

# Role of Skill Education in Teaching and Learning

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## *ABSTRACT*

India with its huge young population needs life skill education for its youth and specially for its adolescents. Need of the life skill education has been suggested by educationists, sociologists, and economists. Adolescence, the transit period of human life, requires life skill education more than any other stage due to the reason that psychologically it is the age of greater potentials and if these potentials are not channelized properly it may go either way-destruction or construction. For a country like India life skill education needs to be the part of our school curriculum in theory and practice both, and specially for our adolescents. Certain skills help individual to lead the life in a better way. These skills useful for better living have been identified by WHO, UNICEF and many other related organizations as life skills. It has been categorized by various bodies in different way, but certain skills are placed in almost all the categories. Communication, empathy, critical thinking, stress management, decision making, problem solving, interpersonal skills are some of the important life skills. Different organizations and many curriculum frameworks suggest learning of these skills by the individuals and specially by the adolescents useful for their all-round personality development.

**Keywords : Life Skills, Adolescents, Life Skill Education, India**

Life skill education educates for living the life meaningfully and purposefully. The aim of life skills education is to make the person aware of the environment around him/her and educate him/her about certain skills which he/she may be able to use while confronting challenging situations. WHO finds life skills the abilities of adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.

Life skills are defined as a set of psychological competence and personal skills that help people make carefully big decisions, communicate effectively with others, develops coping skills with surrounding circumstances, and manage oneself that leads to progress and success. Life skills are abilities for adoptive and positive behaviour. Life skills refer to the ability to maintain the state of mental and physical well-being while interacting with others within the local culture and environment. The purpose of life skill education is to make the person aware of the environment around him/her and educate him/her about certain skills which he/she may be able to use while confronting challenging situations.

In 1999, Department of Mental health, WHO defined life skills education as a design to facilitate the

practice and re-information of psycho-socio skills in a culturally and developmentally appropriate way. WHO finds about life skill that it contributes to the promotion of personal and social development, the prevention of health and social problems and the protection of Human Rights. Quoting WHO Pathak, Satish writes, "World Health Organization (WHO) while initiating life skills education conceptualized life skills as a psychological competence. These skills are different from other significant skills that individuals may have such as literacy, numeric, technical and livelihood skills." Referring WHO, 1997 he narrates further as, "Life skills are 'Living Skills' or abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with demands and challenges of everyday life"

Life skills encompass all the dimensions of human life, be it economical, social or psychological. UNICEF defines life skill as a behaviour change or behaviour development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: knowledge, attitude and skills. In fact, life skills are a large group of psycho-social and interpersonal skills, which can help people, to make informed decisions, communicate effectively and develop coping and self management skills

that may help an individual to lead a healthy and productive life.

Since skills are abilities, hence it is possible to practice them. It is important to give life skills education to students, teachers and community members as they help in improving quality of life. Let us question or think what does life skills education include? The skills required to deal positively with any condition to get the desired outcome is called life skills. Life skills can be developed through environment to adopt by society and promote positively in personal behaviors and by adopting a positive perspective towards work.

We can talk life skills as inherent life skills and acquired life skills. The inherent life skills, as the name suggests, are those life skills that a person inherits by birth. They are respect for elders, obedience to patterns, concern for the siblings and immediate relatives, etc. The inherent life skills mould the individual and enable one to face the challenges which life has to offer as well as to adjust one-self to situations. The acquired life skills are those that are taught to a person or which have been imbibed from others over a period of time, for example non-judgmental attitude, controlled emotional involvement, etc. The acquired life skills are further broken down to formal and informal life skills. The formal acquired life skills are the ones that a person has learns from training and grouping in school, etc. For example, communication skills, being a team member, etc. The informal acquired life skills are those that a person has acquired through the various stages of life and from the constant contact with different people. For example, the ability to organize a party or seminar or get together, handle administrative aspects at the place of work, etc.

Life skill is a comprehensive concept so it can be defined in many ways. There is also no definite list of the life skills. It means life skills will vary according to the conditions and situations of a person. For example negotiation/refusal skills is being emphasized more in an area where, HIV and AIDS is more prevalent, and stress management skills may be emphasized in a conflict oriented area. Life skills education helps in understanding one's own role with the changing societal structure and functions. Life skill education aims at a comprehensive behaviour change approach, which will enable the individual to develop the skills which are needed to face the complex world.

These skills include communication, decision making, critical thinking, controlling emotions, resisting peer pressures, establishing relationships, etc.

### Multiple Types of Life Skills

Life skills cannot be categorized absolutely, though there is the concept of core life skills. Below it has been categorized in different way; some types are common across the category.

1. The following life skills include the psycho-social and interpersonal skills which are generally considered important:

- **Interpersonal Communication Skill:** These skills enable a person to express feelings and give feedback and receive feedback.
- **Negotiation/Refusal Skill:** It enables a person to refuse peer pressures for activities that are morally wrong.
- **Empathy:** Through this skill an individual develops the ability to listen and to understand other's needs and behaviour in a particular situation.
- **Advocacy Skill:** This enables to individual to leave influence on others and present the cause that one perceives as right.
- **Decision-making/Problem Solving Skill:** These skills enable a person to gather vital information on important issues and evaluate the further consequences of the present actions for self and others.
- **Critical Thinking Skill:** These skills enable an individual to take a conscious decision based on his/her understanding rather than the one presented to him/her.
- **Coping and Self-Management Skill :** This skill enables the individual to manage his/her anger and other emotions and cope with loss, anxiety, etc. These skills also help the individual to manage one's own time and reflect positive thinking.

### 2. Skills Adopted by Utah State Board of Education :

The Utah school board of education in 1996 given the list, and in 2001 made minor formatting related aspect. These life skills are as follows:

(A) **Life Long Learning skill:** The attributes of this skill are:

- Initiate own learning ,

- Achieve high standards of literacy ,
- Manage information , and
- Demonstrate aesthetic awareness.

**(B) Complete Thinking Skill:** The attributes of this skill are :

- Demonstrate a variety of thinking processes
- Integrate new information with existing knowledge and experience
- Apply Thinking skills strategically.

**(C) Effective Communication Skill: The attributes of this skill are:**

- Use appropriate methods to communicate with others , and
- Respond appropriately when receiving communication.

**(D) Collaboration Skill: The attributes of this skill are:**

- Understand and serve in a variety of roles ,
- Facilitate group effectively
- Use resources effectively
- Work with a variety of populations , and
- Respond appropriately to complex interrelationships.

**(E) Responsible Citizen Skill:** The attributes of this skill are :

- Demonstrate individual responsibility ,
- Practice a healthy lifestyle ,
- Understand and promote the democratic principles of freedom, justice and equality , and
- Participate in activities that promote public good.

**(F) Employability Skills: The attributes of these skill are :**

- Plan for career ,
- Assume responsibility for professional growth
- Function effectively within the system.

To understand life skills education we can divide it into two parts (1) Life Skill Information, particularly on issues such as health, drug use, alcoholism, etc. which has to be imparted to the adolescent group. The (2) Life Skills Development i.e., helping adolescents to equip them with the necessary skills to

utilize the information received about life skill.

### 3. Core Life Skills:

There are various types of skills which have been identified by agencies like WHO, UNICEF, etc. Life skills education programme has two parts (1) Information, and (2) Skill Development.

#### (A) Critical/Decision Making Skills:

**1. Decision Making Skill:** Decision making skill is to learn and internalize skills related to decision making. Teacher and learners have to take many types of decision regarding content, methodology, social and human issues, etc. To learn to take correct decision is crucial and during crisis period it is especially important. Correct, effective and in time decision making and its learning is vital in life and so this skill is important as a life skills.

**2. Critical Thinking Skill:** Critical thinking skill is an ability which helps to analyze information, experiences, situations , human and social relations in an objective manner. This helps to understand cause and effect relationship in a scientific manner.

**3. Problem Solving Skill:** Life and educational situations, both have different types of problems and choose the best alternative against a given problem is to be learned by an individual. Without problem solving skill learning and its internalization no one can succeed in academic field and life.

#### (B) Interpersonal/Communication Skills:

##### 4. Effective Communication:

Communication helps to share information, emotions, values, ideas, etc. and so to learn to communicate is essential in life. Communication skill is associated with verbal and non-verbal both modes of communication. It is related to active listening, capability of expression and necessary information as feedback to complete the process.

**5. Negotiation/Refusal Skill:** In crisis like situations negotiation helps the individual to save himself/herself from depression and detachment. Crisis management is not possible without negotiation skill. Whether it is life situations or an individual, negotiation helps to change or manage state of crisis. Bullied or abused have to survive with this skill which is quite common in the life of children and deprived adults.

**6. Empathy:–** It is an ability to imagine and

understand what life is like for another person, even in a situation which one has not familiar with. It is about developing positive outlook towards others and feeling of cooperation.

**7. Interpersonal Skill:** It is about the relationship of person with more persons. Interpersonal behaviour is all about a healthy relation pattern with other members of the society. It is related to fellow feeling, acceptance of social norms that in turn helps a child or adolescent to understand the human relationship in a better manner.

**8. Skill of Self-evaluation/Self-awareness :** This skill includes self-esteem, locus of control, likes and dislikes and most importantly believing in self.

Life skills are all about the life and its functioning. These ten life skills as discussed above are important for human being, and specially to the adolescents. These are not essential for happy human life, but these also help to plan for the life in a more meaningful manner.

Education in life skill is essential for promoting healthy interaction and positive behaviour among individuals. How an individual perceives the world and self esteem is important in forming the personality of the individual. Young people need skill and competency to deal with increasing demands and stress they experience in their day to day functioning. Our adolescents need psycho-social competency and ability to adopt healthy life style and responsible behaviour. Most of the infections take place among young people in their reproductive age group. There are many myths and misconceptions regarding HIV and AIDS, Sex and Sexuality among individual which need to be managed. Most parents feel uncomfortable in discussing matter pertaining to HIV and AIDS with their children though these are important concerns for the proper development of their wards. NCFSE (2000) explains the need of life skill education with these words, "Education, by and large , suffers basically from gap between its content and the living experience of the students. Education ideally must prepare students to face the challenges of life. For this , it needs to be intimately linked with the different life skills , the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life , by developing in them generic skills related a wide variety

of areas such as health and social needs. It is through these skills that students can fight the challenges of drug addiction , violence , teenage pregnancy ,AIDS and many other health related problems."

Life skill education helps an individual to explore various alternatives to attain the state of complete physical, mental, emotional and social well being. It is just not information sharing, but is about skill development. Skill development helps the person to live successfully and function efficiently in the different roles as an individual, as a family member, as a community member and as a unit of workforce. It is important to know and understand that how life skills promote healthy and socially accepted adolescents to justify the importance of life skills education. Knowledge of Life Skill Education helps the adolescent particularly as:

1. Life skills help adolescents to transit successfully from the stage of childhood to adulthood with healthy development of social moral and emotional skills.
2. It helps in the development of social competence and problem solving skills which in turn help adolescents to develop their personality and form their own identity.
3. It helps to weight pros and cons of the situation and subsequently act as a mediator to manage problem related behaviour.
4. It helps to learn positive social norms that impact the adolescent health services, schools and family.
5. It helps adolescents to differentiate between hearing and listening and thus ensures management of misconceptions or miscommunications regarding issues such as drugs, alcoholism, etc.
6. It delays the beginning of the abuse of tobacco, alcohol, etc.
7. It promotes the development of positive self-esteem and teaches anger control as and when needed.

Therefore, if the life skills education programme is conducted and completed successfully, it will surely help the adolescents to face the most difficult period of their life.

In fact life skill helps the adolescents in many ways -It enables the students to deal effectively with demand and challenges of everyday life, it develops



the abilities for behaviour responses adaptive to the situations, it develops the ability of positive thinking useful during critical situations and it develops problem solving skills and critical thinking. Life skill education prepares the adolescents for life and teaches to deal with complexity of life with care and calm.

### Teacher as Life Skills Developers

Life skill development is collaborative in nature. Parents, psychologists, counselors, health workers, etc. contribute significantly in life skill development, but the role of teacher is more potent and powerful due to the multifaceted roles to be played by teacher in school and outside the school. Teacher qualities have its bearing on life skill learning, practicing and internalizing. Following qualities of teaches help to develop life skills among learners in positive manner:

- (i) Teacher's ability to guide and facilitate in right directions.
- (ii) His/her good knowledge about the content i.e., concept of life skills education.
- (iii) Her/his nature of being supportive and empathetic.
- (iv) Her/his leadership qualities to guide a group.
- (v) Her/his willingness to learn and accept new concepts.
- (vi) Her/his trustworthiness.

### Useful Methods for Imparting Life Skills Education

Following are few effective methods for imparting life skills education :

**(i) Role Play:** It provides an opportunity to the learners to have an experience of applying a life skill. Through role play, they can expedite practicing skills of assertiveness, interpersonal skill, communication skill, etc.

**(ii) Group Discussion:** It provides opportunity for interaction and life skill can best be learns through interactive process. HIV, AIDS, Drug Abuse, etc. be better discussed under the leadership of the teacher with the help of interactive sessions.

**(iii) Debate:** for and against regarding a theme or concept be learned and discussed through debate and in the process life skills be learned, practiced and internalized. Communication Skill, Critical Thinking Skill, Skill of Assertiveness, etc. may be practiced in a better manner through debate.

**(iv) Case Study:** It helps to understand all the aspects of the problem related to an individual or a practice or an institution as a case. It may be social evils, health issues and other similar issues. This is helpful in developing interpersonal skill, empathy, self-awareness, critical thinking, etc.

**(v) Quiz Contest:** It enables students and other participants to gather varied information on the selected theme. This motivates the audience to act and learn. Participants find opportunity to get exposed to various dimensions of different issues. It develops life skills like communication skill, critical thinking skill, etc.

### Programme and Strategies for Life Skill Education

Effective school health programme needs to be organized to develop attitudes, values, life skills, adjusted life, and health risks (HIV, Infection) as programmers around relevant life skills. Following Programmes may be undertaken:

- Formal and non-formal community programmers that increases access to information, resources and services regarding life skill education.
- Interaction on the issue with media person, teacher educators, curriculum developers, policy framers, parents, etc.
- Integration of life skills in school curriculum, school syllabus and text books.
- Organization of co-curricular activities based on life skills.
- Application of interactive and innovative methods in life skill presentation.
- Development of communication skill -listening, expression, feedback among learners through sessions.
- Negotiation and conflict management skills discussion sessions.
- And many more as per the demand of the situation and availability of resources.

### Life Skill Education and Adolescents

Life skill education is about the skills those help to lead the life in an effective manner. If we look into the life span of human being the most important period is adolescence. During this stage of human life adolescents lead two life simultaneously. At times they behave and think like an adult and again in next

moment they start to think and behave like a child. He/She leads two lives at a time and that is why it is being said the transit phase of human life. Chauhan, S.S. (1978) narrates in his book Advanced Educational Psychology that, "Adolescence is the most important period of human life. Poets have described it as the spring of life of human being and an important era in the total life span."

### **Indian Adolescents Need Life Skill Education :**

As known to us India is the young country in terms of its demography. The world is suffering from the problem of its ageing population and India is trying to lead the gobble with the strength of its young population. India with its total population around 130 corers leads the world in manpower. The nature of this population is even more useful as almost 65% population is of below 35 years in age. No doubt, our young population is our strength, but it may turn into our problem if se are not able to channelize their potential by educating them, skilling them and preparing them properly. As we have discussed adolescence is the stage where we have to work more to develop and nurture our youth otherwise we would not be able to utilize our population dividend in the desired direction. There is a need for the development of mental, social and educational aspects of adolescents.

### **Conclusion:**

Life skill education has become essential for the adolescents of our nation due to increasing means of information collection and sharing, advent of nuclear family and growing pressure of career making. What the country needs is to plan for the implementation and content selection of the life skill education. Expressing the need of health and physical education NCF (2005) has also concluded that adolescents need life skill education, "Age-appropriate context-specific interventions focused on adolescent reproductive and sexual health. Therefore, are needed to provide children opportunities to construct knowledge and acquire life skills, so that they cope with concerns related to the process of growing up. Life skill education prepares the adolescents for life and teaches to deal with complexity of life with care and calm. Teachers and gradually the learners must learn and internalize these for better living and good quality education.

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