

## Adolescent Life Skills Development: Creating Future Ready Landscape in Schools

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### Abstract

**Background:** Adolescence is known as a turbulent period in a person's life in which they develop from a child into an adult. It is important for the mental health of adolescents that they establish and maintain social relations. Global trends and developments in the 21st century are making this increasingly difficult. Adolescence is a time to develop knowledge and skills, learn to manage emotions and relationships and acquire attributes and abilities that will be important for enjoying the adolescent years and assuming adult roles. Though it is a period when the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and all capabilities are at their peak, most adolescents are unable to utilise their potential to the maximum due to several reasons.

They face many emerging issues such as Pandemics, discrimination, unemployment, poverty, suicide, cut-throat competition, as well as other issues like poor eating habits, Increased obesity, Depression, Loneliness, Anxiety, Aggression, Attention problems, Lack of empathy, alcoholism, drug abuse, sexual abuse, delinquency, social media, etc. which make an adverse effect on their mental health. This 21st-century challenge requires immediate attention from the stakeholders, i.e. all the socialisation agents such as Parents, Schools (Education system), and media to make our children's Future Ready. 'Life skills Education' has immense significance in making up a Future Ready citizen in the 21st century. Many pieces of research indicate that life skills education bridges the gap between application and potential. It reinforces the ability of an individual to meet the requirements of the present society. It helps in dealing with the above issues in a manner to get socially desirable behaviour. Today, it is not enough to have educational or academic excellence; we also require other skills, such as individual, reflective, and social skills, to maintain a balance in our professional and personal lives and make ourselves future-ready.

The present paper focuses on the significance of life skills education for creating a happy and peaceful society, to make our children Future Ready and the benefits of implementing life skills education in our curriculum, i.e. developing individual, reflective, and social skills in students, as they are the important ingredients to build a Future Ready dynamic citizen, who can cope up with upcoming challenges, and sustain well in the fast pace society. **Methodology:** The research was conducted taking into account counselling records and interaction with alums of Modern Convent School data. **Result:** There is a positive correlation between life skill education and a future-ready landscape. **Conclusion:** There is a significant relationship between life skill education and the development of social, emotional and thinking skills among school-going children, which makes them future-ready. It depicts the importance of life skill education for adolescents in terms of coping with upcoming challenges and sustaining themselves well in a fast-paced society.

**Keywords:** *Life Skills Education; Adolescent; 21st century; Challenges; Future Ready*

### Introduction

#### Adolescence

Adolescence (from the Latin word *Adolescere*, meaning "to grow up") is a transition stage of Physical and Psychological development that generally occurs from puberty to adulthood. Children entering adolescence go through many changes in their bodies and cognitions, including

physical, intellectual, psychological, and social changes, which are rapid and often take place at different rates. It is an exciting yet challenging time in the life of a teenager. Adolescence is the threshold of adulthood. They are anxious to shed the stereotype of teenagers & to create the impression that they are here adults, and in this stage, young people extend their relationship beyond parents and family and are intensely

influenced by their peers and the outside world in general. Adolescence is the most crucial stage of life with peak intelligence and potential in which their thought becomes more Abstract, Logical, and Idealistic; they become more capable of examining their thoughts, others' thoughts, and what others are thinking about them. Their developing ability to reason gives them a new level of cognitive and social awareness. Adolescence is the time for various achievements, deciding professional choices, developing personality, experimentation, risk-taking behaviour, societal, parental and peer pressure, emotional instability, impulsivity, etc. In a nutshell, a turning point in one's life is a period of increased potential but also one of greater vulnerability.

### **Challenges Of Adolescents**

The major challenges of adolescents are:

#### ***Identity crisis***

Adolescents try to define one's sense of self or the search for identity and try to explore their values, commitments and beliefs. During adolescence, a detachment process enables the individual to develop a personalised set of beliefs that are uniquely their own. In the process of achieving an identity, adolescents could experience conflict with their parents and within themselves. Those who can cope with the conflicting identities develop a new sense of self. Lack of information and skills prevent them from effectively exploring their potential. Self-awareness helps adolescents understand themselves and establish their personal identity.

#### ***Difficulty dealing with emotions***

Adolescents frequently experience mood changes that reflect feelings of anger, sadness, happiness, fear, shame, guilt, and love. They are often unable to understand the emotional turmoil. Adolescence is definitely a vulnerable period in which adolescents experience many conflicts, uncertainties, occasional loneliness, group pressures, self-doubt, anxiety, and concern about themselves and their future. They are also likely to experience excitement, joy, and feelings of competence as they overcome developmental challenges.

During adolescence, peer influence, newly gained freedom, and unresolved problems may create difficulties for them. Adolescents find it difficult to resist peer pressure. Conforming to peer pressure can be both positive and negative. Adolescents are often confronted with decisions regarding smoking, drugs, alcohol, breaking parental rules, etc. Some of them may yield to this pressure due to a lack of assertiveness and decision-making skills and engage in experimentation. Irresponsible behaviour and substance abuse involve greater risks in terms of physical and mental health.

#### ***Difficulty in managing relationships***

Family relationships become less important as the adolescent spends more time outside the home and develops a strong need for peer support and acceptance. Interactions with peers provide them with opportunities to refine their social skills and try out different social behaviours. Peers and Parents are dual forces that have major influences on adolescents. At times, conflicting situations with parents lead to increased identification with peers. Generally, parents and peers serve complementary functions and fulfil the different needs of adolescents. As a part of growing up, adolescents redefine their relationships with parents, peers and members of the opposite sex. Adolescents need social skills to build positive and healthy relationships with others, including peers of the opposite sex. They are expected to understand the importance of mutual respect and socially defined boundaries of every relationship.

#### **Life Skills**

WHO defines Life Skills as "the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with everyday life demands and challenges. "Here, 'adaptive' means that a person is flexible in approach and can adapt to different circumstances, and 'positive behaviour' implies that a person is hopeful even in challenging situations and can show resilience.

Life Skills enable individuals to translate knowledge, attitudes, and values regarding their concerns into well-informed and healthy

behaviours. Empowered with such skills, young people are able to make decisions based on a logical process of “what to do, why to do, how to do and when to do”. Life skills help adolescents solve problems by thinking critically and creatively, enhancing effective communication, interpersonal relationships and empathy, and productively managing their lives. Life Skills fall into three basic categories, which complement each other: i.e. social or interpersonal skills, cognitive or thinking skills, and emotional skills. The core “Life skills” include problem-solving, decision-making, critical thinking, creative thinking, communication skills, self-awareness, stress and emotion management, empathy, and interpersonal relationships.

### Life Skills Education

In the 21st century, education is undergoing a comprehensive change regarding Media & technology, globalisation, privatisation, and industrialisation, etc. Today’s adolescents are facing many emerging issues, such as digitalisation, increasing individualism, climate change, and forced displacement, which influence the development of adolescents and their mental health to a great extent. The constant pressure to have the perfect body, the perfect job, and the perfect life can be overwhelming and lead to feelings of anxiety, guilt and inadequacy. Additionally, youth today are growing up in a time of great political turmoil. They are witnesses to mass shootings, terrorist attacks, and racial tensions. Human values such as empathy and harmony in society are decreasing day by day. The adolescent mind is considered the most productive member of society due to its immense physical and intellectual capability. Unfortunately, most of them are unable to utilise their potential in a socially desirable manner due to a lack of guidance, motivation and facilitation. Social problems like alcoholism, drug abuse, sexual abuse, smoking, juvenile delinquency, anti-social acts, etc. have an adverse effect on society. This new challenge requires immediate attention from a socially responsible system of education. That’s why Life skills education is needed for an

hour. To develop academic excellence is important, but to develop happiness and peace in society and to support and live life better is more important. Thus, the major focus of education should be on holistic development, especially to enhance their social, thinking and emotional skills, which can help them live a healthy life and make them able to face 21st-century challenges.

Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) India has identified the significance of life skills education and, hence, has made it mandatory in its curriculum. Life skills such as resilience, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, literacy skills, productivity and leadership are just some of the areas that are essential when facing the challenges of the 21st-century job landscape. The life skills education program aims to develop critical and creative thinking to make healthy choices that contribute to a purposeful and goal-directed life. It helps adolescents to understand themselves and to assess their strengths, weaknesses, skills, abilities and areas of development. It also allows adolescents to get along with other people, understand others as well as their own emotions, and select, adapt and modify their environment and make responsible decisions. The main objective of life skill education is to enable adolescents to develop their positive self-concept along with enhancement of self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Imparting life skill education in adolescents will bring valuable benefits, which include enhanced self-esteem, peace education, self-confidence, prevention of antisocial behaviour, and promotion of general well-being. It enables individuals to translate knowledge, attitudes and values into actual abilities. It enables individuals to behave in healthy ways, given the desire to do so and given the scope and opportunity to do so. Research proves that life skill education also improves the academic performance of individuals. Various methods such as Brainstorming, Case studies, Class discussions, Role plays, debates, Street plays, working in small groups and pairs, etc., are quite useful in enhancing life Skills in adolescents.

### Review Of Literature

It is important for the mental health of adolescents that they establish and maintain social relations. One of the signs of mental health and an individual's ability to deal with various problems of life refers to the existence of social relations and having effective life skills (Kelinkem, translated by Mohamad Khani, 2005). Though many efforts and activities are taking place in the educational system, we can still observe the troubling news about the academic, moral, social and emotional status of students. Students who are not equipped with life skills are not able to use their knowledge, do not have the required ability to solve their problems effectively, and are not able to make correct decisions at the right time regarding their personal and professional issues. The term life skills refers to a large group of cognitive, social and interpersonal skills, and can help people to make wise decisions with an enhanced level of self-awareness, increase effective communication, learn to deal with emotions and stress effectively and manage oneself and enhance productivity (Sepah Mansour, 2007). Research conducted by Sepah Mansour (2007) examined the effect of life skills training on achievement motivation, self-respect and social adjustment of students. Findings indicated that life skills training is effective in enhancing students' achievement motivation, self-respect and social adjustment. Research conducted by Mott et al. (1999) showed that social skills deficits are a determinant factor for the mental health of children. Tuttle et al. (2006) suggested the increasing capability of teens to promote positive behaviour and flexibility with the help of life skills education. Albertyn and colleagues (2004) concluded that life skills training enhances the quality of living, makes them more responsible in their professional lives, makes them future-ready, and increases their critical thinking abilities. According to the findings of Veranda and Rao (2011), the adolescent has to prepare for a successful global adult life of competition and independent functioning, which is possible only through enhancing their psychosocial competencies through life skills training. Life skill education is important and significant in the overall development of

students, as indicated by the findings of Prajapati, Sharma, and Sharma (2017). Dr Arpita Kackar & Dr Hemlata Joshi's findings suggested that life skill education is significant in the overall development of students. In their research, Roodbari, Sahdipoor, and Ghale (2013) found that life skills training has a considerable positive impact on social development and emotional and social adjustment, suggesting an increase in the compatibility of children and public health.

## Methods

### Overview

Data Sources: Modern Convent School, sec-4 Dwarka, N.D-75, has 3659 students, including 2037 Boys and 1622 Girls.

### Participants

For this paper, data has been collected from counselling records of various students from the nursery class to XII and alums of modern convent schools.

### Measures

Interviews, Observations, Counselling records, Teachers feedback, records of scholastic and co-scholastic activities & performance.

## Result

Counselling Data of Modern Convent School revealed that the awareness of life skills has reduced bullying, violence, antisocial behaviour, drug abuse, smoking, peer conflicts, stress, trauma, etc. and allowed students to face the challenges and meet the demands of their lives. During their school years, students have to deal with various challenges. Life skills help students cope with these challenges on their own and make an important contribution to the well-being of all. Life skills empower students to deal effectively with the demands of everyday life by improving self-regulation, making informed decisions, and building supportive social relationships. Esther Kirchhoff and Roger Keller's (2021) Life skills-based teaching-learning process will help strengthen and promote the quality of the educational system. A. Smitha & Mary Vineetha Thomas (2018).

## Conclusion



The 21st century will pose many new challenges to the younger generation. There are many factors behind this trend, but the increasing pressure to “excel” in academics to secure a stable job is definitely at the top of this list of causes. A relevant and proper implementation of life skill education is a need of an hour to develop a peaceful and harmonious society. Imparting life skills education to the students can be helpful in addressing the current needs of 21st-century children and help in developing cognitive, emotional, social and self-management skills for a better adaptive life. Various research studies demonstrate how life skills learning interventions have had positive impacts on success in school and, subsequently, even in personal and professional lives.

Adolescents should learn Life Skills because they empower them to think critically, deal effectively, engage in positive actions to protect and manage themselves and promote effective communication and healthy interpersonal relationships. Life skill education can serve as a remedy for 21st-century challenges, helping adolescents lead productive and healthy lives by encouraging cooperative behaviour, reducing antisocial activities, and preparing them to face the challenges of life outside the classroom.

The dramatic changes in global economies and the transformation in technology have had a great impact on Education. Thus, students need some new life skills to deal with the challenges that come along with it. Nonetheless, students play a crucial role in the development of a peaceful and healthy society, and this is possible to the fullest extent only if they are well-equipped with life skills. As stakeholders, we should be aware of the significance of life skills in adolescents' personal, social, and professional lives. Considering this, Modern Convent School, Delhi, aims to develop life skills that will help students deal with this fast-paced, competitive world. These include Decision-making, critical and creative thinking, problem-solving skills, teamwork and effective communication among children, a growth mindset, and citizenship. Researchers suggest that the collaboration of life

skills with teaching skills or techniques will surely find a solution for the development of socially desired behaviour, taking into consideration MCS conduct various activities to develop life skills at school. To sharpen student's skills in productive thinking, planning, decision making and communication and facilitate students in dealing with self and others to achieve harmony and peace in Modern convent school, we are doing the following activities- to enhance life skills such as empathy, problem-solving, effective communication, creative and critical thinking, competitive activities in calligraphy, Memory game, Just-a-minute, prop-up, spell bee, folk story narration, unity in diversity, enactments, sell a product, Expression – presentation of oratory skills, mother tongue day, carol singing, shape-o-mania, Time management, cleanliness is next to Godliness, owing gratitude to senior citizens, organised sports, nutrition and anti-bullying week etc and conducting various sessions for teachers and students to facilitate mental health and decision-making in terms of career choices, respectively.

As Life skills techniques in the teaching and learning process as well as in socially oriented activities will create a good relationship between teachers and students believing in this ideology, Teachers in the Modern convent school sensitise the significance of life skills among students, which will prove helpful to get desired modification in their thoughts, behaviour, knowledge, attitudes, skills and values. School is involved in designing effective strategies for building life skills in learners to transform them into globally competent, tolerant and responsible citizens of our country.

In light of the above discussion, it could be concluded that life skill education is significant in students' overall development. Our findings are in common with those of Prajapati, Sharma, and Sharma (2017), A. Smitha & Mary Vineetha Thomas (2018), and many others, suggesting that life skill education programs are essential for promoting mental well-being and competence in young people to navigate the challenges of daily living.

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