



NEED TO AWAKEN EMPATHY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

Lack of fruitful education appears to be one of the reasons why, the entire world is facing the ill effects of youth committed terrorism, sex abuse, drug addiction, crimes and violence. Apart from population explosion, religious fanaticism, technology addiction one of the obvious major root causes of this scenario is lack of quality education or seemingly lack of impact of existing education on our students. The present education system at 10+2 stage seems to be too academic, exam oriented, far more pressurizing, deficient in concrete ideas for all round development and lacks a meaningful curriculum. Moreover, Junior college students are passing through a phase of major physiological, mental, emotional and social changes, get caught up in a rat race of securing marks hence undergo immense pressures. It is proven that empathy plays an important role in adolescent development. By means of empathy one's kindness and motivation to care may be directed towards someone else's feelings and need, rather than misdirected. (Hakansson, 2003) Social responsibility values motivate a person's behaviours that involve helping others and contributing to society. (Wray-Lake and Syvertsen, 2011) All the above points towards an urgency to develop a program which can awaken empathy and social responsibility in the middle adolescents as a part of their schedule. The programs should aim to rouse empathy, enhance youth's decision making skill and give a sense of self-satisfaction. Thus awakening of empathy and social responsibility in youth will be beneficial for the youth, nation and world. The future of our nation depends on the quality education of our adolescents.

Keywords: *Awaken, Empathy, Social responsibility, Adolescents*

INTRODUCTION

Only education is capable of saving our societies from possible collapse, whether violent, or gradual."JEAN PIAGET

Current adolescent educational programs seem to be deficient in value based experiences and fail to awaken empathy and socially responsible behaviour (Dey and associates, 2008) in

today's youth. This in turn, leads to students' disinterest and boredom towards education and life. Lack of fruitful education appears to be one of the reasons why, the entire world is facing the ill effects of youth committed (17629 cases of adolescent crimes in 2005 as in Kongsuwan, Suttharungsee, Purnell, Lynn 2012) terrorism, sex abuse, drug addiction, crimes (WHO 2006) and violence (Dahlberg and Potter 2001, Mytton, DiGuisseppi, Gough, Taylor, Logan 2009). It is time that through education we should try to awaken these dormant qualities in our youth for the well-being of the youth, nation and world.

Today's adolescents (Junior College students) are fortunate enough to enjoy luxuries of life for e.g. wearing branded clothes, footwear, owning latest mobiles, tabs, laptops, bikes, etc. Yet they feel neglected, bored and disinterested (Lindner and Johns, 2002) in the daily activities. The present education system fails to appeal them, motivate them or create meaning to their lives. It is time that through education we try to develop programs for youth which will help to awaken these dormant qualities in our youth and bring about a shift of frame of reference by self-assessment through social comparison (Sestito, Cozzolino, Menna, Ragozoni, Sica, 2010) for the well-being of the youth, nation and world. In life it is our frame of reference that helps in our future decisions, choices and happiness. With this logic the researcher sensed the need to develop a program for the urban adolescents to awaken empathy and social responsibility in them.

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

EDUCATION

“Education does not mean only acquiring the knowledge of subjects but to develop complete and responsible human being. The highest function of education is to bring about an integrated individual who is capable of dealing with life as a whole”.... Krishnamurthy. J (2000)

Few recommendations stated in the NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION (1986) are as follows:- (8.4) The growing concern over the erosion of essential values and an increasing cynicism in society has brought to focus the need for readjustments in the curriculum in order to make education a forceful tool for the cultivation of social and moral values. (8.5) In our culturally plural society, education should foster universal and eternal values, oriented towards the unity and integration of our people. Such value education should help eliminate obscurantism, religious fanaticism, violence, superstition and fatalism.

STAGES OF EDUCATION

The current pattern of our Indian educational system as per the recommendations of Kothari Commission is 10 + 2 + 3. The +2 stage include Std. XI and Std. XII which is known as

Junior College and is a link between the secondary and higher education, thus becoming the crucial years for the adolescent students. The future of our nation depends on the quality education of our adolescents. Adolescent education is the backbone of the country's development and it is unfortunate that there is no uniformity at this level in our country. (Agarwal. K, 2006)

ADOLESCENCE

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and World Health Organization defines adolescents as being between the ages of 10 and 19. One in 5 people worldwide are adolescents between 10 and 19 years of age and 85% of adolescents live in developing countries. (Keeney, Cassata and McElmury, 2004; as in Moeini, Shafii, Hidamia, Babaii, Birashk, 2008) Adolescence is a time of great change which have a profound effect on adolescents' motivation and learning (Dale Schunk, Judith Meece, 2005); a period of transition between childhood to adulthood that involves biological, cognitive and socio-emotional changes. (Singh and Udainiya, 2009)

Moeini, Shafii, Hidamia, Babaii, Birashk (2008) quote that adolescence is a dynamic time in an individual's life, exciting and challenging, can be extremely stressful or is a time when fluctuations across situation are particularly noteworthy. (Blos 1962, Demo and Savin-Williams, 1992, Harter 1990, Leahy and shirk 1985, Rosenberg 1986; as in Harter, Waters, Whitesell 1998) Erikson's Psychosocial Stages suggest that adolescents build on all earlier experiences to develop a sense of self-identity.

The stages of adolescence can be separated into three: early (10-13 years of age), middle (14-17), and late (18-20). Physically, early adolescents are more concerned with their body image than next two stages. Cognitively, adolescents in middle and late stage, move to thinking abstractly and can develop reasoning skills. Emotionally, middle adolescents begin to develop a sense of identity. Socially, sexual interest develops further in middle adolescence with greater peer influence. Behaviourally, middle adolescents involve in more risk-taking. (ReCAPP, 2003)

Middle Adolescence (approximately 14-17 years) is characterized by movement towards independence through self-involvement, switching between unrealistic, high expectations and poor self-concept; feel that parents interfere with independence; extremely concerned with own appearance; effort to make new friends; strong emphasis on the new peer group; sadness due to psychological loss of the parents. (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry).

As documented by Esen (2012) adolescents begin to become independent from their parents, spend more time with their peers and think they are socially and emotionally supported by peers. (Dacey and Travers, 1996) Social needs such as feelings of belonging, acceptance and attachment, intensify during adolescence when, emotions are heightened and marked mood swings are common. (Harrington, 2001 as given by Valois, Zullig, Hunter, 2015)

EMPATHY

The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence..... Rabindranath Tagore

The word 'Einfühlung' (feeling into) coined by Lotze and Vischer was translated by Edward Titchener to Empathy which is derived from ancient Greek word – 'Empatheia' meaning affection, passion, partiality. Empathy is sensing another person's feelings as if one were that other person as per the Rogers humanistic theory (1957) as in Carlozzi, Bull, Stein, Ray and Barnes. (2002)

Empathy is defined as a fundamental skill that helps people anticipate, understand and experience another person's emotional reaction or point of view. (Davis and Franzoi, 1991; as in B.T. McWhirter et al, 2002) It is caring for other people and having a desire to help them, experiencing emotions that match other person's emotions, discerning what another person is thinking or feeling (Pijnenborg, Spikman, Jeronimus, Aleman, 2012) and involves being tender-hearted towards another person.

Hakansson (2003) noted that empathy connects otherwise isolated individuals (Barrett-Lennard, 1997; Davis, 1996); it's a process of humanizing objects, of reading or feeling ourselves into them (Titchener, 1942); and basis of all human interaction. Davis (1983) views empathy as a multidimensional phenomenon including four subscales-perspective taking, fantasy, empathic concern and personal distress.

Infants can connect emotionally with other human beings due to inborn empathetic ability but its development in growing children depends on their relationships with others. (Kidron and Fleischman, 2006; Sagi and Hoffman, 1994) Allamand, Steiger, Fend's (2015) 23 year longitudinal study, revealed a consistent change in social competencies later in adulthood too, with significant change in adolescent empathy. As empathy is an emotional foundation of caring for others, it may be the earliest developing precursor of social responsibility.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Education, in its broadest sense, is the means of the social continuity..... John Dewey

Social Responsibility is defined as a duty or obligation that an individual has to society, which can be rooted in the welfare of close one's or extended to broader community.

(Berman, 1997; Gallay, 2006; Kohlberg and Candee, 1984; Rossi, 2005) It is a social skill that helps adolescents to understand their roles as a part of community member (Berman, 1990); a person's concern for others' welfare, sense of duty, avoids destructive behaviour, civic involvement, and responsible attitude towards others (Scales, Blyth, Berkas, and Kielsmeier, 2000); a commitment everyone has towards the society – contributing towards social, cultural and ecological causes ; a sense of duty or obligation to contribute to the greater good, a personal value that manifests itself in our beliefs and the way we live with others. (Berman, 1997; Gallay, 2006; Kohlberg and Candee, 1984) Adolescents' undergo significant physical and cognitive growth and also encounter new situations, responsibilities and people. Thus, they need to interact with diverse people and social network, to be socially competent to adjust with new situations (Zimmer-Gembeck, Hunter and Pronk, 2007; Barnow, et al, 2004; Otsuki, 2003). (<http://www.ukessays.com/essays/psychology/study-into-the-social-responsibility-of-adolescents-psychology-essay.php>)

Research Article by Wray-Lake and Syvertsen (2011) reports that across disciplines, social responsibility is defined as reflecting concerns that extend beyond personal wants, needs, or gains (Gallay, 2006); and relationships with others and a moral sense of care and justice. (Berman, 1997)

The individual social responsibility includes the active engagement of each person towards what's happening in the community where we live and participation in the solving of some of the local problems. Only through a commitment to embrace and embed social responsibility into your personal value and belief system can you truly become socially responsible in all you do. (Workshop for Civic Initiatives Foundation (WCIF), Bulgaria)

NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF STUDY

GLOBAL YOUTH CONCERNS

The whole world is facing the ill effects of terrorism, sex and substance abuse, drug addiction, suicidal tendencies (CDE Centre for Disease control and prevention, 2011), crimes and violence. Apart from population explosion, religious fanaticism and technology addiction, one of the obvious major root causes of this scenario is, lack of quality education or seemingly lack of impact of existing education on our students.

A greater cause of concern is that major mishaps are being carried out by youth (Rower et al, 2010, Zuckerman, 1994) who get targeted due to a sense of disconnect. (Morrissey, Werner-Wilson, 2005) Rates of crime begins to rise in mid-teens and peaks at about age 18, with a great majority being committed by young people. (Eisner, 2002)

A floating issue of major concern is adolescents' increased electronic gaming of which 94% contained violence. (Haninger and Thompson, 2004) Apart from communication mobiles today are used for different applications such as cameras, internet, music player, games, social media, etc. and that abnormal behaviours, social problems and emotional conditions are related to its problematic use. (Isiklar, Sar and Durmuscelebi, 2013) Martinotti et al (2011) found that 91.75% of teenagers between 14 to 17 years have their own mobile phones, with a significant increase in problematic use of mobile phones (Bianchi and Phillips, 2005) leading to technological addiction, cause loneliness, anxiety due to lack of it, psychiatric and sleeping disorder, depression and physical symptoms such as headache and earache. (Augner and Hacker, 2010; Liao and Wan, 2010; Walsh, White and Young, 2010; Thomee, Harenstam and Hagberg, 2011)

McWhirter et al (2002) extensively studied issues like loneliness and self-esteem during adolescence and cited that, loneliness is a common experience during adolescence (Braggs et al, 1993); a significant problem reported by as many as 66% of high school and middle school students (Culp et al, 1995); that results from school, familial and peer difficulties such as depression, suicide ideation and violence. (Crick and Ladd, 1993; Brage and Merdith, 1994; Loenig et al, 1994); Culp et al 1995) and that empathy is negatively correlated with loneliness. (Davis, 1983) Although stress is not always detrimental but could be advantageous and needed by some individuals to function effectively, (Kiran-Esen and Aktug, 2007); Lashbrook, 2000; Mark, 2004).

The review of Keith King, Strunk, Sorter (2011) reported the details given below. 10-15% teenagers show some signs of depression at any point of time as per population studies (Substance abuse and mental Health services administration, 2003); currently suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth aged between 15-24 years (Heron et al, 2006); every 2 hours and 3 minutes one youth commit suicide (McIntosh USA, 2002); and more than 50% of which have major depression. (Greenberg, Velting, Shaffer, 2006; Miller Eckert, 2009) Depression seriously impairs functioning and is associated with a greater risk for suicide, suicidal behaviours and drug and alcohol abuse (Snyder, 1998); which is caused by acute events such as break up with romantic partner, disciplinary crisis or death of family members. (Valois, Zullig, Hunter, 2015) Adolescence is a crucial period in development of smoking behaviour. (Lotrean, Mesters and de Vries, 2012) Peer pressure has a negative impact on adolescents' psychosocial efficacy (Sim, 2000) and self-respect. (De Rosier and Marcus, 2005)

To sum up adolescents suffer from mental illnesses, psychological distress, depression, anxiety, negative emotions which leads to suicidal ideations (Muris, 2001), drug and substance abuse (Anhalt and Klein, 1976; Ford and Schroder, 2009; Weiss et al, 1992) and sexual risk behaviours (Cooper et al, 1998; Farrel and Danish, 1993; Hessler and Fainsibler-Katz, 2010 as in Robert F. Valois, Keith J. Zullig, Amy A Hunter, 2015)

INDIAN SCENARIO OF ADOLESCENT EDUCATION

India is home to 253 million adolescents, young people in the age group of 10-19 years who comprise 21% of the country's population (Census 2011) The present education system at 10+2 stage seems to be too academic, exam oriented, far more pressurizing, deficient in concrete ideas for all round development (Morrissey, Werner-Wilson, 2005) and lacks a meaningful curriculum.

Together in Std. XIth and Std. XIIth students are available for very short time, for the purpose of development. Within this period there is a challenge of completing loads of syllabus, ample Board exam formalities and series of exams to be conducted. The fact that there is very little scope for some crucial activities needed for the student's growth further demotivates the teachers and institutions to plan for the same. Due to these reasons adolescent education lacks proper training in terms of value inculcation, life skill training, self- esteem, rousing empathy and much more.

Junior college students are passing through a phase of major physiological, mental, emotional and social changes. Moreover, they get caught up in a rat race of securing marks and more marks, due to which they undergo immense pressure may it be parental, peer, societal or due to self-aspirations. All these factors lead to confused and indecisive state of youth and additionally hordes of exams and entrances lie ahead which barely allows them to understand their own likings and make proper choice of career. In this sensitive and vulnerable age adolescents are burdened with very complex and crucial step of making career decisions, which is a ridiculous and debatable fact. Lots of energy and aggression, a highlight of this age, seems to be imbalanced or unattended due to monotonous cramming and rote learning based syllabus.

‘Adolescents in most Eastern countries have to take entrance exams for both high school and college, due to which students are pressurized. With longer school days, cram schools, private tutors these adolescents have far less time for after school-leisure and informal socializing with friends than American adolescents’. (Chaudhary and Sharma, 2012)

The researcher through own experience has observed that newly enrolled mid-adolescents, naturally and obviously, tend to get driven away by the freedom (as compared to school) and a totally different College atmosphere. Most of their classmates are unfamiliar, coming from a various backgrounds; be it economic, political, cultural, social or intellectual. Thus, the vulnerable, anxious and excited student struggles to cope up with new situation and choose a healthy company. Also there are pressures caused by increased risk taking tendency of this age, clashes and conflicts, heart breaks, consequences of undesirable influences.

In the current scenario urban youth mechanically shuffles between classes, tuition and college leading to improper eating and study habits, poor health conditions and lack of confidence and concentration. This leads to producing clones of confused, depressed and demotivated youth community which in the long run can prove disastrous not only to their own life but also to our nation and whole world. As discussed earlier many of these frustrated isolated and dejected youth resort to drugs, violence get involved in crimes and delinquencies or get hooked up by gangsters and anti-social groups of the society.

Nancy O'Neill (2012) reported that more than 90 percent of twenty four thousand students surveyed at three institutions agreed that education for personal and social responsibility- which encompasses outcomes such as striving for excellence, contributing to a larger community and taking seriously the perspective of others- should be a major focus of college.

WHY AWAKEN EMPATHY?

It is proven that empathy plays an important role in adolescent development. New perspective of Research is study of adolescence by directing increased attention to the importance of building on adolescent strengths and abilities as a means to promote positive outcomes and well-being. (Park, 2004; as in Moksnes, Lohre and Espnes, 2013) The researcher respects the suggestion from Valois, Zullig, Hunter (2015) to develop awareness of one's emotional state, develop capacity for empathy involving emotions of others, skill development to degree where adolescent can begin to trust their ability to reach their goals when faced with emotional laden interactions with others.

Eisenberg and Miller (1987) found that higher levels of empathy in children were associated with cooperative and socially competent behaviour and that children with higher empathy for positive and negative emotions are more social competent. (Saliquist et al, 2009, Zhou et al, 2002) The ability to empathize is important for maintenance of meaningful relationships, associated with higher levels of conflict resolution skills in adolescents. (De Wied et al, 2007) Eisenberg and Miller (1987) found that empathy generally had moderate positive correlation with prosocial behaviour. Eisenberg (2002) has proposed that developing empathy, altruism

and other humanitarian behaviours among the world's children could reduce aggression and destructive tendencies and lead to a focus on cooperation and concern for a larger community of human mankind.

Review by O'Malley W.J. (1999) recorded that empathy is a potential psychological motivator for helping others in distress and an important part of social and emotional development (McDonald and Messinger, 2011) or an important precursor to and motivator for pro-social or helping behaviours; an evolved mechanism that promotes altruistic behaviour as per De Waal, 2008.

The literature review of Barr and Higgins-D'Alessandro (2007) reveals that empathy is a fundamental social skill that enables the individual to anticipate, understand and experience others point of view (Davis and Franzoi, 1991); a critical determinant of social transactions, (Feshback,1978); includes feelings of warmth, compassion, and concern for others. (Davis, 1983); and seems to play a key role in the development of social understanding and positive social behaviours. (Staub, 1971) Very few researchers have focused on positive youth development and how to promote empathy during adolescence although interest in it has started increasing (Eisenberg et al, 2002, Eisenberg and McNally)

As compiled by de Kemp, Overbeek, de Wied, Engels and Scholte (2007) although parental support may protect children and adolescents against developing anti-social behaviour problems (Wright and Cullen, 2001) recent studies suggest that low empathic children are less responsive to parental practices (Oxford, Carell and Hughes, 2003) and may be less influenced by parental praise and encouragement. (Lahey, Waldman and McBurnett, 1999) It inhibits the effects of positive parenting as studied by Wootton et al (1997) and Oxford et al. (2003) with an increasing evidence that the combination of lack of empathy along with some factors strongly influences anti-social behaviour (Frick and Morris, 2004)

Empathy is an important individual characteristic in development of anti-social and criminal behaviour, (Jolliffe and Farrington, 2004; Lahey and Waldman, 2003) that may inhibit or prevent harmful behaviours towards others. (Evans, Heriot and Fredman, 2002) Empathic responses are positively related to prosocial behaviours and negatively related to bullying. (Miller and Eisenberg, 1988; Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998; as in Ang and Goh, 2010) By means of Empathy one's kindness and motivation to care (practicality) may be directed towards someone else's feelings and need, rather than misdirected. (Hakansson, 2003)

WHY AWAKEN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY?

Social responsibility means eliminating corruption, irresponsibility or unethical behaviour that might bring harm to the community, its people, or the environment before that behaviour

happens. (Akhtar and Hossain, 2011) With the increasing importance of social competence in adolescents recent trends in the literature reflect growing interest in studying social skills of adolescents, although a majority of the studies were mainly focused on adolescent's interpersonal relationship with peers (Daniels and Leaper, 2006; Ciarrochi and Heaven, 2008; Erath, Flanagan, and Bierman, 2008; Jonkmann, Trautwein, and Lüdtkke, 2009; Barker, 2009). Walker and Gresham (1997) suggests fostering positive social relationships among adolescents for preventing violence in schools; Lee et al (2001) stressed importance of social connectedness in developing healthy relationships and in contributing to overall psychological well-being and a significant contribution by Hatcher et al (1994) that empathy, coping skills and self-esteem may influence the social and emotional loneliness of youth who are at high risk for drop-out, delinquency and other problems. Kawabata, Cross, Nishioka, Shimai (1999) suggested including activities to raise individual's awareness of his/her competencies, uniqueness and relationship with others, respect others, etc. Social skills and may be an important factor in learning right from wrong. (Aksan and Kochananska, 2005) Trust in humanity is the base for social responsibility and can prompt civic contributions (Flanagan, 2003) while empathy and emotion regulation are the precursors.

According to Wray-Lake and Syvertsen (2011) social responsibility values can motivate a person's behaviours that involve helping others and contributing to society and offers insights into how individuals view themselves in relation to others. A person's civic behaviours and social responsibility are mutually influential. Numerous obstacles such as time constraints, stress related to meeting one's own basic needs, social norms that emphasize competition rather than concern for others, or lack of opportunity prevent youth from acting on social responsibility and which need to be addressed. Social responsibility is conceptually related to moral development, empathy, altruism, and prosocial values and behaviours and has direct implications for positive social change through the cultivation of values and actions.

Adolescents, who reported having friends exhibiting prosocial behaviors' were less likely to engage in violence and cigarette smoking (Prinstein et al, 2001) As such, socially responsible individuals are known to act on moral and prosocial grounds. Various settings such as family, peer, school, and community environments can plant the seeds of social responsibility. Families, peers, schools, and communities can create opportunities to socialize social responsibility in children and adolescents.

According to Kongsuwan (2012) cultivating social responsibility as a positive deterrent to violence is essential and school is an important social setting for cultivating adolescents' social responsibility which should be promoted through collaborative social support between

home and school, also focus on adolescents' social responsibility toward violence is needed to collaborate and reach an agreement between school and family. Communities have begun requiring that high schools include in their curricula the cultivation of social responsibility and violence avoidance for all adolescents. (Dahlberg and Potter, 2001, Mytton, DiGuisseppi, Gough, Taylor, Logan, 2009)

CONCLUSION

“Education is the most powerful tool of social change”.....Nelson Mandela

All the above points towards an urgency to develop a program which can awaken empathy and social responsibility in the middle adolescents as a part of their schedule. Although the current National Policy and National Curricular framework suggest the same, very few researchers have explored this area moreover on middle adolescent groups in current background. The positive approach by teachers, school counsellors and parents would be valuable for cultivating adolescents' social responsibility. School should encourage parents to try enhance it and encourage classroom to participate in positive social engagement.

The adolescents' growing sense of responsibility will surely influence the responsibility during their adulthood and a peaceful behaviour. Youth form a major percentage of today's population. If we are dreaming of a peaceful and caring world in future as educationists we need to give opportunities to inculcate proper values and divert youth energy to positive action.

The programs should aim to rouse empathy, enhance youth's decision making skill and give a sense of self-satisfaction. Awakening of empathy and social responsibility in youth will be beneficial for the youth, nation and world. So, the researcher felt a dire need and decided to develop a program for adolescents to awaken empathy and social responsibility at Junior College level.

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