a professional point of view, good communication makes it possible to manage in a positive way, to convince easily, to avoid misunderstandings, to better understand the resistance to change. Communication is a skill to master to be effective at work. A good communicator can listen, understand instructions, explain problems to colleagues, identify non-verbal cues, identify potential conflicts, and resolve them. Through mastery of the rules of interpersonal communication: know how to transmit, say, reformulate, explain, put yourself at the level of his interlocutor, make sure he has heard and understood, human, social and professional relations are better managed.

Soft skill “promote” is related to communication. Promoting is the successful promotion of an action. We communicate not only to transmit or receive information, but also because we want to master certain psychological issues, often unconscious.

5 types of issues have been taken up by different authors, including Mucchielli and Lipiansky [10]:

- The information issues: Transmit an information, a message: idea, thought, order, instruction
- Identity issues: To speak, you must have an identity; any communication defines the identity of the transmitter, the identity of the speaker will manifest in the phraseology used, in the use of a particular code.
- Territorial issues: The challenge is to preserve an intimate space so as not to put oneself in danger in communication: personal, family and professional space. These issues will take place both in the physical and mental space. The stakes of the psychic space refer to aspects of intimacy, personal elements, private limits where one accepts the other in his space.
- The relational issues: There is an “issue” to enter into a relationship, to have contacts, to work towards having satisfactory contacts about one’s objective, depending on the situation of the individual, the moment (need for gratification, protection...). These issues are based on questions of identity and borders: How to get in touch with the other?
- Conative issues: These are the issues representing the possibility of influencing and producing a certain effect on the recipient. In any communication, the issuer seeks to influence the other, convince him of an opinion on a behavior, to change his mind. These issues can take two paths:
 - **Seduction:** which seeks a relationship of complicity, attraction, and sympathy by highlighting the relational aspects;
 - **Power:** which establishes a balance of power between the interlocutors (authority, sanctions, threats).

II.3. Methodological skills

II.3.1. Troubleshooting

This involves identifying complex problems and reviewing related information to develop and evaluate options and implement solutions.

“Problem-solving means goal-oriented thinking and action in situations for which no routine solution exists”. Problem-solving is often a group task; the alliance of forces in a team allows for finding more suitable solutions that take into account the ambivalence of the team. Leaders must have the ability to identify people who can contribute or help solve problems.

II.3.2. Creativity and innovation

In a world where humans are being put on the back burner of artificial intelligence and robotisation, soft skill creativity is a reminder that people continue to be at the centre of the development and innovation process. “Creativity is the ability to transcend traditional ways of thinking or acting and develop new ideas, methods, or objects”.

Creativity is a soft skill that reflects the ability to create, think differently, and make decisions.

It is a broader vision that goes beyond established boundaries and the common framework, creating connections between ideas, people, and projects. Creativity allows us to act optimally in any type of context, to rethink relationships, to imagine and work for another future. It allows for finding solutions to problems by relying on the new and not on the existing. The creative has initiative, out-of-scope thinking, sharp observation, with original thoughts and a limited vision. The creative enhances collective intelligence and is a factor of original solutions and sources of innovation.

Anyone can have a predisposition to creativity, but this soft skill is developed through learning. The combination of creativity and innovation represents the association of imagination and its execution. The definitions of each competence make it possible to bring certain competences closer together and to group competences belonging to the same register.

III. Conceptualizing transversal competences: the logic at work

Drawing the logics that organize the conceptualization of transversal skills in social practices is a challenge as much as the uses found in the different fields (school, university, vocational training, policies related to the relationship between training and employment) seem to be different. This diversity is present in the school setting. The transversal competences are associated with the fundamental competences (or bases), although the competence base, in its historical variations, is sometimes constituted, in its drafting, of transversal and non-transversal competences. They maintain an ambiguous relationship to disciplinary competences: disciplinary competences may become transversal competences [11], the reverse being also conceivable [12]. These are skills that “do not relate to a discipline, but to the child and his or her relationship with the world of school” [13] or that “transcend disciplines” [14]. These are meta-competencies that support the development of disciplinary skills [15]. This diversity is reflected in the professional environment. In the engineering context, these are non-specific skills (excluding scientific or technical dimensions) associated with management functions [16]. These are competences identical to several functions or occupational branches without excluding specific competences [17]. These are skills associated with sharing the same action by different professional bodies, for example in the case of the management of a patient in a hospital setting [18].

There is no transversal competence in itself, since it depends by definition on a dominant context that determines its transversality. It is therefore understandable that first and second grade teachers build very different perceptions of transversal skills [19]. Similarly, certain skills in the mastery of ICT, previously considered as specialized technical skills, are now referred to as transversal skills. The difficulty of a clear definition of transversal competences is probably due to this point. In this context, it seems appropriate to explore transversal competences from the contexts and «troubled» situations that determine them and guide their conceptualization.

It is therefore from the questions or challenges raised by the contemporary context from different points of view that we examine the meanings or criticisms associated with transversal skills, fruits of the commitment of the survey. These are therefore to be considered as analysts of the lively questions that arise in the fields and contexts where these skills are mobilized.

IV. Resolving troubled situations in the school space

Understanding how transversal skills fit into the school field from a macro-social perspective requires a return to the development of the «competence logic». In the school context, it appeared in the pre-school and elementary school curricula from 1991 to be extended and generalized from 2005 at the middle school level. Transversal skills are mobilised in official texts from 1991 and included in the 2002 programmes. They, therefore, seem intimately linked to the problems associated with the importation of the «logical competence» into the school space.

In 2006, the term disappeared from official texts defining the common base of knowledge and skills [20]. This is surprising: why in a contemporary context where the use of transversal skills is prevalent, this category seem to disappear in a space of practice that was used very early? This is the case for the common base of knowledge, skills and culture of 2015, which today constitutes the reference point for educational policies. It is specified that this base «presents what every pupil must know and master at the end of compulsory schooling. It brings together all the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes necessary to succeed in schooling, life as an individual and future citizen» [21]. However, although the expression “transversal competence” is absent from this text, we note the use of the adjective “transversal” in the first article: «each [of the five training areas] requires the transversal and joint contribution of all educational disciplines and approaches». Programs of 2015, when they refer to transversality, indicate that learning objects are shared among a plurality of disciplines. In the light of these elements, we can understand that the absence of an explicit reference to transversal competences in the skills base does not, in our opinion, indicate a drop-out, but an extension of the idea of transversality to compulsory education to make it the dominant logic. The disciplinary logic becomes second. This is clear from the 2002 programmes. They are also defined by areas which, contrary to the current common basis, refer to disciplines against which two transversal areas are identified. However, if transversality always indicates a second position, relative to a dominant orientation, the current reversal of hierarchies between disciplinary logic and transversal approach of teachings indicates a logical impossibility of resorting to «transversal competences», since, in the context of compulsory education, they are all by nature. A logic mobilized in 1991 by the ministerial bodies on the periphery of disciplinary logic seems to have subsumed it. It is therefore less a matter of talking about transversal skills than of transversality of the skills built in the school setting and constituting the common support for each one to engage in his schooling, his professional life and citizenship. Such a position extends the implicit elements of the 2006 basis which seemed to

“place the cross-cutting character as the basis for the notion of competence” [22], with the expression cross-cutting competence therefore presenting a redundancy. Would this disappearance indicate the success of the import of competence logic into the field of compulsory education? Does it not show that the scientifically formulated criticisms have been taken into account?

The generalization of this transversality logic thus seems to be able to take into account and respond to a plurality of situations perceived as troubled from the point of view of educational policy actors:

- It does not fall within the scope of the disciplinary competences that are the transversal oppositions found in the many scientific works on the field of education [23-26];
- It puts the educational mission of the school in perspective, in a socio-political context troubled by the question of terrorism, the democratic model and citizenship. It is thus a return on a historic mission of the school highlighted by the first sociologists of the school: “School socialization is above all a moral and cultural education, even if, in addition to this integrating function, the school must also, as a more technical function, prepare everyone for a place in the social division of labour”;
- It takes better account of an openness of the school to its environment, as evidenced by the rise in “education to” conducive to the development of so-called transversal skills [27];
- It provides a response to the long-standing criticism of academicism and elitism as vectors of educational inequality and injustice. It seeks to integrate a more holistic perspective on the student [28] and questions raised by the existence of hidden curricula or insufficient consideration of informal learning [29];
- • It is consistent with the employability logic that is evident, for example, in work on management science and youth employability [30, 31].

Let us therefore note the scope of this daily conceptualization in the direction of soft skills that seems to unify, from the point of view of these actors, multiple troubled situations. From a scientific point of view, the situation is otherwise problematic. The work carried out in the direction of transversal competences in the school space, mainly from a didactic perspective, highlights the difficulty of attesting to their consistency in teaching activities. If, according to the macro-social perspective, communication or problematization activities seem «logically» transversal to a diversity of disciplines, the didactic analysis of such skills, located in their disciplinary context of construction and mobilization, strongly relativizes this view [32-34]. Michel Fabre [35], questions what is common in problematization activities developed in the different disciplines? Other research questions the construction of a competence to be located from the «bridges» operated by official texts between several disciplines [36, 37]. However, the authors show that the texts are unable to account for this transversality and ultimately lead to a return of discipline. The authors then specify that a didactic reflection on the construction of bridges remains to be

undertaken, indicating implicitly the merits of the prescriptive inquiry. This study demonstrates the sensitivity of didactic approaches to the question of transversal competences, or more precisely what ensures the transversality of competences, in relation to the development of questions posed by inter-pluri-trans-disciplinarity [38-40].

Soft skills seem to find, on the side of school practices, a more favorable terrain for their use when the teachings are no longer part of a disciplinary logic. For some [41,42], the disciplinary decompartmentalization that is allowed by, for example, discovery routes at college or project-based teaching encourages work on (transversal) skills. Thus, in the context of entrepreneurship education, oriented towards the development of autonomy and initiative of learners, Sylvain Starck [43] highlights practices and logics of distance learning in school. Studies investigating the relationship between project teaching and disciplinary knowledge [44] highlight the difficulties of reconciling teaching centred on pedagogical approaches associated with the development of transversal skills and acquisition of disciplinary knowledge. The latter require a conceptualization work that remains fragmentary in the project-based approaches observed. A focus on skills considered as transversal, without real support, thus risk impoverishing the teachings by the emergence of a «psychological didactics» [45] and lead to new forms of educational inequality [46]? This is particularly the case when the focus is on tasks and attitudes to the detriment of the application of knowledge. In the school context, research thus highlights the current inability of this everyday concept and its uses to satisfactorily resolve the troubled situations that it is supposed to respond to.

CONCLUSION

In the school space, the institutional point of view now seems to favour a transversality logic of learning and to question the pre-eminence of a structure based on disciplinary division and specialization. One can, however, question the role that the scientific critics developed in this context may have played in what appears to be a reversal in the use of soft skills. The work of scientific conceptualization of soft skills skills in the school field, carried out mainly from a didactic perspective, shows itself sensitive to this transversality logic in the context of an increase in the power of Multi-disciplinary without renewing institutional conceptualizations. In the vocational and training fields, the study puts a double logic into perspective. From the point of view of policies and managers of the training-employment relationship, transversal skills are either a common foundation that any future professional must have a more singular resource allowing individuals to drive their career paths in a rapidly changing world of work. Scientific approaches, when they question the consistency of these daily conceptualizations, stand out clearly, highlighting in particular the fragilities linked to the generalisations made and the ideological dimensions associated with them. If in the school context a dialogue between scientific and everyday concepts remains hypothetical, such a dialogue does not seem to be possible in the context of the training-employment relationship. At the end of this study, one point

deserves to be stressed: if scientific approaches do not allow to specify what is meant by soft skills, They point out, however, that the latter do not correspond with their daily conceptualization. Would it not be appropriate, then, from a more radical critical perspective, to question what is to be understood by assuming that they are a social object quite different from what the proposed definitions invite us to see?

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