

## **Life Skills Education in School Setting**

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### **Abstract**

School is the platform for learning for the student. The main objectives of school are to build a productive generation in the future. The teacher focuses on the overall development of the students. Teacher builds reading writing and arithmetic skills among students. Apart from these skills it is the duty of the teacher as well as school setting to enable the students to face challenges in life. It is the generic life skills like self-awareness, empathy, effective communication, inter personal relationship, problem solving, decision making, creative and critical thinking, coping with stress and emotions that help the students to overcome challenges in real life. In this study the researchers aims to identify the importance of life skills education in school setting and identifying the gap in providing this life skills in school setting. The researcher have visited many schools, collected the opinion of teachers as well as students regarding life skill education. Major findings of the study were majority of the schools focus on development of arithmetic, writing and reading skills. They feel that improvement in marks of the students will increase their reputation. The teachers in the school are concentrated on training the students to score high in their respective subject. The

transition in this focus of education created much impact in the life of student. They are not able to satisfy their psycho social needs, unable to communicate with others, inability to identify risk factors, unable to make good decisions and finally ended up in frequent failures and suicidal attempts. Through this study researchers are going to describe the importance of life skill education in school setting. The main objective is to identify the relationship between principles and methods in teaching process and life skill education and to identify the gap in the implementation level of the process of teaching and learning in school setting. Major findings of the study are the perception on life skill education among teachers various according to their interest and attitude towards teaching process. Some teachers are aware about the relevance of life skill education in handling the issues faced by students but hesitate to apply this because of time constraint and lack of support from school and parents. Another section of teachers consider it as non-academic activity with less importance and unwilling to change from the approach of teacher centered classroom teaching to child centered. School authorities are worried about the disciple of school while engaging in participatory learning approach and due to excess consumption of time they cannot finish their syllabus on time will affect their result. We can conclude that before integrating life skill education we have to handle the perception of teachers and school authorities regarding the benefits of this type of teaching.

**Keywords:** Life Skill Education, Teachers, Perception

School is the temple of learning. Teachers are the facilitators of learning process. The teacher focuses on overall development of the students. The way of teaching the subjects will influence the student's behavior. It is the duty of the teacher to build the character of a student. Gage defined teaching as a "form of interpersonal influence aimed at changing the behavior potential of another person". The main objective of teaching are it helps the students to understand the realities and adjust in a better way, enable them to analyze the truth and take decisions, make the students a best worker and best thinker. When we relate this in the context of life skill education we can see a lot of similarities like life skills enables the individual to deal effectively with demands and challenges of everyday life, development of cognitive skills including problem solving, decision making, creative and critical thinking, and finally enabling behavior modification of the individuals.

## **General principles in teaching and life skill education**

Teaching process is based on some general principles like principle of motivation and interest in which the teaching should create interest in the mind of students. Interest can be created within the students through participatory learning approach. When the students apply what they learned in daily activities it satisfy the principle of activity. It persists in their mind for a long time and is much effective then note writing and passing the exam. The principle of creation and recreation says teaching should have recreational activities that impart creative thinking and innovations among students. Recognizing individual difference and identifying talents of each student is another principle of teaching. The teacher should analyze the intelligence, nature, ability, interest, potential, needs and concerns of students. The next principle details with enabling the student to set a goal in their life. In this the teacher should help the student to recognize his/her talents and set directions to achieve the goal. The final principle of teaching says a teacher should relate everything to real life. Every subject should be linked to the reality. For example in science class if a teacher took class on health and nutrition the student should able to relate different dimensions of health and should analyze whether he/she is following healthy lifestyle. The principles emphasis on practice of things that is learned and thus develop a good productive citizens.

Nowadays the implementation of these principles in teaching is minimal. The teachers are more focused on completing the syllabus. They teach reading, writing and arithmetic skills to students and consider it as overall development of the student. Here comes the relevance of life skill education through which we can implement all these principle

effectively. The techniques in life skill education like activities, games, role play, debate, discussion etc. will make learning process interesting and the student automatically develop the motivation to study. Each content in life skill focus on learning by doing that improves the creativity of students. Life skill education helps the students to recognize their talents and abilities. The awareness about themselves help them to set goal in their life. Finally enhancement of these skills are useful to address the needs and concerns of their daily life. If a teacher who is well trained in life skill education will effectively implement the principles of teaching through life skill education.

## **Methods of teaching and life skill education**

Methods of teaching plays a vital role in learning process of the student. Method is the style of presentation of contents in the classroom Verma has defined the term method in the following manner "Method is an abstract as logical entities that we can distinguish between matter and method. In reality, they form an organic whole and matter determines method, analogously as objective determines means; content and spirit determine style and form of literature." According to him methods can be classified under following three heads:

1. Telling - Lecture, Questioning, Discussion etc.
2. Showing - Demonstration, visual aids etc.
3. Doing - Project, Role play, Practical etc.

A teacher can use any of these methods or combination of these methods in their teaching. But the method of doing is not much projected in current teaching. The method of learning by doing can be implemented easily by life skill education.

Let us analyze what is the relevance of applying life skills in current teaching methods. UNICEF defines life skill based education as tool for behavior modification. That is a behavior development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: knowledge, attitude and skills. Knowledge can be provided through class room teaching but the attitude and skills can be produced only through practice. Let us analyze what are problems faced by students due to this lack of attitude and skills. And what are the areas that need behavior modification for the student.

## **Problems among students**

The student population faced a lot of problems in the school, family and society. The major problems are:

- \*Handling physical changes in the body.

- \*Academic achievement
- \*Choosing a career
- \*Handling peer pressure
- \*interpersonal relationships issues
- \*parental pressure
- \*lack of protection from violence
- \*inability of community to channelize their energy
- \*lack of trust, recognition and respect
- \*media influence
- \*high risk sexual behavior
- \*parental discord and disharmony
- \*environmental factors like poor access to education and health services
- \*vulnerabilities like poverty, single parenting,
- \*drug abuse
- \*child labor
- \*adjustment issues
- \*emotional instability
- \*mental health issues etc.

All these needs and concerns are to be addressed. The next question is who authority to deal these issues is. Everyone who is relating to these issues is responsible to address these problems. It included the parents, teachers, peer group, community and the student himself. Since the student spend most of his time in school we can say teachers play a major role in providing support and directions to students to handle these problems. Before give support and directions the teacher should perceive this problem in an empathetic manner. Teacher should able to identify the root cause of the problem. For example if a student always come late to class a teacher should find out the reason behind it because sometimes the student is the breadwinner of the family and he has to finish his work and come to school. The skill of empathy helps the teacher to understand the situation of latecomer of the class. If the teacher lacks this attitude he/she may punish the child sometimes dismiss him/her from the class forevermore. So to perceive the root cause of absenteeism the teacher needs the skill of empathy. If a student explores the insecurity that he faced at his home to the teacher, he can help the student by teaching the skills of problem solving, decision making, coping with stress and emotions. Academically backward students can be motivated by the teacher

through creative techniques in studies to reduce the problems of exam stress, burden in studies, inability to concentrate while studying etc. so the creativity thinking in life skills help the student to get rid of the difficulties in study. Aggressive behavior of the student destroys the atmosphere of harmony in class as well as his family. This can be tackled by building good interpersonal relationships with others and by teaching him the ways of effective communication. The skills in good decision making help the student to prevent drug abuse and sexual experimentation. Apart from that if the student is doing the such behavior under the influence of friends or media the teacher should develop critical thinking in student to analyze the situation critically and decide whether they depend on friends decision or not. Unhealthy relationship and lack of communication among students creates many psychosocial problems like depression, stress, suicidal attempts, over use of drugs, anti-social behavior and violence. Most of the problems faced by students can be resolved through life skills education but initially the teachers to be trained on this otherwise the actual goal of life skill education will be misinterpreted.

## **Perception of teachers on life skill education**

Everything we do in our life depends on our interest, outcome from that action and attitude towards the action. These things will differ according to our perception. Perception is generated through experience and knowledge. For example failure in exam can be perceived in two ways, one can conclude that I cannot pass the exam anymore, I am good for nothing, better commit suicide. Another person will perceive this failure as alert for spending more time in studies rather than movies. So it is the perception that create two type of action. Like this the perception of life skill education is different for different people.

The major findings from the opinion of high school teachers in Kerala are life skills are needed for the students but imparting this type of participatory learning approach is difficult because it consume lot of time in teaching process. Some teachers are in the opinion that learning by doing is good but effectiveness of this learning is applicable to small population of students. If the strength of students are above 30 it cannot be managed. The principals of most school welcomed this approach of teaching. They confined the sessions of life skills education once in a year or twice. They are afraid to implement participatory learning in every subject since the students will lose serious of learning and that will affect the result of the institution. Heavy syllabus is backing some teachers to apply these methods of teaching. Some schools has commented that the acceptance of parents towards

experimental learning is poor. They consider it as unprofessional way of teaching and conclude this will not help their child attain an admission for medicine or engineering.

The relevance and scope of life skill education is understood by school authorities when we analyze it from the context of promotion of mental health among students. All of them agree that it improves the mental health issues among students can reduce the vulnerability of students life. Since it is consider as non-academic and the universality of its implementation is a challengeable task to achieve. Many schools follow teacher centered approach in teaching and the role of student is minimal. Dewey (1938) claims that learning comes from children direct experience rather than from inculcating facts and values through books and lectures. Carl Rogers (1969) quoted the importance of child centered approach in learning based on the theory of client centered therapy (1965). He states that teachers must be aware of the need for children's mental wellbeing as element in teaching. Through education child should realize his/her potential and should to capable to decide what he want to achieve and how it will be achieved.

A teacher who followed a traditional way of teaching by lecturing feels indifferent to accept child centered teaching methodologies like life skill education. For such kind teachers this methods are irrelevant, time consuming, difficult to manage etc. if we provide them an opportunity to implement child centered teaching that will be failure due to their wrong perceptions.

## **Conclusion**

As a whole when we focus on school setting for the implementation of life skill education initially we have to analyze the perception of teachers who were the facilitators of life skill education, provide training to addressing their wrong perception and thus implement the program in a universal level. We should integrate life skill development with normal curriculum rather than consider it as a non-curricular activity. Gradually the acceptance of participatory learning will get momentum and our students can lead a healthy life.

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