



AWARENESS OF LIFE SKILL INTERVENTIONAL PROGRAM OF SECONDARY TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

INTRODUCTION

“The purer the mind, the easier it is to control. Purity of the mind must be insisted upon if you would control it... perfect mortality is the all in all of complete control over mind. The mind who is perfectly moral has nothing more to do, he is free.”

-Swami Vivekananda

“All Birds find shelter during a rain. But Eagle avoids rain by flying above the Clouds.”

-A.P.J Abdul Kalam

Life skills are behaviors used appropriately and responsibly in the management of personal affairs. They are a set of human skills acquired via teaching or direct experience that are used to handle problems and questions commonly encountered in daily human life. The subject varies greatly depending on social norms and community expectations.

Life skills are defined as psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. They are loosely grouped into three broad categories of skills: cognitive skills for analyzing and using information, personal skills for developing personal agency and managing oneself, and interpersonal skills for communicating and interacting effectively with others.

LIFE SKILL EDUCATION

It is a new branch of study. It emerged as a subject of attraction only during recent years. Being a branch of Social Psychology, it concentrates on the social behavior of human beings in relation to different social situations. It helps individuals to enhance their behavior in different social settings by identifying their capacity (basic skill) and improving capability (capacity and ability) and competencies (abilities and skills). The opportunity to practice the skills will improve the constructs (application of intelligence and conceptual framework), expectations (learned perceptions about self and others), values (principles of high regard) and self-regulatory plans

(growth plans). Conclusion of the United National Inter Agency Meeting held during 1998 at Geneva says that ‘Life skill education is designed to facilitate the practice and reinforcement of psychological skills in a culturally and developmentally appropriate way.

The extent to which a person exposes to the desired skills and practice, determines the level of his overall development. It also helps to solve the physiological, psychological and social problems. Imparting life skill is the basic attempt that we have to initiate for strengthening the behavior of our adolescents and elders. Acquiring these basic skills will modify the behavior and character of the adolescents. Effective acquisition of life skills can influence the way one feels about oneself and others and can enhance one’s productivity, efficacy, self-esteem and self-confidence. No doubt, this will also pave the way for employment and income generating activities.

MEANING AND CONCEPT OF LIFE SKILL

The meaning and concept of life skill is beyond its definition. It is easy to define the concept in general but to suit the explanation in all the particular life situations and throughout life is difficult. Life skills are defined in general; rather it is essential to ask how they are defined in particular life situations and throughout life.’

As any other animal, human beings are also having inherent ‘capacity’ to do many activities. By training and practice, ‘ability’ will emerge and subsequently the capacity and ability transforms into capability. Life skills are developed as a result of a constructive processing of information, impressions, encounters and experiences, both individual and social that is part of one’s daily life and situation. Life skill education and training paves the way for identifying the capacity through self-analysis, assessing the requirement and training in the respective area for a better and effective result. Life Skill will help the individuals to translate knowledge, attitude and values into healthy behaviors. To make it simple, ‘life skill is the ability (capability) that can be imbibed and improved through practice, to translate the knowledge, attitude, and values into positive behavior, to deal efficiently with the

needs and challenges of everyday life.”

LIFE SKILLS MEANING



DEFINITIONS OF LIFE SKILLS

“The abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.”

-World Health Organisation

“Personal management and social skills that is necessary for adequate functioning on an independent basis.”

-International Bureau of Education

Life skills on three general criteria:

- They are the key competencies that contribute to an overall successful life and a well-functioning society.*
- They are instrumental to meet important challenges in a wide spectrum of relevant contexts.*
- They are relevant to all individuals.*

These key competencies are functioning in socially heterogeneous groups acting autonomously and using tools interactively.

Life skills are the skills we need to deal effectively with the challenges in everyday life, whether at school, at work or in our personal lives. A definitive list is something educators, governments and employers continue to discuss. But no matter if you call them life skills, 21st century skills or soft skills, students who are able to understand and use these skills, along with their educational qualifications, will be better placed to take advantage of educational and employment opportunities.

LIFE SKILLS-BASED EDUCATION

Life skills education is a structured programme of needs- and outcomes-based participatory learning that aims to increase positive and adaptive behaviour by assisting individuals to develop and practice psycho-social skills that minimize risk factors and maximize protective factors.

Life skills education programmes are theory- and evidenced-based, learner-focused, delivered by competent facilitators, and appropriately evaluated to ensure continuous improvement of documented results. A term which came into use to describe life skills education addressing specific content or undertaken to achieve specific goals, e.g., life skills-based peace education or life skills-based HIV & AIDS education. The term makes it clear that a life skills approach will be used to teach the subject matter, meaning that participatory teaching/learning methods will be used to help learners develop not only knowledge, but also the psycho-social life skills they may need to use knowledge to inform and carry out behavior.

Life skills from a psychological standpoint are those mental and emotional skills which enable us to better cope and succeed in our lives. They include such vital skills as how to cope with anger, have successful relationships, get along with your boss, learn to plan (think ahead), be consistent in your studies and at work, cope with frustration, etc. They also include learning to be on time, give your best effort, see your problems in perspective, etc. From a behavior standpoint, life skills also involve practical matters such as managing your finances, scheduling your time, using public transportation, etc.

Life skills have been defined as “the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life” (WHO). ‘Adaptive’ means that a person is flexible in approach and is able to adjust in different circumstances. ‘Positive behaviour’ implies that a person is forward looking and even in difficult situations, can find a ray of hope and opportunities to find solutions. The terms ‘Livelihood skills’ or occupational/vocational skills refer to capabilities, resources and opportunities to pursue individual and household economic goals and relate to income generation. Thus, Life skills are distinct from livelihood skills.

KEY LIFE SKILLS

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 reflection 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 behavior 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/coping with feelings, emotions, stress and resisting peer and family pressure. Young people as

advocates need both thinking and social skills for consensus building and advocacy on issues of concern.

The Ten core Life Skills as laid down by WHO are:

1. Self-awareness
2. Empathy
3. Critical thinking
4. Creative thinking
5. Decision making
6. Problem Solving
7. Effective communication
8. Interpersonal relationship
9. Coping with stress.
10. Coping with emotion

I. Self-Awareness: It includes recognition of 'self', our character, our strengths and weaknesses, desires and dislikes. Developing self-awareness can help us to recognize when we are stressed or feel under pressure. It is often a prerequisite to effective communication and interpersonal relations, as well as for developing empathy with others.

II. Empathy: To have a successful relationship with our loved ones and society at large, we need to understand and care about other peoples' needs, desires and feelings. Empathy is the ability to imagine what life is like for another person. Without empathy, our communication with others will amount to one-way traffic. When we understand ourselves as well as others, we are better prepared to communicate our needs and desires. We will be more equipped to say what we want people to know, present our thoughts and ideas and tackle delicate issues without offending other people. At the same time, we will be able to elicit support from others, and win their understanding. Empathy can help us to accept others, who may be very different from ourselves. This can improve social interactions, especially, in situations of ethnic or cultural diversity. Empathy can also help to encourage nurturing behaviour towards people in need of care and assistance, or tolerance, as is the case with AIDS sufferers, or people with mental disorders, who may be stigmatized and ostracized by the very people they depend upon for support.

III. Critical Thinking: It is an ability to analyze information and experiences in an objective manner. Critical thinking can contribute to health by helping us to recognize and assess the factors that influence attitudes and behaviour, such as values, peer pressure and the media.

IV. Creative Thinking: It is a novel way of seeing or doing things that is characteristic of four components – fluency (generating new ideas), flexibility (shifting perspective easily), originality (conceiving of something new), and elaboration (building on other ideas).

V. Decision Making: It helps us to deal constructively with decisions about our lives. This can have consequences for health. It can teach people how to actively make decisions about their actions in relation to healthy assessment of different options and, what effects these different decisions are likely to have.

VI. Problem Solving: It helps us to deal constructively with problems in our lives. Significant problems that are left unresolved can cause mental stress and give rise to accompanying physical strain.

VII. Effective Communication: It means that we are able to express ourselves, both verbally and non-verbally, in ways that are appropriate to our cultures and situations. This means being able to express opinions and desires, and also needs and fears, and it may mean being able to ask for advice and help in a time of need.

VIII. Interpersonal Relationship Skills: It helps us to relate in positive ways with the people we interact with. This may mean being able to make and keep friendly relationships, which can be of great importance to our mental and social well-being. It may mean keeping, good relations with family members, which are an important source of social support. It may also mean being able to end relationships constructively.

IX. Coping with Stress: It means recognizing the sources of stress in our lives, recognizing how this affects us, and acting in ways that help us control our levels of stress, by changing our environment or lifestyle and learning how to relax.

X. Coping with Emotions: It means involving recognizing emotions within us and others, being aware of how emotions influence behaviour and being able to respond to emotions appropriately. Intense emotions like anger or sadness can have negative effects on our health if we do not respond appropriately.

CLASSIFICATION OF LIFE SKILLS: The classification of life skills include,

1. Generic life skills.
2. Problem specific life skills.
3. Area specific life skills.

GENERIC LIFE SKILLS: Generic life skills are the skills that are required for the overall development of the personality. This can be further classified into the following skills.

- **Mother skills.**
 - a) Self-awareness
 - b) Empathy.
- **Survival skills**
 - a) Interpersonal relations.
 - b) Communication.
- **Thinking skills**
 - a) Critical thinking.

- b) Creative thinking.
- **Negotiating skills**
 - a) Decision making
 - b) Problem solving.
- **Coping skills**
 - a) Coping with emotion
 - b) Coping with stress.

PROBLEM SPECIFIC LIFE SKILLS

Problem specific life skills are the specific abilities that are particularly needed during adolescence to cope up with the adolescent needs and concerns and to keep away from many harmful and unwanted activities.

In addition to generic skills, which pave the way for the overall healthy development and physiological competence of the adolescents, they need some combination of specific generic skills (personal skills, conceptual skills), technical skills and managerial skills (institutional skills) on priority basis to overcome some specific issues. There are many specific issues particularly pertaining to adolescents, which need priority attention and care. There should be efforts to strengthen our adolescents to keep away from these problems. Some problem specific skills of adolescents are:

- Skills to understand sex and sexuality scientifically.
- Skills to avoid suicide tendency.
- Skills to cope with gender issues.
- Skills to overcome negative peer pressure.
- Skills to maintain assertiveness.
- Skills to overcome eating disorders.
- Skills to keep away from substance abuse.

AREA OF SPECIFIC LIFE SKILLS

Area specific skills are the skills needed to handle the different activities related with an area where the person likes to have proficiency. Though we have studied many generic life skills for improving our behavior to lead a better social life, the applicability of the skill in social situations remains a very difficult task. Single life skill as such will not help us to do different activities related to our day-to-day life. There, we need a combination of life skills based on its priority. In the case of problem specific life skills the combination and strength may be moderate, but in the case of area specific achievement the strength of the appropriate combination should be optimum to get good result. In the society, when we deal with specific target related to a particular area, we need some specific skills related to that area. This includes technical skills and managerial skills. The level of these skills depends on the particular area of operation. The appropriate combination of the conceptual skill, personal skill, technical skill and managerial skills constitute the

actual skill needed to do the work effectively in that particular area. The combination varies in relation to the area of operation. We have to identify the combinations of life skills needed for that particular area and practice that to deliver the result in that area. Some of the areas that are important for the adolescents are:

- Skills to improve learning technique.
- Skills for the time management and punctuality.
- Skills for career development.
- Skills to maintain values.

LIFE SKILLS GIVEN BY WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO)

To develop healthy human beings in the world, World Health Organization (WHO) in 1997 has identified some skills which help the person to develop own competencies. The skills given by the World Health Organization (WHO) cover all aspects of human life. These skills help the person to behave appropriately in the situation and live healthy and happy life. The skills identified by the World Health Organization (WHO) are applicable to all individuals. World Health Organization (WHO) has said that by possessing these skills a person is more responsible and selective in his life and able to behave appropriately in the situation. These skills identified by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1997 are known as life skills as it covers all aspects of human life. Life skills are helpful in leading health life. It is a bunch of skills which are helpful to an individual to live life happily and efficiently.

IMPARTATION OF LIFE SKILLS

The method used in teaching of Life Skills builds upon the social learning theory and on what we know of how young people learn from their environment; from observing how others behave and what consequences arise from behaviour. It involves the process of Participatory learning using 4 basic components:

1. Practical activities
2. Feedback and reflections
3. Consolidation and reinforcement
4. Practical application to day to day life challenges

METHODS THAT CAN BE USED TO ENHANCE LIFE SKILLS IN STUDENT TEACHERS

Each workshop is specially designed to impart a particular skill and involves all or some of the following techniques:

- Class discussions
- Brainstorming
- Demonstration and guided practice
- Role plays
- Audio and visual activities, e.g.,
- Arts, music, theatre, dance

- Small groups
- Educational games and
- Simulations
- Case studies
- Story telling
- Debates
- Decision mapping or problem trees.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LIFE SKILLS

In a constantly changing environment, having life skills is an essential part of being able to meet the challenges of everyday life. The dramatic changes in global economies over the past five years have been matched with the transformation in technology and these are all impacting on education, the workplace and our home life. To cope with the increasing pace and change of modern life, students need new life skills such as the ability to deal with stress and frustration. Today's students will have many new jobs over the course of their lives, with associated pressures and the need for flexibility.

CONCLUSION

The present study shows that the B.Ed. Students of Tiruvallur Colleges of Education have more Awareness of life skill interventional program. They can use Awareness of life skill interventional program in their classes and make the teaching learning process more effective and efficient. The global knowledge economy is driven by information and technology. One has to be able to deal with changes quickly and effectively. The new economy places increasing demands on flexible intellectual skills, and the ability to analyse information and integrate diverse sources of knowledge in solving problems. Good critical thinking promotes such thinking skills, and is very important in the fast-changing workplace. This study will help them to ask relevant questions, weigh evidence offered in support of arguments, interpret complex problems, and make wise decisions.

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