



LIFE SKILL APPROACH FOR ADOLESCENCE; AN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL METHODOLOGY

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Abstract

Adolescence is a time wherein teenagers go through a lot of physical and emotional changes. Their body begins to grow rapidly in shape and size. They also experience hormone change and sexual maturation. Girls experience menarche and boys, sperm Arche. All these changes make them uncomfortable. Adolescence is also the stage when young people extend their relationships beyond parents and family and are intensely influenced by their peers and the outside world in general. As adolescents mature cognitively, their mental process becomes more analytical. Adolescence is thus a turning point in one's life, a period of increased potential but also one of greater vulnerability. If adolescents are equipped with life skills, they will be able to cope with all such situations successfully. Life skills training is an efficacious tool for empowering the youth to act responsibly, take initiative and take control. 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. This paper highlights the importance of life skills as a teaching methodology for adolescents.

Introduction

Adolescence is the most critical phase of an individual. It denotes the transitional stage from childhood to Adulthood marked by conspicuous physical, cognitive, emotional and social changes. This period needs a special consideration because it is a period of increased risk talking behaviour. The present condition of adolescents clearly shows that our youth's quality of life has significantly deteriorated. Recently big changes have taken place in our traditional society owing to industrialization and globalization. The impact is evident in the entire society, with no exception to adolescents. The family ties have weakened, moral, social religious and cultural controls rarely exist and a new life style emerged among the adolescents. The highly competitive world of today and the absence of traditional norms and support have heightened the stress among adolescents resulting in multiple mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, loneliness, rejection, diffidence, anger, confliction in interpersonal relationship and failure.

Problems faced by the Adolescents

- Serious emotional disturbances
- Sexual related issues
- Alcohol and other substance use
- Low self –esteem
- Delinquency
- Suicide. etc

Factors responsible for high risk behaviour

The host factors that promotes high risk behaviour are rebellion, disorientation, peer pressure and curiosity. The Psychological 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. There is a need for adolescent-friendly services, programmes, policies and interventions to meet their needs and psychosocial well-being. Many interventions have focused on addressing specific risk factors and health problems rather than using a combination of mutually supportive activities. Combination of mutually supportive interventions that promote psycho-social development and

impart skills that would strengthen adolescent abilities and also enhance their quality of life, which is the need of the hour.

LSE is suggested by many as prevention and development approach to this scenario. Internalising the core essential life skills helps the adolescents to deal with the concerns in the modern world in a dignified and mature way bringing success to them. These skills will help them to resist peer pressure as they learn how to accept themselves for who they are. These basic skills will help young people in coping with difficulties they face in their personal, emotional and social development. Life skills, are essentially those abilities that help to promote mental well-being and competence in young people as they face the realities of life. With life skills one is able to explore alternatives, weigh pros and cons and make rational decision in solving each problem or issue as it arises.

Different perspectives of Life skills

WHO (1997) rightly points out life skills “A group of psycho-social competence and interpersonal skills that help people to make informed decisions, solve problems, think creatively and critically, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others and cope with and manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner. These abilities help in the promotion of mental and social well-being and competence in adolescents to face the hard realities of life”.

Further UNESCO (2001) conceptualized life skills as person’s ability to maintain a state of mental well-being and to demonstrate the same in adaptive and positive behaviour while interacting with others or his environment. It has been widely recognized that the development of life skills should be the primary concern of education.

UNICEF defines life skills as a behaviour change or behaviour development approach designed to address a balance of three areas; knowledge, attitude and skills.

Different categories of Life skills to be developed in Adolescents

The following category of life skills have to be developed in adolescents.

1	Thinking skills	Rational thinking Logical thinking Reflective thinking Critical thinking Creative thinking
2	Solving skills	Decision making Problem solving
3	Skill in establishing relations	Expression of love and respect Negotiation and cooperation Group rules and roles Effective communication
4	Coping skills	Coping with emotions Coping with stress Coping with consumerism
5	Skill in understanding self and others	Value Clarification Empathy Self-concept
6	Skills for self-reliance / personal independence	Personal and environmental hygienic habits Food preparation and eating habits Basic household work Personal finance Time and travel management Career decision and employability

Adolescents with low level of life skills are known to develop high risk behaviours which lead to long-lasting health and social consequences. Life skills development is a key to facilitate this process of transforming information into healthy behaviour. Many countries across the world have introduced life skills education in the school curriculum or for adolescents in special situations. Life skills have been defined by the WHO as “the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of every life”.

Sl.No.	Life Skills	Sub skills
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Life skills methodology

Life skills education approach is an interactive educational methodology that not only focus on transmitting knowledge but also aim at shaping attitudes and developing interpersonal skills. The important goals of the life skills approach are to enhance young people's abilities to take responsibility for making healthier choices, resisting negative pressures and avoiding risk behaviour. Teaching methods are youth centered, gender sensitive, interactive and participatory. Life skill education is generally implemented through methodologies such as group discussion, roleplay, simple games, storytelling, debates etc. These methodologies unlike the lecture method, arouse and sustain attention and interest, ensure participation and team work and also facilitate learning through fun and humour. Therefore, it's important for the trainer to be well versed in these methodologies, it in turn helps in internalizing the skills by the participants in a better way

Theories of Life Skills Education

The foundation on which the life skills approach is developed is drawn from various theories that have positively contributed to the growth and enrichment of Life Skills Education. Social learning theory (Bandura 1977) is prominent among them. The other theories include child and adolescent development theory, multiple intelligence theory etc.

Research evidence for Life Skills Education Training

There is an emerging consensus among mental health professionals worldwide that Life Skills Education training to adolescents are effective. The life skills program focusses on the development of the skills needed for life such as self-awareness, communication, decision making thinking, managing emotions, assertiveness and relationship skills. Also, the training programme aims at bringing comprehensive behaviour change in the adolescents (Rahmati et al. 2010)

Through life skills-based training programmes, mental health professionals attempt to address varied issues of the adolescents such as alcohol and other substance use, reproductive and sexual health, criminal acts, HIV/AIDS prevention and suicide prevention. Maryam and her colleagues (2011) in their investigation to find the

effectiveness of training life skills on adolescent students found that life skills training lead to significant increase of self-esteem in the study group. The authors concluded that mental health programs such as life skills training can decline school and education problems.

A research also showed that life skills training significantly reduced the alcohol and drug use among the studied adolescents (smith et.al.2004). Improvement in interpersonal relationship and reduction in aggression and behavioural problems was found among the participants who had attended a coping skills training by Sukhodolsky and his team (2004) Life skills training can promote social adjustment (Rahmati et al 2010) Anger control, (Feindler et al.1986) enhanced self-esteem (Young et al 1997) and improvement in academic performance (Elias et al. 1991) were reported in various researches that evaluated the effectiveness of life skills training.

Cycle of Life Skills Development

The life skills cannot be developed in isolation from the society rather, they need a collaborative effort. Socialization of the child starts from home but it is fostered formally in school. Therefore, school becomes an important place to develop life skills and teachers have a major role to play in life skills development. The skill development programme can have three parts.

1. Information about life skills

This part of the programme would only deal with providing information about the importance and type of life skills. This will also involve defining life skill and providing examples where a particular life skill can be used.

2. Life skills rehearsal

At this stage, an individual is given a platform where he/she can do the rehearsals of the life skills which has been learnt in phase one is a hypothesized situation. This will give an individual a chance to perform that particular life skill.

3. Life skills maintenance

At this stage, an individual will be encouraged to become self-directed, so that he/she becomes capable to use these life skills in his / her own life to lead a happier life.

Qualities of Teachers as Life Skills Developers:

Although development of a life skill can be done by other members of the society such as counsellors, parents, psychologists, health workers etc, but still, teachers have a powerful impact over learners because they consider them as their role models.

As Life skills developers, teachers should possess certain qualities.

- Ability to guide and facilitate in right directions
- Good knowledge about the content, ie.. Concept of life skills education
- Being supportive and empathetic
- Leadership qualities to guide a group
- Willingness to learn and accept new concepts
- Trust worthiness.

Strategies to be adopted of facilitate the life skill-based

Education Development of life skills means improving the personal effectiveness of young people, particularly those who are at risk. Our traditional education system is unable to fulfil the needs of our adolescents and only focuses on intellectual development of students. Today's youth requires life skill to solve the mysteries of life enthusiastically and there is also a strong need to relate the education with the sensible aspect of life where adolescence can be skilfully made responsible for his/her behaviour or actions.

Learning a variety of life skills prepare adolescents for a more successful life at home, school, in their communities and in the work force. Now, schools are expected to impart life skills that are need for the socialization of young people and to prepare them for a productive and prosperous life.

Effective school health programmes should be organized that follow the newly evolved frame work for skill-based health education that would enable students to acquire the requisite knowledge and develop attitudes, values, life skills and services needed to live an adjusted life and to avoid health risks such as HIV infection.

Interaction with media persons, teacher educators, curriculum developers, policy framers and parents should be arranged.

A detailed curriculum has to be framed where

reproductive health is given due emphasis.

Organize co-curricular activities, quiz competition, group discussion, value clarification, role play, case study, poster competition, symposium etc. that may prove very effective in not only providing accurate and adequate information to students but also inculcating in them positive attitude and responsible behaviour.

For imbibing the life skills, the traditional method may not be effective New interactive question answer method has to be evolved. Life skills can be developed using pedagogical methods.

Methods developing interpersonal skills and positive attitudes should be preferred.

Health related awareness programmes should be organized.

A detailed curriculum has to be framed where reproductive health is given due emphasis.

School syllabi and text books have to be reviewed to identify the scope of life skills needed material for facilitating effective integration of the life skills with the entire educative process.

Teachers should be well versed in the different methodologies used for imparting life skills education.

Conclusion

For the all-round development of the adolescents, life skills education should be compulsory and the school system needs to realize the importance of life skills education and provide slot in the school curriculum for the development of these skills. So, there is a need of a basic life skill education curriculum which along with educational/vocational training equips adolescents with the necessary skills and information to cope with the real problems, they face in real life.

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