

CONTENTS

INDEX

TITLE	Page(s)
"भारतीय राष्ट्रीय कांग्रेस में गान्धीवादी और तिलकवादी दो गुट: एक उद्देश्य की ओर, 1918-1921" - डा० नीलम कौशिक	01
ROLE OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS FOR DEVELOPING LIFE SKILLS - Dr. Girdhar Lal Sharma	17
Security Pricing Movement: A Study of Selected Banks in India - Pramod Kumar Singhal	23
A Study of Occupational Adjustment in relation to Emotional Intelligence and Spiritual Intelligence and among Senior Secondary School's Teachers - Sonia Sharma	29
Women's Education: A study of Rural India - Dr Deependra Sharma	40

ROLE OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS FOR DEVELOPING LIFE SKILLS

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Abstract:

Teaching life skills as generic skills in relation to everyday life could form the foundation of life skills education for the promotion of mental well-being, and healthy interaction and behavior. 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 practise 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. Education to prepare young people for the world of work and for economic independence; to enable them to live constructively in responsible communities; and to enable them to live in a tolerant, culturally diverse and rapidly changing society. This paper focuses on Life Skills in Education.

Our education system, as is prevalent today, is prevalent today, is rather lopsided. It lays optimum focus on the acquisition of knowledge even at the expense of skills, attitudes and values. Living as we do a sophisticated life style in a sophisticated society, what we require is nothing short of a sophisticated mode of education. Knowledge in itself has little value unless it is put to use. We need today, among other things, life skills in a big way rather than mere memorization of information. Life skills are skills, strengths and capabilities that help individuals face problems of their everyday life with a positive attitude and go about with their everyday tasks effectively. Life skills education would place us on the highway to growth and development, in the process, enabling us to lead our lives as effectively and efficiently as possible.

These skills basically involve vocational skills, business management skills etc, whereas life skills encompasses all the dimensions of human life, be it economical, social or psychological.

Life skills have been defined (WHO) as “the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life”

According to the **United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Life-Skills education refers to** “a behavior change or behavior development approach designed to address balance of three areas:

knowledge, attitude and skills”.

Importance of Life Skills in Education

- It helps in the development of social competence and problem solving skills, which in turn help adolescents to form their own identity.
- It Helps o weigh pros and cons of the situation, hence, act as a mediator to problem behavior.
- It promotes positive social, norms that an impact the adolescent health services, schools and family.
- It promotes the development of positive self-esteem and teaches anger control.
- translate knowledge, attitude, skills and values into action;
- behave responsibly and this leads to healthy living;
- develop positive attitude towards themselves and others;

Life Skills Education has long term benefits to the society:

These include educational benefits.

- Strengthens teacher pupil relationship
- Leads to desirable behavior change
- Improves discipline in schools
- Reduces learner problems such as truacy, absenteeism drug and substance abuse and teenage pregnancies
- Helps learners to iprove their performance.

Understanding Life Skills-A Teacher’s Prospective

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

- **Self-awareness** 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.

- **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.
- **Critical thinking** 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 behavior, such as values, peer pressure and the media.
- **Creative thinking** 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).
- **Decision making** 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.
- **Problem solving** 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.
- **Interpersonal relationship** skills help 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.
- **Effective communication** 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 time of need.
- **Coping with stress** 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.
- **Coping with emotions** means involving recognizing emotions within us and others, being aware of how emotions influence behavior 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.

Assumptions in Life Skills in Education

- The learners are able to make rational decisions if they are equipped with adequate information, skills and desirable attitudes.
- Life Skills Education is an effective intervention measure in responding to socio-cultural problems like: HIV and AIDS, drugs and substance abuse, school unrest among others.
- Life Skills Education responds to critical needs of the youth.
- Life Skills are well developed when based on the learners real life experiences.

Why are life skills so important?

- **Safety:** People who cannot care for themselves are more open to abuse and neglect by caretakers.
- **Self-esteem:** Self-esteem comes from achievement and ability. Kids who can do things to help themselves are empowered and happier. Self-reliance makes people the “master of their destiny,” because they don’t always have to wait around for others to do for them and they can choose to do things their way.
- **Health :** Kids who can feed, clean, clothe themselves, and take care of their own basic needs will live a healthier life.
- **Independence :** Not having to depend on someone for everything will open the child’s world up to more independence. The child will have more living and work options to choose from, rather than requiring a maximum care facility.
- **Self-advocacy :** When children can care for themselves and perform decision-making tasks, they can have a larger say in their own lives can make informed choices to create and accomplish their own dreams.
- **Self-regulation :** Learning to manage stress, anxiety and feelings is a very important life skill and will help your child be able to cope with the rigors of daily life.

Conclusion

To live to the challenge of globalization which is in line with the era of information economy, the strength of a nation is strongly dependent on the ability of its citizen to be highly intellectual and skillful. The development of human capital is thus important and necessary since it drives the nation to the envision vision and mission. Without a quality human capital, a nation will be weak as there is no human factor that is capable to embark on new initiatives and perspectives. A quality human capital comes from a quality education process. A carefully designed and well planned education system is

critical to developing such human capital.

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