

*Life and Work Skills in Performing Arts: A Basis for the Developmental Guidelines of the UC – Center for Creative Productions Members*

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**Abstract**

The goal of every academic institution is to prepare students for life and work. Aside from completing competencies based on the curriculum, institutions also offer education-based activities such as performing arts which provide opportunities to enhance the imagination and intelligence of student artists and develop various skills. In connection, this study aimed to identify the attainment of basic skills towards life and work and the impact of the training in the development of 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills. A mixed method design was employed using quantitative for the level of attainment of the former University of the Cordilleras – Center for Creative Productions (UC-CCP) members on life and work where questionnaire and weighted mean were utilized. Qualitative was used to determine the impact of the training program in the development of 21st-century learning and innovation skills along with creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration through focus group discussion using a saturation method. Findings show that respondents have fully attained both life (3.51) and work (3.42). The impacts include high standards, making objective decisions, listening, and teamwork. With these results, performing arts is a big contributor to better real-life activities of the UC-CCP members. The University should therefore develop a developmental guideline for the CCP. The UC-CCP shall foster new approaches in developing knowledge, skills, and attitude, preparing globally competitive individuals promoting culture and arts, holistic development, and quality educational experiences.

Keywords: Life and Work Skills, Training Program, Performing Arts, Holistic Development, Educational Experiences

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## **Introduction**

The goal of every academic institution is to prepare students for life and work. Institutions also offer educational-based activities in promoting holistic development, one of which is the performing arts. It provides opportunities to enhance the imagination and intelligence of members and develop various skills which play vital for life and work. Engaging in performing arts bring out members' maximum potential, completes the academic curriculum, and builds self-identity. Extracurricular activities such as music and dance are an integral part of education along with academics for holistic development (Singh, 2019).

In the United Kingdom, schools offer a substantial program that can offer students a wide range of experiences, intellectual, cultural and relaxing (Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference, 2021). It has an advantage on students' academic performance as well as improving personal dimensions such as social, emotional, mental, and physical. Extracurricular activities are considered supportive and necessary for students as they provide them not only health benefits, but opportunities to learn more about others, develop empathy and self-esteem, and lead students to build positive relations with peers (Sullivan, 2018). Individuals who are into extracurricular activities boost confidence in social interaction, expansion of social networks, and acquire new skills.

Performing arts is a way of life that allows individuals to showcase one's culture. According to Johnston (2017) and Fleming (2019) dances and music keep the culture of a person alive by sharing and teaching younger generations and keeping the history as well. Performing arts in the Philippines showcase the identity of its people and its rich culture among communities. The history of dance and music is rich and vibrant, demonstrating how dances connect and reflect everyday life and significant occasions (Crawford, 2021).

Having been involved in performing arts contributes to the full attainment of basic skills and the development of 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills (Stauffer, 2020). Performing arts develop basic skills in preparation for life and work aside from completing the required curriculum. According to Mercer (2018), creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration are observed through performing arts which are commonly known as the four C's.

The University of the Cordilleras - Center for Creative Productions (UC-CCP) is the official performing arts center that manages all performances either on-off campus. Aside from providing creative and innovative performances, the UC-CCP's main goals are to provide academic support for exemplary students and to aggressively promote and preserve the rich culture and tradition of the Cordillera.

The objectives of UC-CCP are as follows, to balance academic performance and extracurricular activities, to enhance the necessary skills needed for life and work, to uphold the mission-vision of the university, and to nurture the conservation of culture and tradition.

The researcher will explore the experiences of the former UC-CC members in terms of their training program. It identifies and discovers how performing arts contribute to the development of the different skills which are necessary for life and work. And recognizes the impact of the training program in the improvement of 21st-century learning and innovation skills. And it will serve as an eye-opener in formulating new and additional programs that will improve further its training program.

The researcher utilized four concepts to substantiate the study. First, attainment is a measurable progress of skills that are needed to succeed (National Improvement Hub, 2022) and for meeting the demands of the 21st-century industry and existence.

Second, life skills are a group of psychosocial competencies and people skills to ensure a healthier life and productivity (May 2018), however, skills can be developed or changed at any stage of life but what is most important is the willingness to learn since change is constant. There are three sub-variables based on the competency model namely: self-awareness which talks about understanding oneself; interpersonal relates to establishing and maintaining social relationships; and thinking skills deal with thoughtful rationalizing things before making any decisions.

Third, work skills serve as the foundation to ensure employability considering the new sets of competencies and skills in the 21st-century workplace. The Competency Model Technical Assistance Guide from the Competency Model - Communicating Industry's Education and Training Needs (2019) stated that workers must demonstrate that they have the right skills to enter and compete in today's labor market. There are three sub-variables under work skills: personal effectiveness referred to as soft skills which include traits of individuals that are vital in any workplace; academic covers critical basic competencies that students are expected to develop in school; and workplace focus on the skills and abilities of individuals to effectively and efficiently function in the workplace.

And lastly, 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills are the extensive competencies, the most critically important to success in this generation that will ensure the quality of life and work among students. It promotes the development of lifelong skills that caters to life skills and work skills. According to Bogler (2018), the 21st Century Skills can help students prepare for the real world while still meeting or exceeding curriculum goals. In this study, the researcher focuses on learning and innovation skills which are also known as the Four C's. Creativity allows the students to embrace their inner strengths from big-picture planning to meticulous organization (Stauffer, 2020) and it promotes innovation to stay competitive individuals and remains significant in the workplace. Critical thinking is the ability of a person to filter information in making dependable judgments whereas Peart (2019) stated that employers value people who can work as effective members of a team by defining the issues carefully. Communication is necessary for creating a harmonious relationship and is an advantage to communicating accurately and effectively (Faleti, 2017). And collaboration is the ability to work effectively as part of a team has also grown in importance (Peart, 2019) as a result of the fast-changing time and to ensure success.

The research aimed to identify the level of attainment of basic skills both in life and work, and the impact of the training in the development of 21st-century skills among former UC-CCP members. Specifically, it sought to answer the following: what is the level of attainment of the former UC-CCP members on life skills along self-awareness, interpersonal, and thinking, and work skills along personal effectiveness, academic, and workplace; and the impact of the training program in the development of 21st-century learning and innovation skills along creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration.

A mixed method design was employed using quantitative for the level of attainment of the former University of the Cordilleras – Center for Creative Productions (UC-CCP) members on life and work where questionnaire and weighted mean were utilized with 232 respondents. A qualitative method using thematic analysis was used to determine the impact of the training

program in the development of 21st-century learning and innovation skills through focus group discussion using a saturation method with 16 key informants. Both methods used instruments that were adopted from the UNICEF Basic Life Skills Curriculum, Competency Model Technical Assistance Guide from the Competency Model - Communicating Industry's Education and Training Needs, and 21st Century Skills Standard Based Rubrics.

## Results and Discussions

The following are the major findings on the level of attainments in life and work skills, and the impact of the training program among the former members of the UC Center for Creative Productions (UC-CCP).

Table 1 shows the overall weighted mean level of attainment in life skills which were considered as fully attained (3.51). All variables are rated as fully attained, with the highest possible response.

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>W.M.</b>	<b>Q.V.</b>
Interpersonal	3.54	Fully Attained
Self-awareness	3.53	Fully Attained
Thinking	3.48	Fully Attained
<b>General Weighted Mean</b>	<b>3.51</b>	<b>Fully Attained</b>

Table 1. Level of Attainment in Life Skills

This implies that the former UC-CCP members were able to develop life skills that are an essential part of everyday aspects of life. To cope with the fast-paced and technological life, individuals must possess these life skills to adapt to the demands of society.

The result further connotes that the attainment of life skills is necessary for making decisions in life, interacting with other people, and managing emotions. During an informal interview with a music teacher, the development of different life skills can help individuals to adapt to any situation and can be able to handle challenges. She mentioned that most of her students developed a positive outlook on life and self-confidence. Being involved in the performing arts promotes holistic development and success in life.

Life skills are a set of personal skills and social features that the individual needs to interact confidently and efficiently with themselves or with other people and with the local community (The Scientific World, 2019). This definition is evident in the training program where the members are encouraged to interact and collaborate with their peers and superiors in enhancing not only their performing skills but also their different life skills. The UC-CCP promotes not only holistic development but also the attainment of lifelong learning skills which are vital to succeeding in life.

In addition, May (2018) defines life skills as a group of psychosocial competencies and people skills that help individuals to become more efficient and effective members of the community. Former UC-CCP members were able to establish the willingness to improve further their skills to maintain as competitive and competent individuals.

Interpersonal was the highest sub-variable which is interpreted as fully attained (3.54). Indicators of interpersonal include listening skills, managing relationships, confidence in communication, empathy, handling relationships, and interpersonal effectiveness.

This means that the skill fosters harmonious relationships and works together as one team in achieving a common goal. The respondents confirmed that the sub-variable interpersonal is fully attained from their experiences as a student in the university and as former UC-CCP members through the training program.

Interpersonal skills help people to make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with and manage their life healthily and productively (May, 2018). The UC-CCP training program acknowledges that the development of the interpersonal skills of its members serves a vital role to ensure success in life.

The lowest sub-variable is thinking which is still considered as fully attained (3.48). Indicators include decision-making, critical thinking, goal-setting, executive function skills, resilience, and problem-solving.

This indicates that former UC-CCP members were able to process information before making any action. All performing groups were able to incorporate the development of these skills as important life skills. The respondents verified that the sub-variable thinking is still considered as fully attained from their experiences as a student in the university and as former UC-CCP members through the training program.

According to LilyWhite (2021), critical thinking is a valuable skill that can help to make better decisions and judgments on exploring new possibilities, approaches, and strategies in resolving a problem. The respondents considered themselves logical and rational thinkers to overcome challenges in life and with their experience in the center, they were able to inject creative ways of handling situations. The UC-CCP training program recognizes that the development of the thinking skills of its members serves a vital role to ensure success in life.

It is synthesized that the respondents stand firm that the attainment of life skills is necessary for making decisions in life, interacting with other people, and managing emotions. The development of different life skills can help individuals to adapt to any situation, can be able to handle challenges, and developed a positive outlook in life.

Table 2 shows the overall weighted mean level of attainment in work skills which were considered as fully attained (3.42). All variables are rated as fully attained, with the highest possible response.

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>W.M.</b>	<b>Q.V.</b>
Personal Effectiveness	3.50	Fully Attained
Workplace	3.44	Fully Attained
Academics	3.31	Fully Attained
<b>General Weighted Mean</b>	<b>3.42</b>	<b>Fully Attained</b>

Table 2. Level of Attainment in Work Skills

This implies that the former UC-CCP members were able to develop work skills which are a vital part of any workplace. To become competent and competitive in this modern workplace, students need to ensure the full development of the different 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills and the required competencies. This is to manage the demands of the 4.0 industries and in the global market.

The result further connotes that the attainment of work skills is necessary to equip oneself with the skills which are needed in today's industries. Aside from technical skills, it is also equally important to develop soft skills which most employers are taking into consideration. In an informal interview with the Human Resource Officer, she confirmed that there are applicants who are very qualified for the post in terms of technical qualifications but lack interpersonal attributes which might be a problem in working with others and in the organization.

This is consistent with The Competency Model Technical Assistance Guide from the Competency Model - Communicating Industry's Education and Training Needs (2019) stated that workers must demonstrate that they have the right skills to enter and compete in today's labor market. This is the reason why aside from the hard skills or the job-related knowledge and skill, it is equally important that all students develop their soft skills or the personal tributes/qualities which serve as an advantage in getting into any career. The UC-CCP training programs prepare its members to become equipped individuals who are experts in their respective fields of specialization, proficient when it comes to deliverables, and possess positive attitudes who are motivated and inspire others.

Personal effectiveness was the highest sub-variable which is interpreted as fully attained (3.50). Indicators include integrity, dependability and reliability, professionalism, lifelong learning, adaptability and flexibility, interpersonal skills, and initiative.

The UC-CCP promotes the advancement of personal effectiveness aside from sharpening individual performing skills. This means that the former members use their skills to become successful in their respective careers. Usually, those individuals who possess personal effectiveness are more productive because they are motivated, engaged, managed, and reliable.

This is similar to the definition by Virtual College (2022), where they mentioned that personal effectiveness is entirely different for everyone, and it utilizes the skills, talent, and energy of a person to achieve goals. And the only way to achieve it is through our experiences. The new knowledge and skills that a person acquires in any of their experiences can contribute to the development of personal effectiveness. The UC-CCP training program always includes cognitive and practical activities that will help in the development of this skill to ensure success in the workplace.

The lowest sub-variable is "academic," which is still considered as fully attained (3.31). Indicators include reading, basic computer skills, communication, writing, critical and analytic thinking, science and technology, and mathematics.

This implies that academics play a significant role to the former UC-CCP members in finding their present work and job opportunities for any individual. The aforementioned implication on academic serves as a reminder that the topmost priority of every student, especially those who are into educational-based activities, are academics. Nevertheless, academics without other soft skills are worthless. Technical knowledge and skills must be paired with soft skills. This is where the advantage of those who are into educational-based activity, they were able to develop these soft skills from their training and performances.

It can also be associated with the theory of the right-left brain by American psychobiologist Roger Sperry in the late 1960s. According to the article of Boddy-Evans (2019), the right

brain is more visual and processes information intuitively and simultaneously while the left brain is verbal and processes information analytically and sequentially. Based on the result of the study, academics ranked as the lowest indicator but still has a qualitative value of fully attained because artists are generally considered visual people.

Having been involved in an educational-based activity like performing arts, students can develop soft skills which contribute to the development of 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills (Lobell, 2018). The acquisition of different skills, with the completion of the academics, will provide an advantage to a person to scout for a better job opportunity. The UC-CCP training program caters to holistic development for its members to ensure success in work.

It is synthesized that the respondents possess work skills that are necessary for today's industries. Aside from technical skills, it is also equally important to develop soft skills which most employers are taking into consideration.

The development of 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills, specifically learning and innovation skills are equally important to become competitive and competent individuals. The study aims to recognize the effectiveness of the training program in the development of creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration skills among former UC-CCP members.

*Creativity* facilitates all members in the group or organization to see things from different perspectives which are toward the success of the goal. Stauffer (2020) stated that creativity allows students to embrace their inner strengths from big-picture planning to meticulous organization. A person who learns to utilize creativity makes productivity outputs while enjoying and developing a sense of fulfillment. Based on the responses of the key informants, themes of creativity include high standards, innovation, alternative ideas, and self-confidence.

High standard pertains to the quality of work of the former members being rendered to their respective groups and by the University's standards. A person who exercises high standards believes that everything matters even the very least details. "We have a higher sense of creativity; we want to maintain a high-quality output (Key informant 3)". Hudson-Searle (2017) stated that standards must align with your mission and be implemented consistently across your organization's objectives. Key informants 8, 9, 14, and 16 stated that "we always aim for excellence, set high quality in all members, close to perfection, and outstanding performance."

Innovation is a fundamental skill to adapt to the fast-changing world. In the world of performing arts, innovation was already incorporated through the existence of technology. As testified by key informant 7 and 14 "we are required to present something new" and "to come up with unique ideas to help our presentation stands out." Innovation can also help to develop original concepts while giving the innovator a proactive, confident attitude to take risks and get things done (Henderson, 2017). Key informants 5 and 13 were able to apply innovation to their current jobs "I was able to integrate teaching and music" and "I used my inventiveness to deliver the lesson more interestingly."

Having several plans is known as an alternative idea. It is closely similar to innovation where an alternative idea pertains to the backup plans while innovation is the creation of new ideas using different styles and approaches. As confirmed by key informant 1 "I was able to produce different ideas through brainstorming." Fischer (2022) explained that the more ideas you come up with the more likely you are to get some that are useful. Also, the key

informants were able to employ the concept of alternative ideas in handling problems in life and work. Key informant 4 shared that “having better ideas and other alternatives when it comes to problem-solving.”

Self-confidence is necessary for every aspect of life. Key informant 3 mentioned that “they were able to acquire a better sense of competence and confidence to be more presentable”. It means former members have trust in their abilities. People with a strong sense of self and who project their inner confidence are more likely successful in life (Alford, 2022). Participants considered self-confidence as an asset that was fully developed among themselves. People who have self-confidence are happier and have a more fulfilling life.

*Critical thinking* enables all members of the group or organization to become objective in analyzing and evaluating information before creating any judgment. Kleemola et al. (2021) define critical-thinking skills as a combination of complex cognitive skills. Musicians analyze musical pieces to successfully interpret a specific repertoire while for the dance they analyze the intended message of body movement. Critical thinking is crucial to understanding rationally, clarity, fairness, and consistency of the group or organization to achieve a common goal. Based on the responses of the key informants, themes of critical thinking include making objective decisions, logical thinking, accuracy and precision, and understanding.

The bulk of our life and work is about decision-making. Participants were able to enhance their skills by partaking in the decision being made by the group for the betterment of its training program and performance. “We always want to improve so we have that growth mindset already, to grow ourselves especially in making a decision” (Key informant 3). Gaille (2018), mentioned that decisions must be based on logic instead of emotion. They have to detach emotions in making an objective decision to increase the level of productivity. “There should be checkpoints and structure in decision making” (Key informant 2).

The development of logical thinking contributed to overcoming challenges among the participants, a valuable skill in their workplace. And it is even more critical nowadays with the presence of technology to analyze and evaluate all information. As testified by key informant 3 “we need to think about everything, whether that be our technique, our presentation, the program in a concert, or a repertoire.” The key informants were able to apply logical thinking to their respective fields as they gained it from the training program as cited by key informant 8 “I can use it on the actual operation, specifically, how to manage a situation.” Employers place a high value on workers who display strong logical thinking or reasoning skills because their decision-making is based on factual data (Doyle, 2021).

It is necessary to be accurate and precise at all times. As to the performances, the correctness of the dance and the rendition of songs is very crucial as this can be assessed using one measurement or basis while the exactness of the performance can be achieved through rigid practices. As confirmed by key informant 3 “the correctness and aesthetic of things, and most importantly the impact we will be leaving to the person or group who requested us to perform.” McGowan (2017) stated that getting things accurate is far harder than precise. Key informant 5 shared that one of his learnings as a former UC-CCP member was “to make sure that the information is accurate.”

Understanding others is a way of displaying interest and concern among their co-members rather than knowing others’ feelings and emotions. Participants were able to develop the traits of being considerate, compassionate, and empathetic in the training program. Key informants

6 and 15 mentioned that “we are all different individuals with different characters and came from different colleges/departments” and “you need to choose your words, and need to become understanding and compassionate.” It corroborates the statement of Lukas Hermann, “you need to know yourself to understand other people” (cited by Nierenberg, 2017). Individual needs to have the self-awareness to know their strengths and weakness. Former members had fully attained self-awareness; therefore, they are equipped to understand others.

*Communication* fosters good relationships and establishes mutual understanding on different matters and issues toward the successful attainment of goals. Communication is said to be the creation and exchange of meaning (Nordquist, 2019). It is used to express the thoughts and ideas of an individual which are vital in our daily life and work. Communication helps us to connect with others and strengthen our relationships to achieve common goals. Based on the responses of the key informants, themes of communication include listening, non-verbal communication, sharing ideas, and responsibility and accountability.

Listening can be developed skills through the training program. Paying attention not only to the message but how it was said, which includes the use of words and tone, and the trainer’s gestures are crucial. Becoming a better listener takes practice, but it will improve your ability to connect with other people and increase your capacity to retain information (Master Class, 2021). It encourages everyone to actively listen and stimulate understanding of one another. “Through an open forum, we were able to build communication among members for us to know one another better and the directions we want to go” (Key informant 1).

As the saying goes action speaks louder than words. The ability to understand and recognize nonverbal communication is considered helpful in every aspect of life. Key informant 5 stated that “Don’t just rely on everything that is being said we have to look at how they act.” Kelly (2021) explained that non-verbal cues are essential to everyday life. The key informants were able to perceive the mood or feeling or person without asking them. “I became very sensitive when it comes to my students’ gestures or non-verbal” (Key informant 5).

Through brainstorming, they were able to share ideas in exploring a creative solution in a particular situation. “I was able to produce different ideas through brainstorming” (Key informant 1). Sharing ideas also enables the participants to receive feedback and criticism from others. Sharing information freely (Barnes, 2021) will lead to more ideas. Key informants 10 and 13 revealed that sharing ideas allows them to grow as a person “it was a big help to think, produce better ideas, and able to share it to others” and “it taught me to welcome new ideas to become a resourceful person.”

Being responsible and accountable is vital in all aspects of life. For every performance, the members are expected to target the skills needed and work pleasantly among the group. Participants were able to establish these skills as testified by key informant 8 “to become responsible and accountable are the best things we’ve learned as members.” Sergeeva (2021) believes that responsibility and accountability are vital for our reputation and how we are seen by others. Participants were able to establish a good reputation in their respective fields. “To have a great impact on everyone and even ourselves” (Key informant 3).

*Collaboration* allows all members of the group to work together while doing the assigned tasks toward the success of the goal. Stauffer (2020) describes the collaboration as important because whether students realize it or not, they’ll probably work with other people for the rest

of their lives. Individuals are expected to work harmoniously among their co-workers and for the organization. It increases the productivity of the group or organization to achieve a common goal. Based on the responses of the key informants, themes of collaboration include teamwork, goal-oriented, artistic aptitude, and problem-solving.

Teamwork pertains to the individual skills of the members that when brought together and shared for a common goal will result in an advantage for the group towards effectiveness and efficiency. “We are there together as a solo artist, we are there as a team, and we are there because we have a great performance” (Key informant 3). Simon (2022) explained that teamwork it’s more than just completing a task, it is the work that comes from people working together effectively. As mentioned by key informant 2 “collaboration is all about teamwork.”

Being goal-oriented means setting targets and objectives. It is the willingness of the members to align with the group’s objectives and to allocate time and energy towards a common goal. “We have one of us, we have one goal” (Key informant 4). This finding is connected to the article of Gaid (2021), you must be driven by a sense of passion and real desire toward your life goals which gives you the fuel to take those steps every day. Members worked with their passion and their love for their craft to achieve goals. As said by key informant 7 “most of the time we will not work alone for us to achieve our goals.”

Everybody can dance, sing, and play different instruments, but not everyone can develop versatility, stage presence, a sense of rhythm, and gracefulness. Having an artistic aptitude means a person can produce an output that is pleasing to see or hear. According to the article of Glassdoor Team (2021), knowing your aptitudes and understanding how they influence your capabilities enables you to find a career that best suits your unique strengths to produce new concepts and ideas with aesthetic value. As disclosed by key informant 13 “it can provide new ideas for improvement and breakthrough for performances.”

A good problem solver is essential because employers value people who can work through challenges on their own or as effective members of a team by defining the issues, brainstorming alternatives, sharing thoughts, and then making sound decisions (Peart, 2019). As cited by key informant 1 “the 4C’s help me to solve problems I encountered at my workplace.” The former members were able to foresee problem-solving to the situations that might happen which can affect the performance of the group. Moreover, resolving problems collaboratively has advantages compared to a single mind.

Therefore, the training program helped in the development of 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning and innovation skills among the former UC-CCP members. The attainment of the different soft skills from the training program contributes to the enhancement of the imagination and intelligence of student artists which plays a significant role in attaining success both in life and work.

## **Conclusions**

Based on the findings presented, the following conclusions were formulated; the life and work skills of the former UC-CCP members were all fully attained and evident in their real-life activities and present workplaces, and the training program of UC-CCP resulted in the development of 21st-century skills that contribute to their better learning and innovation skills.

Grounded on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations were formulated; a continuing quality improvement shall be made to ensure the development of life and work skills among the former members and UC-CCP shall sustain monitoring and evaluating the impact of the training program on 21st-century skills. In addition, a developmental training guideline shall take place for all the performing groups of the UC Center for Creative Productions.

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