



Effectiveness of 'The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People' in learning Life Skills for Gen X& Y - A Perspective

KEYWORDS

Interdependence, Proactive .Synergy, Life Skills

Dr.Nidhi Pandey

Ph.D, NET, Soft Skills Trainer, SisTec ,Bhopal

ABSTRACT *The 21st century lures us with countless short cuts to accomplish our goals but in the end we are left negated wandering for peace and harmony within our essence. Only venter success is attainable without the manifestation of inner mastery. The book published long back in 1989 with further modifications in 2004 provides a platform to look our inside out. The paper attempts to bring forth the holistic integrated approach of the book by which it can facilitate learning Life Skills in Gen X&Y. The findings of previous primary research done by the researcher on awareness of life skills among youth. is used as the base . A summary of the book in accordance with management principles is presented leading to private victory of the individual which is critical for both the organization and the self growth before the public victory.*

"There is no real excellence in this entire world which can be separated from right living"

-- David Starr Jordan

1.1 Introduction

As per the 2011 census, youth account for 20% of the total population. More than 700 million Indians are expected to be in working age group by 2022. Still the corporate world is reproached for its dearth of true leaders. Employers are seeking proactive, motivated, youth to meet deadlines, setting aside external or internal pressures and obstacles. Gen X & Y who are under constant scanner of work pressure are devoid of life skills which act as frontrunner in shaping the reactions to external stimulus .So, Stephen Covey's book resonates in the corridors of the organization to push beyond the coat and look for the intricacies of human nature and the way it can be shaped up for long term sustainability. As rightly quoted by Mrs. Indra Nooyi, CEO of PepsiCo, "As the seminal work of Stephen R. Covey, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People has influenced millions around the world to be their best selves at work and at home. It stands the test of time as one of the most important books of our time." The author deserves all accolades for presenting such complicated principles in a holistic integrated manner which act as a dream run to solve personal and professional issues of Generation X & Y.

1.1.2 LIFE SKILLS:

According to Wikipedia life skills are problem solving behaviors used appropriately and responsibly in the management of personal affairs. Around the world, Life Skills-Based Education (LSBE) is being adopted as a means to empower young people in challenging situations.

The ten life skills are:

1. Self awareness building skills-

To know thyself.

2. Empathy-

To be sensitive towards others feelings.

3. Interpersonal relationship skills-

To be able to develop & nurture supportive networks.

4. Effective communication-

To know when to speak and when to be silent. Be an active listener.

5. Critical thinking skills-

Ability to analyze information and experiences in an objective manner.

6. Creative thinking-

Explore available alternatives and consequences of actions.

7. Decision making skills-

The ability to develop, prioritize and attain goals

8. Problem solving skills-

To be aware about problems and to deal with them step by step.

9. Coping with stress-

To deal in dignified and mature manner when stress arises and to cope with it effectively.

10. Coping with Emotions-

To know how emotions affect our personality and behavior.

Lack of life skills, especially interpersonal relations skills, has raised the divorce rate. In 1980 New Delhi had two courts that deal with divorce; today there are 16. Most of the divorce rates are in the age group of 25-35 years. Coping with stress and emotions too need to be tackled. 15 suicides took place every one hour during the year 2012 in India

2.1 Research Methodology of Awareness of life skills among youth

Sample Size:

100 students from a management institute in Nagpur.

Sampling Technique Used:

Random sampling technique was used

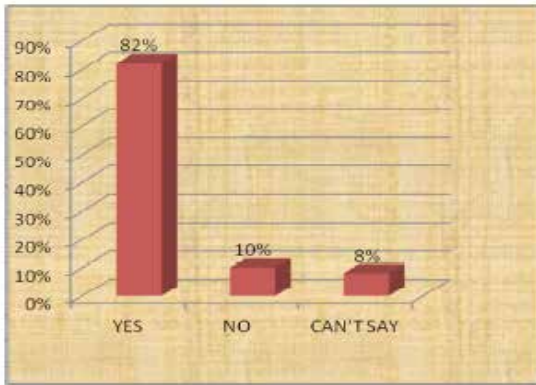
Data:

Primary data by administering structured questionnaire comprising of 20 questions, to the respondents, with 2 questions from each life skill

3.1 Findings of the survey

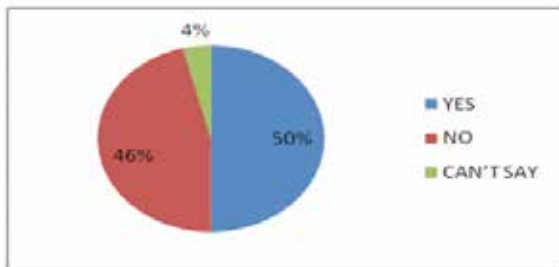
Two answers were combined to get an average score from the question regarding self awareness life skill. The figure shows that 82% of MBA students are having self awareness. Same way, average score for the rest of the answers was done.

Graph 1 : Self Awareness



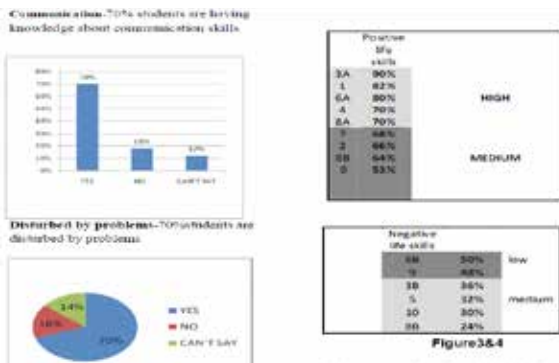
Source: primary survey

Graph 2 : Knowledge of Stress



Source-Primary survey

Graph 3 : Communication skills, Disturbed by problems, Summary of data interpretation



Source: primary survey

It is apparent from figure 3 & 4 that for some life skills like self-awareness, empathy and communication the students are having high regards and have awareness ranging from 60% to 90% but for some like critical thinking, loss of friends and stress they are either ignorant or have low information and range starts with 24% and maximum is just 50%

4.1 Learning life skills through book

The first chapter prepares the human mind to get into the skin of the book by briefly introducing habits in totality

describing habit as the intersection of knowledge, skills and desire. As one progresses ahead from immaturity to maturity she/he gradually transforms from independent to interdependent. Interdependence is the notion combining our talents and abilities to synergize something greater together. The writer here emphasizes that interdependence is a choice which only independent people can make. Dependent people are too feeble to become independent. Gen X & Y lacking in interpersonal relationships can learn to be interdependent by progressing and practicing ahead with the philosophy of the book. The book speaks of 7 habits which are in itself life skills for individual.

4.1.1 Habit 1: Proactive

A proactive mind guards the circle of influence and is not turbulated by negative energy. Proactive person carry their own weather in comparison to reactive people who are offended by their physical environment. As Eleanor Roosevelt rightly stated "No one can hurt you without your consent". The management corridors too value a solution seller instead of problem giver. Gen X & Y need to be proactive in their approach and be a solution seller for business success. Warren Buffet, Sudha Murty are few proactive personalities in the Corporate Social Responsibility segment. Gandhiji was one such proactive personality who was unfazed by circle of influences and led India to independence.

4.1.2 Habit 2: To Begin with the End

A proactive person always has the desired destination which is To Begin with the End in Mind. Covey rightly manifests that first the blueprint is registered in the mind then only draft is prepared. The principle relates to personal leadership referring that leadership is created first and management is second creation. Though all organizations have managers yet leaders are few. The young generation needs to have long term vision instead of short term success. This exactly happened with the influx of MNC in 1990 with liberalization when our indigenous industries failed to visualize the impact of MNC in Indian market and ultimately collapsed.

4.1.3 Habit 3: Put First Thing First

It focuses on time management by exemplifying time management matrix of things urgent, not urgent, important and not important. The essence of the best thinking in the area of time management can be captured in a single phrase: Organize and execute around priorities. Gen X & Y who are in constant hurry need to prioritize their priorities and learn the art of delegation. Effective delegation is perhaps the best indicator of effective management simply because it is basic to both personal and organizational growth. Organizations like Google, IBM and host of others work on these paradigms and are in favor of effective teamwork.

4.1.4 Habit 4: Think Win -Win

It is based on symbiotic relationship where both the parties are mutually benefitting each other. It is based on the concept of abundance mentality with the belief that one person's success is not achieved at the expense or exclusion of the success of others. Certainly there is a place for win-lose thinking in truly competitive and low-trust situations but most of our life is not a competition. The young generation racing ahead with time, scoring low on stress handling and creative thinking should nurture this philosophy. When a boss becomes the first assistant to each of his subordinates, he can greatly increase his span of control. Sheryl Sandberg, CEO of face book believes and

constantly seeks suggestions from her employees even if raises questions on her decision.

4.1.5 Habit 5: Seek to Understand, Then to be Understood

One of the most important skills yet least taught - empathetic listening provides psychological air to the other person. The essence of empathetic listening is not that one has to agree with someone; it's that one fully, deeply, understands that person, emotionally as well as intellectually. The young brigade needs to imbibe this & be open to others perceptive. It takes more time initially but it in future saves both time and energy. With myriad workforce of 21st century the leader needs to be emphatic listener to make an impact and be an exemplary.

4.1.6 Habit 6: Synergy

The word synergy comes from the Greek synergos meaning working together. The ingredient of all the above mentioned habits nurtures the ideal environment for synergy. Synergy speaks about differences in mental, emotional, and the psychological between people. In an interdependent situation, synergy is particularly powerful in dealing with negative forces that work against growth and change in an organization. When an organization involves the people in the problem they feel it is their problem tends to become an important part of the solution. As a result, new goals, shared goals, are created, and the whole enterprise moves upward and creates a new culture. Gen X & Y who find it difficult to adapt need to synergize and optimize the resultant by overcoming all the cultural, gender, linguistic differences. AT&T has implied this idea by having varied workforce diversity be the pioneer.

4.1.7 Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw

The focus should be on continuous and steady learning instead of one time learning. To grow a person needs to be physically fit, emotionally satisfied, spiritually lifted and mentally mature to understand the system. Organizations catering for development and renewal of all four dimensions in balanced way nurture effectiveness and growth. Gen X & Y lacking in conceptual thinking should absorb and learn new paradigms in life. This process of continuous improvement is the hallmark of the Total Quality Management which is a key to Japan's economic superiority.

5.1 Management with Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

Covey emphasizes that in order to achieve change we should prioritize the values and principles. Life skills can be learnt through having clear cut goals and directions. The seven habits are not a technique that can be applied in an organization for success. These are step by step ladder that empowers to take correct decisions. The model also speaks volumes about Emotional Intelligence which is the driving force for management organization to be prudent and successful and explores the importance of self-awareness (which is the basic key of life skill) before successful engagement with others. Covey suggests the process of learning that are aligned with the seven habits

for personal and organizational growth. It takes patience for organization and its members to mould to shifting peripheries. Covey rightly suggests that "Private Victory precedes Public Victory" which leads to master oneself before one becomes manager or leader. It is a powerful book containing effective principles for personal and for facilitating change in organizations. Companies like Procter & Gamble and AT&T have recognized the importance of this and are conducting interpersonal training sessions.

6.1 Conclusion

The book is like a cascade flowing up and down submerging all the dimensions of life. It is aptly written with miniscule details. Various anecdotes have been incorporated to ease the understanding of the principles. After every three habits a summary of the habits, with correlation, has been drafted. This amalgamates the habits in totality instead of in isolation. In the last segment, the writer once again proves his mettle and humility when he connects with the audience by stating that he too has to struggle everyday with what he has shared in the book. The book is apt for learning life skills which prepares the Gen X&Y for future uncertainties. In the end, one thing shines through:-Dr. Stephen's sincere effort to transform the lives of millions with his own personal struggle which puts the faith in the ability of practicing it. This is what makes this book an engaging read. The book, if practiced is sure to bring a revolution in life, not with a big bang, but slowly as a result of small cumulative evolutionary changes. The English novelist Charles Reade summarized what Covey is referring to:

Sow a thought, and you reap an action; sow an action, and you reap a habit; sow a habit, and you reap a character; sow a character, and you reap a destiny.

REFERENCE

- (<http://www.amazon.in/The-Habits-Highly-Effective-People-ebook/dp/B00GOZV3TM>, 2014) | • (<http://www.amazon.com/The-Habits-Highly-Effective-People-ebook/dp/B000WJVK26>, 2014) | • (<http://www.quickmba.com/mgmt/7hab/>, 2010) | • (<http://www.butler-bowdon.com/sevenhabits/>) | • (<http://www.depts.ttu.edu/upwardbound/books/the-7-habits-of-highly-effective-people.pdf>) | • 7 habits of highly effective people by Stephan Covey, Published by Simon & Schuster. | • National Crime Records Bureau report, <http://ncrb.gov.in/> | • http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life_skills | • http://www.cbse.nic.in/cce/life_skills_cce.pdf | • <http://www.unicef.org/lifeskills/> | • http://www.ficci.com/sector/74/Project_docs/SectorProfile.