

Life Skill Education: A Paradigm Shift in Education to Accelerate Holistic Development

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ABSTRACT

Education plays a crucial role in the growth and development of the learners. Students, as learners, are the primary beneficiary of education. Education provides students with the opportunity to develop their cognitive, social, emotional, and physical abilities, as well as to acquire knowledge and skills that will prepare them for future careers and life challenges. Life skills education is a holistic approach which nurtures all dimensions of human development and reinforces psychosocial skills. NCERT recognized the effectiveness of life skills education in promoting desirable behavior such as sociability, improved communication, conflict resolution, self-awareness, stress management etc. Considering the importance of life skill education all over the world, it is being implemented in the curriculum. It has been seen through many research studies that intervention programs of life skills education, has a significant impact on a student's academic achievement as well as his mental health. CBSE and UGC have adopted Life skills education and implemented it in the curriculum of school education and undergraduate program respectively. The present paper focuses on the importance of life skills education and the benefits of imparting life skill education in our curriculum.

Keywords: Life skills education, WHO, CBSE, UGC, skills education, intervention programme

Skills refer to the abilities or competencies that an individual possesses, which enable them to perform specific tasks or carry out certain activities effectively. These can be acquired through education, training and experience. Hence, the qualities that individuals can develop to lead a successful life are known as life skills. The term "life skills" is usually used for any of the skills needed to deal effectively with the challenges of life. According to WHO, life Skills refers to "The ability for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal with demands and challenges of everyday life" (WHO 1994, 1997). UNICEF defines life skills as, "A behaviour change or behaviour development approach designed to address a balance of three areas; knowledge, attitude and skills." Life skills education is an essential aspect of child development, survival and quality of life EFA (2000). It also ensures that

children and young people have access to quality education that includes life skills training and that teachers and other educators are trained to provide this education effectively.

UN agencies like UNESCO, WHO, UNICEF, etc., have looked upon life skills as the best tool for behaviour change. UNICEF promotes a holistic, lifelong and right based vision for education through life skills (UNICEF 2003, 2015). UNICEF also advocates for policies and programs that support life skills education, including initiatives that address gender equality, child protection, and other key issues that affect children and quality of

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lives.

WHO has given ten core life skills as below—

1. **Self-Awareness:** Self-awareness helps to recognize one's own strengths, weaknesses, values, and beliefs. By practicing self-awareness, individuals can improve their self-esteem, decision-making skills, and overall well-being.
2. **Empathy:** Empathy is an essential human trait that enables us to connect with others on a deeper level, to appreciate their experiences, and to respond to their needs in a meaningful way. It is the capacity to put oneself in someone else's shoes and imagine how they might feel in a particular situation. It can help us build bridges with others and form a sense of community. It is also a valuable skill in many professions, such as counseling, healthcare, education, and leadership, where understanding and responding to other people's emotions is essential.
3. **Critical thinking:** Critical thinking is a process of analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information and arguments to form well-reasoned and evidence-based conclusions. It involves the ability to objectively analyze and interpret information, identify assumptions and biases, consider alternative viewpoints, and make logical and informed decisions. Critical thinking is a valuable skill in many areas of life, including academic, professional, and personal contexts.
4. **Creative Thinking:** Creative thinking is the ability to generate and develop new and original ideas, concepts, or solutions to problems in innovative and imaginative ways. It involves breaking away from conventional, established ways of thinking and exploring new possibilities.
5. **Decision-making:** It is the process to deal effectively with challenges of everyday life and making decisions about our lives. Decision making is the process of selecting a course of action among several alternatives.
6. **Problem solving:** It is the process to deal effectively with problems and complex issues in our lives. It enables us to find the solution in a logical manner.

7. **Effective communication:** Communication is the ability to express ourselves, it can be verbally or nonverbally. An effective communication should be coherent for its receivers. It includes the act of conveying information or expressing oneself in a clear, concise, and accurate manner that is easily understood by the receiver. It involves the exchange of ideas, thoughts, and feelings between two or more people, with the intention of creating a shared understanding. Effective communication is essential in all aspects of life, from personal relationships to professional settings.
8. **Interpersonal relationships:** It is a social relationship or connection between people, where they interact with each other and establish interpersonal relationships.
9. **Coping with stress:** It is a technique that controls and recognizes the source of stress and acts in ways that improve everyday functioning.
10. **Coping with emotions:** Emotions influence our behaviour, so it is important to recognise emotions and be aware to respond appropriately.

Objectives

- ❑ To Understand the essence of life skill education.
- ❑ To explore the Importance of life skill education in today's context.
- ❑ To highlight the effectiveness of life skills education intervention programs.
- ❑ To discuss inclusion of life skills education in curriculum and classroom under various strategies.

Review of Related Literature

Life skills education programs are effective tools for acquisition of core skills. Skills can be developed in the learners through life skill education programmes (Veena & Vivek, 2010). Life skills education enhances psychosocial competencies in students (Vranda & Rao, 2011). Life skills education improves self concept and self confidence in adolescent students. There is a positive relationship between life skills and self-concept; which means that those students who possess life skills tend to perform better in all

aspects of life (Khera & Khosla, 2012). Life skills education approach helps to assist students to find new ways of learning. Life skills education improves learners' behavior and helps to make decisions that can lead to positive values (Githaiga *et al.* 2014). Life skills education approach enhances study skills among school going adolescents, and has an extremely high impact of life skills education programs for enhancing study skills (Daisy & Nair, 2018). Life skills education program develops self-esteem among Tribal youths (Parmar & Jain, 2019). Life skills intervention programs work towards meeting the challenges of everyday life and help to develop different dimensions of lives (Rani & Menka, 2019).

Current Status of Life Skills Education in India

According to NCF 2005 the basic concern of education is to enable children to deal with challenges of everyday life and develop their potential abilities (p.2, NCF 2005). Curriculum content must be linked to challenges of life and must be compatible with personality development, physical fitness, creative and critical thinking, and mental health (p.125, NCF 2005). Schools are now recognized as agencies that can teach Life skills to students. CBSE also encourages schools to incorporate life skills education into their teaching and learning practices across all subjects. CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education) has recognized the relevance of life skills education in the overall development of students and has made it a part of its curriculum. In 2010 CBSE introduced the grading system as well as continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCEP) system as a part of life skills training program. Life skills education has been introduced by various state governments in their school curriculum like Delhi, Karnataka, Jharkhand, and Rajasthan etc. CBSE also conducts various workshops and training programs for teachers to help them incorporate life skills education into their teaching practices effectively. Broadly Life skills education is being conducted in two ways; Life skills education as a part of curriculum with grades and without grades. The National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) being the coordinating agency adopted a co-curricular approach in life skills education and worked through the three National

School System- CBSE, NVS and KVS. CBSE has developed a teacher manual for life skills, it includes a theoretical background for the importance of life skills in the classroom and suggestions for activities that develop life skills. Overall, CBSE recognizes the importance of life skills education in the holistic development of students and is taking steps to ensure that it is integrated into the curriculum and teaching practices in schools.

According to UGC life skills play an important role in increasing the employability as well as self-esteem of the students. UGC (2019) has introduced Life skills as the part of curriculum in all the undergraduate programs in India. As per the quality mandate of University Grants Commission, it is an initiative for providing life skills to students in the Institution of Higher education. In order to implement a continuous and comprehensive evaluation system both scholastic and co-curriculum activities for all round development of students is mandatory.

Demand of Life Skills Education in India

India is a diverse nation, people of different cultures, caste and community live in India. Entering in the 21st century, where the literacy rate has been 70.3% (NSO) National Statistical Office, and technology dominates all aspects of life, still social evils such as child marriage, Dowry system, Poverty, Malnutrition, Starvation widespread in the society. Risk-taking behaviour in adults develops the attitude to protect themselves from a multitude of vulnerable social environments.

Strategies to Imparting Life Skills Education in Classroom

Role play: Role play is the act of imitating or pretending to be someone else's character and behavior, who is different from yourself in order to learn new skills or attitudes. Role play is used in training courses, language learning, psychotherapy, social roles etc. it especially helps to develop empathy in a person.

Brainstorming: Brainstorming is a technique to find a conclusion or solution for a specific situation or particular problem, to gather New and creative ideas. It enhances students' imagination and creativity and students spontaneously contribute their ideas in discussion. All the ideas given by

students are appraised without criticism and after the session the ideas are evaluated. Activities like storyboarding, mind mapping, word games, enhance the brainstorming.

Games: Games involve mental and physical participation of students. It helps to develop mental and physical health by the active participation of students. Games are a universal part of human experience and present in all cultures. Pencil and paper games, card games, puzzles, memory games, touch and feel boxes can be introduced in game activities.

Story-Telling: A story is presented by using story books, pictures and slides. It represents different narratives, which are shared as a means of cultural presentation, education, ethics, moral values, and entertainment. It helps to enhance the creative thinking of the students and open various dimensions of a situation. Some activities like puppets, story stones, family photos, drawing games can be introduced in this activity.

Open discussion: Discussion is the process of talking or an action about something in order to reach a decision or exchange ideas and opinions. Discussion helps to develop listening and communication skills of students. Activities like socratic seminars, gallery walks, hot seats, dialogues, talk shows can promote this activity.

Debate: Debate is a discussion on a topic or a specific problem in a formal way. It is a process of expressing different opinions by different people before deciding the final outcome of the discussion.

Group work: Group activities carry out a task into small groups. In group activities students know each other in a better way and learn to help their peers. Activities like matching, sorting, ranking, role-play, sharing can be included to enhance the group work activities.

Field work: Field work involves learners to investigate the facts directly with their own experiences. It includes interviews, surveys, observations etc, which provides first-hand learning experience to learners.

Situation analysis: Situation analysis is the collection of methods or techniques to find out a solution to a specific problem.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Life skills can promote cognitive, behavioral, emotional and motivational skills. To enable behavioral transformation in children the system needs to enrich the school curriculum with highly effective life skill training programs. Effective life skills training can modify behaviors and improve interpersonal relationships in adolescents. Life skills can improve study habits resulting in academic performance and achievements. It can be further looked at non formal education too. Schools are the appropriate place to promote life skills, the identified risk behavior can be modified using life skills training along with parental involvement. This indicates that collaboration of schools and family enhances life skills development in adolescents. In the rural area the knowledge gap can be improved using a life skill approach. The interventions are provided more in terms of rural and urban people but less focused on marginalized society for empowerment. Life skills training enhances resilience to the individuals after the program. The effectiveness of the training is known when it is monitored in everyday lives. The life skill education given at early stages of life will help them during life situations. Brain science acknowledges that "certain skills such as participation, communication or negotiation which get initiated in early childhood are better consolidated in later years". Early intervention helps children to socialize and develop certain coping skills to face the challenges later in life, however, the follow up of such skills would yield long term benefits.

The new paradigm urges to harmonize hand and heart in the classroom. If we educate the students in the classroom by bringing the heart and mind along with education, then the days are not far away when we can easily develop human traits through education. In the foreign countries life skills education is used as a prevention in the field of mental health and the outcome of learning because prevention is better than cure, in India intervention programs used for enhancing life skill education, it should be used in the form of prevention also for better results.

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