

21st Century Youth and Significance of Life Skills Education: A Review

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Abstract: The 21st Century is very crucial for the youth. Due to unimaginable development of science and technology as well as social media the majority of youth population utilizes their potential in a worst way. Use of too much smart phone hampers their productivity. The power of youth population is very high as compared to the other stages of life if they use their time in a productive manner. Being the turning period of life this is the right time to take right decisions. In this condition, life skills are those psycho social skills that enable individuals to cope effectively with their life challenges. This article draws how the life skills contribute to the individual development of Youth.

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1. Introduction

Youth' is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood (UNESCO). 'Youth' means individual between the ages of 15 to 35. A.P. J Abdul Kalam (2010), former President of India stated, "A Vision for the New Millennium and, developed India by 2020, or even earlier, is not a dream. It is a big task we can all take up and succeed. Following the United National Development Programme (UNDP) lead of putting people at the centre of the development and keeping in perspective that 54% of our population is youth". By igniting and channelizing the hidden potential in youth, our nation will be a source of man power and intellectuals. For this reason, Youth has to be imparted the "Life Skills". (Lead India 2020) .A study by Khoshabi and Katayoon (2011, p.24) mentioned that life skills are needed to deal with difficulties and gain personal and social skills. Youth are considered to be the most dynamic and productive members of the society, as a results of their physical and intellectual capacity. Bonnie (2014) stated that, without competency in life skill education, the adolescent will become lost because of the inevitable tension created by globalization, such as the conflict between global and local, universal and individual, tradition and modernity, short term and long term considerations, excellences and equal opportunity, knowledge expansion and knowledge assimilation spiritual and material, beside the increasing divide between the rich and poor. Therefore, there is a need to provide youth population with life skills knowledge as well as opportunities to practice life skills education are understood to be the essential tools for empowering an adolescent or youth to act responsible, take initiative and able to

rise above emotional impasses arising from daily conflicts, entangled relationship and peer pressure, they are less likely to result to anti-social behavior. Further, this period is critical for the introduction and sustenance of critical health-

related knowledge and skills, and is thus vital for mental health (Pandey et al., 2018). The National Mental Health Survey of India (NMHS, 2017) suggests that 7.3% of adolescents in the age range of thirteen to seventeen years have some kind of mental morbidity. The prevalence of suicide rates among adolescents reflects a rather grim picture and demands immediate actions at different levels. According to NCRB (2018), 10159 students died by suicide in 2018. Absence and depleting traditional societal norms, highly competitive world and heightened stress levels among adolescents may often result in multiple mental health issues (Smith et al., 2004). It is therefore important to introduce life skills in the early stage of adolescence to develop better skills to cope with the stressors and exigencies of life. Life skills help in effectively dealing with mental health issues and has even been found to reduce school dropout rates. Life Skills Education (LSE) started as an educational innovation in mideighties and has spread in several countries (Grover, 2018). Botvin (1984) has developed Life Skills Training (LST) programme for substance abuse prevention. Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (1986) recognized life skills and promulgated better health choices. Observing its effectiveness, WHO in the year 1991 had proposed LSE to be included in school curriculum so that children are equipped to effectively deal with the challenges faced in different areas of life. Convention on the Rights of the Children (1992) has linked life skills to education for development of child's fullest potential. National Curriculum Framework (NCF) (2000), Adolescence Education Program (AEP) (2005) and NCF (2005) has given emphasis on linking education in schools with life skills training. National Education policy 2020 also give special emphasis on skill education.

Needs of Youth:

Youth require a combination of cognitive and social skills to tackle their problem, and prepare for future challenges. This period as it is a significant state of growth and development, marks the period of transition from childhood to adulthood. It is characterized by rapid psychological changes and psychological maturation. It is also a stage when youth people extend their relationship between beyond parents and family as the period mark with cognitive changes, the adolescent mental process becomes more analytical and capable of abstract thinking, better articulation, more creative, idealism and risk taking and taking uniformed decision on crucial issues. Gerima (2010), come up with some key issues and concern observed among adolescent include those relating to forming a self-image, managing emotion, building relationships, strengthening social skills, and dealing with or resisting peer pressure and are more prone and vulnerable to high risk situation and may easily succumb to it how well a youth deals with these challenges is decided by a host of factors that include their personality, psychosocial support from the parents, teachers and peers, and the life skill that they possess.

Objectives of the Study: This review aims to trace a comprehensive understanding of the significance of life skill education for the youth population and identify the research gap and priorities.

Method: Descriptive method has been used to analyse the study. The analysis is based on secondary sources such as research article, Books, magazines' and websites.

Analysis of the study: Life skills training/education takes into account psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help youth population to take right 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. (WHO) defines Life skills as the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Life skill has been classified into three broad categories:

- **Thinking skills:** Thinking skills are the skill that enhances the logical faculty of the brain using an analytical ability, thinking creatively and critically, and developing problem-solving skills and improving decision-making abilities.
- **Social skills:** Social skills include interpersonal skills, communication skills, leadership skills, management skills, advocacy skills, co-operation and team building skills, etc.
- **Emotional skills:** Emotional skills, involves, knowing and being comfortable with oneself.

Core Life skills: According to UNICEF, Life Skills are a behavior change or behavior development approach designed to address balance of three areas:

- Knowledge

- Attitude
- Skills.

The world bodies such as UNICEF, UNESCO, and WHO list the ten core Life Skills as:

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

Review of Related Literature

The topic has been a significant area of interest to the researchers, theorists, and practitioners, and there have been numerous researches carried out to emphasize the importance & effectiveness of life skills education in the development of youth' social, emotional and cognitive development & dealing with their psychosocial problems and issues.

Khera and Khosla (2012) investigated the role of education for all round development of individuals. School studies promote the formation of sound personalities. Core life skills are very important for the development of future life of the adolescents. The objective of the study was to determine the relationship between self-concept and core life skills. Five hundred young pupils were taken as sample. These students were from ten schools of south Delhi administered by the government. The trends show that there is a positive co-relation between the self-concept and core life skills of the students. This means that those students who have higher level of these core life skills are more confident in all aspects.

Puspakumarag (2013) in his study showed that life skills training was 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.

Roodbari, Sahdipoor, and Ghale (2013) in their research showed that life skills training has a positive effect and improves social development, emotional and social adjustment, suggesting an increase in compatibility of children and public health.

Bardhan (2016) examined on "Life Skills Education: A Strategy for Handling Adolescents' Risk Behavior". In this study, the analyst has influenced an endeavor to comprehend whether and how school students learned life skills through their persistent contribution with school specialist, their classmates and instructors and its effect in adjusting their behavior. The study was conducted among the adolescent school students with risky behavior. The study proved that with continuous life skills training along with organized counseling helped in creating positive changes among the

students with problem behavior. It has likewise enabled the children to develop friendly relationship with instructors, peers and guardians.

Dhingra and Chauhan(2017) found a highly significant correlation between parental education and the levels of life skills of adolescents, further fortifying the notion that education plays a crucial role in making parents aware of the needs of their children

Nasheeda, et.al.(2018) conducted systematic review of literature on life skills programs to determine their effectiveness. Results show significant difference in life skills education programs conducted in developing and developed countries. In developed countries large number of life skills education programs are conducted resulting in promotion of positive behavior. However, life skills programs lack systematic implementation, evaluation and monitoring in most of the developing countries. Administrators, policy makers, researchers and teachers will find this review useful in implementing effective life skills programs. Developing countries can use the findings of this review to organize effective life skills training programs for better transfer of knowledge and skills.

A Qualitative Research Study on the Importance of Life Skills on Undergraduate Students' Personal and Social Competencies (2019) was conducted by Nair et.al. and the results of thematic analysis indicated that embedding the life-skills program in the university curriculum plays a key role in shaping students' personal and social competencies. This finding has important implications for educators and educational policy makers to integrate students' life skills into curriculum so as to influence students' professional and interpersonal skills such as team working, communication, leadership, and time management, decision making and problem-solving.

According to UNICEF (2019), "life skills are a set of abilities, attitudes as well as socio-emotional skills that enable individuals to learn, make informed decisions, and exercise rights leading to a healthy and productive life". Adolescence is a stage of identity formation, during which attitudes towards socialization, gender equality, and human rights consolidate (UNICEF, 2019); thus, life skills education among adolescents is especially important in India as social and class structures can often limit their opportunities (UNICEF, 2019).

The National Education Policy ((NEP, 2020)) that aims for a holistic development of a child has included critical life skills as one of the programs in the curriculum framework for adult education. It also states the importance of life skills such as, communication, cooperation, teamwork, and resilience in the Indian education system going forward (NEP, 2020).

A Study was conducted by Pomi Mahanta, et.al on "Importance of Life Skills Education among Adolescents" (2021). The result of the study showed that life skills have significant impact in the overall development of the adolescents. LSE helps adolescents for better adjustment with teachers and peers and increased coping, self esteem and pro-social behaviour. Introducing life skills in the early stage of adolescence will aid in the development of better psychosocial competence and skills. Introduction of LSE programme as a part of School Mental Health Program (SMHP) needs to be emphasized. It should also be included in the curriculum from the primary to higher secondary levels.

From the above discussion, it is revealed that life skill education has great importance for the youth population in present situations. Life skill education is a good supportive system for the young generation. Life skill education as an effective mode of education, which does enhance social, emotional and thinking skills and empower 21st century youth to achieve their life goals. World Health Organisation (2020) suggest that the five major risk factors of adolescent i.e. nutrition, hygiene, physical activity, smoking and alcohol can be reduced by implementing life skill based education. There is a very little research done in India in this field. More research required in this area.

Conclusion

We are living in a very busy world. Everybody engaged in their busy schedules, irrespective of age, nature of job or course studying and struggling to find time to accomplish their targets. In this rush many of us are forget about how to live a quality life and how to handle various problems of our day to day life. Today young generation is rising up with a growing sense of suspicion and gloom. Young generation is not using their abilities and potential to the fullest even though their mental, physical, emotional and social skills are extreme in this period. There are many issues which hinder them from this like addiction to drugs, lack of emotional balance, physical abuses, decreased self esteem, improper knowledge the physiological and psychological changes occurred during adolescence, moral deterioration etc which badly affect the individual as well as the society. This results in low self-esteem, inability to handle pressures at work and in personal lives, eventually ending up in depression. Life skill education for young students will bring innumerable benefits to individuals and to development of the society. Life Skills education equip students to understand differing and opposing views and to express opinion, to behave in a team, to understand emotions of others as well as themselves, and to lead a successful life with mental well being. Efficient and appropriate execution of life skill education is a necessity of the time. Implementing life skills education to the students will be beneficial as it deals with the requirements of students, helps to improve the management of emotions and fostering thinking skills.

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