

Life Skills : The Need of The Hour

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Abstract:

The present pandemic situation across the globe has opened our eyes and minds to the realization that all human beings are equally vulnerable whether a newly born, middle aged and even an octogenarian. The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown across the globe presents an unprecedented challenge for the workforce. The skills lost on account of COVID school closures will give a major blow to the global economic output for the rest of this century. Learning loss will lead to a skill loss and that will have a tremendous impact on the productivity. One way to inculcate good life skills and practices is through education. Family upbringing also plays a significant role in making one cultivate good life skills and practices. Nowadays parents do not spend much quality time with their children as a result the responsibility of shaping the child's behaviour into a holistic individual has been entrusted upon the teachers.

Life skills are a range of psycho-social and cognitive abilities that equip children to make informed decisions and choices, manage their emotional well-being and communicate effectively. It is these skills that make a difference between a good and an outstanding employee, or between being a follower and a leader. The paper attempts to highlight the essential life skills that the students of today's generation should inculcate to overcome all sorts of challenges in life.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The present pandemic situation across the globe has opened our eyes and minds to the realization that all human beings are equally vulnerable whether a newly born, middle aged and even an octogenarian. The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown across the globe presents an unprecedented challenge for the workforce. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. The skills lost on account of COVID school closures will give a major blow to the global economic output for the rest of this century. Learning loss will lead to a skill loss and that will have a tremendous impact on the productivity.

Though Science and Technology have helped mankind to advance exponentially in the last few decades, in tough times like the COVID-19 pandemic, it can be seen that basic life skills and survival instincts play significant roles in our lives. One way to inculcate good life skills and practices is through education. Family upbringing also plays a significant role in making one cultivate good life skills and practices. Nowadays parents do not spend much quality time with their children as a result the responsibility of shaping the child's behaviour into a holistic individual has been entrusted upon the teachers.

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manage their emotional well-being and communicate effectively. It is these skills that make a difference between a good and an outstanding employee, or between being a follower and a leader.

Life skills are 'abilities for adaptive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life' (WHO, 2001). The World Health Organisation (WHO) categorizes life skills into the following three components (1997): 1) Critical thinking skills/Decision making skills including the skills of Problem solving, Decision making, Critical thinking and Creative thinking, 2) Interpersonal/Communication skills, consisting of Effective communication, Interpersonal skills and Empathy, 3) Coping and self-management skills like Coping with emotions, Coping with stress and Self awareness (Parvathy & Renjith 2015).

II. HISTORY OF LIFE SKILL EDUCATION IN INDIA

Life skills education is an educational innovation that has spread in several countries since it was introduced in mid-eighties. In India, the life skills education is an important component of all the major schemes at all levels of education.

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These are as under:

- National Curriculum Framework (2000) recommended that education ideally must prepare students to face the challenges of life. It is through life skills that students can fight the challenges of drug addiction, violence, teenage pregnancy, AIDS and many other health related problems.
- National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 has emphasized on constructive learning experiences and on the development of an inquiry-based approach, work-related knowledge and broader life skills. Interventions focused on adolescent reproductive and sexual health concerns, including HIV/AIDS and drug/ substance abuse are needed to provide opportunities to construct knowledge and acquire life skills, so that, they cope with concerns related to the process of growing up.
- Adolescence Education Program (AEP), 2005 in India is implemented by Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD) in collaboration with National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) as a key intervention for empowering adolescents to deal with risky situations, preventing new HIV infections, reducing vulnerability to the infection and substance dependence and influencing positive behaviour development.
- Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), in 2005, introduced life skills education as an integral part of the curriculum through Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) for classes 6 to 10 and developed life skills manuals for teachers teaching classes 6, 7 and 8. These manuals provide teachers broad guidelines for each of the ten core life skills identified by WHO.
- National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE), 2009 has elaborated that true education is a process of developing the human personality in all its dimensions – intellectual, physical, emotional, social, moral and spiritual.
- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) also has, under its agenda, life skills training for girls in upper primary classes.
- The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) envisages far-reaching transformations in the prevailing Indian education system. It is a significant stride towards making education meaningful, assimilative and skill-centric. The NEP is a sincere endeavour in this direction to ensure that every learner develops some life skills through vocational training while studying in school/college/university.

Government Sponsored Teacher Training Programme

- 1) YUVA school Life Skill Program: This Program is focussed in Delhi and directs its attention on teachers and students to train them to use the fullest potential
- 2) Public Private Teacher Training: This venture believes in giving teacher training for imparting Life Skills. It was a project that was launched in 2012.
- 3) Tool Kits: Tool Kits refers to various curricular recommendations put forward by the authorities. In the case of NCERT they have formed a teacher suggestion packet in 2016.

Indian Association of Life Skill Education is a best example to show how the country has started accepting the idea of Life skill education. In India Life Skill Education also flourished as a part of Rajeev Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development in 2008.

Life Skill education believes in the fullest blooming of the potential of human being.

III. RELEVANCE OF LIFE SKILLS

The Life Skills are important aspects of quality education since the epitome of education is to lead a life not merely for the sake of living but encompassing the real essence of it.

The relevance of Life Skills education can be witnessed in every walk of life be it educational, social, health, cultural and economical. In today's scenario, which is full of stress and pressure of various kinds, enhancement or possession of such psychological competencies can make an important contribution to one's personal as well as professional life. Strengthens teacher-pupil relationship, improves discipline in schools, reduces learner related problems such as truancy, absenteeism, drug and substance abuse and teenage pregnancies. It also helps the learner to improve his/her performances in studies. The knowledge of life skills enhances key employability skills such as the ability to self-manage, solve problems and understand the business environment, time and people management. Respecting diversity allows creativity and imagination to flourish developing a more tolerant society. Developing negotiation skills, the ability to network and empathies can help to build resolutions rather than resentments. : Promotes harmonious interaction between people of different cultures and helps in the clarification of values in the society. Life skills enable individuals to translate knowledge, attitudes and values into actual abilities – i.e. what to do and how to do it (Esmaeilinasab et al., 2011).

IV. ESSENTIAL LIFE SKILLS FOR THE STUDENTS

The students of today's world should learn essential Life Skills especially in a period of crisis like COVID-19.

1. **Embracing change:** Change is unavoidable and an integral part of human existence. To survive and succeed in this world student need to keep evolving newer ideas and ways to tackle the situations. To manage our response and move from fear, resistance and resignation to acceptance and adjustment, we need to 'embrace' change, a key lead habit. The world wide lock down has brought severe changes in the mindset of the people, behavior and even in the classroom atmosphere too. Students of the present generation should be ready to accept the changes in the mode of instruction as well as in the mode of examination.

This is the time to learn how to deal with setbacks positively and build resilience for the future. It's possible to shift how we feel about change, even when it is as unanticipated and dramatic as the one we are living through today.

2. **Expanding networks:** Social contacts need nurturing. Interactions with people around offer many opportunities to the student folk to build expand and maintain networks. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 the networks between peers can languish but as a teacher educator we all need to resort to different social media to keep the students well connected. Now is the time to make collaboration a habit and learn to build long-lasting networks for professional growth.
 3. **Practicing excellence:** At home, the students do not have a structure, interaction or momentum provided by their work routines to keep themselves going. At such a time we need to inculcate among the students the practice of self-governance, become self-propelling and develop a strong work ethic. We need to teach the students how to push themselves to be the best version of oneself. Take the opportunity to learn to not just succeed at what you do but to excel at it.
 4. **Communicate effectively:** The importance of speaking cannot be emphasized enough. We need to communicate with each other more and more over the telephone or in virtual meetings. In such situations, the ability to prepare well, deliver effectively and employ logic will prove to be crucial. So, students should go ahead and build their speaking skills for clear and impactful communication at work.
 5. **Active listening:** Listening is a valuable workplace skill that has become more important today as remote working kicks in and online calls become the norm. It's critical to listen patiently so we can understand the perspective of others, avoid misunderstanding and build trust with colleagues. This time should be utilized for both for our professional growth and personal interactions.
 6. **Writing proficiently:** Writing has always been an essential skill for any professional, but it has become more relevant in this digital age due to the increasing need for clear and concise communication. As we work remotely and globally, the need is stronger than ever to minimise miscommunication and increase collaboration. This time should be utilized to learn how to structure our thoughts and build strong writing skills that we can apply to our day-to-day workplace communication.
 7. **Establishing trust:** Establishing trust helps build collaborative skills as well as meaningful, trust-rich professional and personal relationships at work.
 8. **Managing teamwork:** Being a team player is critical for a modern professional. Go ahead and build your teamwork skills so you can work with a group of people to achieve a shared goal at work. Students should learn how to take everyone's ideas on board and handle constructively.
 9. **Discovering purpose:** A good place to start is to understand what we're passionate about and what makes us tick. Once we've figured that out we'll be more productive and satisfied at work, and learn how to bounce back from setbacks easily. That will help us stay motivated at work. And stay happy at work. Information regarding various online courses and skill development courses should be shared with the students so that they can keep themselves updated.
 10. **Leading self:** Challenges hold us back when times are uncertain. The key to becoming the best version of oneself is to overcome interferences - fears, anxieties, self-doubt, loss and illness. Utilise this time to learn some basic workplace skills so that we can fulfill our potential and take charge of our own growth.
 11. **Technology Skills:** In today's world, knowing how to use basic technology is essential. A successful student should be comfortable using smartphones, the internet, social media email and standard computer programs like Microsoft Word and Excel. Students should learn to back up one's phone and computer to the cloud or to an external drive. Even students should know about the password management tool to protect one's data.
 12. **Basic First Aid:** Students should be well versed about basic first aid and will be able to rely on their instincts and knowledge in emergency situations.
 13. **Budgeting:** Students should learn about the ability to budget and be financially responsible which will help them to achieve financial peace and security in tough situations.
- Life skills education helps building a society that is equipped with a creative spark, problem solving attitude, critical thinking approach, rationalistic individual, decision making potentialities, high level of sociability, effective communication and skills of interpersonal and empathy for tuning in the society.
- Life skills training create an opportunity for the inculcation of fundamental life skills for operating successfully in the world of work, as well as fulfilling the demands of a changing society.

V. REFERENCES

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