



## COMBINATORIAL COMPONENTS OF LIFE SKILL EDUCATION FOR ADOLESCENTS

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### ABSTRACT:

Adolescents are considered to be active agents in making India as a skilling and transforming India. They play vital role in bringing about sustainable society in the light of school and higher education, technology driven environment, knowledge driven economy, employability and entrepreneurship through their creative and reflective potentialities. But, some of the adolescents are projecting on disruptive, impulsive, and antisocial behaviours. They are deviating from the qualitative productivity as well as value oriented behaviour. Thus, it is highly needed to make them active icons in learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, learning to become and learning to live together for quality life and complete wellbeing. It is necessary to uplift their innate and acquired abilities in the direction of peaceful and prosperous life. It is profound fact that Life Skill Education will strengthen their intra personal and inter personal skills. Life Skill Education stimulates them towards rational and responsible behaviour. The present paper focuses on conscious, critical and thoughtful dialogues on life skill education for adolescents. It also touches on rationale and various types of life skills, reflective and insightful thoughts on life skill education for adolescents.

### KEYWORDS:

**LIFE SKILL, LIFE SKILL EDUCATION, ADOLESCENTS, COMBINATORIAL COMPONENTS.**

### INTRODUCTION:

Life skills are human skills which can be acquired through training, instruction, practice and experience. They are very useful to manage personal as well as inter personal relations. They are expected behaviours for solving problems in our daily life. They prepare the individual to be complete well being mentally, emotionally and socially. They help to cultivate competences among the people for dealing with complexities in life. World Health Organization (WHO) reflects life skills as the capabilities of an individual for strengthening adaptive and positive behavior in order to deal effectively with demands and challenges of everyday life. *UNICEF* views life skills as behavior development approach designed to address a balance of knowledge, attitudes and skills. Life skills are personal and social skills required for young people to function effectively with confidence and competence for the sake of self and community. Essential life skills help to recognize and reveal one's own feelings, to provide and receive feedback, to formulate realistic, measurable and attainable goals, and to employ problem solving approaches for happy and delightful life.

Life skill enhances psychosocial competence. Psychosocial competence has a vital role in promoting health also. Psychosocial competence refers to an individual ability to maintain complete well-being and to frame adaptive and positive behaviour while interacting with others in relation to culture and environment. Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of

everyday life. Generally, life skills are innumerable. However, analysis of the life skills field suggests that there is a core set of skills that pave the path for promotion of the health and well-being of children and adolescents.

### COMBINATORIAL COMPONENTS:

There are ten core life skills, which have been identified by World Health Organization (WHO). They are:

**SELF-AWARENESS:** Self-awareness construes recognizing one's 'self, the character, the strengths and weaknesses, desires and dislikes. Developing self-awareness can help an individual to recognize when he/she is stressed or feel under pressure. It is often a prerequisite to effective communication and interpersonal relations, as well as for developing empathy with others. It helps the adolescents to understand their self worth and build confidence to face life boldly. It also enables them to identify weaknesses or negative personality traits and to improve them. Some of the self related terms are used as synonyms of self awareness are self- concept and self-image etc.

**EMPATHY:** Empathy is the ability to imagine what experiences of life or life in general is like for another person. It is the mental capacity to accept others without emotional turbulence and understand them in a better way. Without empathy, communication with others will amount to one-way traffic. Empathy can help the individual to accept others, who may be very different from them. Empathy can also help to encourage nurturing behavior towards people in need of care and assistance, or tolerance.

**EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION:** It means ability to express yourself, both verbally and non-verbally, in the ways that are appropriate to culture and situations. This means able to express opinion and desires and also needs and fears. It may mean able to ask for help and advice in time. Effective communication is in fact an effective tool for establishment and maintenance of good social and working relationship with others. It is a way to reach to people by transmitting our ideas, facts, thoughts, feelings and values.

**INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS:** Interpersonal relationship skills are known as necessary skills to live which are very imperative for establishing and maintaining social relationships. This skill helps us to relate in a positive way to interact with the people and also to de-link with unconstructive relationships. This may mean being able to make and keep friendly relationships, which can be of great importance to our social and mental well-being. It may mean keeping good relationship with our family members, which are an important source of social support. It may also mean to end the relationship constructively. Relating with others is an important life skill and one of the most important forms of human intelligence and which provides warmth, care, support and collaboration with people. All these factors contribute excitement, joy and personal fulfillment in life.

**CREATIVE THINKING:** Creativity is the ability to generate unique, innovative ideas and manifest them from thought level to reality. It is a process, which involves originality of ideas and then its production. It is the ability to produce work that is both novel (original and unexpected) and appropriate (useful and meet task constraints). It is a novel way to seeing or doing things that is characteristic of four components- fluency (generating new ideas), flexibility (shifting perspective easily), originality (conceiving of something new), elaboration (building on other ideas). It helps adolescents to respond to different challenges of life in a flexible manner and helps them to explore possible alternatives of a given situation.

**CRITICAL THINKING:** It is construed as logical thinking and reasoning inclusive of skills such as comparison and classification. Critical thinking is that method of thinking about any subject, content or problem in which the individual improves his/her quality of thinking by imposing intellectual standards upon it. It is an ability to analyze the information and experiences in an objective manner. It can contribute to health of adolescents by recognizing and assess the factors that influence attitude and behavior such as values, peer pressure and media.

**DECISION MAKING:** It facilitates an individual to handle formatively with decisions about his/her life. 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. It is the skill to analyze and weighs the pros cons of alternatives and accepting responsibility of the consequence of decisions with confidence. It teaches that, decisions be made only

after assessing different options and its effects.

**PROBLEM SOLVING:** It helps one to deal constructively with problems in his/her life. Significant problems are left unresolved can cause mental stress and give rise to accompanying physical stress. It enables the individual to get out of the uncomfortable situation and accomplish one's need without using anger, coercion, defiance, aggressive behavior or force. Scientifically, problem solving is a method to bring an opportunity for a positive act. It helps an adolescent to solve problems by using creative and critical thinking.

**COPING WITH EMOTIONS:** It helps in addressing emotions within one self and also in others through aware of how emotions impact behavior and being able to respond to emotions appropriately. Intense emotions like sadness and anger can have negative impact upon a person if he/she does not respond appropriately. This skill helps to know that it is normal to have strong feelings and that feelings are neither positive nor negative. Accepting feelings is the first step towards learning to have more control over them. Life skill helps the adolescents to learn healthy, positive and safe ways to express emotions. It enables them to recognize their emotions as well as others emotions, to identify its effects on behavior and to respond on them aptly.

**COPING WITH STRESS:** This skill is related to identification of the sources of stress in one's life, recognizing it affects and taking actions that help him/her controlling stress in lives. It also emphasizes the altering the environment or life style and learning the ways to relax. This skill provides the strength to face positive as well as negative stressful situations and to deal with accompanying emotions and look for solutions that are beneficial for adolescents.

All these ten skills are related to each other and contribute in the holistic development of an individual like reinforcement in enhancing psycho social competencies. Further these ten life skills may fall into three basic categories (CBSE, 2010): These three categories comprise different core life skills given by the WHO. They are as follows:

1. **THINKING SKILLS:** Thinking skills are associated to some powers with reference to mental abilities. The individual must be skilled to evaluate the outcome of his/her actions and actions of others too. On the bases of learned skills, an individual must be capable to think critically, creatively and to find out the solution of this/her problems and take future decisions.
2. **SOCIAL SKILLS:** Social skills comprises of those skills that come upfront when a person interacts and communicates with those around them. These skills include verbal and non-verbal communication, understanding of other's feelings, their circumstances and able to make better social relationships. Live in a society, according to its norms, is very essential as it lays the foundation of

an adult social behavior.

3. **EMOTIONAL SKILLS:** Emotional skills can be conceived as skills which help in making rational decisions but also enabling to make others agree to one's perspective. These skills enable adolescents to know, understand and manage their own internal frictions and feelings, emotions, stress and enable them to deal with different kinds of stress and pressures of their lives.

Researches of Ozlem et.al (2017) have identified three categories of 21<sup>st</sup> century life skills that even reflects on life skills they are cognitive skills (critical thinking, non routine problem solving and systems thinking), interpersonal skills (complex communication, social skills, teamwork, cultural awareness and appreciation for diversity), intrapersonal skills (self management, time management, personal development, self regulation, adaptation and management process) where as Bipasha Sinha (2017) concludes that life skills are essentials parts of personal and social development. It should be a mandatory part of curriculum in all the schools. There are various methods of teaching life skills to students. They are discussion method, debate, role plying, brainstorming, buzz group, miming, case study, question and answer method, field trips, games, songs and jingles, storytelling, poetry and recitals and Annahita Ball et.al (2016) have developed 21<sup>st</sup> century life and career skills scale (21C-LCS) which is useful for measuring skills among target group. It is useful for researcher, professional, educator and service providers.

Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enables individual to deal effectively with demands and challenges of everyday life. Tinggen et.al (2011) admitted that web 2.0 tools such as blogs, wikis and podcast can enhance teachers thinking, problem solving skills, and self directional and interpersonal skills. Maria Abdullah Kamisah Osman (2010) has revealed that, there are significant difference in inventive thinking skills between students in Malaysia and Brunei. Education for children to acquire 21<sup>st</sup> century skills may held maintaining notion prosperity and stimulating economic growth. They also added that managing complexity command self direction, risk taking, curiosity, creative reasoning and higher order thinking or also six important constructs of inventive thinking. And Bharath and Kishore (2010) have revealed that a child with life skills has competence to cope with challenges of life using the available resources event amidst such adversity.

Critical thinking skills can be promoted among students through performance based approach rather than traditional approach. Study of Chatrah (2008) and Bhawe (2008) have revealed that high school students have managed their stress through life skills education program. Whereas Kenneth (2008) added that management of stress in adolescent is highly essential for gaining success in adulthood. Management stress can be done through life skills training. Singh (2008) has advocated that experiential learning and creative learning methods are

useful for adapting life skills training.

Research of Wagner (2008) identified seven survival skills in which students need to specialize in order to obtain a good job. These survival skills were determined as a result of interviews with many leaders from the business world. Wagner identifies them as: critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration and leadership, agility and adaptability, initiative and entrepreneurialism, effective oral and written and communication, accessing and analyzing information and curiosity and imagination. Elksnin (2007) reflects that it needed to transform children's learning process and engaged them in gaining 21<sup>st</sup> century skills for economic development, educational evaluations, work force development and social services. Berk (2007) adds that work force of the 21<sup>st</sup> century must have creative fluency in communication, ability to solve complex problem and science and mathematical skills. Life skills are responsible in specific psychological areas conducive to mental wellness.

The life skills can be taught to young people as abilities that they can acquire through learning and practice. The Model for problem solving behaviour for attaining life skills is needed for adolescents to analyze their behaviour and direct themselves towards achieving life skills. In this model, adolescent has to identify the problem and clarify it in a meaningful and manageable manner. Then, s/he has to collect relevant resourceful data and analyse it properly. Subsequently, s/he has to interpret and make generalizations in the light of outcome of the problem. Then, it becomes easy to inculcate life skills among adolescents in society. Inevitably, cultural and social factors will determine the exact nature of life skills. Gender issues will arise in identifying the nature of life skills for psychosocial competence. The exact content of life skills education must therefore be determined at the country level, or in a more local context. However, life skills are being taught in such a wide variety of countries that they appear to have relevance across cultures.

#### **LIFE SKILL EDUCATION:**

The term 'Life Skill Education' denotes provision of education to the students for imparting knowledge related to health, values, thinking, behaviour, communication and social relations. Positive and adaptive behaviours, decision making capacity, critical mental ability, problem solving ability etc. are the important elements in life skill education. Life Skills Education is a series of self developmental sessions. It helps to deal with peer pressure and learning to resist negative peer pressure. It also promotes assertive skills during the adolescence period. It insights to have awareness on one's self, feeling good about one's self, learning to have relationships with others and understanding other people with regard to their cultural values. It helps how to develop creative thinking, problem solving skill, coping with emotions and stress, and making informed decision in every aspect of life.

Life Skills Education succeeds or fails based upon teaching quality. Hence, it is the need of hour to provide quality

training and support to life skills teacher and instructor. Nivedita and Budh Singh (2016) have emphasized that life skills education can be design across the curriculum through certain techniques like brain storming, storytelling, debate, discussion, role playing, buzz group, games and situation analysis. And Armin Mahmoudi & Golsa Moshayedi (2012) express that life skill education strengthens people moral development. Adolescent is a period of experimenting, experiencing and expanding. Adolescent needs guidance and counseling in decision making, problem solving, critical thinking, developing interpersonal skills, self - awareness, empathy, coping with stress and managing emotions. Hence, the family life & life skills education is good support system for adolescents at the community level.

### **IMPORTANCE OF LIFE SKILL EDUCATION FOR ADOLESCENTS:**

Adolescents are considered to be active agents in making India as a skilling and transforming India. They play vital role in bringing about sustainable society in the light of school and higher education, technology driven environment, knowledge driven economy, employability and entrepreneurship through their creative and reflective potentialities. But, most of the adolescents are projecting on disruptive, impulsive, and antisocial behaviours. They are deviating from the qualitative productivity as well as value oriented behaviour. Thus, it is highly needed to make them active icons in learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, learning to become and learning to live together for quality life and complete wellbeing. It is necessary to uplift their innate and acquired abilities in the direction of peaceful and prosperous life. It is profound fact that Life Skill Education will strengthen their intra personal and inter personal skills. Life Skill Education stimulates them towards rational and responsible behaviour.

In order to cope with the crucial stages of adolescents development, early intervention of life skills programmes are carried out with basic skill building activities; participative interactions of role plays, group work, team building exercises, discussions, voicing out opinions and presentations, to actively engage young people in their self development process. These basic skills will help young people in coping with difficulties they face in their personal, emotional and social development. Through these skills adolescents learn to communicate with their parents, teachers, adults and peers. They also learn the importance of saying NO, especially at times of negative peer pressure. They learn to take control of their emotions and make more informed.

Berk (2007) reveals that pubertal changes affect adolescent's self image, mood and interaction with parents and peers. However, if the adolescent is informed in advance about these changes, it could help the young person to develop a more positive body image. On the other hand, when teens have a poor body image, self esteem is low, relationships gets rocky. In the worst cases,

eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia and other unhealthy behaviours develop. The media complicates this condition by placing standards for how girls and boys should look defining what is beautiful in our culture and society. Young people who had high levels of self worth are able to cope well with the challenges they face, than the adolescents who had poor family adjustments. It is stated that the advancement in developmental psychology and neuroscience explained this phenomenon as the result of complex interplay of body chemistry, brain development and cognitive growth. Nevertheless, these changes that the adolescents experience take place in the context of multiple systems, such as individual relationship, family, school and community that support and influence the change.

According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, individual human development takes place within multiple ecological systems. The stability of the family, the parenting style, types of family problems and conflicts in a family will determine the type of stresses, conflicts and psychological effects on the individual particularly on adolescents. These ups and downs in the family cause parent-child conflicts, risky behaviours and mood changes in the adolescent's life. These situations lead to unnecessary stress, anger issues and low self esteem resulting in, low academic performances, and disruptive behavior in school and at home.

Life skills help adolescents to transit successfully from childhood to adulthood by healthy development of social and emotional skills. It helps in the development of social competence and problem solving skills, which in turn help adolescents to form their own identity. It helps to weigh pros and cons of the situation, hence, act as a mediator to problem behaviour. It promotes positive social, norms that an impact the adolescent health services, schools and family. It helps adolescents to differentiate between hearing and listening and thus, ensuring less development misconceptions or miscommunications regarding issues such as drugs, alcoholism etc. It delays the onset of the abuse of tobacco, alcohol etc. It promotes the development of positive self-esteem and teaches anger control.

### **ROLE OF TEACHER:**

Teacher has to teach life skill education for adolescents with realistic tendencies. For gaining knowledge and skills among adolescents in relation to life skill education, teacher has to:

- Reflect on life skills and learn from experience for teaching life skill education.
- Participate in ongoing inquiry related to acquisition of life skills.
- Expect feedback in bringing refinement and promotion of life skills.
- Remain open to alternative perspectives for strengthening life skills in daily life.
- Frame responsibility as well as accountability for own learning in light of life skill education.

- Take action to align with new knowledge, understanding, proper attitude and skills for life skill education.
- Observe self and others in the process of thinking and acting in connection with life skill education.
- Commit to continuous improvement in practice for attaining life skills.
- Strives to align behaviors with values and beliefs in the direction of life skill education.
- Seeks to discover what is true in the acquisition of life skills.

### CONCLUSION:

The adolescent has to prepare for a global successful adult life of competition and independent functioning which is possible only through enhancing their psychosocial competencies through life skill education which results in bridging up communication barriers with parents, teachers and others and enables adolescents to handle stressful situations effectively. Teacher has to reinforce the adolescents to cultivate life skills in daily life. At higher level, teacher has to create learning environment where students can develop their critical and creative thinking skills as well as inter-personal and communication skills. This can be done through development of inquiry activities. Teachers have to formulate appropriate learning goals and provide necessary learning activities to reach the goals, and also use appropriate assessment strategies to know the degree of achievement of life skills. Teachers have to participate in orientation programmes, seminars, conferences, workshops and symposia in connection with life skill education in order to know recent approaches, trends and techniques for gaining life skills. Teachers have to focus on motivation, management, mediation, modification and monitoring for inculcating life skills among adolescents.

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