

## “Life Skill Education in Classroom”

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**ABSTRACT:** Allround development is the ever cherished goal of education. Though Education can provide sufficient knowledge and information to an individual but could not be guaranteed to bring desirable acceptance in the society. It is a person's ability to maintain a state of mental well-being and to demonstrate this in adaptive and positive behaviour while interacting with others, his/her culture and environment. Psychosocial competence has an important role to play in the promotion of health in its broadest sense; in terms of physical, mental and social well-being. Sometimes it was found that a number of persons having high educational degree fail to adjust in their society along with behaviour disorders are also found in most of the adolescent. Imparting life skill training through inculcating life skill education will help youth to overcome such difficulties in life. An attempt has been made in this present paper to have a clear understanding of the concept and types of Life Skill Education, why it is needed and who need it. In the last section different activities (methods) are discussed along with how and why Life Skill Education can be implemented in the classroom situation.

**KEYWORDS** - Life Skills, Education, Classroom.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Our 21<sup>st</sup> century is well-known as a century of science and technology, a century full of an ever-growing technology and data driven world, where much of the focus in education has been given on science, technology, engineering, and math shortly - STEM initiatives by this present educational system which prepares students for the coursework and careers of the future. Along with the development of the technology students are moving from the real world towards a virtual world in which they lag behind the progress and unable to develop maximum potential one possesses.

Education in our present century is undergoing a revolutionized change regarding science & technology, globalization, privatization, urbanization, industrialization, westernization etc. The youth of the present society are facing many emerging issues such as global warming, famines, poverty, suicide, population explosion as well as social, emotional, physical and psychological issues. Along with that cut-throat competition, unemployment, lack of job security, etc. are other concerns for the educated youth and as a result, they are caught in the mad race. No one has time for his/her 'self', to develop empathy with surrounding and to have harmony in society. They also face a philosophical and psychological problem in order to be an adjustable and social human being. Most of the cases these problems continue in job life along with family and social life.

### II. DEFINITION OF LIFE SKILLS

A skill can be defined as a learned ability (of any creature whether human or others) to do something well. Life skills are those abilities which are adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively in the society with the demands and challenges of everyday human life (WHO, 1996). According to Wikipedia, "Life skills are problem solving behaviours used appropriately and responsibly in the management of personal affairs". They are a set of human skills acquired via teaching or direct experiences that are used to handle problems and questions commonly encountered in daily life.

In other words, life skills are those competencies that assist people in functioning well in the environments in which they live. In short they are psychosocial abilities that enable (to lead a future life of) individuals to translate knowledge, attitudes and values regarding their concerns into well informed and healthy behaviours. The strength of positive behavior depends upon the depth of skills acquired by the individual. (Nair, Subasree and Ranjan, 2010).

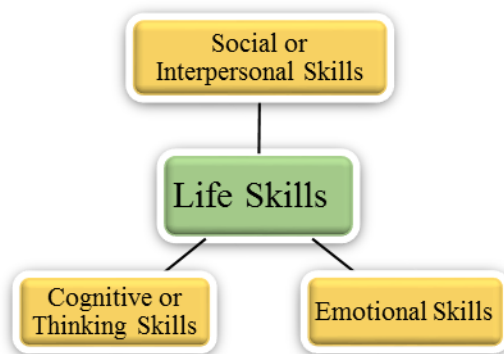
World Health Organisation (WHO) defines Life Skill as "The abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life". Here 'adaptive' means that a person is flexible in approach and is able to adjust in different circumstances and 'positive behaviour' implies that a person is forward looking and even in challenging situations, can find a ray of hope. UNICEF defines life skills as "A behaviour change or behaviour development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: knowledge, attitude and skills". Life Skills are defined in the Targeting Life Skills (TLS) Model (Hendricks, 1996) as "Skills that help an individual to be successful in living a productive

and satisfying life.” Yarham (1919) defined Life Skills as “The personal competence that enables a person to deal effectively with the demands and challenges confronted in everyday life”.

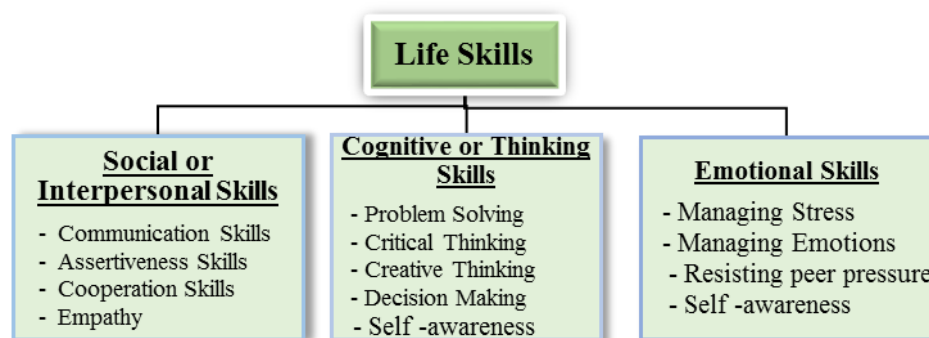
Life skills has the capacity to enable a person to take decisions based on a logical process and ask some questions like "what to do, why to do, how to do and when to do", to get a better output in the society. Essentially, there are two kinds of skills - those related to thinking called "thinking skills" and skills related to dealing with others called "social skills". While thinking skills relate to the personal level, social skills include interpersonal skills. It is the combination of these two types of skills that are needed for achieving assertive behaviour and negotiating effectively. Described in this way, skills that can be said to be life skills are innumerable, and the nature and definition of life skills are likely to differ across cultures and settings.

### III. TYPES OF LIFE SKILL

Analysis of the life skills field suggests that there is a core set of skills that are at the heart of skills-based initiatives for the promotion of the health and well-being of children and adolescents. 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 manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner. In ‘Teacher’s Manual–Life Skills for Class-VIII’, CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education), New Delhi, has categories Life Skills into three basic categories which are compliment, supplement and reinforce each other:



In order to have a clear understanding these three basic categories further they are divided into the following sub- skills areas.



World Health Organization (WHO), Geneva, has published a paper in 1997 entitled "Life Skills Education for Children and Adolescents in Schools"- Programme on Mental Health, which contains two parts, Part 1, Introduction to Life Skills for Psychosocial Competence and Part 2, Guidelines: The Development and implementation of Life Skills Programmes. In Part 1, it has discussed ten type of core (generic) life skills. They are (adapted from "Life Skills Education for Children and Adolescents in Schools"-Programme on Mental Health, World Health Organization, Geneva, 1997) as follow -

- a) **Decision making:** It helps us to deal constructively with decisions about our lives. This can have consequences for health if young people actively make decisions about their actions in relation to health by assessing the different options, and what effects different decisions may have.
- b) **Problem solving:** It enables 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.

- c) **Creative thinking:** It contributes to both decision making and problem solving by enabling us to explore the available alternatives and various consequences of our actions or non-action. It helps us .to look beyond our direct experience, and even if no problem is identified, or no decision is to be made, creative thinking can help us to respond adaptively and with flexibility to the situations of our daily lives.
- d) **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.
- e) **Effective communication:** It means that we .are able to express ourselves, both verbally and non-verbally, in ways that ate appropriate to our cultures and situations. This means being able to express opinions and desires, but also needs and fears. And it may mean being able to ask for advice and help in a time of need.
- f) **Interpersonal relationship:** It 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. 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.
- g) **Self-awareness:** It includes our recognition of ourselves, of our character, of 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 also often a prerequisite for effective communication and interpersonal relations, as well as for developing empathy for others.
- h) **Empathy:** It is the ability to imagine what life is like for another person, even in a situation that we may not be familiar with. Empathy can help us to understand and accept others who may be very different from ourselves, which can improve social interactions, for example, 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.
- i) **Coping with emotions:** It involves recognizing emotions in ourselves and others, being aware of how emotions influence behaviour, and being able to respond to emotions appropriately. Intense emotions, like anger or sorrow can have negative effects on our health if we do not react appropriately.
- j) **Coping with stress:** It is about recognizing the sources of stress in our lives, recognizing how this affects us, and acting in ways that help to control our levels of stress. This may mean that we take action to reduce the sources of stress, for example, by making changes to our physical environment or lifestyle. Orit may mean learning how to relax, so that tensions created by unavoidable stress do not give rise to health problems.

All these skills are interrelated and reinforce each other. Together, they are responsible for our psychosocial competence; build our self-esteem and self-efficacy and nurture holistic development.

#### **IV. NEED OF LIFE SKILL**

Life skills are the beginning of wisdom which focuses on behaviour change or developmental approach designed to address a balance of three areas- knowledge, attitude and skills. The Life Skills programme is a school based programme where Life Skills are imparted in a supportive learning environment. The programme is for the promotion of health and well-being and targeted group is all children.

##### **Who need Life Skills -**

Everyone and anyone who wants to lead a meaningful life needs Life Skills. They are applicable to all ages of children and adolescents. Since young people in this age group seem to be the most vulnerable to behaviour related health problems, however, the age group targeted is mainly 10-18. Life Skills are thus needed for the promotion of good health and well-being, rather than as an intervention aimed only at those already at risk. Ouane (2002) says “Life Skills are developed as a result of a constructive processing of information, impressions, encounters and experiences, both individual and social, which are a part of one's daily life and work, and the rapid changes that occur in the course of one's life”. Well designed and well delivered Life Skills Programme can help young adolescents to become more responsible, healthy and resilient both during adolescence and adulthood. Among the adolescents, boredom, rebellion, disorientation, peer pressure and curiosity are the host of factors that promoting high risk behaviour such as alcoholism, drug abuse and casual relationships

##### **Why Life Skills are needed**

Many research studies have demonstrated that Life Skills Education is very effective and essential for any person. Some of the studies emphasized Life Skills because they are able to –

- Endorsement of self-esteem, peace education, self-confidence etc. [ TACADE,1990 ]
- Prevention of antisocial activities and behavior [Botvin et.al. 1984 , Pentz, 1983 ]

- Helps in the promotion of general wellbeing and primary prevention [Errecart et al., 1991; Perry and Kelder, 1992 ; Caplan et al., 1992]
- Enable individuals to translate knowledge, attitudes and values into actual abilities and enable individuals to behave in healthy ways, given the desire to do so and given the scope and opportunity to do so. Results of research studies also prove that life skill education improves the academic performance of individuals (Weissberg et.al. 1989)
- Enhance critical thinking abilities, which further impacts were living life actively, being responsible in the job and in future planning too (Albertyn et al. 2004).
- Increase mental and physical health, pro-social behavior and decreasing in behavioral, social problems & self-destructive behaviors (Ramesh and Farshad C. 2004).
- Improvement in interpersonal relationship and reduction in aggression and behavioral problems (Smith & et al., 2004).
- Extraordinary capability of teens to positive promotion and flexibility (Tuttle et al, 2006).
- Enhance psychosocial Competencies of individuals (Vranda and Rao, 2011).
- Effective in preventing a wide range of problems such as substance abuse, teenage pregnancies, violence Bullying & to promote self-confidence and self-esteem among the adolescents (Puspakumarag, 2013).
- Positively effect and improve social development, emotional and social adjustment, suggesting an increase in compatibility of children and public health (Roodbari, Sahdipoor, and Ghale, 2013)

Besides the above some of the other important needs of life skill education are as follows -

- To promote positive attitudes and behaviours among the young adolescents
- To improve communication abilities
- To promote healthy decision making capacity
- To prevent negative and high risk behaviours
- To promote greater sociability
- To teach anger control
- To increase self-esteem and self confidence
- To improve academic performance
- To make aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens
- To informed about social and political issues
- To concerned about the welfare of others
- To make enable to clearly articulate their opinions and arguments
- To make capable of having an influence on the world
- To be active in their communities
- To be responsible in how they act as citizens

## **V. LIFE SKILL EDUCATION (What, How and Why)**

It is widely accepted that life skills are objectives of holistic education. A parallel can be drawn between objectives of education mentioned in Delors Commission Report (1993) with life skills. The life skills may be grouped in to four objects of education proposed in the report of Delors Commission (UNESCO, 2005). Thus learning to know comprises knowledge and critical thinking, learning to do implies practical skills, learning to be is synonymous with personal skill while learning to live is all about social skills (Sengupta, Sinha & Mukhopadhyay, 2012). Though the genesis of the life skills education approach is not new but in the recent decades it has a significant movement to review the basis of social science like Psychology, Sociology and Social Work (Nair, Subasree and Ranjan, 2010).

The life skill education is a programme where life skills are imparted in a supportive and effective learning environment. Life skills education is an effective tool for empowering the youth to act responsibly, take initiative and control over stress and emotions. 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.

**1. Classroom Discussions:** It can be done in small or large group in classroom. The class examines a problem or topic of interest with the goal of better understanding an issue or skill, reaching the best solution, or developing new ideas and directions for the group.

**How it can be done** - Decide how to arrange seating for discussion, identify the goal of the discussion and communicate it clearly, Pose meaningful, ask open-ended questions, and keep track of discussion progress.

**Why it is necessary** - Provides opportunities for students to learn from one another and practice turning to one another in solving problems. Enables students to deepen their understanding of the topic and personalize their connection to it. Helps develop skills in listening, assertiveness, and empathy.

- 2. Brainstorming:** In this method students actively generate variety of ideas about a particular topic or question quickly and spontaneously by using their imagination. Whole class can generate the creative ideas and a healthy discussion can be started on these ideas. It helps students to use their imagination and think out of the box. It is essential to evaluate the pros and cons of each idea or rank ideas according to certain fixed criteria.

**How it can be done** - Designate a leader and a recorder, state the issue or problem and ask for ideas, students may suggest any idea that comes to mind, do not discuss the ideas when they are first suggested, record ideas in a place where everyone can see them. After brainstorming, review the ideas and add, delete, categories

**Why it is necessary** - Allows students to generate ideas quickly and spontaneously. Helps students use their imagination and break loose from fixed patterns of response. Good discussion has a great value because the class can creatively generate ideas.

- 3. Role Plays:** Role Playing being a fun activity, involves whole class, to be active and participative. Role play is an informal dramatization in which people act out a suggested situation. It enables the students self-describing ability.

**How it can be done** - Describe the situation to be role played, select role players, give instructions, to role players, Start the role play and finally discuss what happened.

**Why it is necessary** - Provides an excellent strategy for practicing skills; experiencing how one might handle a potential situation in real life; increasing empathy for others and their point of view; and increasing insight into one's own feelings.

- 4. Small Groups:** This is also called Buzz Group. Groups are helpful when the time is limited as it maximizes students input. A large class is divided into smaller groups of five or six or even less and given a short time to accomplish a task, carry out an action, or discuss a specific topic, problem or question. By doing so, students know each other better and learn to help their peers.

**How it can be done** - State the purpose of discussion and the amount of time available, form small groups, position seating so that members can hear each other easily, ask group to appoint recorder. At the end have recorder describe the group's discussion.

**Why it is necessary** - Useful when groups are large and time is limited. Maximizes student input. Let's students get to know one another better and increases the likelihood that they will consider how another person thinks. It is also helpful for students to hear and to learn from their peers. It allows students interactions, allows to know, one another better which in a way enhances team building and team work.

- 5. Educational Games and Simulations:** Students play games as activities that can be used for teaching content, critical thinking, problem solving and decision making and for review and reinforcement. Simulations are activities structured to feel like the real experience.

**How it can be done** - In the case of educational game, remind students that the activity is meant to be enjoyable and that it does not matter who wins. In case of simulations, work best when they are brief and discussed immediately, Students should be asked to imagine themselves in a situation or should play a structured game of activity to experience a feeling that might occur in another setting.

**Why it is necessary** - It promotes fun, active learning, and rich discussion as participants work hard to prove their points or earn points. They require the combined use of knowledge, attitudes, and skills and allow students to test out assumptions and abilities in a relatively safe environment.

- 6. Analysis of Situation and Case Studies:** Situation analysis activities allow students to think about, analyze, and discuss situations they might encounter. Case studies are real life stories that describe in detail what happened to a community, family school or individual. Case studies can be tied to specific activities to help students practice healthy responses before they find themselves confronted with a health risk

**How it can be done** - Guiding questions are useful to spur thinking and discussion, facilitator must be adept at teasing out the key points and step back and pose some 'bigger' overarching questions. Situation analyses and case studies need adequate time for processing and creative thinking, Teacher must act as the facilitator and coach rather than the sole source of 'answer' and knowledge.

**Why it is necessary** - It gives a chance to analyze, explore, challenges, dilemmas and safely test solutions for providing opportunities for working together in groups, sharing idea, new learnings and gives insight

and promotes sometimes to see things differently. It provides opportunities to work hard, share feelings and develop critical thinking. By engaging in this thinking process, students can improve their own decision making skills.

7. **Story-Telling:** The instructor or students tell or read a story to a group. Pictures, comics and photo novels, filmstrips and slides can supplement. Students are encouraged to think about and discuss important (health related) points or methods raised by the story after it is told.

**How it can be done** - Keep the story simple and clear. Make one or two main points, be sure the story (and pictures, if included) relate to the lives of the students, and make the story dramatic enough to be interesting. Try to include situations of happiness, sadness, excitement, courage, serious thought, decisions, and problem solving behaviours.

**Why it is necessary** - Can help students think about local problems and develop critical thinking skills, creative skills to write stories or interact to tell stories. ‘Story-Telling’ lends itself to draw analogies or make comparisons, help discover healthy solutions. It also enhances attention, concentration, listening skills and develops patience and endurance.

8. **Debates:** In a debate, a particular problem or issue is presented to the class, and students must take a position on resolving the problem or issue. The class can debate as a whole or in small groups.

**How it can be done** - Allow students to take positions of their choosing if too many students take the same position, ask for volunteers to take the opposing point of view, provide students with time to research their topic, do not allow students to dominate at the expenses of other speakers, make certain that students show respect for the opinions and thoughts of other debaters and maintain control in the classroom and keep the debate on topic.

**Why it is necessary** - Provides opportunity to address a particular issue in depth and creatively. Health issues lend themselves well. Students can debate, for instance, whether smoking should be ban in public places in a community. It allows students to defend a position that may mean a lot to them. It offers a chance to practice higher thinking skills.

9. **Life Skill Journal:** A Life Skills journal can be a time diary or a life transforming tool. A student can write in a fancy leather bound book or in a small spiral notebook. A Life Skills journal is personal so each student should be allowed to write in it as he/she wishes.

**How it can be done** -Decide on a Journal as a time diary, choose one that has dates and ample space to record what happened and when. Decide on a framework like long, descriptive paragraphs about what one appreciates in one's daily life. Commit to a schedule of writing once a day in the beginning or several times per week, but one should allow oneself some time to catch up if things get busy and just keep writing regularly.

**Why it is necessary** -It help the students to develop a better understanding of themselves and the world around them and shy students to overcome their problems. It can help in managing anger by helping the students to acknowledge it, recognize its source and make new choices about how to deal with it, they can learn the truth about themselves, a way to keep a record and to go back to a specific time of your life. Writing in a Life Skills Journal can keep the students sane and balanced throughout their life also a way to encourage creative thinking.

Other important methods to facilitate life skills learning include peer supported learning, practical community development projects, audio-visual activities i.e. music, dance and theatre. Life skill education cannot be facilitated on the basis of information or discussion alone. It is not only an active learning process, but it must also include experimental learning i.e. practical experience, and reinforcement of the skills for each learner in a supportive learning environment.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Thus it can be concluded that current education in our country which is achievement oriented where success is measured on the basis of percentage of marks/division and finding a job, must be re-think for the those abilities which are adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively in the society with the demands and challenges of everyday human life to make fulfill the ever cherished ‘all-round development’ goal. Life skill education lays the foundation for learning skills which enhance self-direction of the individual. It would be a way of empowering youth to build their lives and their dreams. It would be a means of handholding them through the critical stages in their life and helping them tap their potential to the fullest. Thereby, it is hoped that the current education system with its oppressive rigidity would open up and make life skills education a part of its mainstream curriculum. This would enable the country to build individuals who believe in themselves, who are efficient leaders and administrators, who are able to understand their potentials

and achieve them. It enable the education of learner in a more comprehensive manner by providing the right content on Life Skills Education through the most viable usage of strategies for the teenage group. This can make our current young minds to act in par with the demands of the society. It also enable the individual to monitor his own understanding and learning needs along with the commitment to learning as life long process.

### Can life skills education be applied to other fields ?

After the above discussion, answering the above mentioned question ‘Can Life Skills Education be applied to other field ?’ made very easy and the answer is obviously, ‘Yes’. A considerable progress has been made from the past decade to the present and found that life skills education, as an effective mode of education, which does enhances social, emotional and thinking skills, and helps the 21st- century youngsters to achieve their goals, by strengthening their abilities to meet the needs and demands of the present society and to be successful in life but still further empirical research is needed from future researchers, academicians and professionals in the related field to demonstrate robust findings. It can be applied to other fields like Medical, Engineering, Marketing and other social sector.

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