



Life Skill Education: A Missing Component in Teacher Education Programmes in India

KEYWORDS

Life skills; Teacher Education; Innovative approach;

B. Razia

Research Scholar, Dept. of Education, AMU Aligarh

ABSTRACT *Life skills are the abilities that help to promote psychosocial competence and general well being of individuals. To enhance the efficiency of Prospective pre-service teachers and to convert them into individuals with high potential, teacher education programme should be reformed giving due importance to life skill education. Imparting Life skills can empower prospective teachers to take positive action, promote healthy and positive social relationships. It also entails being able to establish productive interpersonal relationships. The Teacher education curriculum should encompass Life skill Education to impart diversity of skills among prospective teachers thereby to build an open and flexible mind, not only to adapt to diverse classroom situations but also to develop life skills of their students in real teaching situations. Pre-service teachers should be given training in real life activities through simulation, brainstorming, situation analysis, role playing, games and many more such interactive and participatory techniques to transact Life Skill Education. Life Skill Education as a fully fledged subject is necessary to enhance the efficiency and wellbeing of prospective teachers.*

INTRODUCTION

Teachers being the facilitators of learning process in classrooms are responsible for overall development of the students. Effective teaching in this century requires more than a basic understanding of educational theory and classroom management (Simmons, 2010). One of the prime duty of the teachers apart from teaching the subject matter is to develop positive attitude among the students and enable them to think critically, make adjustments in adverse conditions and to generate good decision makers. Teachers can also help the students to relate the learnt matter to the real life situation.

Adolescents at secondary level faces a number of problems related to academic performance, teachers, family, peer groups, career, health, adjustment etc. Indian schools lack guidance workers or counselors and in these situation teachers can play an important role in assisting the students by incorporating various life skills. In the context of life skill education, it promotes Psycho social competence and helps the students to cope with the challenges of life by behavior modification. The Life skill Education will enable teachers to assist students for handling real life situations helping them to decide 'what' 'when' and 'how' to do it with ease.

Pre service Teacher Education Programmes in the country need to produce competent teachers by focusing on the Psycho- social Competence of trainees which are the base for the development of Professional Competencies. The ability to navigate complex teaching environment in the globally competitive information age requires teachers to pay rigorous attention to developing adequate life skills. Teachers often meet with adverse situations that require adequate life skills to cope up with the situation which is much required for their well being. Thinking 'out of the box' often helps to find solution to the problems. Today, largely, teachers are not creative and critical thinkers and due to this they are not able to train their students in Critical Thinking Skill and Creative Thinking Skill (Patel, 2010). Greene (2003a) suggests that a teacher should imagine, reflect and act with more and more concrete responsibility. The teachers should not merely prepare Life Skills lessons

but they should be prepared and planned as a part of unified and sequential programme which promotes psychosocial competence and mental health of the young adolescents.

The NCERT has included life skills in National Curriculum Framework (2005) and The Central Board of Secondary Education in India has introduced Life Skills Education as an integral part of the curricula for classes VI to X. Hence it becomes vital that Pre-service teachers are to be taught various techniques for inculcating life skills to students.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Sharma (2003) assessed the levels of life skills in adolescents of a secondary school at Kathmandu and recommended that teachers should be provided with knowledge and skills to impart life skill education and to enable them to deal with adolescents having high risk behavior, specially counseling skills. Helaiya (2009) conducted an experimental study and observed that initially majority of the Student-teachers were relatively poor at different life skills. Post intervention scenario revealed that there was remarkable gain in the Self Awareness Skill, Effective Communication Skill, Interpersonal relationship Skill, Coping with Emotions Skill, Decision Making and Problem Solving Skill.

Sandhu (2014) observed that majority of pupil teachers had average level of life skills which were not adequate, No significant difference was found in relation to gender and locale. However, a significant difference was found between science and arts pupil teachers. Science pupil teachers were found to possess higher level of life skills as compared to arts pupil teachers. The researcher suggests for a need to train the teachers and consequently develop the life skills among the students.

Suresh and Subramoniam (2014) attempted to identify the relationship between principles and methods in teaching process and life skill education and identify the gap in the implementation level of the process of teaching and learning in school setting. Major findings of the study were the perception on life skill educa-

tion among teachers varied according to their interest and attitude towards teaching process. Some teachers were aware about the relevance of life skill education in handling the issues faced by students but hesitated to apply 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

DEFINITION OF LIFE SKILLS

Life skills are the abilities that helps to promote general well being and psychosocial competence of an individual. According to World Health Organization (1997: p.1) Life skills are 'abilities for adaptive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life'.

The core set of skills (WHO 1997: p.2) that follow the above description are:

Decision making helps us to deal constructively with decisions about our lives. This can have consequences for health if young people actively make decisions about their actions in relation to health by assessing the different options, and what effects different decisions may have.

Problem solving enables us to deal constructively with problems in our lives. Significant problems that are left unresolved can cause mental stress and give rise to accompanying physical strain.

Creative thinking contributes to both decision making and problem solving by enabling us to explore the available alternatives and various consequences of our actions or non-action. It helps us to look beyond our direct experience, and even if no problem is identified, or no decision is to be made, creative thinking can help us to respond adaptively and with flexibility to the situations of our daily lives.

Critical thinking is an ability to analyse information and experiences in an objective manner. Critical thinking can contribute to health by helping us to recognise and assess the factors that influence attitudes and behaviour, such as values, peer pressure, and the media.

Effective communication means that we are able to express ourselves, both verbally and non-verbally, in ways that are appropriate to our cultures and situations. This means being able to express opinions and desires, but also needs and fears. And it may mean being able to ask for advice and help in a time of need.

Interpersonal relationship skills help us to relate in positive ways with the people we interact with. This may mean being able to make and keep friendly relationships, which can be of great importance to our mental and social well-being. It may mean keeping good relations with family members, which are an important source of social support. It may also mean being able to end relationships constructively.

Self-awareness includes our recognition of ourselves, of our character, of our strengths and weaknesses, desires and dislikes. Developing self-awareness can help us to recognize when we are stressed or feel under pressure. It is also often a prerequisite for effective communication and interpersonal relations, as well as for developing empathy for others.

Empathy is the ability to imagine what life is like for another person, even in a situation that we may not be familiar with. Empathy can help us to understand and accept others who may be very different from ourselves, which can improve social interactions, for example, in situations of ethnic or cultural diversity. Empathy can also help to encourage nurturing behaviour towards people in need of care and assistance, or tolerance, as is the case with AIDS sufferers, or people with mental disorders, who may be stigmatized and ostracized by the very people they depend upon for support.

Coping with emotions involves recognising emotions in ourselves and others, being aware of how emotions influence behaviour, and being able to respond to emotions appropriately. Intense emotions, like anger or sorrow can have negative effects on our health if we do not react appropriately.

Coping with stress is about recognising the sources of stress in our lives, recognizing how this affects us, and acting in ways that help to control our levels of stress. This may mean that we take action to reduce the sources of stress, for example, by making changes to our physical environment or lifestyle "

IMPORTANCE OF LIFE SKILL TRAINING

Training for Life skills promotes mental health and general wellbeing of pre-service teachers which is vital as the teachers often work in diverse situations. It helps to improve the academic performance by enabling to translate acquired knowledge, attitudes and values into actual abilities and thereby facilitate to behave in healthy ways. Qualities like critical thinking, effective communication, decision making and problem solving are imperative for quality teaching and that can be obtained through Life skill education. It helps to build confidence and self esteem among the pre-service teachers. Many a time teachers face job stress in the work place and quite often struggle with their emotions which affect their teaching. In order to cope with stress and emotions, a prior training in life skills will be boon for the teachers to carry on the teaching work efficiently. It helps the teachers to tackle adolescents who are in a transition phase and quite often are found struggling due to inappropriate home and school environments and also assist teachers to impart the acquired knowledge of life skills to the students in a better way by employing different teaching methods.

TEACHING METHODS

In order to inculcate life skills among the students in the actual teaching learning situation, the prospective teachers are supposed to acquire proficiency in teaching techniques that may include as follows.

Discussions: A purposeful conversation on a particular topic leading to sharing of ideas, facts, experiences and opinions. Teacher educators should motivate the B Ed students to take part in discussions by providing sufficient background knowledge on the concerned topic. This technique can be used to clarify the concepts, change attitudes and build values. Brain storming sessions should be held to help the prospective teachers to explore new concepts.

Debates: A debate is a kind of discussion between two opposing groups with each group expressing views about a given topic. Each group competitively attempts to win the other to their side of the argument.

Role plays: Through Role plays students are provided with experience how they feel in a similar real life situation. Role plays can be employed to discuss sensitive issues and unfamiliar concepts.

Story telling: Prospective teachers should be trained to storytelling technique based on specific themes like decision making, emotions, academic stress etc. Training could be provided to narrate stories interestingly and systematically so that students come out with wise decisions.

Case studies: Teachers present a case or dilemma and the students come out with suggestions to solve the case or conflict posed. Teacher should ensure that enough time is provided to the students in groups to discuss and study the case and present the views.

Other methods like Audio and visual activities using ICT, Simulations, Demonstrations and Educational games can be employed by teacher educators to facilitate pre-service teachers equip with life skills teaching strategies.

CONCLUSION

Life skills encompass those abilities that help to promote overall wellbeing and competence of individuals to face the problems of life. No doubt the aim of teacher education programme is to produce quality pass outs or to make the pre-service teachers professionally proficient according to the changing and competitive modern time. In order to achieve the said goal it becomes vital to educate the pre-service teachers for life skills. There is a need of introducing Life Skills education at different levels of Teacher Education or efforts should be made to integrate Life Skill approach in different core subjects and methods of teacher education programme.

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