

Positive Social Interactions and the Development of Lifelong Learning Skills among Secondary School Students in Cameroon

Manjong Patricia Ndangdo¹, Valentine Banfegha Ngalim^{2*}

¹(PhD Student), Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, University of Bamenda, Bamenda, Cameroon.

²Chair of Philosophy, Higher Teacher Training College, Bambili, the University of Bamenda.

*Corresponding Author
Valentine Banfegha Ngalim

Chair of Philosophy,
Higher Teacher Training
College, Bambili, the
University of Bamenda.

Article History

Received: 03.06.2025
Accepted: 15.07.2025
Published: 12.08.2025

Abstract: The study set out to explore the effects of positive social interactions on the development of lifelong skills among secondary school students in the North West Region of Cameroon. Positive interactions constitute one of the key indicators of the hidden curriculum within the school milieu. Using A concurrent nested mixed method design, a sample of 3,642 students, 388 teachers, 11 Principals, and 21 Pedagogic Inspectors were randomly, purposefully, and conveniently selected from public, mission, and private schools in four sub-divisions of the North West Region of Cameroon. We collected data using 50 item questionnaires for students, 15 interview guide questions for teachers, Principals, and 35 for Pedagogic Inspectors. Hypotheses were tested using Simple Linear Regression Analysis test. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively and inferentially, while qualitative data were analyzed using thematic content analysis. Findings of the study revealed a moderate significant effect of positive social interactions on the development of lifelong learning skills among secondary school students in the North West Region, which predicts 16.3% of the variations in students' development of lifelong learning skills ($F=58.262$, $R^2=0.163$, $p=0.001$). This study therefore recommends that policy-makers and school administrators should prioritize policies and the organization of environment that intentionally promote positive social interactions to significantly enhance lifelong learning skills.

Keywords: Positive social interactions, hidden curriculum, lifelong learning skills.

Cite this article:

Ndangdo, M. P., Ngalim, V. B., (2025). Positive Social Interactions and the Development of Lifelong Learning Skills among Secondary School Students in Cameroon. *ISAR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(8), 18-23.

Introduction

The development of lifelong learning skills is an essential goal of modern education, as these skills enable students to adapt, grow, and succeed throughout their lives. Ngalim (2021), opines that building human potentials in education can enhance learning competences in students for the development of self and the society. According to Binkley et al. (2012), success both in life and work necessitates some 21st century skills such as higher-order thinking skills, communication, cooperation skills, information and media literacy, and many others. In addition, globalization, economic necessity, and lack of civic engagement all add to the pressures on students' and demand to acquire the skills and information they need to succeed and excel (Levy & Murnane, 2005). However, the factors that influence the acquisition of these vital skills are not always obvious or well-understood. One area that warrants deeper examination is the impact of the hidden curriculum", the unwritten, implicit messages and lessons that

students absorb through their educational experiences, beyond the formal curriculum (Alsubaie,2015). Conversely, the educational system of every society is not unconcerned with the implicit and explicit transfer of norms and distinctive approaches to the learners, (Ehsan & Ahad, 2015).

In today's educational discourse, curriculum is one of the most discussed terms. The school as a social setting, has officially planned programmes of studies and instructional practices, learning experiences and student performance assessment, designed to bring out and evaluate the target learning outcomes of students. The school curriculum is, all the learning experiences planned and directed by the school to attain its educational goals (Caswell and Campbell, 1935). It usually contains a statement of aims with some specific objectives and composed of organizational method, various teaching techniques for communicating content material to the learners. The curriculum is broad-based comprising many other types, among which is the hidden curriculum, otherwise

known as the “latent”, “unwritten” or “unintended” curriculum (Leke, 2012).

This paper examines positive social interactions, an aspect of the hidden curriculum and how it influences the cultivation of lifelong learning skills among secondary school students. By conducting an in-depth interview, observing classroom environments, and analyzing relevant school policies and practices, the paper provides valuable insights into how the implicit messages and structures within educational institutions either foster or hinder the development of these essential skills. The findings of this research have implications for educators, policymakers and researchers seeking to create learning environments and empower students to become engaged, self-directed, and adaptable lifelong learners.

Statement of the problem

We live in a society where technology, industries, and job requirements are constantly evolving. This necessitates lifelong learning skills, a concept which has gained prominence as a means to adapt and thrive in the face of changes and challenges (Weise M.R. (2020). Schools as formal settings of education have the interest to promote essential skills that permit students to be able to participate in public life irrespective of the challenges in the society. Some of these essential skills include critical thinking, innovation, creativity, the ability to communicate and collaborate to solve social problems and make the best decisions. These are determinants of educational success in the twenty-first century (González-pérez & Ramírez-montoya, 2022, Fitriani et al., 2022).

However, my experience as a secondary school teacher reveals that some students graduate from schools and continue to face difficulties in social communication, collaborative works, team spirit, critical decision making even about their interests and careers and relating with others. This betrays the inability to learn from positive interaction experiences provided in the school settings. Some schools have not been able to lead students obtain commendable experiences from these. UNESCO statistics prove that only 24.1 % of children in Cameroon achieve at least minimum level of skills in communication before completing school. Also, only 11.8 have critical thinking and logical reasoning skills that could serve for life-long learning values (UNESCO, 2017 as cited in Wiysahnyuy & Ngalim, 2023). We are assuming that if positive school interactions are well managed and intentionally organized, they could yield commendable social skills proper for students’ integration in public life. It is against this backdrop that this paper investigates the effects of positive social interactions on the development of life-long learning skills.

The central question we are answering is; what are the effects of positive social interactions on the development of lifelong learning skills among secondary school students?

Our theory to test in this paper is that; **Ha:** Positive social interactions have a significant effect on the development of lifelong learning skills among secondary school students.

The pertinence of this subject lies in the great interest to organize informal learning experiences in secondary schools so as to acquire values, especially the social skills necessary for their integration in public life. At the moment, we have literature on these in some contexts, but very little studies exist within the Cameroon context and even none that provides evidence about the situation within the North West region of Cameroon, where students are presently learning in fragile circumstances.

Review of Related Literature

In this sub-section, we are concerned with the explanation of key concepts in the paper and the implications of Vygotsky’s theory of social constructivism on positive social interactions and life-long learning skills. Positive interactions here refer to social experiences that lead one to acquire values, skills, attitudes, beliefs, emotions and feelings. This enables one to develop essential skills that facilitate integration into the lives of the community (Jarvis, 2004 as cited by Ackaalan, 2015). Besides being an activity as one’s conducting oneself, learning may occur occasionally during a purposeful activity (Apps, 1979; Tremlett, 1999).

For Frey, Fisher, and Allen (2009), classroom experiences oblige students to sit for long hours copying notes rather engaging in discussions and interactions with peers. By engaging with peers, teachers, and mentors, students are exposed to diverse perspectives, ideas, and knowledge that enhance critical thinking, communication and problem-solving abilities. Through collaboration and discussions, students learn to work effectively, in teams, communicate their ideas clearly, and consider different viewpoints. These strengthen confidence, develop empathy, and improve on interpersonal skills which are essential for success in both academic and professional settings.

Lifelong Learning Skills are essential values, which enable one to functional appropriately in public life despite challenges. In this paper, these skills include critical thinking values of collaboration and team work, good decision making, self-confidence, empathy and communication skills.

Again, Vygotsky’s social constructivist theory emphasizes the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition and also focuses on social constructionism. It describes and explains teaching and learning as complex interactive social phenomena between teachers and students (Picciano, 2017). For him, learning is a socially mediated process where individuals acquire cultural values, beliefs, and problem-solving strategies through collaborative dialogues with more knowledgeable members of society. Vygotsky posits that learning is problem-solving and that the social construction of solutions to problems is the basis of the learning process. This corroborates the epistemology of reconstruction, where dialogic classroom with problem-posing exercises are preferable to banking models of teaching. In this model, the philosophy of teaching is pragmatism, where the teacher provides a social environment for learners to assemble or construct with others, the knowledge necessary to solve problems. Therefore, the social constructivism theory posits that knowledge is not passively received but actively constructed through interactions with others and the environment. Also, students need each other to succeed. Social constructivism promotes interdependence among students. Skills such as communication are developed through dialogue, discussions, and debate. The ideas of students’ are well articulated, misunderstandings are clarified and they learn from one another.

Methodology

In this paper, we employed a concurrent nested mixed method design. We used a sample of 3,642 students, 388 teachers, 11 Principals, and 21 pedagogic inspectors, who were randomly, purposefully, and conveniently selected from public, mission, and private schools respectively. These samples were obtained from four sub-divisions of the North West Region of Cameroon. We

collected data using 50 item questionnaires for students, 15 interview guide questions for teachers, Principals, and 35 for pedagogic inspectors. Hypotheses were tested using Simple Linear Regression Analysis test. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively and inferentially, while qualitative data was analyzed

using thematic content analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to answer research questions while inferential statistics were used to verify the null hypotheses. Firstly, descriptive statistical tools were frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviations. While average responses (AR) were computed for each research.

Presentation of Findings

Positive social interactions and lifelong learning skills of students

Table 1. Students Opinions on Positive Social Interactions

Items	N	Stretched		Collapsed		Stretched		Collapsed		Mean	Std.
		SA	A	SA/A	D	SD	D/SD				
I often seek help or advice from my peers regarding academic matters	301	42	154	196(65.1%)	67	38	105(34.9%)	2.66	.870		
My relationship with my peers affects my academic performance positively	301	105	131	236(78.4%)	47	18	65(21.6%)	3.07	.861		
I participate often in group activities	301	43	145	188(62.5%)	78	35	113(37.5%)	2.65	.865		
I most often ask questions and contribute ideas during group activities	301	113	130	243(80.7%)	48	10	58(19.3%)	3.15	.805		
I communicate frequently with my friends	301	48	123	171(56.8%)	94	36	130(43.2%)	2.61	.894		
I find it challenging communicating with my teachers	301	99	130	229(76.1%)	57	15	72(23.9%)	3.04	.848		
We always work together in groups	301	48	141	189(62.8%)	78	34	112(37.2%)	2.67	.876		
We share responsibilities and support each other's learning	301	126	125	251(83.4%)	42	8	50(16.6%)	3.23	.785		
I always include my peers in social activities despite their sex and ages	301	44	166	210(69.8%)	45	46	91(30.2%)	2.69	.902		
I ensure that everyone feels welcome and valued	301	126	121	247(82.1%)	32	22	54(17.9%)	2.66	.870		
Average Response for Research Question One	301	79	137	216(71.8%)	59	26	85(28.2%)	2.84	0.858		

N = Sample size, SA =Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree, Std. = Standard Deviation

The data on students' perceptions of positive social interactions reveal that a majority of pupils engage in and value peer-related activities that contribute to their lifelong learning skills. For instance, 65.1% of students strongly agree that they often seek help or advice from peers regarding academic matters, with a mean score of 2.66, indicating a moderate to high level of reliance on peer support. Additionally, 78.4% agree that their relationships with peers positively influence their academic performance, reflected in a high mean of 3.07, which suggests that students perceive social interactions with peers as beneficial for their academic success. Participation in group activities is also prevalent, with 62.5% strongly agreeing that they often participate, and they frequently contribute ideas during group work, with 80.7% strongly agreeing, and a mean of 3.15.

Furthermore, students report positive social behaviors that foster inclusivity and mutual support. A large proportion (83.4%) agree

that they share responsibilities and support each other's learning, with a mean of 3.23, indicating strong perceived teamwork and support. Similarly, 69.8% strongly agree that they include peers in social activities regardless of sex or age, and 82.1% believe they ensure everyone feels welcome and valued, both with high mean scores of approximately 2.66. The overall average mean response for this research question is 2.84, with 216(71.8%) students indicating that positive social interactions, such as seeking help, collaborating in groups, sharing responsibilities, and fostering inclusion, affects their development of lifelong learning skills in students while only 85(28.2%) of the students were not affected.

For the theory, **H0₁**: Positive social interaction does not significantly affect the development of lifelong learning skills among secondary school students, we have these findings.

Table 2: Model summary table for Positive social interaction and Lifelong learning skill

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.404 ^a	.163	.160	3.956

a. Predictors: (Constant), POSITIVE SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

The model in the table above shows that a moderate positive relationship (R = 0.404^a) exists between positive social interaction and lifelong learning skills. This means that the more students interact positively among themselves, the more they turn to develop more lifelong learning skills. The table further reveals the

overall R-Square for the model to be 0.163, with an adjusted R-Square of 0.160. This means that 16.3% of the variations in students' development of lifelong learning skills can be explained by positive social interaction.

Table 3. Coefficient table for Positive social interactions and Lifelong learning skills

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	18.149	1.441		12.598	.000
POSITIVE SOCIAL INTERACTIONS	.375	.049	.404	7.633	.000

a. Dependent Variable: **LIFELONG LEARNING SKILLS**

The table for regression coefficients indicates that the regression equation is given by (**Lifelong learning Skills = 18.149 + 0.375 x Positive Social Interactions**). This means that when positive social interaction is absent, lifelong learning skill is at a constant of 18.149. According to the slope, for each additional unit change in positive social interaction, students' lifelong learning skills

increases by 0.375 units. This increase is significant at 0.001 level of significance (t = 7.633, p = 0.000). The positive nature of the constant term means that there are still some factors not included in the model that aggregately influenced positively the lifelong learning skills of students.

Table 4 ANOVA table for Positive social interaction and Lifelong learning skill

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	911.610	1	911.610	58.262	.000 ^b
	Residual	4678.376	299	15.647		
	Total	5589.987	300			

a. Dependent Variable: **LIFELONG LEARNING SKILLS**
 b. Predictors: (Constant), **POSITIVE SOCIAL INTERACTIONS**

The ANOVA results (F (300) = 58.262, p < 0.001) indicate a statistically significant effect of positive social interaction on students' development of lifelong learning skills in secondary schools. The p-value is below the significance level of 0.05, indicating that there is a very low probability (less than 0.1%) of incorrectly rejecting the null hypothesis. Based on these results, the alternative hypothesis (Ha1), that positive social interaction has a significant effect on students' development of lifelong learning skill is confirmed.

From the interviews, teachers perceive positive social interactions as important for fostering lifelong learning in students, emphasizing the importance of interactive learning through effective communication and relationships. They believe such interactions help develop essential 21st-century skills, including teamwork, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence. Additionally, teachers point out the internalization of social norms and leadership capacities as key outcomes of these interactions, contributing to students' overall growth and resilience.

Also, interviews indicate that principals stress that good social interactions help students develop important skills for the 21st century, like communication, critical thinking, and teamwork, which are crucial for learning throughout life. They point out that interacting with different people helps students see things from various viewpoints and learn to solve problems together. In general, these interactions play a big role in helping students grow

both personally and academically by encouraging better communication and collaboration

For pedagogic inspectors, positive social interactions among students foster effective collaboration and shape attitudes towards learning, influenced by peer dynamics and social media. They observed that student-teacher interactions are vital for overall development and encourage programs like clubs to enhance social skills. Inspectors upheld the importance of communication and leadership skills developed through these interactions, which contribute to students' lifelong learning.

From the emerging trends in qualitative data, we have retained that teachers, principals, and pedagogic inspectors confirm the invaluable role of positive social interactions on the development of essential 21st-century skills on students. These include; communication, teamwork, and critical thinking, which foster lifelong learning and personal growth. They identified that collaborative experiences and diverse perspectives shape students' attitudes towards learning. Inferentially, findings revealed a moderate significant effect of positive social interactions on students' development of lifelong learning skills and positive social interactions predicted 16.3% of the variations in students' development of lifelong learning skills (F=58.262, R²=0.163, p =0.00).

Positive social interaction enhances life-long learning skills

From the above analysis of data and presentation of the findings, the hypothesis that positive social interactions have an effect on the development of life-long learning skills has been affirmed. These positive social interactions are centred on the verbal and non-verbal exchange of ideas, thoughts and feelings between people, involving spoken language, facial expression and, gestures. The high significant effect of positive social interactions on the development of lifelong learning skills among secondary school students results from the fact that students feel motivated enough when discussing and exchanging ideas, with their teachers and peers. This may be because of a flexible and secured learning environment. This particular perspective corroborates the findings of a study carried by Sangiuliano et al, (2023) entitled: “Flexible Learning Environment for a Sustainable Lifelong Learning Process for Teachers in the School Context”, The flexibility of learning environments allows for personalized content delivery tailored to individual teachers’ needs, fostering active and engaged learning. When students feel free to share their thoughts and emotions, they develop lifelong learning skills, that is, if a stated teaching objective suits learner’s interest and needs and when it is within their capacity to attain, they are motivated to learn. This explains Sangiuliano’s (2023), recommendation that teachers should define their objectives clearly and realistically and inform learners of these objectives in such a way that they see why they should be interested in working towards achieving them. In terms of selecting learning materials, there are also students, who would have like to select learning materials by themselves.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper examined the effects of positive social interactions on the development of lifelong learning skills among secondary school students in the North West Region of Cameroon. The paper triangulated data from many sources to explain the theory it set out to justify. From the findings, it is asserted that positive social interactions are capital in the development of life-long learning skills. This reinforces the importance of organizing the school environment for students to benefit from the values of the hidden curriculum. At times, real time learning takes place out of the official programmes spelt out. We have to be keen about school values and all these have to be intentional and permit each and every child to grow in socio-emotional skills.

References

1. Abhilasha, B. (2020). Hidden curriculum: Lesson learnt through schooling. *International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Studies*, 5(11), 2582-1601.
2. Acklaalan, S. (2015). Relationship between lifelong learning levels and information literacy skills in teacher candidates. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 60.
3. Akiko, H., et al. (2022). Embodied and social-emotional learning (SEL) in early childhood: Situating culturally relevant SEL in Asian, African, and North American contexts. *Early Education and Development*, 5, 746-763.
4. Alison, K., et al. (2013). Development of social interactions and behaviors in early education settings. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 11(3), 292-311.
5. Alexander, B. P. (2020). Curriculum in conflict: How African American and Indigenous educational thought complicates the hidden curriculum. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 31(1), 97-114.
6. Alsubaie, M. A. (2015). Hidden curriculum as one of current issue of curriculum. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(33), 125-128.
7. Apps, J. W. (1979). *Problems in continuing education*. McGraw-Hill.
8. Becker, H. S. (2007). *Writing for social scientists: How to start and finish your thesis, book or article*. University of Chicago Press.
9. Bergenhenegouwen, G. (1987). Hidden curriculum in the university. *Higher Education*, 16(5), 535-543.
10. Binkley, M., et al. (2012). Defining 21st century skills. In *Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills* (pp. 17-66). Springer.
11. Bransford, J. D., & Stein, B. S. (1993). *The ideal problem solver: A guide for improving thinking, learning, and creativity* (2nd ed.). W.H. Freeman and Company.
12. Bush, N. (2018, September 17). The “hidden curriculum” for children in SA. EWN. (link unavailable)
13. Durkheim, E. (1938). *The evolution of educational thought*. Routledge.
14. Durlak, J. A., et al. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405-432.
15. Ehsan, A., & Ahad, K. (2015). Hidden curriculum. *World Essays Journal*, 3(1), 18-21.
16. Frey, N., Fisher, D., & Allen, A. (2009). Productive group work in middle and high school classrooms. In S. Parris, D. Fisher, & K. Headley (Eds.), *Adolescent literacy: Effective solutions for every classroom* (pp. 70-81).
17. Frey, N., Fisher, D., & Allen, A. (2009). *Literacy and learning in content areas: Enhancing reading, writing, and comprehension*. Pearson Educational Publisher.
18. Gilster, P. (1997). *Digital literacy*. John Wiley & Sons.
19. Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R., & McKee, A. (2002). *Primal leadership: Unleashing the power of emotional intelligence*. Harvard Business School Press.
20. González-Pérez, L. I., & Ramírez-Montoya, M. S. (2022). Components of Education 4.0 in 21st century skills frameworks: Systematic review. *Sustainability*, 14(3), 1-31.
21. Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating achievement*. Routledge.
22. Hesapcioğlu, M. (1998). Öğretim ilke ve yöntemleri: Eğitim programları ve öğretim [Teaching principles and methods: Education and training programs] (5th ed.). Beta.
23. Hurst, B. (2005). My journey with learning logs. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 49(1), 42-46.
24. Hurst, B. (2013). *The impact of social interactions on student learning*. Missouri State University.
25. Jackson, P. W. (1968). *Life in classrooms*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
26. Jarvis, P. (2004). *Adult education and lifelong learning: Theory and practice* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
27. Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (2009). An educational psychology success story: Social interdependence theory and cooperative learning. *Educational Psychologist*, 44(2), 92-100.

28. Kirkpatrick, D. L., & Kirkpatrick, J. D. (2016). Implementing the four levels: A practical guide for evaluating educational and training programs. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
29. Knowles, M. S. (1975). Self-directed learning: A guide for learners and teachers. Association Press.
30. Lee, R., & Patel, M. (2024). School climate and its role in developing lifelong learning competencies. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 45, 75-88.
31. Leke, T. (2012). Principles and methods of teaching. University of Buea.
32. Levy, F., & Murnane, R. J. (2005). How technology changes demand for human skills. In *The future of work* (pp. 1-15).
33. Margolis, E., Soldatenko, M., Acker, S., & Gair, M. (2001). Hiding and outing the curriculum. In E. Margolis (Ed.), *The hidden curriculum in higher education* (pp. 1-19).
34. Weise, M. R. (2020). Long-life learning: Preparing for jobs that don't even exist yet.
35. Ndongmo, A. (2020). Classroom interactions and lifelong learning skills development in secondary schools in Cameroon. *Journal of Educational Research*, 15920, 45-58.
36. Ngalim, V. B., et al. (2021). Education as the development of human potentialities in Maria Montessori's "Education for a new world".
37. Ngalim, V. B. (2019). Music and the development of language skills of pupils in early childhood education in Tubah Municipality.
38. Ngalim, V. B. (2018). Dewey's notion of interest: Antithetic to or sympathetic with educational development: Fighting back!
39. Nkrumah, K., & Winston, K. A. (2020). The hidden curriculum and the development of latent skills: The praxis. *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching Kwame*.
40. Picciano, A. G. (2017). Theories and framework for online education: Seeking an integrated model. *Journal of Online Learning*, 21(3), 166-190.
41. Ruijuain, L., et al. (2024). From classroom to career: Enhancing vocational education through collaborative and active learning. *Journal of Education and Education Development*, 11, 332-344.
42. Sanguiliano, et al. (2013). Defining teaching and assessing lifelong learning skills. American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE) Annual Conference. Conference Proceedings.
43. UNESCO (2017). Sustainable development goal (SDG) 4: country profile: Cameroon. Available at <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/countryprofiles/CM.pdf>
44. Wiisahnyuy, F. L. & Ngalim, V. B. (2023) "Folktales as indigenous pedagogic tools for educating school children: A mixed methods study among the Nso of Cameroon" in *Frontiers of Psychology* DOI 10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1049691. pp.1-10.