

IMPORTANCE OF LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN ADOLESCENCE PERIOD

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Abstract

Adolescence is the golden period of lives when we have very high functioning capabilities. Intellectual, physical, social, emotional and all the other required skills are performed with utmost energies. But, unfortunately, not all the adolescents are able to utilize these potentials to the best of their capabilities due to various reasons. They are facing many emerging issues including global warming, poverty, suicide, famines and population explosion as well as the issues that come out as a result of peer pressure or societal influence like alcoholism, drug abuse, sexual abuse, smoking, juvenile delinquency, anti-social acts, etc. that leave an everlasting adverse effect on them and others too, to a large extent. Remedies to this new challenge is the need of an hour and requires immediate and effective responses from our socially responsible educational system. Education is important, but education that teaches a way of living to sustain a better life plays a pivotal role in building our society and will help in shaping a better future of every adolescent, as an individual. It has been felt that life skills education bridges the gap between rights and duties. It strengthens the ability of an individual to meet the needs and demands of the present society and helps in dealing with the above issues in a manner to get the desired behavioural modifications. Imparting life skills training through various activities and life skill education will help youth to come up with more solutions to their problems and ideas to overcome such difficulties in life. The present paper focuses on the pivotal role of life skills education and the benefits of imparting life skill education in our curriculum i.e. developing social, emotional and thinking skills in students, as they are the building blocks for a dynamic citizen, who will be the driving forces of future; to ensure that they are able to cope up with future challenges and survive well.

Keywords:*Life Skills Education; Adolescent; Challenges in adolescence, children with special needs.*

Introduction

With the emerging era, education is undergoing a revolutionized change in terms of Science and Technology, globalisation, urbanisation, privatization, industrialization, etc. Today's youth is facing many emerging challenges including global warming, poverty, suicide, famines and population explosion; creating social, emotional, physical and psychological issues. Cut-throat competition, unemployment, lack of job security etc, are some of the major concerns for the educated 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 with society. This is because youth does not spare enough time to introspect and is more inclined to work with the flow of society. Youth is considered as the most productive member of the society, due to their physical, cognitive and reasoning capabilities. But in real scenario, most of them are being the victims of psychological problems like depression, isolation as well as the issues that come out as a result of peer pressure or societal influence like alcoholism, drug abuse, sexual abuse, smoking, juvenile delinquency, anti-social acts, etc. that leave an everlasting adverse effect on them and others too, to a large extent.

Remedies to this new challenge is the need of an hour and requires immediate and effective responses from our socially responsible educational system. Education is important, but education that teaches a way of living to sustain a better life plays a pivotal role in building our society and will help in shaping a better future of every adolescent, as an individual. Thus, the cardinal focus of education, therefore, needs an extraordinary emphasis on developing such skills in students, as they are the building blocks for a dynamic citizen, who will be the driving forces of future; to ensure that they are able to cope up with future challenges and survive well. It strengthens the ability of an individual to meet the needs and demands of the present society and helps in dealing with the above issues in a manner to get the desired behavioural modifications.

Review of 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 students' social, emotional and cognitive development & dealing with their psychosocial problems and issues. According to Albertyn et al. (2004) life skills training enhance critical thinking

abilities, which further impacts were living life actively, being responsible in the job and in future planning too. Ramesh and Farshad C. (2004) in his study proved the effectiveness of life skills training in increasing mental and physical health, pro-social behaviour and decreasing in behavioural, social problems & self-destructive behaviour's. Smith & et al., (2004) noted significant improvement in interpersonal relationship and reduction in aggression and behavioural problems. Tuttle et al., (2006), during their investigation, add the life skills to students' curriculum. The results of this study suggested the extraordinary capability of teens to positive promotion and flexibility. Vranda and Rao (2011) proved that life skills training enhanced their psychosocial Competencies. 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. The present paper focuses on how enhancing social, emotional and thinking skills through life skills education, helps the 21st- century youngsters to achieve their goals strengthens the abilities to meet the needs and demands of the present society and be successful in life.

Defining Life Skills

Life skills is the training for adaptive and positive behaviour that allows individuals to deal effectively with the upcoming needs, demands and challenges of everyday life. In this way, there can be innumerable life skills and the nature and definition of life skills are likely to differ across various cultures and settings. However, analysis of the life skills field suggests that there is a typical core set of skills that are at the heart of skills-based initiative for the promotion of good physical health and mental well-being of the child and adolescents. These are listed below:

- ✚ Decision making
- ✚ Problem solving
- ✚ Creative thinking
- ✚ Critical thinking
- ✚ Effective communication

- ✚ Interpersonal relationship skills
- ✚ Self-awareness
- ✚ Empathy
- ✚ Coping with emotions
- ✚ Coping with stress

Characteristics of Children with special needs with reference to life skills.

- ✚ Poor decoding skills
- ✚ Lack of self-monitoring
- ✚ Poor comprehension or retention
- ✚ Extreme difficulty building ideas and images
- ✚ Difficulty integrating new ideas to existing knowledge
- ✚ Difficulty recognising high frequency words
- ✚ Extreme difficulty in focusing attention
- ✚ Difficulty controlling eye movements
- ✚ Poor basic calculation skills
- ✚ Poor understanding of mathematical concepts
- ✚ Difficulty sorting out irrelevant information
- ✚ Lower visual concept and visual-spatial ability
- ✚ Inability to use basic facts in complex situations
- ✚ Weak ability to store and retrieve information efficiently
- ✚ Extremely weak ability to solve problems, particularly when information, procedure or situation is unfamiliar
- ✚ Extreme difficulty recognising, transferring, or using specific information to reach general conclusions

Five important daily life skills for adults with special needs to learn for independent living.

1. Telling Time

Routines can be comforting to those with special needs, but they're also important to learn to navigate daily life in our society. Schools, grocery stores, public transportation – all

have routines and specific hours of operation. In order to become an independent adult, one must learn to operate within these parameters, which is why telling time is such an important life skill.

2. Counting Money

The more you understand how to earn and keep money, the more independent you can be. However, before an adult with special needs can learn these skills, they must first learn to count money. Not only will they need this skill to purchase items that they need and want, but they, unfortunately, also have to be careful that people aren't taking advantage of them. Say, by giving them back less change than they're owed during a transaction.

3. Personal Hygiene

Personal hygiene is the first step in taking care of yourself. If an action item isn't part of a routine – such as brushing your teeth at the same time every night – it's easy to forget. But keeping up with one's personal hygiene helps build self-confidence and self-reliability. It also makes people more approachable. This last part is essential to making new friends and gaining new opportunities, such as landing a job interview.

4. Compromise/cooperation

Learning to share and find common ground are skills we wish were taught beyond Kindergarten for the general population. Adults with special needs have a unique opportunity through day habitation facilities to continue learning this important skill. It can help them make lasting relationships and develop respect for their mentors and peers.

5. Physical Fitness

This skill is something that evades the special needs population, particularly because caregivers do not set an example or stress the importance of physical fitness. Listen, we get it. Working a full-time job and then coming home to your second full-time job as a caregiver can be just as tiring as it is rewarding.

Establishing a routine of physical fitness, however, not only lowers the risk of type II diabetes, heart disease, and obesity. It also builds confidence, strengthens focus and

improves brain activity, which can help adults with special needs – and all adults, for that matter – learn even more life skills.

Interventional strategies for enhancing life skills among children with special needs.

- ✚ Clear and simple instructions work best with Children with Special Needs.
- ✚ Repetition and consistency is important when working with Children with Special Needs – they may not retain direction for a significant period of time.
- ✚ Activities like listening to music, electronic games, etc. may help in keeping students away from distractions.
- ✚ Do not provide complex choices to Children with Special Needs.
- ✚ “Storyboards” can be used to identify locations along the bus routes to calm the fears of a child, especially when change has occurred.
- ✚ A well thought out evacuation plan is essential.
- ✚ Qualified personnel should assess each child to determine the level of assistance needed and to help the child become independent over time.
- ✚ Instructions should be friendly and direct.
- ✚ Use their names, learn their interests, show them respect, honesty, care and trust.
- ✚ Be professional and maintain a positive attitude.
- ✚ Give children responsibility that they can handle.
- ✚ Establish key safety rules, communicate them clearly along with the consequences of not following them and enforce them fairly and consistently.
- ✚ Learn students’ non-verbal cues to anticipate a potential incident. Defuse problems before they escalate to another level.
- ✚ It is difficult for students to conform to what is expected if they are unable to comprehend what is being asked of them. Expectations should be directly related to the students’ functional ability.

Conclusion

A relevant and proper implementation of life skill education is a need of an hour, for today’s society. Imparting life skills education to the students, can be helpful as it specifically addresses the needs of children, helps in motivating, providing practical,

cognitive, emotional, social and self-management skills for life adjustments. Yadav P, Iqbal N(2009) showed positive results of imparting life skills education to students and bringing the change in adolescent's attitude, thought and behaviour by providing supportive environment to them. According to Errecart et al., (1991) and Caplan et al., (1992) life skills education proves to be an effective approach in primary prevention education, as its more interactive, uses problem solving approach and is activities based. Hence, teacher and the taught both involves in learn and fun too. On the whole, life skills education, have found to be an effective psychosocial intervention strategy for promoting positive social, and mental health of adolescents which plays an important role in all aspects such as strengthening coping strategies and developing self-confidence and emotional intelligence, as well as enhancing critical thinking, problem solving and decision making skills as has been well documented in the aforementioned studies. Thus, there is, significance and importance of life skills education to be integrated into the regular school curriculum and given on a daily basis by a life skills trainer/ teacher/counsellor to enhance the mental health of students, equip them with better adapted skills to face the challenges of changing life situations and empower them to become fully functioning contributors to the host society in particular and the world in general. In the light of above discussion, it could be concluded, that, Life skill education has its importance and significance in overall development of students. Our findings are in common to the findings of Botvin, et al., (1998), Nair. M.K.C, (2005) many more, suggesting life skill education program as a good supportive system for adolescents. Future Implications: Although considerable progress has been made in the past decade, and in the present study too, to reflect, 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 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.

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