

Morality and Life skills: The need and importance of life skills education

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Abstract

Education lays the foundation of personality and it is necessary for all-round development of learners. Education is important for character building and moral development also. Life skills play an important role in preparing the foundation of a good character for a well developed personality. Delors report 'learning the treasure within' emphasize on education to be able for Learning to know, Learning to do, Learning to be and Learning to live together with others, so that it can result into a happy life (Delors, 1998). Well developed personalities and socially adjusted person are able to lead a happy life. World Health Organization specified ten core life skills which are the basis of the formation of a good personality by developing certain characters into the students. Rousseau stated that a proper education during childhood is the basis of happiness in future. Life skills are those skills which make children able to deal with everyday situations for leading a happy life. This paper is concerned with the necessary life skills, their effect on children's development and the way of implementation of life skills education during schooling.

Keywords: life skills, morality, curriculum, education, schools

1. Introduction

Education is the medium by which individuals achieves success in their life, society and the world. The objective of education is overall and holistic development of the child which prepares healthy and intellectual human resources to the society. In the present era of science and technology, education has undergone several changes with the impact of urbanization, globalization privatization, and industrialization on it. Many other issues such as lack of family values, poverty, population explosion, lack of jobs, mental pressure, suicide, value erosion are also affecting youth and resulting in disturbance in their social, psychological, emotional, physical and overall development. Everyday increasing pressure of studies, cut-throat competition, lack of job security, are also the adverse things. These issues later limit the capabilities and potential of youth, and even cause other social problems in them such as smoking, alcoholism, drug abuse, anti-social activities.

Overcoming these problems among young generation is a great challenge and only education has a solution for it. The present educational system should be able to support and prepare the youngsters to deal with such problems and prepare them to live a happy life. Education should be able to develop those skills in young generation which can transform them to be an intelligent, social, and well adjusted citizen. Life skills provide solution for the above problems by developing emotional and social skills and personalities of learners. A well balanced life skills education programme is necessary to develop these basic capabilities of students and to nurture their abilities to deal with the everyday changing needs of the society and the world (Prajapati *et al.*, 2017) [2].

If we perform a google search for 'utility of life skills' we find About 52,90,000 results in 0.49 seconds which shows the importance and relevance of the topic (Google, 2017) [3].

The aim of education is to prepare such human beings who are happy within themselves as well as with others and to create such approach for knowledge that children can use their

knowledge and develop throughout their lives as they learn to know, to do, to be and to live together with others (Michalos A.C., 2007) [4]. Life skills are the abilities which can help and promote well-being and happiness among young generation.

Realizing the importance of the collaborative learning and lessons of life, United Nations declared the decade 2005-2014 as the UN Decade for Education and Sustainable Development for emphasizing on the essential role of education in improving the quality of life of current and future generations (O'Brien C., 2010) [5]. Recently new concept, sustainable happiness, has also been introduced by combining the principles of sustainability and findings from happiness studies resulting by education. Sustainable happiness is defined as the happiness that contributes to individual, community and global well-being without exploiting others, environment or future generations. Life skills education is capable to nurture these skills and habits among students so that they can contribute positively for the well-being of others. Cape Breton University, Canada, has also introduced Sustainable happiness as a course in the teacher education program.

2. The link of moral development and life skills

Moral development represents that which behaviors are acceptable with others and which is not. A sense of morality among students distinguishes right from wrong and makes individuals prepared to act according to the situation. The word *moral* means the code or customs of a people or the social behaviour that defines how we should live together (as the Delors report says). Thus, Moral education is concerned with helping children to acquire those virtues or habits that will help them for living good lives and making them able to be productive and contributing members of their communities, society and nation (<http://education.stateuniversity.com>, 2017) [6]. Moral development includes certain moral characters like, Humanity, Intelligence, Courage, Respect, Responsibility, Loyalty, and Humility (Ma H., 2009) [7]. Life skills help to develop these within the personalities of learners.

Moral development can be done by helping children to understand other's emotional feelings and to understand other's perspectives and life skill education is able to develop such understanding among children (Hassan A., 2017) [8]. To make learners of good moral character, discipline, behaviour, and cooperation, education should be able to incorporate certain qualities within the learners. These qualities can transform students and modify them into better adjusted and emotionally intelligent people. These qualities are a part of life skills and a good life skills training can make the foundation of these virtues and habits. Life skills help individuals and communities to solve problems, make informed decisions, think critically and creatively, empathize with others, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, and cope with and manage life in a productive manner.

Realizing the importance of life skills education, it has been introduced in Indian school educational system in syllabus of Central Board of Secondary Education India (CBSE) at various levels and in some other state boards too. In the today's modern society these skills are more relevant and in fact necessary to prepare students for facing present day challenges of life.

3. Life skills in education

The term 'life skills' covers a broad range of abilities, competencies and approaches. Life skills is concerned with the education, health, and social sectors and generally represents a set of skills for empowering cognitive, emotional, personal and interpersonal skills. These skills are essentially the abilities that promote mental and social well-being in situations encountered in the course of life (Wiedemann N., 2013) [9].

Life skills are personal and social skills needed to all people to act with confidence and competence with themselves and within the community and society. According to UNICEF and WHO, life skills are useful in several areas of life and a broad range of issues, like prevention of drug and substance abuse, prevention of HIV and AIDS, prevention of sexual violence, reduction of teenage pregnancy, prevention of suicides, peace education, environmental education, livelihood and income generation.

World Health Organization has defined life skills as – *The living skills or abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with demands and challenges of everyday life* (W.H.O. 1997) [10]. These basic life skills prepare an individual to deal with different aspects of life.

The United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF) defines life skills based education as basically being behaviour change or behaviour development. Generally the term life skills refers to a group of psycho-social and interpersonal skills which can help people make informed decisions, communicate effectively, and think critically (James O., 2010) [11].

Life skills are empowering skills that enable people to cope with the changes and challenges of life. Strengthening life skills helps students to meet the challenges and risks, maximize opportunities and solve problems in co-operative, non-violent ways. Life skills help to improve a person's sense of self as an individual and member of a family, community and society. (Wiedemann N., 2013) [9].

The basic elements of Life Skills education

The basic elements of life skills education involve a wide range of diverse learning elements, which including:

- Knowledge and understanding of rules and laws, human rights, diversity, democratic process, sustainable development, and concepts like justice, equality, democracy, and freedom.
- Skills and aptitudes like critical thinking, expressing opinions, analysing information, participating in discussions, negotiating, dispute resolution and participating in community actions.
- Values and attitudes like respecting justice, democracy tolerance, courage and the rule of law, willingness to listen to others and work with others. (Parry and Nomikou 2014) [12].

World Health Organization has defined the life skills as Self awareness skill, Empathy, Interpersonal relationship, Effective communication, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Decision Making, Problem solving, Coping with emotions and Coping with stress skills. These skills are classified into three categories which are- Cognitive skills, Social skills and Negotiating skills or Coping skills.

3.1 Cognitive Skills

Cognitive Skills are thinking skills which cover thinking process to solve the problems by taking decisions through critical thinking and creative thinking.

i) Creative Thinking Skill

Creative Thinking Skill is an ability to bring about something new and valuable more than break away from old pattern.

ii) Critical Thinking Skill

Critical Thinking is an ability to draw sound conclusion on facts and observations, to analyze carefully and evaluate the information.

iii) Decision Making Skill

Decision Making Skill is the ability to follow the process of choosing appropriate alternative course of action.

iv) Problem Solving Skill

Problem Solving Skill is an ability to use problem solving procedure for resolving a problem in efficient manner.

3.2 Social Skills

Social skills are related with the social life of the individual. An individual needs to have these skills to become a good citizen in the society. These social skills are interpersonal relationship, effective communication, self awareness and empathy skill.

i) Effective Communication Skill

Effective Communication Skill is an ability to make exchange of information between two or more persons in such a way that it creates understanding between and among them.

ii) Interpersonal Relationship Skill

Interpersonal Relationship Skill is an ability to maintain good relationship with the other members of the society.

iii) Self Awareness Skill

Self Awareness Skill is the ability to understand oneself.

iv) Empathy Skill

Empathy Skill means an ability to understand another person's (his or her) emotions and feelings.

3.3 Negotiating Skills

Negotiating Skills are related to adjustment of the individual as per needs of the society. If the person is not able to adjust himself with others then it will affect him/ her. So, one has to acquire negotiating skills which includes, coping with emotions, coping with stress and adjustment skills.

i) Coping with Stress Skill

Coping with Stress Skill is an ability to recognize source of stress in own life and cope up by appropriate behavior in the situation.

ii) Coping with Emotions Skill

Coping with Emotions Skill means ability to manage own emotions and understand others emotions.

4. Need and importance of life skills education:

Life skills education promotes mental well-being among youngsters and makes them able for facing the realities of life. Life skills education equips students for behaving in a social manner. Life skills education empowers children and enables them to take more responsibility in their lives.

At the United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting held at W.H.O., Geneva life skills education was considered important for promoting healthy children and adolescent development, preventing some causes of child and adolescent death, disease and disability, preparing young people for changing social circumstances, socialization. (Prajapati *et al.*, 2017)^[2]

Life skills education helps in different ways, for instance, preventing abuse, preventing bullying and preventing HIV and AIDS among youths. If we apply life skills education programme effectively in schools, it is able to change outlook of children about others and themselves, resulting in improvement of their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Life skills education helps students in developing their emotional and psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills which results in an attitude for solving problems, taking right decisions, thinking critically and creatively, communicating effectively, creating good relationships, empathize with others, and managing their lives in a healthy and perfect manner.

In fact, all individuals need life skills for their healthy and positive ways of living at one or other step. One can learn and enhance life skills throughout the life. Practicing the use of life skills in simple day to day situations makes it easy for utilizing them in complex life situations too.

Life Skills is useful in several areas like-

- Education
- Career development
- Sexual and Reproductive Health
- HIV/AIDS
- Conflict Resolution/ Violence Prevention
- Substance abuse
- Environmental issues
- Marriage

▪ Workplace

Several researches have proved the importance & effectiveness of life skills education for development of students' social, mental and emotional development and making them competent in dealing with their problems and issues. For example, in some recent researches-

- Vranda and Rao (2011)^[13] showed in their study that life skills training can enhance psychosocial Competencies of students. (Vranda and Rao, 2011)^[13]
- Puspakumara (2013)^[14] found that life skills training was effective in preventing a wide range of problems such as substance abuse, teenage pregnancies, violence Bullying & to promote self-confidence and self-esteem among the adolescents. (Puspakumara J., 2013)^[14]
- Roodbari, Sahdipoor, and Ghale (2013)^[15] in their research showed that life skills training has a positive effect and improves social development, emotional and social adjustment, suggesting an increase in compatibility of children and public health. (Roodbari, *et al.* 2013)^[15]

Thus, it is clear that life skills education helps the youngsters of present era to develop their efficiencies, to achieve their goals and strengthens their abilities for meeting the changing needs of the present day society and to lead a successful life.

5. Imparting life skills education

Life skills can be imparted at school level directly. During their schooling years, children acquire a great portion of their formal education, so the schooling stage is very important and also the developmental phase of a learner's life. It makes school as a preferred place for introducing life skills programmes. Students learn social skills and also face authority other than their parents besides academic activities in schools. Students get the support and guidance within school community which is helpful in their social development. Thus schools have a great influence on children and their families. All these factors present the school as a good choice of agency for life skills intervention. (Prajapati *et al.*, 2017)^[2]

It is also shown that if life skills education is imparted in classrooms, it has positive results when it is taught as a part of curriculum (Yadav and Iqbal, 2009)^[16].

Following activities and methods can be used at different levels and classes for instruction and enhancement of life skills in students:

- 1. Classroom Discussions:** Discussions offer opportunities for learning and practicing for solving problems and enable learners to make their understanding deep of the topic and Develops skills, in listening, assertiveness, and empathy.
- 2. Group tasks:** Groups tasks are important exercise and maximize student engagement and allow interactions, allow knowing others better which in turn enhances team forming and team work.
- 3. Educational Games:** Educational Games are helpful in promoting fun based active learning, enriching discussion and motivate participants to work hard. Students learn combined use of knowledge, attitudes, and skills and test their assumptions and abilities.
- 4. Role Plays:** Role Play is a fun based activity involving all members of class, to be active and take part. Role Play provides an excellent method for practicing and experiencing skills and increase empathy for others.
- 5. Debates:** Provides chances to discuss issues in depth and creatively. It allows students to defend an argument or

point and provides chances for practicing high order thinking skills.

6. **Brainstorming:** In Brainstorming students generate ideas quickly which helps them to use their imagination and think differently. It is essential to evaluate the bright and dark sides of ideas.
7. **Case Studies and analysis:** Case Studies give students the chances, for exploring and analysing, and provide opportunities for working together and sharing ideas, Case studies are like useful for thought and discussions, engaging learners to improve, think critically, and making decisions.
8. **Story-Telling:** Storey telling is helpful for students to develop critical thinking skills, creative thinking skills for writing or telling stories. It helps to draw conclusions and make comparisons. Storey telling also enhances concentration, listening skills and develops patience and endurance in students.

By using these strategies in an appropriate way with planned curriculum, Life skills education programme can be very effective for students at schools.

Inculcating life skills through teacher training programme

To inculcate the life skills in schools, teachers have to adopt learner's centered approach and plan innovative group and or individual activities related to life skills. These group or individual activities can be games, project work, assignment, case studies, brain storming exercises, survey, role play, drama, poster presentation, group discussion, quiz, debate, etc. An effective and quality teacher training is required to strengthen these life skills from the content and planning and implementation of appropriate activities in the schools.

So it is needed to train teachers towards incorporating these skills among students. These changes can result in developing understanding within learners, can make them able to learn and create their own versions of knowledge with their growth. This understanding is important to make their life creative, wholesome and enjoyable.

National Curriculum Framework 2005 focused on constructive approach in pedagogy, to develop thinking and qualities as personal and social values- e.g. self-reliance, cooperation and creativity which are necessary for successful life in today's world. Thus NCF 2005 put greater responsibilities and expectations on the teacher.

Successful integration of life skills can be achieved through subjective as well as practical tasks. Practice teaching can be introduced to integrate life skills in teaching practice programme. For integration of life skills the activities undertaken were as discussed below:-

6. Discussion and Conclusion

Life Skills help in developing positive and flexible attitude for life among youngsters. Enhancing Life Skills enables us to adapt to situations and people and helps us to lead a healthy and positive life. All people have inherent Life Skills but to get the best out of them we need training and get them shaped.

Life Skills are needed to-

- Develop a dynamic self image and self esteem
- Improve communication skills
- Make better relationships and handle interpersonal problems
- Boost decision making ability and make informed decisions

- To deal with the challenges of day to day life
- Become a well adjusted person
- To adapt to situations and people
- To make a positive approach and not get depressed with problems.
- Reduce vulnerability and high risk behaviour

Life skills result in greater acceptance, better relationships and a healthy, positive life.

Life skills enable individuals to translate knowledge (what one knows), attitudes and values (what one believes and feels) into actual abilities and action (what to do and how to do it).

One can learn Life Skills from own experiences, insight, perceptions, parents, stories, books, teachers, religion, media, and culture etc. Life skills education is effective for promoting positive social and mental health of adolescents which plays an important role in strengthening coping strategies and developing self-confidence and emotional intelligence, as well as enhancing critical thinking, problem solving and decision making skills. Studies have also shown that life skills are helpful for human happiness (Kumar P. And Kumar A., 2016). Life skills education has been integrated with school curriculum for enhancing the mental health of students, to equip them with better adapted skills, to face the challenges of changing life situations and to empower them for contributing well for the society and the world.

Today relevant and proper implementation of life skill education is a need time. Imparting life skills education to the students is helpful to address the needs of children, helps in motivating, providing practical, cognitive, emotional, social and self-management skills for life adjustments.

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