

BUILDING RESILIENT HUMAN CAPITAL THROUGH STEAM EDUCATION IN THE BANI WORLD: FROM EARLY EDUCATION TO ADAPTIVE EDUCATORS IN CIVIL–MILITARY CONTEXTS

Muşata-Dacia BOCOŞ*, Adriana Cosmina VANCEA**

*Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

**“Independența” Technological High School, Sibiu, Romania

musata.bocos@ubbcluj.ro, cos26052001@yahoo.com

Abstract: Contemporary society is characterized by rapid transformations, marked by uncertainty, volatility and complexity, conceptually described by the BANI (Brittle, Anxious, Nonlinear, Incomprehensible) paradigm. In this context, the development of resilient human capital becomes a strategic priority for educational systems. The paper analyzes the contribution of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics) education to the development of essential competencies, highlighting the fundamental role of teachers in supporting adaptability and authentic learning. The emphasis is placed on the importance of early integration of these competencies, as a foundation for cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioral development. The implications for civil-military contexts are also analyzed, as resilience, critical thinking and decision-making capacity under conditions of uncertainty are essential. The results highlight the need for a systemic approach that connects early education, competence development and continuous professionalization of teachers. Thus, STEAM education becomes a strategic vector in the formation of human capital capable of responding effectively to contemporary challenges.

Keywords: human capital, STEAM education, resilience, skills, teachers

1. Introduction

The rapid changes characteristic to global society require a profound rethinking of the way human capital is built. The BANI paradigm describes an environment characterized by systemic fragility, increased anxiety, nonlinear developments, and difficulties in understanding complex phenomena [1]. In this context, education must go beyond the traditional model focused on transmitting information and focus on the development of transferable skills.

STEAM education provides an integrative framework that supports interdisciplinary learning and the development of skills relevant to adaptability. These skills are not formed exclusively in the advanced stages of education, but have their foundation in

early learning experiences, where cognitive structures and dispositions towards learning are configured [2].

This paper supports the idea that the development of resilient human capital is a continuous process, which begins in early education and is supported by the essential role of teachers in facilitating learning.

2. The BANI paradigm and its implications for education

The BANI paradigm reflects a reality where systems are vulnerable to sudden disruptions and individuals are exposed to high levels of uncertainty. This dynamic generates a generalized climate of anxiety and cognitive pressure, in which individuals are forced to process a large quantity of information, often contradictory or

incomplete. Consequently, the ability to operate effectively no longer depends exclusively on the level of acquired knowledge, but on the ability to interpret the context, to quickly assess situations and to make decisions under conditions of ambiguity. Thus, adaptability becomes a fundamental competence, and cognitive and emotional flexibility takes on a central role in individual and professional functioning.

In educational terms, this reality requires a reconsideration of teaching purposes and strategies. It is no longer sufficient to transmit stable sets of information, but it is necessary to form cognitive structures capable of managing uncertainty and integrating multiple perspectives. Education must support the development of critical thinking, analytical skills and autonomy in learning, providing students with the necessary tools to navigate an environment characterized by continuous change. In this sense, the emphasis is shifting towards learning processes and the development of transferable skills, which allow the application of knowledge in varied and unpredictable contexts.

Therefore, the BANI paradigm is not only a description of contemporary reality, but also a strong argument for transforming education into a system oriented towards resilience, adaptability and continuous development.

In this context, education must focus on the formation of skills, not just on the accumulation of knowledge. Skills such as critical thinking, collaboration and self-regulation become essential for effective functioning in complex environments [3].

3. STEAM education and skills development

STEAM education integrates different fields in a coherent way, facilitating the transfer of knowledge and its application in real-world contexts. This approach contributes to the development of systemic thinking and problem-solving skills [4].

At the same time, STEAM education plays an essential role in the development of fundamental skills for resilience, such as creativity, critical thinking and collaboration. These skills allow individuals to respond effectively to rapid changes and manage situations characterized by uncertainty and ambiguity [5]. The specific activities of this type of education, based on exploration, experimentation and problem-solving, create a favorable framework for active learning and deep cognitive involvement.

Moreover, STEAM education contributes to the development of autonomy in learning, encouraging students to assume an active role in building their own educational path. This autonomy is essential in a context in which continuous learning is becoming a necessity, and the ability to self-regulate and adapt to new requirements is decisive. Also, by its applied nature, STEAM education supports the development of decision-making skills, providing students with the opportunity to evaluate options, anticipate consequences, and adjust strategies based on feedback.

Concrete examples of the implementation of STEAM education demonstrate its impact on the development of adaptive skills and resilience in diverse contexts. In the civilian sector, the European project Scientix promotes the interdisciplinary integration of science, technology, and mathematics through activities based on solving authentic problems and international collaboration among teachers and students. The program's results highlight increased motivation for learning, the development of critical thinking, and the improvement of collaboration and communication skills [6].

Another relevant example is the Finnish educational model based on phenomenon-based learning, in which curricular content is integrated around real-life themes and problems. This approach uses STEAM principles to facilitate the transfer of skills across disciplines and to develop students'

cognitive flexibility and autonomy in the learning process.

In the military context, STEAM education is leveraged to develop the competencies required for managing complex situations and rapid decision-making processes. For example, programs developed within the Defense STEM Education Consortium in the United States use digital simulations, robotics, and project-based learning to develop analytical, coordination, and problem-solving skills in operational environments characterized by uncertainty and decision-making pressure [7]. In addition, NATO initiatives regarding the integration of emerging technologies into education and training highlight the importance of developing interdisciplinary and digital competencies in order to strengthen operational resilience and civil-military cooperation.

These examples confirm that STEAM education contributes to the development of a flexible and adaptable professional profile, capable of responding effectively to the challenges generated by the BANI paradigm, both in the civilian and military domains.

Overall, the integration of STEAM education into the educational process contributes to the formation of a flexible and adaptable learning profile, capable of responding to the challenges of a society characterized by complexity and continuous change.

Through STEAM activities, fundamental skills such as creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration are developed. These are indispensable for adapting to rapid change and managing uncertainty [8].

4. Integrating early childhood education into skills development

4.1 The formative role of early experiences

Early childhood education is the stage in which the foundations of cognitive and socio-emotional development are laid. Learning experiences during this period

influence the later capacity to adapt and learn [9].

The increased plasticity of the brain in the first years of life allows the formation of fundamental structures that support the later development of skills, which gives this stage a strategic importance in the educational architecture.

In this sense, early childhood education should not be reduced to the transmission of elementary contents, but should be understood as a complex process of forming desire towards learning and emerging skills. Curiosity, initiative, the ability to explore and openness to new experiences are cultivated through activities that encourage discovery and active interaction with the environment. The integration of STEAM education principles at this stage contributes significantly to the development of these skills, by promoting an interdisciplinary approach and by facilitating experiential learning. Exploratory activities and contextualized learning situations provide children with the opportunity to construct meanings, formulate hypotheses and test solutions, thus developing incipient critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Early childhood education also plays a decisive role in the development of socio-emotional skills, which are essential for later adaptation in educational and professional contexts. Skills such as cooperation, communication, empathy and emotional self-regulation are formed in interaction with others and are strengthened through learning experiences that value collaboration and mutual respect. These skills constitute the basis for the later development of professional relationships and for effective integration into complex organizational environments.

The foundation of skills in early childhood education has direct implications for the educational and professional path of the individual, configuring the premises for lifelong learning. The skills formed at this stage are not static, but evolve and are

refined over time, being transferred and adapted according to the requirements of different stages of development and career contexts. Thus, the ability to learn autonomously, adapt to changes and manage new situations becomes a central element of continuous professional development.

4.2 Grounding long-term skills

In a society where career paths are increasingly dynamic and less predictable, early childhood education contributes to the formation of a solid foundation for flexibility and professional retraining. The skills developed from this stage, such as critical thinking, creativity and the ability to collaborate, are later found in the key skills needed in the labor market. In this sense, early childhood education is not just the beginning of the educational journey, but the first level of a continuous process of skills development, which extends throughout life and career.

Therefore, the coherent integration of STEAM principles in early childhood education not only supports the development of basic skills, but also creates the necessary conditions for the formation of an adaptable and continuously evolving learning profile, allowing for the gradual development of skills. This perspective strengthens the role of early childhood education as a foundation for individual and professional resilience, in a context characterized by uncertainty and permanent transformation.

5. The role of teachers in building resilient human capital

5.1 Teachers as facilitators of learning

Teachers play a central role in designing and implementing relevant educational experiences, being the main facilitators of the learning process. They do not limit themselves to transmitting information, but create learning contexts that stimulate critical thinking, encourage exploration and support the development of the skills necessary to adapt in a complex

environment. Through the way they structure teaching activities and through direct interaction with students, teachers contribute to the formation of cognitive and socio-emotional capacities essential for the development of resilient human capital.

5.2 Professional adaptability

In the context of the BANI paradigm, the role of teachers becomes even more complex, requiring the development of advanced professional competencies, such as pedagogical flexibility, the ability to integrate technologies and the continuous adaptation of teaching strategies as needed. Also, the socio-emotional competencies of teachers are essential for supporting students in managing uncertainty and the pressures associated with an unpredictable environment [10]. Teachers thus become benchmarks of stability and models of adaptability, contributing to the creation of a safe and stimulating educational climate.

In addition, the continuous professional development of teachers is a fundamental condition for maintaining the relevance of the educational act. Their ability to critically reflect on their own practices and to integrate pedagogical innovations contributes to increasing the quality of education and strengthening the resilience of the education system as a whole. At the same time, the involvement of teachers in professional communities and collaborative learning processes supports the exchange of good practices and rapid adaptation to emerging challenges.

6. Relevance in civil-military contexts

6.1 The need for operational resilience

In civil-military environments, the resilience of human capital is essential for operational efficiency. The ability to make quick and informed decisions under conditions of uncertainty is directly linked to the skills developed through education. In this sense, the training of individuals capable of analyzing complex situations, managing pressure and acting responsibly becomes a strategic priority.

Competency-oriented education contributes to the development of these capacities, providing a framework for practicing critical thinking and decision-making in simulated or real contexts. Operational resilience also requires not only rapid reaction, but also the ability to anticipate and adapt to constantly changing scenarios. In addition, the integration of learning situations based on real or close to reality scenarios contributes to the development of strategic thinking and to the strengthening of the response capacity in critical situations. This approach supports the training of individuals capable of operating effectively in conditions of high complexity and decision-making pressure.

6.2 Transferability of skills

The skills developed through STEAM education are applicable in both civilian and military contexts. Critical thinking and adaptability facilitate inter-institutional cooperation and an efficient response to complex challenges. In addition, the interdisciplinary nature of these skills allows for rapid integration into diverse environments and collaboration between different fields. Their transferability becomes essential in a context in which the boundaries between the civilian and military fields are increasingly permeable. Thus, education contributes to the training of professionals capable of operating effectively in multidisciplinary teams and responding in a coordinated manner to crisis situations. Moreover, these skills support professional mobility and the capacity for reconversion, essential aspects in a dynamic socio-professional environment. In this sense, skills-oriented education facilitates continuous adaptation to the requirements of the fields which are constantly transforming.

6. Conclusions

The analysis highlights that the development of resilient human capital cannot be approached by segments, but requires a systemic and continuous vision, grounded from the early education stage and consolidated throughout the entire educational path. In this context, STEAM education asserts itself as a relevant conceptual and operational framework, capable of supporting the integrated training of the skills necessary to cope with the complexity and unpredictability specific to contemporary society.

The integration of the civil-military dimension amplifies the relevance of this approach, highlighting the need to train individuals capable of acting effectively in diverse contexts, marked by decision-making pressure, uncertainty and accelerated change. Thus, the skills developed through education become not only tools for individual adaptation, but also strategic resources for the functioning and security of social systems.

In this framework, the role of teachers takes on fundamental importance, as they are essential actors in facilitating relevant learning experiences and supporting the development of transferable skills. Through their ability to structure adaptive educational processes and create authentic learning contexts, teachers directly contribute to the formation of human capital capable of responding to emerging challenges.

In conclusion, STEAM education is not just a pedagogical option, but a strategic necessity in the construction of resilient human capital. Its transversal relevance, both in civilian and military contexts, confirms that the development of skills from the early stages of education constitutes an indispensable foundation for adaptability, performance and sustainability in a world defined by the BANI paradigm.

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