

LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT: Kapil Sibal, Minister of HRD, emphasized that life skills should become the central focus of education. In this context, he said, "In the present day context, it is not enough for teachers to merely give information and knowledge to students ...human beings need wisdom. They need character. Life skills must become a central focus of educational efforts."

Introduction:- Life Skills: Adolescence, a vital stage of growth and development, marks the period of transition from childhood to adulthood. It is characterized by rapid physiological changes and psychosocial maturation. Adolescence is also the stage when young people extend their relationships beyond parents and family and are intensely influenced by their peers and the outside world in general. As adolescents mature cognitively, their mental process becomes more analytical. They are now capable of abstract thinking, better articulation and of developing an independent ideology. These are truly the years of creativity, idealism, buoyancy and a spirit of adventure. But these are also the years of experimentation and risk-taking, of giving in to negative peer pressure, of taking uninformed decisions on crucial issues, especially relating to their bodies and their sexuality. Adolescence is thus a turning point in one's life, a period of increased potential but also one of greater vulnerability.

Life skill:- A skill is a learned ability to do something well. Life skills are abilities, individuals can learn that will help them to live a fruitful life. Life skills are defined in the Targeting Life Skills (TLS) Model (Hendricks, 1996) as "Skills that help an individual be successful in living a productive and satisfying life."

WHO has defined the Life skills as "the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" (WHO). 'Adaptive' means that a person is flexible in approach and is able to adjust in different circumstances. 'Positive behaviour' implies that a person is forward looking and even in difficult situations, can find a ray of hope and opportunities to find solutions. The terms 'Livelihood skills' or vocational skills refer to capabilities, resources and opportunities to pursue individual and household economic goals and relate to income generation. Thus, Life skills are distinct from livelihood skills.

Key Life Skills:- 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". While thinking skills relate to reflection at a personal level, social skills include interpersonal skills and do not necessarily depend on logical thinking. It is the combination of these two types of skills that are needed for achieving assertive behaviour and negotiating effectively. "Emotional" can be perceived as a skill not only in making rational decisions but also in being able to make others agree to one's point of view. To do that, coming to terms first with oneself is important. Thus, self management is an important skill including managing/coping with feelings, emotions, stress and resisting peer and family pressure. Young people as advocates need both thinking and social skills for consensus building and advocacy on issues of concern. WHO has laid down the ten core Life Skills, these are:-

1. Self-awareness
2. Empathy
3. Critical thinking
4. Creative thinking
5. Decision making
6. Problem Solving
7. Effective communication
8. Interpersonal relationship
9. Coping with stress
10. Coping with emotion

1. 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.

2. 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. We grow up in relationships with many people – parents, brothers and sisters, cousins, uncles and aunts, classmates, friends and neighbours. When we understand ourselves as well as

others, we are better prepared to communicate our needs and desires. We will be more equipped to say what we want people to know, present our thoughts and ideas and tackle delicate issues without offending other people. At the same time, we will be able to elicit support from others, and win their understanding. Empathy can help us to accept others, who may be very different from ourselves. This can improve social interactions, especially, in situations of ethnic or cultural diversity.

3. 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 behaviour, such as values, peer pressure and the media.

4. 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).

5. Decision making helps us to deal constructively with decisions about our lives. 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.

6. 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.

7. 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 a time of need.

8. 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. 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.

9. 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.

10. Coping with emotion means involving recognizing emotions within us and others, being aware of how emotions influence behaviour 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.

Different methods that can be used to enhance Life Skills in students:-

There are various teaching methods that can be used to enhance Life Skills in the students and these methods are discussed below in the table :-

S. No.	TEACHING METHOD	DESCRIPTION	BENEFITS	PROCESS
	CLASS DISCUSSION (In small or large groups)	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.	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.	<input type="checkbox"/> Decide how to arrange seating for discussion. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify the goal of the discussion and communicate it clearly. <input type="checkbox"/> Pose meaningful, open-ended questions. <input type="checkbox"/> Keep track of discussion progress.
	BRAIN STORMING	Students actively generate a broad variety of ideas about a particular topic or question in a given, often brief period of time. Quantity of ideas is the main objective of brain storming. Evaluating or debating the ideas occurs later.	Allows students to generate ideas quickly and spontaneously. Helps students use their imagination and break loose from fixed patterns of response. Good discussion starter because the class can creatively generate ideas. It is essential to evaluate the pros and cons of each idea or rank ideas according to certain	<input type="checkbox"/> Designate a leader and a recorder <input type="checkbox"/> State the issue or problem and ask for ideas. <input type="checkbox"/> Students may suggest any idea that comes to mind. <input type="checkbox"/> Do not discuss the ideas when they are first suggested.

			criteria.	<input type="checkbox"/> Record ideas in a place where everyone can see them. <input type="checkbox"/> Afterbrain storming, reviews the ideas and add, delete, categorise.
	ROLE PLAYS	Role play is an informal dramatization in which people act out a suggested situation.	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.	<input type="checkbox"/> Describe the situation to berole played <input type="checkbox"/> Selectrole players <input type="checkbox"/> Giveinstructions to role players <input type="checkbox"/> Start the role play <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss what happened
	SMALL GROUP/BUZZ GROUP	For small group work, a large class is divided into smaller groups of six or less and given a short time to accomplish a task, carry out an action, or discuss a specific topic, problem or question.	Useful when groups are large and time is limited. Maximizes student input. Lets students get to know one another better and increases the likelihood that they will consider how another person thinks. Helps students hear and learn form their peers.	<input type="checkbox"/> State the purpose of discussion and the amount of time available. <input type="checkbox"/> Form small groups <input type="checkbox"/> Position seating so that members can hear each other easily. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask group to appoint recorder <input type="checkbox"/> At the end have recordr describe the group's discussion.
	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.	Games and simulations promote fun, active learning, and rich discussion in the classroom 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 relatively safe environment.	Games: <input type="checkbox"/> Remind students that the activity is meant to be enjoyable and that it does not matter who wins. Simulations: <input type="checkbox"/> Work best when they are brief and discussed immediately. <input type="checkbox"/> 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.
	SITUATION ANALYSIS 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.	Situation analysis allows students to explore problems and dilemmas and safely test solutions; it provides opportunities to work together, share ideas, and learn that people sometimes see things differently. Case studies are powerful catalysts for thought and discussion. Students consider the forces that converge to make an individual or group act in one	<input type="checkbox"/> Guidingquestions are useful to spur thinking and discussion. <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitator must be adept at teasing out the key points and step back and pose some 'bigger' overarching questions. <input type="checkbox"/> Situationanalyses and case studies need adequate time for processing and creative thinking <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher must act as the facilitator and coach rather than the sole source of 'answer' and knowledge.

			<p>way or another, and then evaluate the consequences. By engaging in this thinking process, students can improve their own decision making skills.</p> <p>Case studies can be tied to specific activities to help students practice healthy responses before they find themselves confronted with a health risk.</p>	
	DEBATES	<p>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.</p>	<p>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 banned in public places in a community. Allows students to defend a position that may mean a lot to them. Offers a chance to practice higher thinking skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 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. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide students with time to research their topic. <input type="checkbox"/> Do not allow students to dominate at the expenses of other speakers. <input type="checkbox"/> Make certain that students show respect for the opinions and thoughts of other debates. <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain control in the classroom and keep the debate on topic.
	STORY TELLING	<p>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.</p>	<p>Can help students think about local problems and develop critical thinking skills. Students can engage their creative skills in helping to write stories, or a group can work interactively to tell stories. Story telling lends itself to drawing analogies or making comparisons, helping people to discover healthy solutions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Keep the story simple and clear. Make one or two main points. <input type="checkbox"/> Be sure the story (and pictures, if included) relate to the lives of the students. <input type="checkbox"/> Make the story dramatic enough to be interesting. Try to include situations of happiness, sadness, excitement, courage, serious thought, decisions, and problem solving behaviours.

Life skill education Strategies:-

Life skills covering the areas like leadership, ethics, accountability, adaptability, personal productivity, personal responsibility, people skill and self direction. Leadership skill enables the person to solve problems, attain his/her life goal and the ability to motivate others and also achieve a common goal. Person will meet the high standard of accomplishments by following the ethics in his/her personal as well as professional life. He will be able to adapt different roles and responsibilities. They are able to tolerate ambiguity and willing to change their priorities as per the requirement. Thus they will be committed to their work by utilizing the time more effectively. Life skill education will be effective only when people are able to act upon the skill which they have learned. In mental health and other areas, there is a considerable improvement in behaviour with the help of life skill education. Life skill education lays the foundation for learning skill, which is greater demand in job market. Life skill education enhances self direction of the individual. He/She will be able to monitor his or her own understanding and learning needs. And also has the commitment to learning as a lifelong process. A life skill programme could include content about friendships, bullying, sexual relationships, anger management, perceptions about drug use. The Key basic categories of life skills including communication, negotiation, refusal skills, assertiveness, cooperation, empathy. Cognitive skills including problem solving skills, understanding consequences, decision making, critical thinking, self evaluation. Emotional coping skills including managing feelings self management and self monitoring. In order to have an effective implementation of life skill education there is a need for professionally trained and skilled personal from within the country. Professional training

requires a purposely planned programme of study prepared by experts which has the approval of a competent authority. There is an urgent need to train and prepare a large contingent of "trainers of trainers" (TOTs). The TOTs will require adequate training on all aspects of the subject. They have to be expert in this field of study in order to be effective in performing their task. Through life skill education one can move towards a more positive and holistic approaches in order to educate the new generations and through them the future generations.

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