

## Embedding 21<sup>st</sup> Century Life Skills in Education

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### Abstract

This is a technologically advanced era of intense competition. Nowadays, it's crucial for everyone to be alert to potential possibilities, prepared to make the most of them with the right information, attitude, and abilities, and flexible enough to adapt to different situations. In this culture, everyone encounters stress, rivalry, and conflict at some point. Children in nuclear families are expected to meet high standards. A child's mental health can take a nosedive when they constantly compare themselves to their classmates, which can lead to issues like depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, aggressive behaviour, social isolation, and criminal behaviour issues. College students are frequently the targets of ragging. In order to help their pupils avoid potential problems, schools should teach them valuable life skills, and educators should be well-versed in this area. Making instructors who are well-rounded professionals who can empathise with their kids and meet their needs is a top priority. Through teacher education programs, students learn valuable life skills that can help them succeed in the classroom and beyond. The instructor can use these life skills in the classroom and in his own life after he has mastered them. As a result, curricula for pre-service teachers should aim to incorporate life skills. Because of this, educators will be able to improve their own critical thinking skills and adapt to the requirements of their students. In this paper, we'll look at how life skills are an integral part of the teacher preparation program.

**Key Words:** 21<sup>st</sup> Life Skills, Education, Student, Teacher.

### Introduction:

A variety of explanations shed light on the nature of life skills. In order to function in society, solve problems of all kinds, and engage in meaningful interactions with others, each individual needs a unique combination of social features and personal abilities. In addition, life skills are the abilities needed to handle every situation and achieve one's goals. Encouraging individuals to adapt to society, promote constructive behaviours, and take a positive attitude towards work are all ways to develop life skills. In their most basic form, life skills are the competencies that equip young people to deal with the challenges of adulthood in a healthy and confident manner.

The majority of experts in the field believe that health and social situations are the most common settings in which life skills are put into practice. Substance misuse, sexual assault, teen pregnancies, HIV/AIDS, and suicide prevention are just a few of the numerous subject areas that could benefit from their utilisation. Education for development, livelihood, economic production, peace, and environmental protection are all encompassed within the term. In a nutshell, having life skills enables young people to actively safeguard themselves, while also fostering health and developing social interactions. Who defines life skills as "the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with demands and challenges of everyday life" (World Health Organisation, 2015). To paraphrase UNESCO, "A behaviour change or behaviour development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: knowledge, attitude and skills" constitutes life skills. People leaving prisons and

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jails need a wide range of life skills to be able to reintegrate into society and their jobs. The most fundamental skills, including reading, writing, and mathematics, are typically taught in prisons' adult education programs. Having the ability to read and write does not, however, guarantee that one will be able to live on one's own and find gainful employment. A thorough understanding of how to write a cover letter, resume, and application as well as how to conduct oneself in an interview is essential for anyone seeking employment. As a social worker, you need to know how to get along with coworkers, communicate effectively with superiors, and consistently deliver high-quality work on time if you want to keep up with the demands of your profession. Individuals with life skills are better able to "adapt and positively behave" in response to "the demands and challenges of everyday life," according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Life skills enable individuals to navigate the swift transformations instigated by modernisation (Wanjama et al., 2006). The life skills approach seeks to empower adolescents by providing them with innovative learning methods, enabling them to manage their behaviour effectively and make informed decisions that foster positive values (Githaiga et al., 2014). The incorporation of life skills within the educational framework possesses a compelling justification. Instructing young individuals in essential life skills serves to avert maladjustment and fosters the development of human potential, enabling them to uncover their personal capabilities (Castle, 1966). Life Skills Education equips learners with a range of competencies, including critical thinking, problem solving, decision making, interpersonal relationships, stress and anxiety management, effective communication, self-esteem, assertiveness, and empathy (Veena and Vivek, 2010). The life skills approach represents an engaging educational methodology that emphasises a learner-centred, youth-friendly, gender-sensitive, interactive, and participatory learning experience. (Rooth, 2000). Evaluative studies of life skills programmes indicate that the employed methods can enhance the relationships between teachers and students (Parsons et al. 1988). Research suggests that the instruction of life skills correlates with enhanced academic performance. Additional beneficial outcomes encompass enhanced school attendance, a reduction in bullying, fewer instances requiring specialist support services, and improved relationships between children and their parents. Through the acquisition of life skills, the learner cultivates opportunities to enhance their potential for increased productivity, thereby fostering greater engagement within the community. As the individual acquires a greater array of life skills, they become increasingly adept at navigating challenges and may even preemptively circumvent potential issues. The more skills the learner has cultivated and possesses, the more alternatives and opportunities become accessible, enabling the learner to enhance their capabilities in any domain (Pigozzi, 2004). The acquisition of life skills fosters positive behaviour, and the efficacy of such behaviour is contingent upon the profundity of the skills attained by the individual. The comprehensive manifestation of an individual's conduct is the aggregate of a judicious amalgamation of various competencies. The most suitable approach for fostering the psychological competence of children within educational settings involves the enhancement of skills through the effective utilisation of available resources, facilitated by life skills education and training (Nair, 2010). The cultivation of life skills enhances psycho-social capabilities, thereby contributing to overall psycho-physical well-being. Acquiring education in life skills equips an individual to enhance their knowledge, cultivate values, and refine perspectives, thereby enabling them to discern the appropriate timing and methodology for executing a task. The acquisition of life skills fosters the cultivation of healthy behaviours and enhances one's self-assurance. Consequently, it can be asserted that they will contribute to the enhancement of psychological well-being and play a significant role in the prevention of psychological disorders and behavioural issues (Nori, 1998).

### **Life Skills in Education**

Life skills are a broad set of abilities that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. These skills are not limited to specific disciplines but are transferable across various contexts, including personal, social, academic, and professional settings. The World Health

Organization (WHO) defines life skills as abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. While there isn't a single, universally agreed-upon list of life skills, some commonly identified skills include:

- **Communication Skills:** The ability to express oneself clearly and effectively, both verbally and non-verbally, and to listen attentively to others.
- **Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving:** The capacity to analyze information, evaluate arguments, and generate creative solutions to problems.
- **Collaboration and Teamwork:** The ability to work effectively with others, contribute to group goals, and resolve conflicts constructively.
- **Self-Management:** Skills related to managing one's emotions, time, and stress, as well as setting goals and making responsible decisions.
- **Leadership:** The capacity to guide and motivate others, take initiative, and inspire positive change.
- **Adaptability:** The ability to adjust to new situations, learn from experience, and embrace change.

### Life Skills for Students:

Science and technology, globalization, privatization, urbanization, industrialization, etc. are all having a profound impact on education in the new century. A plethora of new problems, including climate change, hunger, poverty, suicide, and an exploding population, are affecting today's youth, along with other social, emotional, physical, and mental challenges. Extremely competitive market

A lot of educated people are worried about things like unemployment and job insecurity, so they're caught up in the rat race. Nobody has time to focus on "self," let alone cultivate empathy for within, and for social harmony to prevail. They and others are greatly impacted by societal issues such as substance misuse, sexual abuse, smoking, juvenile delinquency, anti-social behaviour, etc. The UNICEF defines life-skills education as "an approach to behaviour change or behaviour development to Ensure a harmonious integration of understanding, demeanour, and competence.

### Teacher's Role in Educating Life Skills

- **Role Model:** Teachers serve as role models for students, demonstrating and embodying the life skills they seek to instill. For example, a teacher who exhibits effective communication skills in the classroom sets a positive example for students to follow.
- **Instruction and Guidance:** Teachers provide explicit instruction and guidance on specific life skills, explaining their importance and teaching the strategies and techniques associated with each skill. For instance, a teacher may provide lessons on problem-solving techniques or active listening skills.
- **Creating a Safe and Supportive Environment:** Teachers establish a safe and supportive classroom environment that encourages students to practice and develop life skills without fear of judgment or failure. This includes promoting respectful communication, empathy, and collaboration among students.
- **Providing Feedback and Encouragement:** Teachers provide constructive feedback and encouragement to students as they develop their life skills. They offer specific praise for students' efforts and growth, reinforcing positive behaviors and attitudes.
- **Tailoring Instruction:** Teachers recognize that students have diverse needs and learning styles. They adapt their teaching methods and strategies to meet individual student's needs, ensuring that each student has opportunities to develop and apply life skills effectively.
- **Integrating Life Skills across the Curriculum:** Teachers integrate life skills into various subjects and lessons across the curriculum, emphasizing the relevance and application of these skills in different contexts. For example, a science teacher may incorporate teamwork and collaboration skills into group laboratory projects.
- **Facilitating Cooperative Learning:** Teachers organize cooperative learning activities that encourage students to work together, communicate effectively, and practice essential life skills such as problem-solving, decision-making, and conflict resolution.

- **Fostering Critical Thinking:** Teachers promote critical thinking skills by posing thought-provoking questions, encouraging students to analyze information, consider multiple perspectives, and evaluate evidence. They create opportunities for students to engage in discussions and debates that develop their critical thinking abilities.

- **Encouraging Reflection and Self-Assessment:** Teachers guide students in reflecting on their progress, strengths, and areas for improvement in relation to life skills. They encourage students to self-assess their performance, set goals for growth, and take responsibility for their own development.

- **Collaboration with Parents and Community:** Teachers collaborate with parents and community stakeholders to reinforce the development of life skills. They provide resources and suggestions for parents to support life skills practice at home and engage external experts or community members to share their experiences and expertise.

Overall, teachers play a vital role in imparting life skills to secondary students by modeling, instructing, guiding, and creating a supportive learning environment. Their active involvement in students' skill development contributes significantly to students' overall growth and success.

**Objective of the Study:** To study the life skills in relation to teaching learning process

#### **Review of related Literature:**

The research studies conducted by Helaiya Shetal (2010), Chouan Sarika (2016), Kalaiselevi R (2016), Pandya , Jaldan (2019), Gopinathj K(2019), Rahayu (2020) and Srivastava Shipra (2020) were in the area of teachers in higher education by experimental method. These studies motivated to take up the experimental method to know the effect of Life Skills among Student-Teachers. Even the researcher had interest in this area by attending some workshops related to Life Skills Education. From the above mentioned previous studies the researcher got depth knowledge about the concept of Life Skills, Core Skills in Life Skills, Preparation of Modules and Tools in Life Skills to take intervention programme for the study. Previous studies helped the researcher to know about Social and Emotional adjustment, Learning Style, better health, Cope with Stress, Self-Concept, Decision Making, Problem Solving Attitude, Think Creatively and Think Critically according to the surrounding situation through Life Skills education. life skills education has been implemented in multiple settings such as sports, at-risk behaviors, and sexual and reproductive health programs (Jones & Lavalley, Citation2009). The main expected outcome from life skills education is to equip participants with appropriate knowledge and skills to protect them from abuse, exploitation and to help them refrain from risky and risk-taking behaviours (UNICEF, Citation2015). It is implicit that life skills have several common key components, which include behavioral, cognitive, psychosocial and interpersonal competencies that aid individuals to cope with challenges, and develop and succeed in various settings. However, several studies report deficiencies in the transfer of skills as little emphasis was placed on acquiring skills through various approaches such as modelling, imitation and reinforcement (Botvin, Citation1998; Botvin & Kantor, Citation2000; James, Reddy, Ruiter, McCauley, & van den Borne, Citation2006; Kazemi, Momeni, & Abolghasemi, Citation2014; Maryam, Davoud, Zahra, & Somayeh, Citation2011). The studies revealed that life skills tend to be effective in bringing about individual changes relevant to knowledge, skills and attitudes in risk areas as well as psychosocial skills (Botvin et al., Citation2001; Lillehoj, Trudeau, Spoth, & Wickrama, Citation2004; Menrath et al., Citation2012). Although these studies show promise, they were limited in their scope to a particular research design such as experimental, quasi-experimental or randomized control groups.

life skills education activities conducted around the world reflect the priorities and areas of concern of the respective countries. For example, the USA, Canada, UK, Germany and Greece have many well-planned, tailor-made life skills education programmes that aim to promote positive behaviours around smoking, alcohol, drug abuse, HIV, AIDS, contraception, perception about sexual activities and condom use through refusal skills, attitude change and personal goal setting (Botvin et al., Citation2001; Goudas, Dermitzaki, Leondari, & Danish, Citation2006; Goudas & Giannoudis, Citation2008; Holt, Tink, Mandigo, & Fox, Citation2008; Lillehoj et al., Citation2004; Menrath et al.,

Citation2012; O'Hearn & Gatz, Citation1999; Smith et al., Citation2004; Teyhan et al., Citation2016; Thompson, Auslander, & Alonzo, Citation2012; Tuttle et al., Citation2006; Vicary et al., Citation2004; Weichold & Blumenthal, Citation2016; Wenzel et al., Citation2009). These programs address cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies to develop self-efficacy, for positive social and personal behavior. Similarly, life skills education programs are popular in developing countries such as India, South Africa, Cambodia, Iran and Mexico. However, programs conducted in these countries often emphasize the development of communication skills, assertive skills, decision-making, building self-esteem, self-efficacy, reducing learning difficulties, decrease aggressive behavior, anger control, and changing attitudes towards engaging in sexual behavior (James et al., Citation2006; Jegannathan, Dahlblom, & Kullgren, Citation2014; Maryam et al., Citation2011; Naseri & Babakhani, Citation2014; Parvathy & Pillai, Citation2015; Pick, Givaudan, Sirkin, & Ortega, Citation2007; Vatankhah, Daryabari, Ghadami, & KhanjanShoeibi, Citation2014; Yadav & Iqbal, Citation2009). Studies are limited to reporting on short term results through experimental methods with small samples sizes without any follow-up to fully ascertain the effectiveness of the respective programs (Jegannathan et al., Citation2014; Maryam et al., Citation2011). Life skills education programs as several gaps such as how to transfer life skills into everyday life and priorities for reducing risk behaviors were identified (Jegannathan et al., Citation2014). Qualitative studies on life skills education were limited; only one qualitative study met the inclusion criteria of effectiveness of life skills experiences focusing on young people's learning experiences (Holt et al., Citation2008). Many of the identified studies were based on assessment of life skills components rather than understanding what knowledge, skills and attitudes adolescents require in order for positive behavior change to occur. Hence, future research should be directed toward investigating how life skills program knowledge is translated into behavior and attitude change (O'Hearn & Gatz, Citation1999; Parvathy & Pillai, Citation2015; Pierce, Gould, & Camiré, Citation2017). Fewer studies have been conducted in developing country contexts in comparison to those carried out in developed countries (Givaudan, Van de Vijver, Poortinga, Leenen, & Pick, Citation2007; Maryam et al., Citation2011). Successful life skills programs such as the Botvin Life Skills Training Programme have implemented cognitive, affective and behavioral platforms for intervention with the goal of influencing individual learning with ongoing support from the community (Botvin & Griffin, Citation2004). These programs were highly structured with concise modules specifically prepared for addressing at-risk behaviors. In contrast, programs conducted in countries like India and Iran, such as the Life Skills Education Program, comprised a series of developmental sessions consisting of communication skills, assertiveness, anger management, decision-making, creative and critical thinking skills (Naseri & Babakhani, Citation2014; Parvathy & Pillai, Citation2015; Yadav & Iqbal, Citation2009). Many of these programs however, lacked rigorous planning, and were thus not implemented effectively (Holt et al., Citation2008; James et al., Citation2006; Jegannathan et al., Citation2014). For instance, researchers have suggested that life skills programs aimed at improving attitudes and knowledge on HIV/AIDS and condom use need to improve the time spent on the lessons, in addition to increasing the number of lessons carried out to address specific issues (James et al., Citation2006; Thompson et al., Citation2012). Furthermore, some content needs to be taught with more skill-based activities to ensure that skills are developed (James et al., Citation2006; Maryam et al., Citation2011; Thompson et al., Citation2012). life skills education programs need to be delivered with an emphasis on development of skills rather than delivering specific knowledge about safe sex and protection against HIV/AIDS alone. For example, James et al. (Citation2006) stated that if the goal of life skills is to promote safer sex, then efficacy beliefs and skills related to condom use as well as proper communication skills on how to communicate with one's partner on adopting safer sex should be included. Life skills programs in developing countries focusing on promoting adaptive behaviors are structured as one-shot or short-term interventions rather than ongoing activities, and they lack emphasis on individual learning (Parvathy & Pillai, Citation2015; Teyhan et al., Citation2016; Tuttle et al., Citation2006). Scholars, however, have emphasized the need to implement sustainable life skills

programs as a top priority (James et al., Citation2006; Jegannathan et al., Citation2014). Therefore, more attention is required in these contexts to develop programs that are ongoing and sustainable through systematic planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in order to learn skills and attitude change (UNICEF, Citation2012). While there is consensus that life skills education acts as a buffer for prevention of at-risk behaviors, the sustainability of effective life skills programs has been called into question (James et al., Citation2006; Lillehoj et al., Citation2004; Yadav & Iqbal, Citation2009). According to James et al. (Citation2006) this could be due to a lack of programmatic structure, which tends to be common in developing country settings. Kazemi et al. (Citation2014), Maryam et al. (Citation2011), and Teyhan et al. (Citation2016), suggest that program evaluation and follow up are equally important in sustainability. Therefore, systematic planning and implementation is critical for effective and sustainable programming (Holt et al., Citation2008). Gatekeepers, policy makers, administrators and teachers of life skills need to believe in the potential and value of the life skills programs and receive appropriate training (James et al., Citation2006; Jegannathan et al., Citation2014). Further, long term monitoring and evaluation reviews are required to gather empirical evidence on the effectiveness of programs (Tuttle et al., Citation2006). This includes participant feedback and discussion on each life skills topic in order to improve application of the skills taught (WHO, Citation2001). Given the role of life skills as a strong catalyst for the development of positive behaviour, building life skills in the early years of life will help children navigate their social and emotional challenges such as coping with emotional pain, conflict, peer pressure and relationship issues. How life skill programs are structured and delivered can significantly impact long-term program quality, therefore, it is important to deliver programs systematically in order to have a lasting impact on the health and wellbeing of participants (Holt et al., Citation2008).

**Discussion:** Life skills education and training has encouraging prospects with the young populations i.e adolescents in particular. On the whole studies are quite divergent addressing different populations. This of course indicates that life skills training is a broad based intervention encompassing all the facets of life. Majority of the studies are quantitative in nature and most of them have focused on assessment of life skills components and have not focused on life skills education. It was also be seen that many studies have been conducted in countries outside India and they have addressed specific at risk behaviors. Studies on life skills assessment have been sparse and have not be conducted. Comparison between rural and urban students in terms of life skill education has also not been done. Finally, published studies on assessment of life skills in school going students and the efficacy of life Skills education by social work professionals have been very limited. In higher education majority of the studies were focused on developing core life skills as a whole. So the status of Life Skills education is not up to the satisfactory level at teachers' level in India. In all the studies researchers used many different approaches by using ready tools and modules prepared by NCERT, UNICEF and NACO for few components of life skills. This review examined published literature on the effectiveness of life skills education programs for adolescents in developed and developing countries. Findings reveal great promise for life skills education as a way to promote positive behavior and to act as a buffer against risk-taking behaviors for adolescents in both developed and developing countries. The review revealed a number of quantitative studies examining life skills as an intervention program to effectively deal with adolescent issues such as self-esteem, decision-making, problem solving (Parvathy & Pillai, Citation2015), coping with stress, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, violence, HIV and AIDS (Botvin et al., Citation2001; Thompson et al., Citation2012) in controlled environments. Qualitative studies on life skills education were limited. Minimal research attention has been directed towards adolescents' transfer of life skills knowledge into their daily lives. There is a need to understand adolescents' learning experiences within life skills education and to identify which skills are most effective at times of difficulty. Hence, inquiry into how adolescents acquire knowledge and skills through life skills programs and subsequently adopt positive attitudes and behaviours as a result is not well documented. This should be considered as an essential research priority. More work is needed to ensure proper

transfer of life skills to attain long term results. Understanding how knowledge, skills and values learnt from life skills education facilitates healthy transition to adulthood will add merit to life skills education programs in diverse contexts. Examining adolescent experiences within the embedded culture of the individual is important to understand how individuals from different backgrounds construct life skill knowledge into reality. Therefore, more studies are needed that embed life skills education within specific social and cultural settings. Studies can be framed within the view of experiences, such as narratives from adolescents' lives, analysis of multiple perspectives and specific social contexts that shape their life skills experiences. Such approaches can provide a more nuanced perspective on the reality of program effectiveness.

### Conclusion:

Every person in this culture must deal with conflict, competitiveness, and stress in every aspect of their lives. Nuclear families have unreasonable expectations on their children. Because of a lack of parenting skills, there is an unfair comparison with other students. All of this has an impact on the child's mental state and can lead to a variety of issues, including fear of failure, suicidal thoughts, violence, feelings of inferiority or superiority, loneliness, and anxiety about criminal behaviour, among others. Students are often the targets of ragging at institutions. In order to prevent the repercussions of various circumstances, it is vital to teach pupils life skills in school. For this to happen, teachers must know how to transmit life skills to their students. As a result, life skills education should be included in both school and teacher training programs. People employ a variety of life skills to create a successful family, community, and career. Life Skill Education helps people become well-rounded adults and contributes to the development of a more meaningful society. Pediatricians have a significant role to play by taking this course and teaching it to others.

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