

LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF VADODARA CITY

R. L. Madhavi

Assistant Professor, Department of Education
The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara

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Abstract

In 21st century the employment needs are complex and changes within no time. People need to upgrade, update and enhance the employment requirements continuously. It is physically and psychologically strain causing process, but is necessary. In order to cope with this situation, sufficient inputs need to be given from education system in the form of content, skills and attitudes. Students need to be equipped with communication, problem solving, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills along with subject knowledge. These capabilities are identified as life skills and are now an important aspect of curriculum in education. India looking into the need of providing these capacities to the people started offering these programmes through the education boards. CBSE developed guidelines to organize the life skills education programme in CBSE schools all over the country. In the present paper life skills education programmes in the CBSE schools of Baroda city are studied to understand the organization and management of the programmes.

Keywords: Life Skills, Life skills for adolescents, Life Skills Education Programmes, CBSE manual for teachers.

In the present global and internationalized living context, people need not only knowledge but abilities like communication, decision making, critical thinking, creativity and many more to survive successfully. Mere possession of knowledge is of no use as people have to take proper decisions with changing situations. Change is happening so rapidly that within seconds one needs to take decisions and implement. Education, employment and any other aspect of life is now so complicated that people need knowledge, skills and abilities to face and lead life successfully. School being the focus point of developing knowledge for needs of society, the other aspects of skills and abilities are also now become a part of learning in schools. Along with content knowledge, practical exposure to skills and abilities is the responsibility of schools in present context. These skills are classified on many considerations. WHO proposed 10 life skills classification, Hilton-Pellegrino Framework proposed skills under three domains, CASEL under 5 categories and Partnership for 21st century skills under 3 classes. Mainly these skills consist areas of understanding self, understanding others to communicate, and knowledge / skills to lead life.

Life Skills

Just like their categorization, life skills are also defined in different ways. As mentioned by Vranda, 2011, Life Skills are defined by Hamburg (1990) as training as the teaching of requisite skills for surviving, living with others, and succeeding in a complex society. Nelson-Jones (1993) states life skills are personally responsible sequences of self-helping choices in specific psychological skills areas conducive to mental wellness. Powell (1995)

defines life skills as the life coping skills consonant with the developmental tasks of the basic human development processes, namely those skills necessary to perform tasks for a given age and gender in the following areas of human development – psychological, physical, sexual, vocational, cognitive, moral, ego and emotional. All these definitions are throwing light on the fact that life skills are not simple group of skills but a comprehensive lot of skills aiming to develop characteristics to lead life effectively in all situations.

According to WHO (1996) Life Skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. EFA Global Monitoring report identified five contexts that use life skills, like, generic skills, contextual skills, literacy skills, life skills in schools and miscellaneous skills. The Dakar Framework for Action (2000) adopted by The World Education Forum had 6 goals, of which, 3 and 6 are based on life skills. (Anuradha, 2016). So life skills are a combination of skills, aiming to develop social, personal and psychological abilities to sustain complexities of life in a composed way. If individual member of a society is composed, the community and society at large are controlled and peaceful. These skills empower individuals to lead life with success and harmony.

A group of psychological competencies and interpersonal abilities to deal with problems, taking decisions, thinking differently. One can decide about their own actions and also others and their consequences on the situation. Life skills education is a programme that develops skills in a person to face difficult situations with proper decision making, to interact with people with proper behavior to live in peace and harmony. In a formal sense it is developing decision making, critical and creative thinking, interpersonal skills to live effectively in future life out of school.

Need of Life Skills for Adolescents

The stage of adolescence itself is the reason to offer life skills education. Adolescents have finished childhood and entering into adulthood. Physical changes coupled with psychological and emotional needs can bring in untoward behaviors suddenly. Once something negative happens it is difficult to turn them back. In order to ensure safety in their upbringing and growth during this stage life skills education is important. In addition to this, future life aspects also make it necessary to provide life skills education. Academic achievement is dependent not only on intelligence but also on qualities like, self-confidence, motivation and disciplines. There are so many factors that help in improving the academic achievement in the students. Classroom strategies, skills, attitudes and many other things help improving academic achievement. In this sense, life skills occupy an important aspect of curriculum.

Success in life after school is not dependent on achievement. A person needs attitudes to adjust, skills to perform and communication to make

other understand to get income through employment. Even to get employed according to own choice person needs to work upon non-cognitive aspects than cognitive ones.

Employment requirements have undergone a sea change in 21st century. It is not dependent on one aspect. Person needs skills of various nature to get success in the job market. The needs of employees are not simple and straight forward and change fast with incoming requirements. So person needs to change skills to get suited for the changing environment. Students need to be job-ready once they left their institutions.

Not only good settlement but leading life with maturity, content and happiness is a crucial adult life outcome. This is a difficult task if person is not balanced during the times of success and failure. Person needs to lead a responsible and productive life in society through-out life.

Social and emotional learning brings in more benefit than developing cognitive area alone. The power of learning skills to survive in the society help person more to sustain difficulties to move on in life.

In order to reduce economic marginalization combination of cognitive skills and economic skills are necessary. In order to move out of poverty and achieve change in life these are of utmost importance for children. (Source: Bikrama D. Singh and Rashmi Menon, 2015)

Scope of the Study

India being a large populous country expected to cross over china in population in near future. The divide of population basing on access to resources is very wide effecting the social ideals of development of the Nation. In order to come over this marginalization mere literacy is not enough. We need students with social awareness, resilience to achieve goals, patience to overcome problems and determination to come out of negative background to live life with confidence and self-esteem. With the onset of 21st century World Education Forum (2000) has taken up the goal of Education for All with proper perspective on the life skills aspect. Life Skills Education Programmes were designed for implementation. Indian education institutions also started providing opportunities to develop life skills in school students with proper planning and implementation. CBSE provided guidelines to schools to offer programmes from 6th standard onwards. In the present research the focus is to understand how schools are providing life skills education according to the guidelines of CBSE?

Research Design and Implementation

The study was conducted in CBSE Secondary schools of Vadodara city. According to the guidelines of the life skills education programmes proposed by Central Board of Education, New Delhi, schools are organizing life skills education programmes. Teachers' Manual developed by CBSE for the purpose of implementation of life skills education programmes in schools for Standard IX and X was considered as guidelines for these programmes. Ideas and expressions from the manual regarding

various aspects, like, meaning of LSE, objectives of LSE, expectations from teachers, teaching learning methods and assessment methods. The analysis is presented here point wise.

Data Analysis

Life skills are essential abilities that help to promote positive behaviour in individuals to deal with the challenges of everyday life. They empower learners to take positive action for self-growth and promotion of health and positive social relationship. Enhanced Life-Skills in an individual thus help in developing – improved self-esteem, self-confidence, assertiveness, ability to establish relationships, ability to plan and set goals and acquisition of knowledge related to specific content areas.

Life skills education as defined by UNICEF is a behaviour change or a behaviour development approach designed to address balance of three areas; knowledge, attitude and skills. This definition is based on research evidence that suggests that shifts in risk behaviour are unlikely if knowledge, attitudinal and skill based competencies are not addressed. The knowledge imparted to students is likely to be passed on to their own children, thus influencing future generations. Global and Indian experiences have shown that educational interventions that focus on Life- Skills development have proven very effective in empowering adolescents to manage their concerns including avoidance of risky behaviour.

Objectives of Life Skills Education Programmes –

To develop concept of life skills with respect to everyday life.

To create awareness about the ten core life skills and their inter-relatedness.

To develop life skills of creative thinking, critical thinking, empathy coping with stress, coping with emotions, inter personal relationships, communication skills, decision making skills, self-awareness and problem solving.

To apply these life skills in all sphere of life.

Main components of life skills – the ten life skills are further categorized into three core groups as depicted below.

Thinking Skills – self-awareness, problem solving, decision making, critical thinking and creative thinking. Thinking skills help individual to demonstrate the ability to be original, flexible and imaginative. Instead of taking all that comes her / his way, she / he raises questions and thinks critically identifies and analyses problems. While deciding on a thing s/he implements a well thought out decision and takes responsibility. It makes one comfortable with one's own self at the same time accepting or trying to overcome weaknesses while building on the strengths for positive self-concept.

Social skills – interpersonal relationships, effective communication and empathy. Social skills help a person to demonstrate the ability to identify, verbalize and respond effectively to others' emotions in an empathetic manner. Along with this s/he also takes criticism constructively and

reflects, listens actively and communicates using appropriate words, intonation and body language.

Emotional skills – managing feeling / emotions and coping with stress. Emotional skills help people to develop ability to identify causes and effects of stress on oneself and develop and use multi-faceted strategies to deal with it. As and when required, the person is also able to express and respond to emotions with an awareness of the consequences.

The approach that is being followed by CBSE is to provide accurate, objective and scientific knowledge keeping in mind that the content should be age-appropriate and directed towards the sensitivity of young minds. The process of transfer is made simpler through the KAVELS approach – Knowledge Attitude Value Enhanced Life Skills.

Self and social awareness, environmental education, peace education, education for development, consumer education, adolescence education and physical education are some places where these skills can be applied.

These skills can be visualized in many content areas like- relationship management, professional communication, consumer education, livelihood and employability, environmental awareness, gender concerns, process of growing up, education for development and social communication.

Integration of life skills in text books -

One way to impart life skills is by emphasizing the importance of a particular life skill in the text, to create awareness among young students about life skills.

The second way to incorporate life skills in text books is to include a few meaningful questions or activities in the text.

It is hoped that the schools will adopt an interdisciplinary approach for transacting the curriculum of life skills education through the curriculum plus mode. Components of life skills are also integrated in the formal modes of learning such as language textbooks, science textbooks and social science textbooks. However, it is more important to promote life skills through informal approach and in an activity mode.

Participatory teaching methods like, class discussions, brainstorming, demonstration and guided practice, role play, small groups, educational games and simulations, case studies, storytelling, debates, practicing life skills specific to a particular context with others, audio and visual activities like arts, music, theatre, dance and decision mapping or problem trees. Activities are merely suggestive and a resourceful teacher can definitely think of many more activities to promote particular life skill.

Assessment includes different tests / scales / inventories that indicate the degree and direction of weakness of skills in students. These assessment practices should not be judgmental or response- biased.

Analysis of the above points on life skills education resulted in following conclusions about these programmes to be taken up in CBSE schools.

Life skills help learners to develop of self and facing life with confidence and assertiveness; Education helps in facing future with confidence and the process must focus on behaviour change to positive side with development of knowledge, attitude and skill based competencies in students; Objectives are focusing on developing concepts, awareness and application of specific listed life skills; Ten life skills identified by WHO were grouped under three core groups, as, thinking skills, social skills and emotional skills. The activities developed for each group helps in developing these skills in combination; Approach to this education is based on age specific activities providing knowledge through KAVELS approach; Specific content areas in education were also identified to include activities related to life skills. This would help in designing activities in integrated approach; Integration of life skills education with text book content is more preferred way of teaching learning; Participatory teaching methods were spelled out. It is also expected that teachers could design activities according to their contextual requirement to develop life skills; Assessment modes were expected to be of qualitative nature. Judgmental and subjective ways/tests were not proposed at any stage of assessment.

Conclusion

According to the guidelines and expectations CBSE schools are providing life skills to students under the domains of thinking, social and emotional skills. Proper arrangements were made providing teacher training, infrastructure and other resources. Integrated Methods of providing life skills were also developed. Qualitative assessment practices were followed as per the nature of the skills. For a country like India, to achieve the social goals of the development focus on life skills is highly necessary.

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