

## Application of life skills within the context of the BNCC: implications from research in military schools in the interior of Goiás

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**Abstract - Objectives:** This study aimed to assess teachers' self-perceptions about their intention to teach life skills and compare students' perceptions about learning life skills in military schools influenced by these teachers. **Methods:** The sample consisted of five teachers, aged between 28 and 45 years, each with at least four years of classroom experience. Additionally, 769 students participated in the study, with a mean age of  $12.4 \pm 0.92$  years, representing both genders. **Results:** The results indicated that, except for Teacher 1, who scored between 29% and 74% of the maximum possible scores across the investigated subscales of the P-CLSS-Q, the remaining teachers scored above 79% on the same subscales. Furthermore, classes taught by Teacher 3 showed lower scores in life skills compared to other teachers in areas such as teamwork [ $\chi^2(4) = 16.819$ ;  $p = 0.02$ ], goal setting [ $\chi^2(4) = 21.159$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ], social skills [ $\chi^2(4) = 19.441$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ], problem-solving [ $\chi^2(4) = 15.788$ ;  $p = 0.003$ ], emotional skills [ $\chi^2(4) = 20.457$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ], leadership [ $\chi^2(4) = 16.075$ ;  $p = 0.003$ ], time management [ $\chi^2(4) = 25.119$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ], and communication [ $\chi^2(4) = 21.561$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ]. There were also minor variations in time management and communication life skills among classes taught by the other evaluated teachers. **Conclusion:** Based on these findings, teachers expressed interest in fostering a positive classroom climate to promote life skills (LS); however, students' self-perceptions of LS learning were different, suggesting a need for targeted professional development to improve teachers' teaching practices.

**Keywords:** teaching practice, school physical education, human resource development, sport, human development.

### Introduction

The National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) is a framework designed for students and teachers in Brazilian Basic Education, structuring ethical, political, and aesthetic principles to foster holistic human development and build a just and inclusive society in Brazil<sup>1</sup>. In this context, the BNCC is a normative document establishing what education should be provided to all students across the nation, regardless of locality or educational system (public or private), aiming to ensure a common learning experience that enhances education quality nationwide and clarifies the expected learning outcomes for students in Basic Education<sup>1,2,3</sup>.

Through the BNCC, equity in educational processes in Brazil is promoted<sup>4</sup>, prioritizing competency-based learning - the mobilization of knowledge, concepts, and procedures - and the acquisition of skills (practical, cognitive, and socioemotional) that students need to develop throughout their education<sup>1,5</sup>. This approach emphasizes the importance of viewing students holistically, consider-

ing their full range of physical, psychological, intellectual, cultural, and social dimensions and the contexts they are part of, such as family, school, and community<sup>5</sup>. Thus, the BNCC is committed to constructing educational processes that foster learning that are aligned with students' needs<sup>1</sup>.

The BNCC's guiding principles align with the framework of Positive Youth Development (PYD), which postulates that youth possess strengths, or at least the potential to develop strengths, that enable positive growth<sup>6,7</sup>. According to Damon<sup>8</sup>, the PYD approach seeks to understand, educate, and engage children and adolescents in productive activities rather than focus on correcting, curing, or treating maladaptive tendencies. Developing essential competencies in young people can result in healthier and more productive adolescence and adulthood<sup>7,9,10</sup>. Additionally, PYD recognizes youth as active agents in their development, possessing intrinsic capacity for growth<sup>6,11,12</sup>.

In this realm, PYD promotes sustainable, positive relationships between youth and adults and seeks to develop life skills<sup>6,13,14</sup>, allowing these skills to be applied

beyond the environments in which they were initially learned<sup>7,12,15</sup>. Life skills are defined as skills developed in specific contexts, such as school or sports training, that can transfer to other contexts, including home, community, or society<sup>16,17,18</sup>. In the context of sports instruction, a secure and inclusive sports environment can teach children skills they can use throughout their lives and in settings beyond sports<sup>19</sup>.

Life skills can be taught and fostered through sports using both implicit and explicit approaches<sup>20</sup>. The implicit approach is unintentional and refers to sports programs focused solely on developing sports skills without aiming to cultivate life skills<sup>21</sup>. Here, the teacher focuses strictly on tactical, technical, and physical aspects, although students can learn life skills implicitly<sup>22</sup>. This approach will not prevent people from learning and transferring life skills despite them occurring haphazardly<sup>22</sup>. Learning life skills happens indirectly, through everyday experiences and activities, rather than through explicit and structured teaching<sup>22</sup>. In this approach, inherent characteristics of sports (competition, rules, and climate) are identified as factors that may influence the assimilation and application of essential life skills<sup>23</sup>. Conversely, the explicit approach requires the teacher's intentional focus on developing life skills, integrating them into class and training routines beyond tactical, technical, and physical aspects<sup>20,21,22</sup>, yielding better life skill acquisition outcomes<sup>22,24</sup>.

In the literature, studies on PYD through life skills have explored the role of coaches in sports contexts nationally and internationally<sup>6,25,26,27</sup>, highlighting the significance of life skills and their potential for development through sports, underscoring coaches' and educators' pivotal role as facilitators in this process. However, in school settings, research on life skills remains limited, especially in the context of military schools. Note that these educational units, military schools, offer environments conducive to developing and transferring life skills due to their approach based on principles such as hierarchy, discipline, civility, and citizenship<sup>28</sup>. Although life skills are recognized as important for students' holistic development, their study, and application in school contexts in military school contexts are still underexplored, requiring coordinated efforts in research, teacher training, and public policy formulation to promote and integrate

these skills more broadly and effectively within the educational system<sup>29</sup>.

In the Brazilian context, research on this topic is sparse, limiting the understanding of student development within specific cultural, environmental, and structural realities<sup>30</sup>. Implementing programs or guiding documents for youth development depends on intentional processes promoting essential life competencies and protective factors<sup>1,31</sup>. Furthermore, it is known that perceptions regarding the intentionality of teaching life skills may differ from practical application, with self-reported behavior incongruent with that observed in professional practice<sup>26</sup>. In addition, a hidden curriculum does not explicitly explain how to develop life skills, called competencies in the BNCC<sup>1</sup>, which may result in pedagogical failure due to the lack of knowledge and pedagogical tools to develop an explicit approach to these skills<sup>24</sup>. Consequently, teachers' roles are critical in this developmental process. Accordingly, the present study aimed to assess teachers' self-perceptions about their intention to teach life skills and compare students' perceptions about learning life skills in military schools influenced by these teachers. Our hypotheses are: 1) Teachers will exhibit high scores in their intention to teach life skills, given the BNCC's alignment with PYD concepts; and 2) there will be no differences in students' self-perceptions of life skills by these teachers, as they operate within similar educational settings and have the BNCC as a guiding document for physical education instruction.

## Methods

### Sample

This study included five teachers aged between 28 and 45 years, each with a minimum of four years of classroom experience (Table 1). Additionally, questionnaires were administered to 769 students, averaging  $12.4 \pm 0.92$  years old, of both genders. The sample consisted of students enrolled in elementary education, from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, born between 2010 and 2012, from two units of the Military Schools in the city of Rio Verde, GO. Notably, the teachers had been instructing the analyzed classes for a minimum of one year and a maximum of three years. Informed consent and assent forms were

**Table 1** - Sample characterization.

Teachers	Age	Time since graduation	Classroom time	Number of students per teacher	Age of students (years)
Teacher 1	45 years	22 years	22 years	313	$12.2 \pm 0.82$
Teacher 2	28 years	6 years	4 years	116	$12.4 \pm 0.91$
Teacher3	34 years	13 years	4 years	67	$11.9 \pm 0.81$
Teacher 4	34 years	12 years	12 years	209	$12.4 \pm 0.89$
Teacher 5	39 years	13 years	14 years	64	$11.6 \pm 0.57$

signed by the participants as well as by the legal guardians of the sampled students. This study is part of an umbrella project approved under CAAE number: 65290217.2.0000.5083.

### Design

Teachers were given the Portuguese Coaching Life Skills in Sport Questionnaire (P-CLSS-Q)<sup>32</sup>, via a digital platform. They responded to the questionnaire online, self-reporting their intentionality in teaching life skills. In this version, terms were adapted by replacing “athlete” with “student,” “coach” with “teacher,” and “training” with “class” to fit the school context better. Student participants were directed to their schools’ computer labs, with each lab accommodating up to 36 students. The students completed the Portuguese version of the Life Skills Scale for Sport (P-LSSS)<sup>33</sup>, online with researcher assistance. Students were instructed to read each question carefully and, if necessary, consult the researcher for clarification. This approach ensured that all questions were fully understood, enhancing the quality of the data collected. The study considered differences among teachers as well as variations between institutions.

### Variables

#### Teaching life skills

The Portuguese Coaching Life Skills in Sport Questionnaire (P-CLSS-Q) is a 30-item, 5-factor scale validated by<sup>32</sup> for assessing the intentionality of teaching life skills through sport in Portuguese-speaking countries. Teachers responded to each item on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Reliability indices were obtained through internal consistency and temporal stability. Internal consistency for subscales was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, while test-retest reliability was measured via Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC), with values above 0.75. Factor validity was confirmed by Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA).

#### Life skills learning

The students' perceptions of learning life skills were assessed using the Life Skills Scale for Sport (P-LSSS), originally developed by Cronine Allen<sup>34</sup> and validated for Brazil by Nascimento-Junior et al<sup>33</sup>. Reliability indices for the Brazilian version included an ICC of 0.01 (range = 0 to

0.05) at the sport level, and Cronbach's alpha for each life skill subscale. The 43-item scale evaluates the development of eight frequently cited life skills in sports, including teamwork, goal setting, social skills, problem-solving and decision-making, emotional skills, leadership, time management, and communication.

### Statistical procedures

Descriptive analysis of the P-CLSS-Q provided insight into teachers' self-assessments across the five subscales. Descriptive statistics were reported for the life skills variable, including the mean, lower limit, and upper limit for each life skill in the P-LSSS, with a 95% confidence interval. The analysis of students' self-perceptions of life skills according to their teacher was performed using the Kruskal-Wallis test, as the data were categorical and did not meet the assumptions of normality. A significance level of 5% ( $p < 0.05$ ) was adopted, and data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) for Mac, version 29.0.

## Results

The results concerning teachers' perceptions of teaching life skills are presented in Table 2. Descriptive analysis revealed that Teacher 2 reported the highest scores across all subscales, while Teacher 1 reported the lowest scores across all subscales. Furthermore, it is observed that teacher 2 considers himself to have the highest profile for transferring life skills, that of practicing transfer, since he evaluated himself with practically the highest score in each of the subscales investigated. Teachers 3, 4, and 5 consider themselves to have an explicit teaching profile, indicating that they are between practicing life skills and discussing transfer. Teacher 1 evaluated himself in an implicit profile of development and transfer of life skills, being at the level of facilitating a positive climate.

Their teacher noted differences when evaluating students' self-perceptions of life skills (Table 3). The Kruskal-Wallis test indicated significant variation among teachers in teamwork [ $\chi^2(4) = 16.819$ ;  $p = 0.02$ ]. A pairwise comparison revealed that Teachers 1 ( $p = 0.02$ ) and 5 ( $p = 0.032$ ) scored higher than Teacher 3. For goal setting, the Kruskal-Wallis test identified significant teacher differences [ $\chi^2(4) = 21.159$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ]. Pairwise comparison

**Table 2** - Sum of the items that constitute each subscale of the P-CLSS-Q.

P-CLSS-Q subscales	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5
Structuring and facilitating a positive sports climate (maximum score: 78 points)	58	76	74	72	69
Discussing life skills (maximum score: 30 points)	13	30	29	28	25
Practicing life skills (maximum score: 24 points)	7	22	19	19	20
Discussing the transfer of skills to life (maximum score: 24 points)	9	24	22	20	22
Practicing life skills transfer (maximum score: 24 points)	9	24	17	20	20

**Table 3** - Learning of life skills by teacher.

Life skills	Teacher	Average	Lower limit	Upper limit
Teamwork	1.00	24.80±7.07	24.02	25.59
	2.00	23.62±6.50	22.42	24.81
	3.00	21.13±7.95	19.19	23.07
	4.00	23.50±7.82	22.43	24.56
	5.00	24.89±7.35	23.05	26.72
Set goals	1.00	24.67±7.62	23.82	25.51
	2.00	23.54±7.35	22.19	24.89
	3.00	19.74±8.38	17.70	21.79
	4.00	23.33±8.19	22.22	24.45
	5.00	24.75±7.33	22.91	26.58
Social skills	1.00	16.73±5.18	16.15	17.31
	2.00	15.00±4.82	14.12	15.89
	3.00	14.10±5.95	12.65	15.55
	4.00	15.84±5.54	15.09	16.60
	5.00	16.76±5.23	15.45	18.07
Problem solving	1.00	13.23±4.46	12.73	13.72
	2.00	12.46±4.38	11.65	13.27
	3.00	10.89±4.82	9.71	12.07
	4.00	12.28±4.60	11.65	12.91
	5.00	13.10±4.47	11.99	14.22
Emotional skills	1.00	13.47±4.43	12.98	13.97
	2.00	12.36±4.18	11.59	13.13
	3.00	10.98±4.95	9.77	12.19
	4.00	12.30±4.94	11.62	12.97
	5.00	13.60±4.43	12.50	14.71
Leadership	1.00	26.84±8.00	25.96	27.73
	2.00	24.78±7.57	23.38	26.17
	3.00	22.38±9.50	20.06	24.69
	4.00	25.28±8.59	24.11	26.45
	5.00	26.77±8.06	24.75	28.78
Time control	1.00	13.11±4.44	12.62	13.61
	2.00	11.33±4.25	10.55	12.18
	3.00	10.69±4.99	9.47	11.90
	4.00	12.29±4.79	11.63	12.94
	5.00	13.37±4.26	12.31	14.43
Communication	1.00	13.81±4.36	13.32	14.30
	2.00	12.55±3.93	11.83	13.28
	3.00	11.86±5.05	10.63	13.10
	4.00	12.66±4.58	12.04	13.28
	5.00	14.03±4.40	12.94	15.13

showed that Teacher 3 scored lower than Teachers 1 ( $p = 0.00$ ), 4 ( $p = 0.021$ ), and 5 ( $p = 0.006$ ). In social skills, the Kruskal-Wallis test confirmed teacher differences [ $\chi^2(4) = 19.441$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ]. Teacher 3 had lower scores

than Teachers 1 ( $p = 0.009$ ) and 2 ( $p = 0.010$ ). In problem-solving, the Kruskal-Wallis test again showed significant differences among teachers [ $\chi^2(4) = 15.788$ ;  $p = 0.003$ ], with pairwise comparisons indicating that Teacher 3 scored lower than Teacher 1 ( $p = 0.003$ ). Regarding emotional skills, differences among teachers were suggested by the Kruskal-Wallis test [ $\chi^2(4) = 20.457$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ], with Teacher 3 scoring lower than Teachers 1 ( $p = 0.002$ ) and 5 ( $p = 0.024$ ). Regarding leadership, the Kruskal-Wallis test identified teacher differences [ $\chi^2(4) = 16.075$ ;  $p = 0.003$ ]. Pairwise comparison indicated that Teacher 3 scored lower than Teacher 1 ( $p = 0.009$ ). Time management skills also revealed significant differences among teachers, as per the Kruskal-Wallis test [ $\chi^2(4) = 25.119$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ]. Pairwise analysis showed that Teacher 3 scored lower than Teachers 1 ( $p = 0.003$ ) and 5 ( $p = 0.017$ ), and Teacher 2 scored lower than Teachers 1 ( $p = 0.002$ ) and 5 ( $p = 0.026$ ). Finally, in communication skills, the Kruskal-Wallis test showed differences among teachers [ $\chi^2(4) = 21.561$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ]. Pairwise comparisons indicated that Teacher 3 scored lower than Teacher 1 ( $p = 0.044$ ); Teacher 2 scored lower than Teachers 1 ( $p = 0.015$ ) and 5 ( $p = 0.043$ ); and Teacher 4 scored lower than Teacher 1 ( $p = 0.038$ ).

## Discussion

As a foundational document for basic education in Brazil, the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) aims for the holistic development of students, encompassing both cognitive and socio-emotional growth<sup>1</sup>. Among the competencies outlined, there is a notable alignment with life skills, which are essential for preparing individuals to navigate daily challenges<sup>35</sup>. Teaching these skills is crucial as it fosters autonomy, critical thinking, and socio-emotional competencies, thereby equipping students to handle everyday situations more effectively, efficiently, and responsibly, whether in personal or professional spheres<sup>1,35</sup>. Thus, this research aimed to assess teachers' self-perceptions about their intention to teach life skills and compare students' perceptions about learning life skills in military schools influenced by these teachers.

Our first hypothesis was partially confirmed, predicting that teachers would score highly in their intention to teach life skills due to the BNCC's alignment with similar concepts found in DPJ. Apart from Teacher 1, who scored between 29% and 74% of the maximum possible score across the subscales examined in the P-CLSS-Q, all other teachers scored above 79% on the same subscales. The discrepancy observed between teacher 1's self-assessment and his students' perception of SL teaching can be attributed to his high self-criticism since he had 22 years of experience and participated in professional development courses throughout his career<sup>26</sup>, even though the courses were not specific to implementing socio-emo-

tional skills in physical education classes, as indicated in the BNCC<sup>1,24</sup>. These findings suggest, particularly within the BNCC framework, that teachers have internalized the importance of integrating socio-emotional competencies and life skills as core components of the basic education curriculum<sup>1,36</sup>. In this context, the BNCC emphasizes students' holistic development, encompassing cognitive and socio-emotional skills, aligning with DPJ and integral education initiatives<sup>37</sup>. However, for teachers to progress towards higher levels of intentionality in terms of teaching life skills, self-awareness is crucial, meaning that they must position themselves in a state of self-knowing to maximize the opportunities they provide their students to develop and transfer life skills<sup>26</sup>.

The literature highlights the importance of fostering a positive sporting environment to engage students in sports and to promote values such as empathy, respect, and cooperation<sup>34,38</sup>. Additionally, studies indicate that deliberate practice and structured discussion of life skills, supported by a nurturing environment, can maximize the transfer of these competencies to other domains of students' lives<sup>25,39</sup>, underscoring the value of competent teachers who, through reflective pedagogy, integrate and enhance socio-emotional skills development in sports<sup>40</sup>.

Our second hypothesis was not supported, which predicted no differences in students' self-perceptions of life skills among classes led by teachers, given their similar school settings and the BNCC as a guiding document for physical education instruction. Results showed that student's self-perception in classes led by Teacher 3 scored lower in life skills compared to those taught by other teachers, a fact that may indicate that this teacher was less involved in the training process for teaching socio-emotional skills, a fact that may make it difficult to articulate the teaching of life skills<sup>26</sup>. Additionally, minor variations were observed in time management and communication life skills across classes taught by the evaluated teachers. This suggests that while the BNCC serves as a guiding document, it does not necessarily imply that teachers, even within similar school settings, have practical guidelines for its implementation. In physical education classes, teachers must determine the methods, timing, and approach for addressing socio-emotional skills, including life skills<sup>30</sup>.

Furthermore, self-perception regarding the intention to develop life skills, not recently, is incongruent with the behavior observed in professional practice, and it is necessary for teachers, through regular and practical training, to become aware and intentional about the development of life skills, adopting well-articulated teaching philosophies that consider the teaching of these skills<sup>26</sup>. In this context, we know that the teaching and development of life skills are on an implicit/explicit continuum, and teachers can optimize the development and transfer of these skills based on strategies that complement the aspects inherent in the

explicit content of the curriculum and adapted to the teaching philosophy<sup>19</sup>. The research underscores the significance of structured and intentional approaches to developing life skills through sports<sup>38</sup>, in which teachers consciously integrate intended life skills into class and training routines, transcending merely technical, tactical, and physical aspects. This approach incorporates discussions, specific exercises, and reflections on life skill development<sup>20,21,22</sup>. Moreover, while implicit approaches may promote life skill development in sports by leveraging intrinsic interactions and experiences in the sports environment<sup>21</sup>, this approach typically focuses on the sport's technical, tactical, and physical facets<sup>22</sup>. Therefore, it is observed that the inherent characteristics of sport (competition, rules, atmosphere) are identified as factors that can impact the assimilation and application of life skills<sup>23</sup>.

The findings of this study indicate that the BNCC seeks to restructure educational guidelines in Brazil, emphasizing human development through cognitive and socio-emotional training, thus preparing students for everyday challenges in both personal and professional realms<sup>4</sup>. Although the BNCC does not explicitly refer to life skills, they are embedded within general competencies, specifically socio-emotional skills, encompassing abilities such as communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, and empathy<sup>1,4</sup>. Consequently, as per this guiding document, the teacher assumes a crucial role, transitioning from merely transmitting content to facilitating the development of competencies and skills fundamental to the holistic formation of students<sup>40</sup>. However, teachers have not been adequately trained to implement BNCC-based practices in schools, a factor that may hinder the practical application of the framework and explain the differences found in this research since differences are observed between teachers' perceptions of teaching life skills and their practical behavior<sup>26</sup>, which is the result of the hidden curriculum that does not indicate models or ways of incorporating life skills into the structuring of physical education classes<sup>24</sup>.

In this context, addressing life skills within the instructional plan by the BNCC<sup>30</sup> will require strategic planning by teachers<sup>40</sup>, who must select the appropriate approach and ensure that these skills are discussed and reflected upon within the instructional time allocated to physical education classes<sup>30,40</sup>. Based on these observations, it becomes apparent that integrating life skills into school planning is urgent. This could involve interdisciplinary projects in which students collaborate on tasks that require research, organization, and presentation of findings. Practically, the results highlight the need for teacher training to meet the demands outlined in the guiding documents for basic education, as well as the development of technical resources explicitly demonstrating how to work with life skills in the school setting and specifically within physical education classes.

While this study contributes to understanding life skills within the BNCC and the examined educational units, some limitations should be noted. The first limitation is the focus on military schools, which represent a distinct academic environment compared to regular, private, or public schools, thus limiting the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the small sample size of teachers and reliance on self-reported pedagogical practices may introduce discrepancies between reported and actual professional practices.

## Conclusion

Based on an investigation conducted in military schools in the interior of Goiás, this study demonstrates the intentionality of physical education teachers in promoting life skills in the school context. The results revealed discrepancies between the self-perception of some teachers and the perception of students' learning of life skills. Such inconsistencies are probably aligned with the experience of teaching in physical education classes and access to training courses for implementing socio-emotional skills in lesson plans. Despite the discrepancies found, it was observed that teachers are interested in promoting a positive classroom environment to support the development of life skills. In addition, student perception of life skills learning differed between classes, probably due to the need for teacher training to implement these skills in their daily practices. Future research should explore a broader range of school environments and include a larger sample of teachers.

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