

THE NEED FOR AND THE TRAINING OF COMPLEX PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

There is an increasing global need for generic skills for the 21st Century and problem solving has been shown to be one of the most needed of these skills. However, it is not clear as to what is being done by education and training institutions to develop problem solving skills, especially relating to solving complex problems. The general purpose of this research was to investigate the extent of the need for problem solving skills and the extent to which problem-solving training courses focus on complex problem solving (CPS). Literature reviews were conducted of; a) studies that investigated the need for generic skills, including problem solving skills, b) problem solving training courses advertised on the Internet, and c) the CPS literature. The findings confirm that there is a substantial global need for problem solving skills, but the problem-solving courses advertised by universities and training institutions vary considerably in their content and do not adequately address CPS. Based on these findings and the literature review, a holistic and integrated model of CPS is proposed with the aim of contributing to the conceptualization of CPS, the training of CPS and its practical implementation. The main practical implication of these findings is that universities and training institutions should seriously consider offering CPS training courses based on a holistic and integrated model. Also, senior managers should incorporate the training of CPS skills into their Human Resource strategic thinking and planning.

Keywords: Problem solving, Generic skills, Core skills, Key competencies.

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