



LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION: NEEDS AND STRATEGIES

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Abstract

The education, today, needs to enable a child to deal effectively with the environment, make maximum use of resources, discern available opportunities and face the challenges of society. To enable these behavioural transformations in the child, the system needs to enrich the school curriculum with a highly researched and effective life skills training programme. Life skills are essentially those abilities that help promoting mental well being and competence in young people as they face the realities of life. Life skills education is an effective tool for empowering the youth to act responsibly, take initiative and control over stress and emotions. 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 such as alcoholism, drug abuse and casual relationships.. In this paper the the need of life skill education has been discussed and some activities are suggested to to develop the life skills among students.



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The individual today is confused and baffled by the exposure to the limitless information and choices based on that orientation. Although not lacking in knowledge, the learner certain times find it difficult to face the challenges of the day to day life. Education today is unable to prepare the learner to fight with frustration, anxiety and depression. There is a lot of stress on achievement and performance from the teachers and parents. Children are pushed to do much more than customary to get the desired acceptance and acknowledgement from the family and society circle.(Subita, 2013) Sometimes when the pressure of subscribing to high expectations gets overwhelming, they fall back and are labelled by the school and society as a

child with ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder). Whichever way the story goes, the end products of our schooling system are children who have moderate to low self-esteem and self-concept, moderate to low tolerance for frustration, and are poor problem solvers and poor decision makers. (Subita, 2013)

Our education system is mechanical and stereotype, leading the learner towards materialism. It is treating the students as products. The all-round development of the child is unobserved. Faith in human capacity defined in terms of ability to assess a problem situation and find solutions, capacity for convergent and divergent thinking, effective interpersonal skills, ability to communicate effectively, has been undervalued.

There is a dire need to change in terms of philosophy of education of our system of education. It needs to be more humanistic. The emphasis should be given on creative thinking and reasoning and personal growth of the individual. Every individual is capable of thought and reason, a free will and is capable of making choices and taking decisions. Swami Vivekananda has said that education is the divine perfection already existing in man. Every child has maximum potential and innate powers to learn. The education, today, needs to enable a child to deal effectively with the environment, make maximum use of resources, discern available opportunities and face the challenges of society. To enable these behavioural transformations in the child, the system needs to enrich the school curriculum with a highly researched and effective life skills training programme. An empowered (empowered with life skills) child has the competence to cope with the challenges of life using the available resources even amidst such adversities. (Bharath and Kishor, 2010)

Life skills

According to Wikipedia, life skills are problem solving behaviours used appropriately and responsibly in the management of personal affairs. They are a set of human skills acquired via teaching or direct experiences that are used to handle problems and questions commonly encountered in daily life. Life skill refers to a positive behavior, that encompasses a mix of knowledge, behavior, attitude and values and designates the possession of certain skills and know how to do something positively, or reach a goal. The strength of positive behavior depends upon the depth of skills acquired by the individual. (Nair, Subasree and Ranjan, 2010). Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enables individual to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Life skills from perspective are essentially those activities which help to promote mental well being and competence among young people as they face the realities of life. It is based on the

philosophy that young people should be qualitatively empowered to take responsibility for their action. (WHO, 1993)

Life skills include 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.

The Ten core Life Skills as laid down by WHO are:

1. Self-awareness
2. Empathy
3. Critical thinking
4. Creative thinking
5. Decision making
6. Problem Solving
7. Effective communication
8. Interpersonal relationship
9. Coping with stress
10. Coping with emotion

Need of Life skills: Life skills act as facilitators to strengthen the survival capacities of the individual by providing him an orientation to basic education, major health issues, social and basic management skills for active community participation. Life skills are essential for:

- The promotion of healthy child and adolescent development;
- Prevention of key causes of child and adolescent death, disease and disability;
- Socialization;
- Preparing young people for changing social situation;

Therefore, life skills not only contribute towards one's personal growth and development, but these also make an individual interesting and dynamic. Life skills help an individual to improve his working capacity as he will be able to contribute and participate effectively in workplace situation. Life skills are developed as a result of a constructive processing of information, impressions, encounters and experience,-both individual and social – that are apart of one's daily life and work and the rapid changes that occur in the course of one's life. Life skills are essentially those abilities that help promoting mental well being and competence in young people as they face the realities of life (Nair, Subasree and Ranjan, 2010). These skills enhance the ability of the person in this rapid transforming environment and empower them to make aware about their future life. Life skills are essential to any type of educational or training organization system and can be introduced at any stage or level of education.

Life Skills education: The life skill education is a programme where life skills are imparted in a supportive and effective learning environment. Life skills education is essential for all

children and especially for adolescents because young blood of us seem to be most vulnerable to behavior related health problems. Life skill education is an emerging area of scientific study. The genesis of the life skills education approach in the recent decades lies in a significant movement to review the basis of social science like Psychology, Sociology and Social Work (Nair, Subasree and Ranjan, 2010).

Life skills education is a value added programme for young generation to understand self and able to assess their abilities and areas of development. It aims to provide students with various strategies to make healthy choice that contribute to a meaningful life. As a matter of fact life skills are objectives of holistic education. A parallel can be drawn between objectives of education mentioned in Delors Commission Report (1993) with life skills. The life skills may be grouped in to four objects of education proposed in the report of Delors Commission. (UNESCO 2005) Thus learning to know comprises knowledge and critical thinking, learning to do implies practical skills, learning to be is synonymous with personal skill while learning to live is all about social skills (Sengupta, Sinha & Mukhopadhyay, 2012).

Among the adolescents, boredom, rebellion, disorientation, peer pressure and curiosity are the host of factors that promoting high risk behaviour such as alcoholism, drug abuse and casual relationships. The psychological push factors such as the inability to tackle emotional pain, conflicts, frustrations and anxieties about the future are often the driving force for high risk behaviour. Life skills education is an effective tool for empowering the youth to act responsibly, take initiative and control over stress and emotions. 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.

Life skill Education Strategies

Life skills education can be designed to be spread across the curriculum, to be a separate subject or to be in integration. Following are some techniques to enhance life skills in students:

Brain Storming: Students actively generate variety of ideas about a particular topic or question quickly and spontaneously by using their imagination. Whole class can generates the creative ideas and a healthy discussion can be started on these ideas, it is essential to evaluate the pros and cons of each idea according certain fixed criteria.

Story Telling: A story is told or read by students or teacher by using picture, book, comic, slide etc. Students are motivated to think critically about the issue (health related, cleanliness,

drug addiction etc.) raised through the plot of story. It helps the students to use their creative thinking write stories, making comparison and helping people to discover the solution of problems through healthy discussion.

Debates: Debate a definite problem or issue is presented before the students and they must take a position on resolving the problem or issue. Various issues and problems related to health, social evils can be raised and discussed. Debate allows the students to defend a position (favour or against) that may means a lot to them and provide opportunities to practice higher thinking skills.

Discussion: Discussion helps the students by deepen their understanding about the content and provide opportunities to learn from one another. Discussion helps in developing skills of listening, assertiveness and empathy. It also helps to develop the communication skill of students.

Role playing: It provides an excellent opportunity for developing various life skills especially empathy as in role playing students has to play the role of other person. A student learns how one might handle a potential situation in real life. This helps in increasing insight into one's own feeling.

Buzz Group: Students during this activity are divided into small group of five or six members and they have to carry out a task. By doing so, students know each other better and learn to help their peers.

Games: Games promote active learning, decision making, discussion and fun. It promotes healthy competition among participants as they work hard to prove their talents. It enables students to use their knowledge, attitude and skills.

Situation Analysis: During situation analysis, students are allowed to explore problems and safely test solutions. It provides opportunities to work hard, share feelings and develop critical thinking. Other important methods to facilitate life skills learning include peer supported learning, practical community development projects, audio-visual activities i.e. music, dance and theatre. Life skill education cannot be facilitated on the basis of information or discussion alone. It is not only an active learning process, but it must also include experimental learning i.e. practical experience, and reinforcement of the skills for each learner in a supportive learning environment.

Conclusion: Life skill education lays the foundation for learning skills which enhance self direction of the individual. It would be a way of empowering youth to build their lives and their dreams. It would be a means of handholding them through the critical stages in their life

and helping them tap their potential to the fullest. Thereby, it is hoped that the current education system with its oppressive rigidity would open up and make life skills education a part of its mainstream curriculum. This would enable the country to build individuals who believe in themselves, who are efficient leaders and administrators, who are able to understand their potentials and achieve them. (Subita, 2013) By realising these skills he will be able to monitor his own understanding and learning needs. He will have the commitment to learning as life long process.

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