

LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: ADMINISTRATORS' VIEWS

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ABSTRACT

Our education system is providing a knowledge base more than a practical base. To survive successfully in the present-day globalized context, need for practical knowledge than conceptual understanding. Taking cues from the situations, the World Health Organization gave out ideas about life skills education in schools to develop the necessary skills to cope up with complicated situations of present society. '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.' (Joseph, 2008) Understanding the need to equip children with these life skills different school boards in India take up the issue seriously and developed life skills education programmes for implementation at different levels of the schooling system. In spite of occupying with the burden of curricular aspects, Schools have taken up this aspect with enthusiasm. In this paper, the focus is on the implementation of life skills education programmes in secondary schools from the administrators' point of view.

Keywords : *Life Skills, Life Skills Education, Adolescents Need for life skills, Administrator's views, Problems in implementing life skills Education.*

Introduction

Ten life skills are shortlisted by WHO for developing life-leading capacity in children, like, Self-Awareness, Empathy, Decision Making, Problem Solving, Effective Communication, Interpersonal Relations, Creative Thinking, Critical Thinking, Coping with Emotions and Coping with Stress. Skills of critical thinking and creative thinking are higher-order thinking skills. If an individual equips self with these skills, s/he will be able to make proper decisions without being affected by outside influences, bias and prejudice. Self-awareness is another important life skill which can help to understand oneself from personal, social, emotional and physical angles. Developing healthy interpersonal relations is another important aspect of human life. It is a competence that consists of several rules that help us relate to others effectively. Seen from this perspective each life skill helps us to be effective and efficient towards life. This clearly explains the need to implement life skills education in schools to equip children with life-promoting, life-sustaining capabilities in present-day society.

Need for Life Skills

Education helps children to lead a life in harmony in society. It equips them with knowledge and skills according to changing times. It is a dynamic entity which is under continuous pressure to change. Techno-savvy society of the present day has brought drastic and rapid changes in the lives of people. The complexities are increasing day by day to technological evolution in information gathering and processing. Personal life and workspace are no exceptions from this change. Family patterns are changing, job demands are increasing, norms and values are changing, competition is increasing globally, and enormous amounts of information are at hand in the form of knowledge, making life complex. The traditional system of education can no more provide inputs to lead a life with these kinds of complexities. We need a different kind of education. The knowledge-oriented traditional system is not capable of managing the needs of the 21st century.

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Adolescence is a turmoil period for the development of self-identity. It is a process of coming to terms with self-identity through comprehending physical changes in the body along with social demands to be someone. This leads to a psychologically stressful situation to live the life of an adult in adolescence. They need to cope with peer pressure and the need for intimacy and dependence with proper guidance and support. In the absence of guidance, many misconceptions occur and lead to risky behaviours due to a lack of knowledge. It is a time when adolescents are struggling to keep a balance among themselves, family, society and peers. They are coming to terms with values taught and followed in reality in the living context. Adolescents need social and emotional support to manage such situations. If support is not provided they get confused and misunderstood changes. It may also affect their academics and social interaction. Life skills provide some help here, as they influence them to develop proper self-identity, and to deal with societal and peer pressure effectively. Own perception of ability, confidence, and respect are known better with the acquisition of Life skills.

After-home school is the main ground of socialization for students. They interact with people from different strata, regions, religions, languages, and gender with different values, traditions and beliefs to learn about society and its contextual realities. If schools can provide awareness about social interactions through life skills education to students in schools, it will help them to deal with complex social situations in later life with the required maturity and composure. Therefore, the need to take up these concepts in schools was thought of and implemented in the form of life skills education in schools all over the world. There are even ideas and implementation of these programmes in some university level programmes also in different places of the world.

Contextual bases for the study

Schools are already occupied and pressurized with so much work of teaching learning, administration and other work provided by Boards / Public institutions. Teachers in present-day schools are completely occupied with teaching and administrative work. The emerging need to take up life skills education programmes are further adding a burden to the working systems in schools. There are going to be

certain problems with accommodating and implementing the programme in schools. At the secondary level students, parents and teachers are more interested in focusing on further professional course entry than taking up other burdens of study. Accommodating life skills education programmes in this scenario is a challenge for any administrator. Looking into the emerging needs of children of today's world and supporting research reports life skills education is appearing as a dire need of present schools. Therefore, a study was planned on life skills education programmes in secondary schools with a view to understanding the implementation of the programmes and problems of implementation from administrators' viewpoint.

Research Design and Implementation

A survey of selected schools was employed to collect information from selected CBSE schools of Baroda City offering education in English medium and working under private management. Data was collected personally by visiting selected schools willing to provide data. A questionnaire was developed to collect data from the administrators involved with Life Skills Education Programmes in selected Schools. Questions were asked about the management of programmes, facilities provided for the programme, training needs of teachers and problems faced by administrators in implementing the programmes.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The views of administrators from selected schools were presented here point-wise.

1. Administrators opined that life skills education programmes help secondary students to develop social and emotional skills like, self-esteem, and tolerance towards others and help them to channel ideas towards the future.
2. Life skills education programmes are managed according to the guidelines of CBSE. A core committee is formed to manage these programmes. Time table is prepared to conduct Life-Skills activities. One to two periods are allotted per week to conduct these activities. Teachers are guided to develop and implement different activities during this allotted time. Students are divided into groups to conduct these activities.

3. Teachers are prepared through workshops, orientation programmes, and field-expert sessions and students are oriented about the activity beforehand about necessary resources and ways.
4. Programmes are designed based on skills and needs. CBSE guidelines are followed to plan programmes integrating into school activities like school cinema, outstation trips etc. Class teachers conduct these activities according to the timetable in groups or individually based.
5. Cooking without fire, school cinema, stitching buttons and making a kitchen were some innovative activities implemented by schools.
6. Schools mostly meet the financial requirements to implement these programmes. School-based activities are implemented with school help. Students make their own arrangements for class-based activities.
7. According to the activity, facilities are provided or arranged. Most activities are conducted within school premises. Outfield activities like street play, and trip facilities are arranged. For simple class-based activities, students make their own arrangements.
8. Various problems mentioned by administrators on different aspects are mentioned point-wise.
9. The teacher's evaluation of the activity is not authentic. Activities are planned mechanically as part of the programme. This led to a lack of interest, focus and importance of activity in students.
10. Life skills activities are clashing with extra-curricular activities. Availability of auditorium or AV room facilities is becoming a problem due to clashing of time.
11. Students take time to adjust to the schedule of life skills education. Academic burden and stress for scores dominate their enthusiasm to take part in these activities with enthusiasm. Often the timetable is compromised to accommodate academic and extra-curricular activities.
12. Parents' support is divided, some schools said they are less supportive and questions about the necessity of taking up these activities. Some schools said that parents have no problem, even when extra expenses

have to be incurred for providing varied experiences, the response of parents was very positive.

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13. A lack of proper time management problems is reported. Within the periods allotted, it is difficult to achieve the result as expected.
14. School Management is very positive and generous with spending resources for all activities including life skills education.

Integration of life skills in the curriculum may reduce the burden of implementation to some extent.

Suggestions for proper implementation of Programmes

Various Suggestions given for further improvement of these programmes were as follows-

1. Evaluation of life skills activity is not required. The students must be just exposed to various situations to comprehend the skills.
2. Time allotment needs to be more. The scope for more classes on life skills with a focus on innovative teaching methods like, practical-based, hands-on experiences and experimental base will improve the achievement of goals.
3. Teachers with clear ideas about activity i.e. planning, implementing and evaluating need to be involved in implementation. Clarity on all aspects and concepts of activity is needed in the teacher.
4. Freedom to choose activities for students in their interest areas.
5. Education Boards have to closely monitor the conduct of life skills education in schools. This is essential so that students develop wholesome and well-rounded personalities.
6. Action should be taken against schools which do not take care of life skills education. Strict measures and actions need to be taken against schools that do not adhere to the guidelines of CBSE Life Skills Education Programmes. Failure of taking action against the misconduct of schools is causing the failure of the programme.

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schools, the quality of government schools needs to be drastically improved. The principal chairs the management council at the school level. According to the report, additional funding should be set aside for purchasing instructional resources for disabled students in order to ensure that inclusive education is applied effectively.

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easier. Policymakers and boards of education need to act keeping this idea for improvement in goal achievement. The present study is expressing views based on CBSE schools’ data. More studies are needed from different contexts to conclude properly on the implementation aspects in a holistic manner.

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Discussion and Conclusion

According to the guidelines of the CBSE Board schools are implementing the Life Skills Education Programmes. Opinions expressed by administrators show that time management of these programmes is a serious issue. Without affecting the academic interests of the students if schools are able to integrate these programmes into the curriculum then the achievement of goals would be