

Life Skills Education for Secondary Education

Armin Mahmoudi¹ & Golsa Moshayedi²

¹Department of Studies in Education, Yasouj branch, Islamic Azad University, Yasouj, Iran

²Department of Law, Yasouj branch, Islamic Azad University, Yasouj, Iran

Abstract: Life skills study is intended to strengthen a pupil's overall development. This involves, for instance, having pupils make an effort to develop spiritual values, physical health and psychological strength. They strengthen their social skills, moral competence and respect for others and themselves. In addition, an effort is made to strengthen their courage, initiative, natural creativity and adaptability to meet the demands and challenges of everyday life. The emphases in life skills underline the fact that the school is the pupils' workplace, where valuable upbringing takes place. Basic responsibility for children's upbringing must, however, always be in the hands of their parents/guardians. As the school assists parents in their role as child-raisers, pupils' education and welfare is thus a joint project of schools and households. This co-operation must be based on mutual respect, mutual trust and joint responsibility. One of the emphases of life skills is to have the school create a positive and secure study environment, characterized by the support and co-operation of everyone in the school, both pupils and staff. A positive school spirit, together with realistic demands and expectations of pupils, facilitates them in achieving the study objectives set. Adolescence is a period of experimenting, experiencing and expanding. Adolescents need help and guidance in decision-making, problem solving, critical thinking, developing interpersonal skills, self-awareness, empathy, coping with stress and managing emotions. The rebelliousness and dislike for parental intrusion usually keeps parents at bay because teenagers do not relish the idea of help and guidance from parents. However, this may not always be so. Beneath frequent violent outbursts, sudden mood swings and related interpersonal problems of an adolescent, there may be a person crying out for professional help. All adolescents need support and guidance. When parents find it difficult to handle signs of trouble, professional help should be sought at the earliest. Extra care is needed while offering help to adolescents' problems because it is not easy for teenagers to accept the fact that they need help. Attempts should be made to understand the adolescent, and to safeguard, protect and guide him/her. The Family Life & Life Skills Education Programmed is a good support system for adolescents at the community level. [Armin Mahmoudi & Golsa Moshayedi. **Life Skills Education for Secondary Education.** *Life Sci J* 2012;9(2):1155-] (ISSN:1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>. 172.

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1. Introduction

Life skills study is intended to strengthen a pupil's overall development. This involves, for instance, having pupils make an effort to develop spiritual values, physical health and psychological strength. They strengthen their social skills, moral competence and respect for others and themselves. In addition, an effort is made to strengthen their courage, initiative, natural creativity and adaptability to meet the demands and challenges of everyday life. The emphases in life skills underline the fact that the school is the pupils' workplace, where valuable upbringing takes place. Basic responsibility for children's upbringing must, however, always be in the hands of their parents/guardians. As the school assists parents in their role as child-raisers, pupils' education and welfare is thus a joint project of schools and households. This co-operation must be based on mutual respect, mutual trust and joint responsibility. One of the emphases of life skills is to have the school create a positive and secure study environment, characterized by the support and co-operation of

everyone in the school, both pupils and staff. A positive school spirit, together with realistic demands and expectations of pupils, facilitates them in achieving the study objectives set. Making life skills a special subject is a response to contemporary demands that pupils be better prepared to face the challenges of life. To do so, they need to work on themselves, respect themselves but know their strong and weak sides. Life skills provide valuable opportunities to strengthen pupils' social development. The aspects dealt with are connected with participating in a democratic society, belonging to a family, having friends and comrades, working with others and placing oneself in another's position. The subject looks at the pupil as a whole, his/her ability to communicate, express opinions and give reasons for them, set objectives, show initiative, find his/her way around in the local environment, avoid dangers and be independent. In addition, creative ability and practical skills need to be developed. Life skills also gives schools the opportunity to take a closer look at issues which may come up and concern pupils' well-being

and feelings.

Adolescence is a period of experimenting, experiencing and expanding. Adolescents need help and guidance in decision-making, problem solving, critical thinking, developing interpersonal skills, self-awareness, empathy, coping with stress and managing emotions. The rebelliousness and dislike for parental intrusion usually keeps parents at bay because teenagers do not relish the idea of help and guidance from parents. However, this may not always be so. Beneath frequent violent outbursts, sudden mood swings and related interpersonal problems of an adolescent, there may be a person crying out for professional help. All adolescents need support and guidance. When parents find it difficult to handle signs of trouble, professional help should be sought at the earliest. Extra care is needed while offering help to adolescents problems because it is not easy for teenagers to accept the fact that they need help. Attempts should be made to understand the adolescent, and to safeguard, protect and guide him/her. The Family Life & Life Skills Education Programmed is a good support system for adolescents at the community level.

2. Defining Life Skills

Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Described in this way, skills that can be said to be life skills are innumerable, and the nature and definition of life skills are likely to differ across cultures and settings. However, analysis of the life skills field suggests that there is a core set of skills that are at the heart of skills-based initiatives for the promotion of the health and well-being of children and adolescents. These are listed below: 1. Decision making 2. Problem solving 3. Creative thinking 4. Critical thinking 5. Effective communication 6. Interpersonal relationship skills 7. Self-awareness 8. Empathy 9. Coping with emotions 10. Coping with stress

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 similar

Problem solving enables us to deal constructively 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 analyze information and experiences in an objective manner. Critical thinking can contribute to health by helping us to recognize and assess the factors that influence attitudes and behavior, 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 weakness, 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 while 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 behavior 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.

3. Life Skills Education

For health promotion, life skills education is based on the teaching of generic life skills and includes the practice of skills in relation to major health and social problems. Life skills lessons should be combined with health information, and may also be combined with other approaches, such as programmes designed to effect changes in environmental and social factors which influence the health and development of young people. The methods used in the teaching of life skills builds upon what is known of how young people learn from their own experiences and from the people around them, from observing how others behave and what consequences arise from behavior. This is described in

the Social Learning Theory developed by Bandura (1977). In Social Learning Theory, learning is considered to be an actively involved in a dynamic teaching and learning process. The methods used to facilitate this active involvement include working in small groups and pairs, brain storming, role play, games and debates. A life skills lesson may start with a teacher exploring with the students what their ideas or knowledge are about a particular situation in which a life skill can be used. The children may be asked to discuss the issues raised in more detail in small groups or with a partner. They may then engage in short role play scenarios, or take part in activities that allow them to practice the skills in different situations – actual practice of skills is a vital component of life skills education. Finally, the teacher will assign homework to encourage the children to further discuss and practice the skills with their families and friends. Life skills have already been taught in many schools around the world. Some initiatives are in use in just a few schools, whilst in other countries, life skills programmers have been introduced in a large proportion of schools, and for different age groups. In some countries, there are several important life skills initiatives, originating in different groups in countries, there are several important life skills initiatives, originating in different groups in countries, there are several important life skills initiatives, originating in different groups in countries, there are several important life skills initiatives, originating in different groups in countries, there are several important life skills initiatives, originating in different groups in the country, e.g. Non-governmental organizations, education authorities, and religious groups

Identifying an optimal strategy for life skills education

The wide range of motives for teaching life skills to children and adolescents include the prevention of drug abuse and teenage pregnancy, the promotion of mental well-being and cooperative learning. For adults, life skills appear in programmers such as communication and empathy skills for medical students and counselors, problem solving and critical thinking for business managers, and coping with emotions and stressors for people with mental health problems.

Given the wide ranging relevance of life skills, an optimal strategy for the introduction of life skills teaching would be to make it available to all children and adolescents in schools. Life skills teaching promote the learning of abilities that contribute to positive health behavior, positive interpersonal relationships, and mental well-being. Ideally, this learning should occur at a young age, before negative patterns of behavior and interaction have become established.

The school is an appropriate place for the introduction of life skills education because of:

- The role of schools in the socialization of young people.
- Access to children and adolescents on a large scale
- Economic efficiencies (uses existing infrastructure);
- Experienced teachers already in place;
- High credibility with parents and community members;
- Possibilities for short and long term evaluation

Even in countries where a significant proportion of children do not complete schooling, the introduction of life skills education in schools should be a priority. Life skills education is highly relevant to the daily needs of young people. When it is part of the school curriculum, the indications are that it helps to prevent school drop-out. Furthermore, once experience has been gained in the development and implementation of a life skills programme for schools, this may help with the creation and implementation of programmes for other settings.

Developing life skills programmers

Designing and implementing a life skills program is only a part of the life skills programmers development process. It is equally important to secure long term support and resources for life skills education, and to engage, from the very beginning, all of the potential agencies that would have a role to play in the process of life skills programmers' development. Implementing life skills programmers will require the introduction of teaching methods that may be new to teachers, and the success of the programmers will depend very much on the availability of in-service training, as well as efforts to include training in participatory learning methods in teacher training colleges.

The introduction of life skills education will require input from the school and education authorities, for teacher training and the development of teaching manuals, as well as for the ongoing support of teaching programmers once they are in place. This investment is worthwhile considering that the potential gains of life skills education are so far reaching. Apart from the impact on child health, there may be other benefits for the school as an institution. For example, evaluative studies of life skills programmers suggest that the methods used can help to improve teacher and pupil relationships (parsons et al., 1988), and there are indications that life skills lessons are associated with fewer reports of classroom behavior problems. There are also research indications of improved academic performance as a result of

teaching life skills (Weissberg et al., 1989). Other positive effects include improved school attendance (Zabin et al., 1986), less bullying, fewer referrals to specialist support services and better relationships between children and their parents. A life skills programme will have to be proven worthy of the resources allocated to it. Process and outcome evaluation studies should be carried out, and results shared with all the relevant decision makers that could affect the future of the life skills programmes. A programme that has a component of ongoing assessment of its use and impact offers scope for keeping in touch with changing priorities, and is more likely to be modified and maintained over time.

Well designed, tested and delivered life skills programmes can achieve much in helping children and adolescents become more responsible, healthy and resilient both during childhood and as adolescence.

ii) What is the target group of the life skills program?

If a life skills program is to be developed for the promotion of health and well being, it should ideally be targeted at all children and adolescents, as a positive response to health needs, rather than as an intervention aimed only at those already at risk or who already have health problems.

If the plans are that the life skills program should eventually be implemented wide scale in a country, then the original program is likely to be developed first for the most dominant, majority language and culture in the country. This may mean that minority groups will not be reached, especially if there are no representatives from such groups in the Life Skills Advisory Panel or Development Group. Plans should be made for program adaptation, or life skills program development, for such groups once a program has been implemented and is being maintained. Life skills program can be developed for all ages of children and adolescents in school. Experience gained in countries where life skills program have been developed groups to be targeted are likely to be determined by education policy and the resources available, as well as by the age at which children are most groups, to help select who it is for and for how many year groups. Given the role of life skills in the promotion of positive health behavior, it is worthwhile ensuring that life skills program are available in the pre-adolescent or early adolescent years, since young people of this age group seem to be most vulnerable to behavior-related health problems.

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