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# Enhancing student success in education- A strategic approach

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## **Abstract**

Educational institutions today are repeatedly found struggling with the issues of performance gaps in classrooms, low student retention & and student success rates, lack of motivation in students, etc. A deep reflection by the educationists has led us all to infer that if a firm foundation is provided to students at all the major transformation levels, like preprimary to primary, primary to middle, middle to secondary or secondary to Senior secondary, and then to university, it would certainly have a positive impact on student development. The goal of student success is deeply studied by many academicians and the struggle to find the right answer continues. It is crucial that schools of this millennium respect competency & and outcome-based education for future readiness, and incorporate them into their entire ecosystem, right from students to teachers, parents, school management, and the community. The school leaders could re-orient themselves using technology to integrate learnings of head, heart, and hand, to impart life skills. The paper throws light on how the curriculum transaction, teacher motivation, and guided pathways can lead to a successful career path for children.

**Key Words:** Student Success, holistic, competencies, strategies.

## **1.0 Introduction**

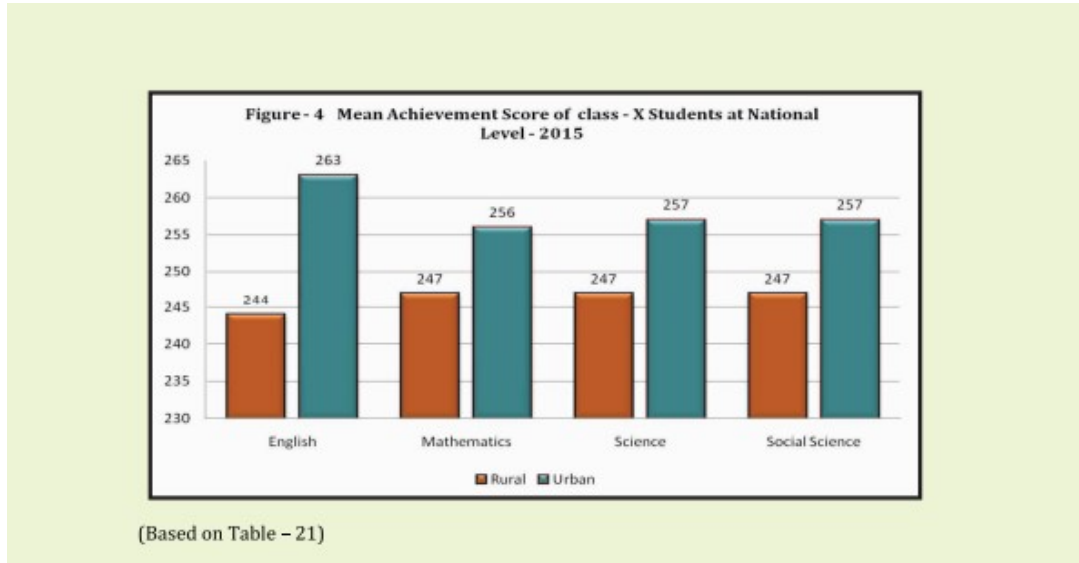
Student success is a multifaceted concept that encompasses a range of desirable outcomes within the realm of education. In any educational institution, be it a school, college, or university, the ultimate goal is to foster an environment where students can thrive academically and personally. To achieve this, several key elements come into play, each contributing to the overall success of students. In this context, we will explore four essential dimensions of student success: student retention, educational attainment, academic achievement, and holistic development.

**Student Retention:** Student retention refers to the ability of an educational institution to keep students enrolled and engaged in their programs until they successfully complete their educational goals. High retention rates indicate that students are satisfied with their educational experience and are more likely to persist and graduate.

**Educational Attainment:** Educational attainment is a fundamental aspect of student success, as it reflects the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and credentials. It encompasses the successful completion of degrees, certificates, or other educational milestones that enable students to pursue their career aspirations and contribute effectively to society.

Results of a national achievement survey, in 2015, revealed that in subjects like English, mathematics, science, and Science, urban students outperform their rural counterparts. One of the reasons could be the accessibility of the nearest schools to the households specifically in the secondary level in equity often amplifies the gap in quality and hence productivity the mean achievement scores of class 10 students at the national level in 2015 was very low in rural areas compared to urban areas. The UDISE reveals that most of the schools are not providing educational and vocational counselling to their students. This could be one of the reasons for high dropout at the

secondary level. This analysis is based on educational statistics at a glance issued by the government of India MHRD2018.



*Fig- Mean achievement level of class X students as per NAS 2015*

**Academic Achievement:** Academic achievement involves the demonstration of knowledge and skills in various subject areas. It measures a student's ability to excel in coursework, perform well on assessments, and meet academic standards. Academic success is often a critical component of long-term educational and career goals.

**Holistic Development:** Holistic development recognizes that education goes beyond academics. It encompasses the personal, social, and emotional growth of students. Holistically developed individuals not only excel academically but also demonstrate qualities such as critical thinking, problem-solving, adaptability, and a strong sense of ethics.

As educational institutions strive to facilitate student success, they must address these dimensions in an integrated and comprehensive manner. By promoting student retention, fostering educational attainment, and encouraging academic achievement while nurturing holistic development, institutions can create an environment where students are more likely to flourish.

In the following sections, we will delve deeper into each dimension of student success, exploring strategies and practices that educational institutions can employ to maximize the potential for positive outcomes among their students. By doing so, we aim to shed light on the multifaceted nature of student success and inspire educators, administrators, and policymakers to work collaboratively in fostering an environment where all students can reach their full potential.

## 2.0 Objectives:

The objectives of the paper are:

1. To enhance student retention through proactive support and addressing attrition factors.
2. To find ways to promote educational attainment with relevant programs and guided pathways.
3. To work on improving academic achievement via effective teaching methods and high standards.
4. To Nurture the holistic development of students by integrating soft skills and extracurricular engagement.

## 3.0 Literature Review:

According to *Successful School Leadership*, a journal by Christopher Day and Pamela Sammons, School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions. A key task for leadership, if it is to influence student learning and achievement, is to improve staff performance. Such performance

is a function of staff members' motivations, commitments, capacities (skills and knowledge) and the conditions in which they work

Developed in 1984 by Arthur Costa and Robert Garmston, Cognitive Coaching is a model that guides a leader's actions. "The mission of Cognitive Coaching is to produce self-directed persons with the cognitive capacity for high performance both independently and as members of a community" (Costa & Garmston, 2002, p. 16). Missions define an institution's purpose and reason for existing. Cognitive Coaching assists leaders in defining their purpose and role as leaders. Self-directed persons are one of the outcomes of a leader who holds the mission of Cognitive Coaching at the forefront of his or her mind. This has been observed in *Effective School Leadership: Developing Principals through Cognitive Coaching* by Jllison, C. Hayes in their research paper.

In a paper titled, *Outcomes-driven curriculum reform- reconstructing teacher work and professionalism* by Bob Elliott & Clair Hughes in many education systems reform of the curriculum has centered around some form of "outcomes-based education". This means that there has been a shift from curriculum defined in terms of processes or content to curriculum defined in terms of what learners are expected to be able to demonstrate. The key question in such reform initiatives has become "What do the students have to show that they have learned?" (Griffin, 1998, p. 9). Accordingly, with the introduction of such reforms, there are likely to be changes in the way that teachers work is defined and changes in levels of responsibility associated with student learning outcomes.

Within the cultures of compliance that leaders and their schools seem to exist, emotions can either be "deadly" (filled with fear, anger, apathy, envy, and greed) or "dynamic" (filled with obsession, passion, delight, love, desire, and trust). Leadership preparation programs are, more than ever before, key factors in preparing leaders of today, not only by including discussions about the nature of emotions as researched in the literature, but also by providing safe venues in which to discuss ways to face the changing landscape in education and, in particular, by preparing administrators to manage a complex role that has the potential of being both emotionally exhilarating or dangerously emotionally debilitating.

The challenges facing school leaders include, strategically managing resources and the environment building the school as a professional learning community, ensuring consistently good teaching and learning, developing partnerships beyond the school to encourage parental support for learning and new learning opportunities, Integrating a sound grasp of basic knowledge and skills, and Managing behavior and attendance

In a research titled-*Equity, Academic Rigor and a Sense of Entitlement: voices from the 'Chalkface'* by Nado Aveling, Pip Davey, Andre Georgieff, Elizabeth Jackson-Barrett, Helen Kosniowska, and Audrey Fernandes-Satar, it is highlighted that As teacher educators we believe that teachers have a responsibility to implement principles of social justice; that it is not enough simply to teach, but that we have a responsibility to teach in ways that are inclusive of all students and address issues of 'race' and racism, ethnicity and culture, gender and discrimination, social class and poverty, prejudice and stereotyping, power and powerlessness. Theoretically, this unit is grounded in critical theorizing that attempts to move "beyond interpretation to change" and that links the teacher education curriculum to the critical study of power, language, culture, and history.

Carol L. Hodes, and Patricia L Kelley in their paper *Closing the Skills Gap through Technical Excellence*, share that No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation has dominated U.S. education policy since it was signed into law in 2001. Standards exist at the national, state, and local levels and impact both education and the workplace; they are developed by groups of experts who agree on the importance of certain performance or qualities to be met. Processes such as Baldrige and Six Sigma provide tools educators can use to improve their own practice. Yang (2016) states that "proven skills trump all." Today's global workplace needs a higher level of skill and education than it did in the past century. To give our students increased confidence and a competitive edge, we need to strive to do our best and help them achieve excellence beyond the levels set by many standards

21st Century Skills and Competences for New Millennium Learners in OECD Countries, a research paper by Katerina Ananiadou, and Magdalena Claro, highlights that, issues related to the teaching and assessment of 21st-century skills and competencies in 17 OECD countries. The findings of the questionnaire survey show that most countries or regions cover 21st-century skills and competencies in their regulations, guidelines, or recommendations for compulsory education. However, there are few specific definitions of these skills and competencies at the national or regional level, and virtually no clear formative or summative assessment policies for these skills. The only evaluation regarding their teaching is often left to external inspectors as part of their whole school audits. Similarly, there are few teacher training programs that target the teaching or development of 21st-century skills, although there exist several teacher training initiatives that focus on developing teachers' ICT pedagogical skills, most of them are optional. Accordingly, governments should make an effort to properly identify and conceptualize the set of skills and competencies required so as to incorporate them into the educational standards that every student should be able to reach by the end of compulsory schooling. The key findings of this study are:

- The introduction of 21st-century skills has often been done in the context of a major curriculum reform.

- There are virtually no clear (formative or summative) assessment policies for these skills. The only evaluation regarding their teaching is often left to external inspectors as part of their whole school audits.

- Similarly, there are few teacher training programs, initial or in-service, that target the teaching or development of 21st-century skills. There exist several teacher training initiatives that focus on developing teachers' ICT pedagogical skills, most of them optional

In a research paper titled an integrated model of School Students' academic achievement and life satisfaction. Linking soft skills, extracurricular activities, self-regulated learning, motivation, and emotions by Tommaso Feraco, Dario Resnati, Davide Fregonese, Andrea Spoto, and Chiara Meneghetti, focuses on the combined influence of soft skills (in terms of adaptability, curiosity, leadership, initiative, perseverance, and social awareness), extracurricular activities, achievement emotions, self-regulated learning, motivation, and cognitive abilities on academic achievement and life satisfaction. Our findings support the importance of soft skills in school students. These skills were found positively related not only to self-regulated learning, motivation, and achievement emotions but also to life satisfaction.

21st-century schools are faced with the imperative to cultivate innovative learning environments and ensure ubiquitous access to technology in classrooms. To effectively nurture future-ready, competency-based teaching, several crucial attributes must be embraced. Firstly, educators must gain an understanding of how learners process information and adapt their teaching methods accordingly. The integration of learning and teaching concepts is paramount, blurring the lines between instructor and student to create collaborative, dynamic environments. Teachers should transition into facilitators and co-learners, fostering an atmosphere where humility, respect, critical thinking, and caring are values upheld by all. These environments should support the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and professional behaviors across cognitive, psychomotor, and affective learning domains. Self-driven learning, with learners taking responsibility and being accountable for their own progress, is a cornerstone. An active feedback system, coupled with self-assessment and the willingness to unlearn and relearn, forms the basis of continuous improvement. Lastly, personalized learning experiences, motivation driven by clear goals, and a steadfast commitment to learning are the cornerstones upon which future-ready competency-based teaching thrives.

#### **4.0 Methodology**

A study was conducted in a school in Haryana that aimed to explore and identify effective strategies for building competencies that prepare students for future readiness in a rich learning environment. The research findings highlight various approaches that facilitate meaningful learning processes,

moving away from rote memorization and towards competency-based education. Its findings are as follows:

**1. Meaningful Contexts:** Active learning

- Teachers play a pivotal role in creating meaningful contexts for learning. By designing lessons that relate to real-life situations and challenges, students experience the relevance of what they are learning.
- This approach enhances students' curiosity, fostering a deeper engagement with the subject matter.

**2. Multidisciplinary Approach:**

- Competency-based learning should transcend traditional subject boundaries, adopting a holistic perspective.
- Encouraging students to explore connections between different disciplines promotes a broader understanding of complex issues and encourages critical thinking.

**3. Constructive Learning:**

- Learners are most engaged when they actively construct their own knowledge.
- The process involves interaction with their environment, such as building models, creating products, generating guidelines, and composing reports.

**4. Cooperative or Interactive Learning:**

- An open approach to education is essential, fostering dialogues between learners and educators.
- These dialogues encompass expectations, needs, goals, and choices, promoting a collaborative and supportive learning environment.

**5. Discovery Learning:**

- Acquiring knowledge is driven by inquiry and research-based methods.
- Students are encouraged to ask questions, seek solutions, and investigate topics independently, promoting critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

**6. Reflective Learning:**

- Learners are encouraged to reflect on various aspects of their learning journey.
- Self-reflection on needs, motivation, approach, progress, and results helps students develop "learning to learn" competencies, which are invaluable for future readiness.

The findings of this study highlight the significance of competency-based learning in preparing students for future readiness. Educators are encouraged to adopt these strategies to create a rich learning environment that fosters meaningful learning processes, encourages critical thinking, and equips students with the competencies needed to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

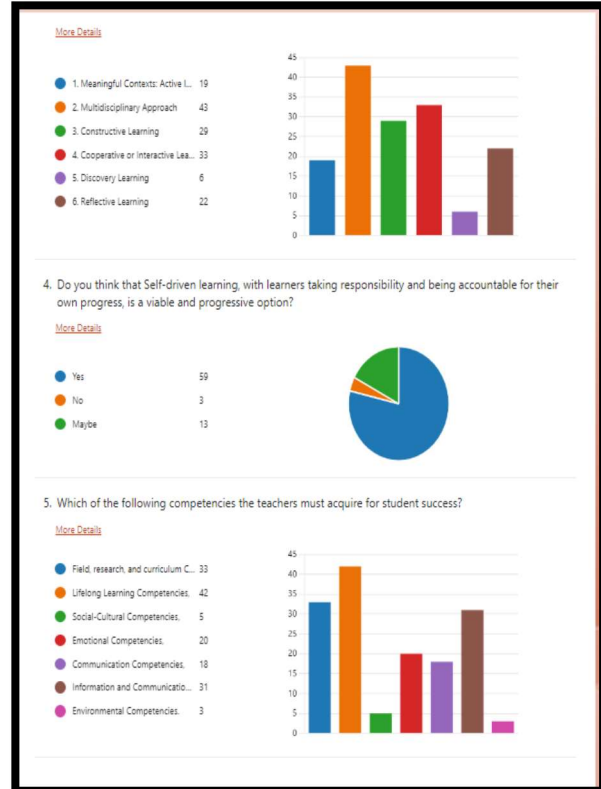
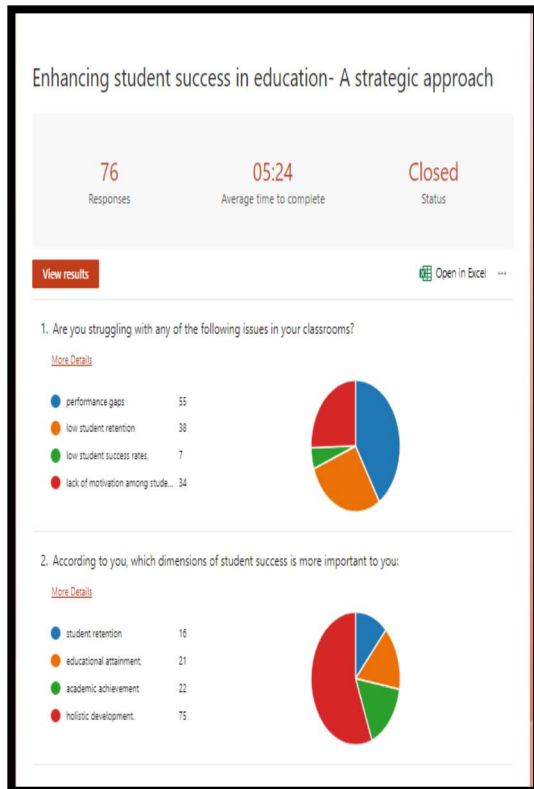
## 5.0 Analysis

A study was conducted in a school in Haryana, where a questionnaire was given after interviewing 75 educators. The responses were compiled in the form of a pie chart, which is presented here:

The questions asked were:

1. Are you struggling with any of the following issues in your classrooms? performance gaps/low student retention/low student success rates/lack of motivation among students
2. According to you, which dimensions of student success are more important to you: student retention/educational attainment/academic achievement/holistic development?
3. Can you identify some effective strategies for building competencies that prepare students for future readiness in a rich learning environment? Meaningful Contexts: Active learning/Multidisciplinary Approach/Constructive Learning/Cooperative or Interactive Learning/Discovery Learning/Reflective Learning
4. Do you think that Self-driven learning, with learners taking responsibility and being accountable for their own progress, is a viable and progressive option? Yes/No/Can't say
5. Which of the following competencies the teachers must acquire for student success?
  - Field, research, and curriculum Competencies,
  - Lifelong Learning Competencies,
  - Social-Cultural Competencies,

- Emotional Competencies,
- Communication Competencies,
- Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Competencies
- Environmental Competencies.



## 6.0 Results & Discussion

After a careful study of the data obtained, the following observations were made:

1. Asked about the issues, educators were struggling with in their classrooms, the reason for performance gaps was highest at 41%, followed by low student retention at 28%, lack of motivation among students at 25%, and low student success rates at 5%.

2. In the dimensions of student success that they considered more important, holistic development was the highest at 56%, followed by educational attainment at 16%, academic achievement at 16%, and student retention at 12%.

3. They identified effective strategies for building competencies that prepare students for future readiness in a rich learning environment.

- Multidisciplinary approach 43%
- Meaningful Contexts: Active learning 19%
- Constructive Learning 29%
- Cooperative or Interactive Learning 33%
- Discovery Learning 6%
- Reflective Learning 22%

To prepare students for future readiness, effective strategies in a rich learning environment include a multidisciplinary approach, active learning in meaningful contexts, constructive learning, cooperative or interactive learning, discovery learning, and reflective learning. These methods collectively equip students with essential competencies for the future.

4. Of the total, 79% believed that Self-driven learning, with learners taking responsibility and being accountable for their own progress, is a viable and progressive option for student success.

5 Competencies That the Teachers Must Acquire for Student Success:

- Lifelong Learning Competencies 42%
- Field, research, and curriculum Competencies 33%
- Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Competencies 31%
- Social-Cultural Competencies 5%
- Emotional Competencies 20%
- Communication Competencies 18%
- Environmental Competencies 3%

In conclusion, educators are facing challenges related to performance gaps, student retention, and student motivation in their classrooms. To promote student success and readiness for the future, it's crucial to implement effective teaching strategies such as self-driven learning and provide a rich learning environment. Additionally, teachers should possess a range of competencies, including lifelong learning, field expertise, ICT proficiency, social-cultural understanding, emotional intelligence, effective communication, and environmental awareness. These factors collectively contribute to the holistic development of students and their preparedness for the challenges of the future.

### 7.0 Conclusion:

To strategize student success and provide a coherent vision to a school while facilitating the achievement of educational and organizational goals, a holistic approach is essential. This involves focusing on educational goals such as instilling a future-oriented, career-oriented mindset among students. To achieve this, the school can incorporate elements of educational entrepreneurship, encouraging students to explore start-up ideas and innovations in their learning environment. Furthermore, organizing workshops on entrepreneurship and financial literacy can equip students with practical skills. Implementing projects like the School Enterprise Challenge and partnering with organizations like KWHS can offer students real-world experiences to nurture their holistic development and prepare them for a successful future.

Teachers too need to acquire competencies and hone their skills. Some of them are- field, research, and curriculum Competencies, Lifelong Learning Competencies, Social-Cultural Competencies, Emotional Competencies, Communication Competencies, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Competencies, and Environmental Competencies.

To turn the school into a center of excellence, the school Principals too need to bring in visible changes around them. Those include relevant curricula, well-trained teachers, the use of appropriate instructional strategies, support and collegiality of teachers, and the needed infrastructure for ICT capacity building and training.

The New Education Policy recognizes the need to evaluate “higher-order skills, such as analysis, critical thinking, and conceptual clarity,” indicating a shift in the focus of assessments. The policy puts India on track to achieve Goal 4 (SDG4) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A set of learner-oriented skills and competencies that takes cognizance of teacher capacity building too, shall surely prepare our students on the path of lifelong learning with excellence

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