

LIFE SKILL BASED EDUCATION; CHALLENGES IN ITS IMPLEMENTATION

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Life skills have been defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as “abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life”. It represents the psycho-social skills that determine valued behavior. It includes reflective skills (such as problem-solving and critical thinking), and personal skills (such as self-awareness, and to interpersonal skills). Practicing life skills leads to the development of certain qualities like, self-esteem, sociability and tolerance to act in competencies, to take decision and generate change, capacity and the freedom to decide what to do and who to not to do. Life skill Education is the one of the important programme in the school curriculum now a day. But under present education system its goal is not achieved successfully, because of various reasons like examination oriented curriculum, poor study habit among students, etc. The present research paper highlights the challenges faced by teachers in implementing life skill education in schools. As adolescents mature cognitively, their mental process becomes more analytical. At this stage they are capable of doing their own activities, abstract thinking, and better articulation and of developing an independent ideology. The present world expects more creativity, idealism, buoyancy and a spirit of adventure. It requires more experimentation and risk-taking. It gives negative peer pressure, confusion in taking uninformed decisions on crucial issues, especially relating to their bodies and their sexuality. Adolescence is thus a turning point in one’s life, a period of increased potential but also one of greater vulnerability.

Key words: Life skill based education, Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Adolescents, and challenges to Education.

Introduction

Life skills training is an efficacious tool for empowering the youth to act responsibly, take initiative and take control. It is based on the assumption that when young people are able to rise above emotional impasses arising from daily conflicts, entangled relationships and peer pressure, they are less likely to resort to anti social or high risk behaviours. During the time of adolescence change in their education and role, leads them to the confusing world. So life skills are very essential for an adolescence to become complete human beings. Life skills help an individual to get good job and increases the vocational value of education. Keeping this in mind the present study is undertaken. Life skill education is one of the important goals of education, but its implementation has got its own challenges.

Life Skill; what does it Mean?

A skill is a learned ability. Life Skills are those competencies that assist people in functioning well in the environments in which they live.

UNICEF defines life skills as “a behaviour change or behaviour development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: knowledge, attitude and skills” [1].

Life skills include psychosocial abilities and interpersonal skills that help people take decisions, solve problems, think critically, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with the stress and strain of life in a healthy and productive manner. Essentially, there are two kinds of skills - those related to thinking called "thinking skills" and skills related to dealing with others called "social skills". While thinking skills relate to the personal level, social skills include interpersonal skills. It is the combination of these two types of skills that are needed for achieving assertive behaviour and negotiating effectively [2].

Life skills have been defined as “the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life” (WHO). ‘Adaptive’ means that a person is flexible in approach and is able to adjust in different circumstances. ‘Positive behaviour’ implies that a person is forward looking and even in difficult situations, can find a ray of hope and opportunities to find solutions. The terms ‘Livelihood skills’ or ‘occupational/vocational’ skills refer to capabilities, resources and opportunities to pursue individual and household economic goals and relate to income generation. Thus, Life skills are distinct from livelihood skills [3].

Key Life Skill includes psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with managing their lives in a healthy and productive manner. Essentially, there are two kinds of skills - those related to thinking termed as "thinking skills"; and skills related to dealing with others termed as "social skills". While thinking skills relate to reflection at a personal level, social skills include

interpersonal skills and do not necessarily depend on logical thinking. It is the combination of these two types of skills that are needed for achieving assertive behaviour and negotiating effectively. "Emotional" can be perceived as a skill not only in making rational decisions but also in being able to make others agree to one's point of view. To do that, coming to terms first with oneself is important. Thus, self management is an important skill including managing/coping with feelings, emotions, stress and resisting peer and family pressure. Young people as advocates need both thinking and social skills for consensus building and advocacy on issues of concern [4].

Brief history of Life skill Base Education

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (commonly abbreviated as the CRC, CROC, or UNCRC) is a human rights treaty which sets out the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children. The Convention defines a child as any human being under the age of eighteen, unless the age of majority is attained earlier under a state's own domestic legislation

Nations that ratify this convention are bound to it by international law. Compliance is monitored by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. In India many people are still suffering from non-nutritious food; many parents are still leaving their children on riverside, in trains etc. Under the auspices of the UNICEF many actions are initiated by the Government of India, specifying the outline of a means of change and improvement in child care, and many trusts such as child Line, Plan India and Save the Children etc are taking efforts to outdate child labour from India. A few of the organisations who work with children's rights in India are Plan India, CRY (Child Rights and You), Save the Children, Bal Vikas Dhara-New Delhi, Bachpan Bachao Andolan, CHORD-Hyderabad. These international conventions and national activity highlighted that there is something lagging in the education system. To strengthen our education system at national and international level these measures are adopted. These national and international organisations highlighted the important of life skill education in our education system.

To improve our education system in India, NCERT introduced life skill education in the schools. Presently life skill education is not a separate curriculum but NCERT identifies 10 such life skills, and every teacher must teach these skills while teaching their class subjects.

Today in India we have about 225 million adolescents in the age group of 10-19 years, the largest ever cohort of young people to make a transition to adulthood. The physical changes that herald adolescence are the most visible and striking markers of this stage. However, these physical changes represent just one aspect of the developmental processes that adolescents experience. Their developing brains bring new cognitive skills that enhance their ability to reason and to think abstractly. They develop emotionally, establishing a new sense of who they

are and who they want to become. Their social development involves relating in new ways both to peers and adults and they begin to experiment with new behaviour.

Life skills recognised by the NCERT

The Ten core Life Skills as laid down by WHO are recognised by the NCERT [5-8].

i) Self-awareness: includes recognition of ‘self’, our character, our strengths and weaknesses, desires and dislikes. Developing self-awareness can help us to recognize when we are stressed or feel under pressure. It is often a prerequisite to effective communication and interpersonal relations, as well as for developing empathy with others.

ii) Empathy: To have a successful relationship with our loved ones and society at large, we need to understand and care about other peoples’ needs, desires and feelings. Empathy is the ability to imagine what life is like for another person. Without empathy, our communication with others will amount to one-way traffic. Worst, we will be acting and behaving according to our self-interest and are bound to run into problems. No man is an island, no woman either! We grow up in relationships with many people – parents, brothers and sisters, cousins, uncles and aunts, classmates, friends and neighbours. When we understand ourselves as well as others, we are better prepared to communicate our needs and desires. We will be more equipped to say what we want people to know, present our thoughts and ideas and tackle delicate issues without offending other people. At the same time, we will be able to elicit support from others, and win their understanding. Empathy can help us to accept others, who may be very different from ourselves. This can improve social interactions, especially, in situations of ethnic or cultural diversity. Empathy can also help to encourage nurturing behaviour towards people in need of care and assistance, or tolerance, as is the case with AIDS sufferers, or people with mental disorders, who may be stigmatized and ostracized by the very people they depend upon for support.

iii) Critical thinking: is an ability to analyze information and experiences in an objective manner. Critical thinking can contribute to health by helping us to recognize and assess the factors that influence attitudes and behaviour, such as values, peer pressure and the media.

iv). Creative thinking: is a novel way of seeing or doing things that is characteristic of four components – fluency (generating new ideas), flexibility (shifting perspective easily), originality (conceiving of something new), and elaboration (building on other ideas).

v). Decision making: A Decision making helps us to deal constructively with decisions about our lives. This can have consequences for health. It can teach people how to actively make decisions about their actions in relation to healthy assessment of different options and, what effects these different decisions are likely to have.

vi). **A Problem solving:** helps us to deal constructively with problems in our lives. Significant problems that are left unresolved can cause mental stress and give rise to accompanying physical strain.

vii). **A Interpersonal relationship skills:** help us to relate in positive ways with the people we interact with. This may mean being able to make and keep friendly relationships, which can be of great importance to our mental and social well-being. It may mean keeping, good relations with family members, which are an important source of social support. It may also mean being able to end relationships constructively.

viii) **Effective communication:** means that we are able to express ourselves, both verbally and non-verbally, in ways that are appropriate to our cultures and situations. This means being able to express opinions and desires, and also needs and fears. And it may mean being able to ask for advice and help in a time of need.

ix). **A Coping with stress:** means recognizing the sources of stress in our lives, recognizing how this affects us, and acting in ways that help us control our levels of stress, by changing our environment or lifestyle and learning how to relax.

x). **A Coping with emotions** means involving recognizing emotions within us and others, being aware of how emotions influence behaviour and being able to respond to emotions appropriately. Intense emotions like anger or sadness can have negative effects on our health if we do not respond appropriately [9].

Present education system in India

After passing of Right to Education Act, government has taken several actions to provide free and compulsory education to all the children up to the age of 14 years. But government failed to provide proper infrastructure facilities to those schools, especially in rural areas. The survey report of UNICEF reveals that 96.7% of children of age group between 6 to 14 years are enrolled in the school. (but most of them are not regular). 75.6% schools are having drinking water facilities, 65.2% schools are having useable toilet facilities, and 78% schools with library books 19.6% schools are having computer facilities. Most of the village schools even though have computers, no trained teachers to teach or utilise the facilities. Because of these the children will lose interest in the study at the initial stage itself. It is very difficult to teach life skills to such children in the rural area.

Ability to read and write is foundation skills without which children cannot progress academically. But the present scenario of education is not giving much importance to it. A survey conducted by ASER reveals that, from 2008 to 2014, the reading habit among children is declined drastically [10]. 20% of the children who are studying in third or fifth standard cannot

read the sentences or sometime the letters itself. 14% students can read only the words and not sentences. Such children when they reach the adolescents stage, they will lose interest in study. Apart from this they face difficulty in facing challenges of life, difficulty in joining with other children etc. Very easily they can be attracted towards the anti-social activities or they will be depressed and go for committing suicide also.

Challenges in its implementation

Adolescence, a vital stage of growth and development, marks the period of transition from childhood to adulthood. It is characterized by rapid physiological changes and psychosocial maturation. Adolescence is also a stage where young people extend their relationships beyond parents and family and are intensely influenced by their peers and the outside world in general. As adolescents mature cognitively, their mental process becomes more analytical. They are now capable of abstract thinking, better articulation and of developing an independent ideology. These are truly the years of creativity, idealism, buoyancy and a spirit of adventure. But these are also the years of experimentation and risk-taking, of giving in to negative peer pressure, of taking uninformed decisions on crucial issues, especially relating to their bodies and their sexuality. Adolescence is thus a turning point in one's life, a period of increased potential but also one of greater vulnerability. To protect the children from such confusion proper life skill education at the school level is essential. But in India there are various drawbacks in implementing this form of education.

1. In India, the quality of primary education is declining from last several years. Especially in the rural area the children are not getting qualified education.
2. Presently the education is only for documentation. That means the teachers are spending whole year by preparing various documents as required by the rules and regulations of the government. The teachers may not get time to implement life skill education in the schools.
3. Now a days the children studying in the school only for the purpose of certificate. So they are also least bothered about life skill education
4. Most of the teachers once they join into government service stop their studies or fail to do higher education. It adversely affects to their personality and they themselves lag certain life skills.
5. The inventions of modern technology, change in the family system, nuclear families, the present way of life of parents, etc adversely effect upon the development of life skills
6. Globalisation which leads to adoption of various foreign education methods also adversely affects the students. Adoption of foreign method may not be suitable to the Indian education system.
7. Lack of stable education system is also another drawback for children. Various programmes like SSA, CCE, Trimester system, Semester Scheme, objective type

examination, descriptive examination, etc confuses not only the students but the teachers. So they are unable to insert life skills in their curriculum.

8. Lack of proper infrastructure facilities, students-teacher ratio etc also adversely affects the life skill education.
9. Under Right to Education Act if a child is not attending the school properly, it is the duty of teachers to visit the house and convince the child and parents. Because of this in most of the rural area, the teachers are getting additional burden and they cannot spend more time in teaching.

Conclusion

The survey report of UNICEF shows that the rate of enrolling of children in the school is increased. But at the same time the rate of infrastructure facilities in the schools are not increased. And without these facilities, it is very difficult to achieve the goals of our education. If we achieve other goals of education like knowledge of arithmetic, reading and writing and understanding skills etc it is enough to achieve life skills. Firstly we have to enhance quality of primary education. Same thing should be continued in the High School level that is during adolescents' stage. If it is achieved life skill education as a separate subject need not be taught in the schools. A good method of education gives best life skills to all the children.

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