



Life skills education for youth development

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Abstract The aim of this paper is to find what behavior development approach addresses the knowledge, attitudes and value enhanced Life Skills for Youth.

As a dynamic productive force, it is important for adolescents that the transition from childhood to adulthood is smooth and effortless. But it is a fact that most of the adolescents are unable to utilize their potential in an appropriate way and are engaged in non-productive activities due to lack of proper guidance and motivation. These high risk behaviours affecting society to a large extent and therefore require effective and immediate programmes which would be beneficial to young adolescents. In this connection, Life Skills Education plays a vital role in creating awareness and providing guidance and direction to them. It empowers them with improved decision making skills, abilities that promote mental wellbeing and competencies to face the realities of life. Life Skills Education would enable adolescents to clear their issues and know their rights; build their self-esteem and self-confidence; and develop the ability to take responsibility for self-relationships and society around them. Thus it can be concluded that efforts has to be made to enable the education of learner in a more comprehensive manner by providing the right content on Life Skills Education through the most viable usage of strategies for the youth. This can make our current young minds to act in par with the demands of the society.

Key words : Life Skills, behavior development, youth, guidance, awareness, young minds, society

“Education should not be the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.” - W.B.Yeats

“Our youth are not failing the system; the system is failing our youth. Ironically, the very youth who are being treated the worst are the young people who are going to lead us out of this nightmare.” - Rachel Jackson

“We all benefit by having young people exposed to the ‘way things are done’ in a democratic society. Isn’t it time... to ‘tap the power of youth?’” - Hans Bernard

Introduction

“Education in India has seen tremendous growth over the past decade, both in number of students and number of colleges An attempt is made in the present study to understand what are the Life Skills which are needed the most

for our students to overcome the lags created by our education system. The objectives of the study are to understand the major troubles of students in their education and the strategies which can be adopted to overcome those troubles. The study will be made by referring several



other literatures on "Life Skills" published by various sources. In the above context, a Qualitative study will be conducted on "importance of life skills education for youth". This being a non-empirical study the analysis will be made from the data and contents collected from various articles published by various authors and released through various sources. The references of the same will be given in reference part. The hypothesis of the analysis is Implementation of Life Skills program for Youth in Schools and Colleges will reduce the problems of Young Minds.

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. 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 rejection 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 with feelings, emotions, stress and resisting peer and family pressure.

As a dynamic productive force, it is important for the youth that the transition from childhood to adulthood is smooth and effortless. But it is a fact that most of the young are unable to utilize their potential in an appropriate way and are engaged in non-productive activities due to lack of proper guidance and motivation. These high risk behaviours affecting society to a large extent and therefore require effective and immediate programmes which would be beneficial to young adolescents. In this connection, Life Skills Education plays a vital role in creating awareness and providing guidance and direction to them. It empowers them with improved decision making skills, abilities that promote mental wellbeing and competencies to face the realities of life. Life Skills Education would enable adolescents to clear their issues and know their rights; build their self-esteem and self-confidence; and develop the ability to take responsibility for self, relationships and society around them.

Who needs Life Skills?

Anyone who wants to lead a meaningful life needs Life Skills. They are applicable to all ages of children and adolescents, since young people in this age group seem to be the most vulnerable to behaviour related health problems. Life Skills are thus needed for the promotion of good health and well-being, rather than as an intervention aimed only at those already at risk. Ouane(2002) says "Life Skills are developed as a result of a constructive processing of information, impressions, encounters and experiences, both individual and social, which are a part of one's daily life and work, and the rapid



changes that occur in the course of one's life".

Life Skills Education

The Life Skills Programme can be designed in such a way that it can be infused into other school subjects or it can be introduced as a new subject. Whatever design is followed, it must ensure greater potential for success. School education plays an important role in Life Skills Development among individuals, especially in the current time when traditional mechanisms for passing on Life Skills are no longer adequate, considering the influences that shape a young individual's development.

For health promotion, life skills education is based on the teaching of generic life skills and includes the practice of skills in relation to major health and social problems. Life skills lessons should be combined with health information, and may also be combined with other approaches, such as programmes designed to effect changes in environmental and social factors which influence the health and development of young people.

In life skills education, children are actively involved in a dynamic teaching and learning process. The methods used to facilitate this active involvement include working in small groups and pairs, brainstorming, role play, games and debates. A life skills lesson may start with a teacher exploring with the students what their ideas or knowledge is about a Particular situation in which a life skill can be used. The children may be asked to discuss the issues raised in more detail in small groups or with a partner. They may then engage in short role play scenarios, or take part in activities that allow them

to practice the skills in different situations - actual practice of skills is a vital component of life skills education. Finally, the teacher will assign homework to encourage the children to further discuss and practice the skills with their families and friends.

Inculcating Life Skills in the Youth through Value Integrated Education

Some of the initiatives (as discussed in the above section) undertaken by the successive Indian governments to promote human values through value oriented education have achieved success but only to a very limited extent. The overall impact at system level has not been very encouraging or visible. Lack of consensual political will and regional, linguistic and socio-economic diversities are some of the reasons that most of the system-wide educational reforms have not been visibly effective.

The curriculum of the present education system needs to be overhauled. Lessons need to be carefully planned by embedding values in the contents of the textual material taught to the students. These then may be discussed in the class and the students should be made to understand and appreciate them. Values and attitudes should thus become a part and parcel of everyday education. The students should be taught to imbibe these moral values and ethics as Life Skills so that they can face the challenges and realities of life more confidently and aptly. Respect for culture, traditions and heritage of the country should be made an integral part of curriculum transaction. In essence, the curriculum should aim at promoting equity, social justice and secularism.



The teaching and learning process should be more practical and activity oriented. Students should be encouraged to participate in the activities and the discussions. Exploratory learning approach should be followed to instill skills of creativity and innovation in the students and to make them think rationally. Innovative teaching techniques like 'Role Play' should be used to make the lessons more interesting so that the 'Value Education' classes are not taken by the teachers or the students as some extra burden but as something they really look forward to.

Lately, the NCERT and the CBSE have made efforts to introduce teaching of Value Education and Life Skills in the school curriculum. Guidelines and detailed plans for its implementation were drawn with focus on generating awareness, development of relevant material, training the teachers and promoting research and innovation in education of human values. Guidelines were issued by the CBSE to the schools to devote at least 2 periods per week to life skills.

Categories of Core Life Skills:

a. Core Affective Life Skills:

Core affective life skills consisting of four core life skills such as: Coping with stress, Empathy, Interpersonal relationship and Coping with emotions.

b. Core Cognitive Life Skills:

Core cognitive life skills consisting of six core life skills such as: Self-awareness, Critical thinking, Decision making, Effective communication, Creative thinking and Problem solving.

YUVA School Life Programme:

YUVA School Life Skills Programme (SLP) is a specific and coherent plan of action to help children become happy, healthy, responsible, and productive citizens and covers a very large spectrum of themes such as promoting positive values, civic and social awareness, nutrition, health and hygiene and a separate module for teachers and parents. What makes the YUVA SLP stand out is that it has already been trailed with over 40,000 teachers and Principals, with remarkable results.

Life Skills Training :

On the basis of the past researches and review of existing programs, a life skills training program was developed. The Life Skills program is a comprehensive behavior change approach that concentrates on the development of the skills needed for life such as self-awareness, communication, decision-making, thinking, managing emotions, relationship skills, daily living skills, survival skills, choices and consequences, interpersonal/social skills, eye contact, tone and volume of speech, conversational skills, and assertiveness. This intervention program worked on promoting child's coping resources, enhancing the social competency and consequently imposing a positive effect on mental health. Training sessions also focused on teaching skill modules using brief didactic instruction, behavioral modeling, role-playing, obtaining direct feedback from therapists, behavioral rehearsal and assertiveness, accepting compliments and implementing the skills.

Conclusion

Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday



life. In particular, life skills are a group of 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 and manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner.

Thus it can be concluded that efforts have to be made to enable the education of learner in a more comprehensive manner by providing the right content on Life Skills Education through the most viable usage of strategies for the teenage group. This can make our current young minds to act in par with the demands of the society.

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