A Study on the Current Status and Development Strategies for the Cultivation of Life Skills among Students at Guizhou Light Industry Vocational and Technical College

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Abstract: This study takes 436 second-year students from Guizhou Light Industry Vocational and Technical College during the 2024-2025 academic year as its research subjects. Through questionnaire surveys and data analysis, it explores the current status of life skills among vocational college students and proposes cultivation strategies. The study found that students performed well in problem-solving abilities and cybersecurity awareness, but showed significant shortcomings in interpersonal conflict management, persistence in achieving learning goals, and proficiency in office software operations. Based on these findings, this paper proposes targeted recommendations from three dimensions: course optimization, practical activity implementation, and strengthened guidance education. These recommendations aim to enhance the comprehensive literacy of vocational college students and facilitate their adaptation to societal development needs.

Keywords: higher vocational colleges, life skills, training, guidelines

I. Introduction

Life skills are essential adaptive abilities that individuals need in their daily lives, and they are closely related to personal growth, career development, and social adaptation. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines them as "social skills necessary for self-management and full functional capacity based on independence." The World Health Organization (WHO) further categorizes them into three dimensions: cognitive thinking, self-management, and interpersonal communication, encompassing ten core skills such as decision-making, problem-solving, and emotional management. Globally, 143 countries have actively promoted life skills education, with 68 countries incorporating it into their national compulsory curricula.

China has been increasingly emphasizing life skills education. In 2011, the Ministry of Education and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) launched the "Social and Emotional Learning Project" in multiple provinces. In 2020, the "Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening Labor Education in Primary, Secondary, and Higher Education Institutions in the New Era" explicitly combined labor education with life skills cultivation, emphasizing "cultivating virtue through labor, enhancing intelligence through labor, strengthening the body through labor, and nurturing beauty through labor." Vocational education, as the key arena for cultivating technical and skilled talent, must pay particular attention to the comprehensive development of students' life skills. However, there remains a practical gap in life skills education at higher vocational colleges. As a national-level high-quality higher vocational college, Guizhou Light Industry Vocational and Technical College serves as a typical example of the current state of life skills cultivation among its students, making research on this topic of significant practical importance.

II. Research Subjects and Methods

1. Research Subjects

This study took the second-year students of Guizhou Light Industry Vocational and Technical College in the 2024-2025 academic year as the research population, totaling 3,522 students. Based on the sampling table by Krejcie & Morgan (1970), a simple random sampling method was used to select 436 students as the sample, covering six major categories: mechanical and electrical engineering, computer science, management, food and pharmaceuticals, architecture, and art design. The sample structure is consistent with the overall distribution and is representative.

2. Research Tools and Methods

The research tool was a self-designed questionnaire, consisting of two parts: the first part collected demographic information, including gender, household registration, and major; The second part is a survey of current life skills, designed based on five dimensions: interpersonal skills, problem-solving, perseverance, digital literacy, and social skills. The Likert five-point scoring method (1 = rarely, 5 = always) was used. After

expert validation (IOC = 0.67–1.00) and a pilot survey (Cronbach's α = 0.91), the questionnaire demonstrated good reliability and validity.

Data collection was assisted by the Student Affairs Office of the college, with a total of 436 valid questionnaires collected, representing a 100% response rate. Data analysis was conducted using percentages, means, and standard deviations for statistical description, combined with content analysis to summarize the results of open-ended questions.

III. Research Findings and Analysis

1. Overall Performance of Students' Life Skills

As shown in Table 1, the overall mean score for students' life skills is 3.24 (moderate level). The scores for each dimension, from highest to lowest, are as follows: problem-solving (3.38), perseverance (3.31), digital literacy (3.30), social skills (3.18), and interpersonal skills (3.01). This indicates that students' life skills exhibit significant imbalance, with strengths and weaknesses coexisting.

Table 1: Overall Performance of Students at Guizhou Light Industry Vocational and Technical College in Life Skills

Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Ranki
Human relationship skills	3.01	0.79	5
Problems solving	3.38	0.90	1
Perseverance	3.31	0.91	2
Digital literacy	3.30	0.88	3
Social skills	3.18	0.89	4
Overall	3.24	0.87	

2. Specific performance in each dimension

(1) Interpersonal skills: Mean score of 3.01, ranking lowest. Among these, "actively communicating and leveraging others' strengths in teamwork" scored the highest (3.31), but "proactively resolving interpersonal conflicts" scored the lowest (2.78), indicating insufficient initiative among students in conflict management.

(2) Problem-Solving: Average score of 3.38, ranking first. The highest score was for "developing a spending plan to address economic difficulties" (3.67), while the lowest score was for "adjusting activity formats to address low participation" (3.23), indicating that students need to improve their ability to handle complex situations.

(3) Perseverance: Average score of 3.31. "Adjusting mindset to find solutions after setbacks" scored the highest (3.43), but "persisting in achieving learning goals" scored the lowest (3.14), indicating that students have weaknesses in maintaining long-term goals.

(4) Digital Literacy: Average score of 3.30. "Cybersecurity knowledge and privacy protection" scored the highest (3.72), but "basic office software operations" scored the lowest (3.07), highlighting weaknesses in office skills.

(5) Social Skills: Average score of 3.18. "Polite expression of differing opinions" scored the highest (3.47), but "actively participating in social activities to become the focus" scored the lowest (2.88), indicating insufficient social initiative among students.

3. Supplementary Results from the Open-Ended Questionnaire

In the open-ended responses regarding "important life skills"(199 valid responses),cooking(18.09%), interpersonal communication (17.09%), and computer skills (10.05%) were frequently mentioned, reflecting students' urgent need for practical skills. Additionally, 41.70% of the responses involved comprehensive abilities such as time management and emotional regulation, indicating the diversity of life skills cognition.

IV.Discussion

1. Causes of Advantages

Students' advantages in problem solving (such as economic planning) and digital literacy (such as cybersecurity) are related to multiple factors: labor education courses offered by schools have strengthened practical life skills; families have cultivated consumption concepts, enhancing students' ability to deal with economic issues; and the widespread availability of information in the Internet age has enhanced cybersecurity awareness. In addition, the advantage in teamwork skills is attributed to the widespread application of "project-based teaching" in vocational education.

2. Root Causes of Weaknesses
(1) **Course Design Deficiencies:** Schools lack specialized courses in interpersonal conflict management, office software operation, and other areas, resulting in insufficient training in related skills.
(2) **Student Cognitive Biases:** Some students prioritize professional skills over life skills, neglecting proactive learning and practical experience.
(3) **Social Environmental Influences:** The widespread use of online social media has reduced opportunities for face-to-face communication, weakening the ability to handle real-world conflicts; fast-paced lifestyles have also diminished patience for pursuing long-term goals.

3. Differences in influencing factors
Gender, household registration, and major may have a potential impact on life skills. For example, the average social skills score of management majors is slightly higher than that of other majors, which is presumed to be related to communication training in their major courses. Urban students' digital literacy scores are slightly higher than those of rural students, which may be related to the availability of resources during their formative years. However, the difference is not significant and requires further verification.

V. Policy Recommendations
1. Optimize the curriculum system to address skill gaps
(1) **Introduce specialized courses:** Offer required courses such as "Practical Office Software Operations" and "Interpersonal Conflict Management," combining case-based teaching with simulated training to enhance students' weaker skills.
(2) **Integrate life skills into professional education:** Integrate life skills development with professional courses, such as adding a "Comprehensive Application of Digital Tools" module in computer science programs and strengthening "Team Collaboration and Negotiation" content in management programs.
(3) **Strengthen goal management courses:** Through specialized teaching on topics such as "Time Planning" and "Learning Strategies," cultivate students' ability to persist in their goals and manage themselves.

2. Conducting diverse practices and building training platforms
(1) **Organizing themed activities:** Hold activities such as "social etiquette workshops" and "conflict mediation simulations" to improve interpersonal and social skills; conduct "office skills competitions" and "digital literacy challenges" to strengthen practical skills.
(2) **Expanding practical scenarios:** Integrate life skills training into club activities and volunteer services, such as organizing campus activities to exercise problem-solving abilities and providing community services to enhance social participation.
(3) **Establish school-enterprise collaboration:** Collaborate with enterprises to develop "Workplace Life Skills Training Camps," simulating workplace communication and stress management scenarios to enhance the practicality of skills.

3. Strengthen guidance and education to reinforce understanding and support
(1) **Strengthen publicity and guidance:** Use campus broadcasts, themed class meetings, and other formats to promote the importance of life skills and correct the misconception of "prioritizing professional skills over life skills."
(2) **Improve faculty support:** Form a team of life skills guidance teachers to provide personalized counseling and conduct group counseling for issues such as interpersonal difficulties and lack of motivation.
(3) **Establish an evaluation system:** Incorporate life skills into students' comprehensive quality evaluations and establish a dynamic cultivation mechanism of "skill assessment—feedback improvement—reassessment."

VI. Conclusions and Outlook
This study reveals that the life skills of students at Guizhou Light Industry Vocational and Technical College exhibit the characteristic of "some areas of strength but significant weaknesses in key areas." Interpersonal conflict management, persistence in achieving learning goals, and proficiency in office software operations are the key areas requiring improvement. Through a three-pronged strategy of course optimization, practical reinforcement, and guidance support, the comprehensive development of students' life skills can be effectively promoted.

Future research could further explore the mechanisms by which factors such as gender and household registration influence life skills, refine tiered and categorized training models; simultaneously, establish a long-term tracking mechanism to dynamically assess the effectiveness of interventions, providing more precise theoretical and practical support for the cultivation of life skills among vocational college students. As the primary institutions for cultivating skilled talent, vocational colleges must continue to prioritize life skills education to help students grow into high-quality technical and skilled professionals capable of adapting to societal development.

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Author Profile

Yang Yi studied Education at the School of Education Sciences, Guizhou Normal University from September 2010 to July 2014, where he obtained a bachelor's degree. Since August 2014, he has been engaged in student management and service research at Guizhou Light Industry Vocational and Technical College.