

A Study of Life Skills of Pupil - Teachers

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Abstract: *Life skills are those abilities that enable a person to face the challenges of their lives with courage in a manner which is adequate for their age and experience. Life skill facilitates healthy, positive and productive personal development. Life skill enables the young person to provide meaningful contribution to society. Life skills are applicable to self and others. Thus the young people should demonstrate moral and cognitive maturity by owing the responsibilities for their actions. They should develop their social and emotional skills. According to WHO, life skills can be grouped into ten core values which need to be developed in each and every student. The investigator has tried to find out the life skills of pupil teachers. A sample of 300 pupil teachers was taken. Descriptive survey method was applied. A standardized scale on life skill assessment was administered to the entire sample. The result reveals that majority of the students have just average level of life skills which are not adequate. There is a need to train the teachers and consequently develop the life skills among the students. There was no significant difference in life skills between male and female pupil teachers as well pupil teachers belonging to urban and rural area. 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.*

Keywords: Life Skills, Pupil Teachers

1. Introduction

Life skills assist the students to face the challenges of everyday life. Life skill enhances the capabilities of the students so as to become healthy, responsible and productive citizens. Young people are considered the major agents in their own development, which means that they have the ability to create the supportive relationships and communities they need to grow and thrive (Larson, 2006). The development of life skill is considered a control resource for enhancing positive and productive development in students. In order to identify the skills those are required to enhance the quality of civic lives and positive social relationships, authors have prepared various definitions. The World Health Organization (1997) has defined life skills as the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. By emphasizing adaptation and positive orientation, this commonly used definition is considered with the skills-based, positive approach to youth development (e.g. Benson, 2007). The Pan-American Health Organization has defined life skills in terms of social and interpersonal skills (including communication, refusal skills, assertiveness and empathy), cognitive skills (including decision-making, critical thinking, and self-evaluation), and emotional coping skills (including stress management and increasing an internal locus of control; see Mangrulkar *et al.*, 2001).

UNICEF (2002) defines life skills as psychosocial and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, communicate effectively, and develop the coping and self-management skills needed for a healthy and productive life. Life skills are applicable to the actions that are directed to self, others or the local environment. The objectives of life skills are to develop health and well-being at all levels.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) proposed the importance of life skills

to achieve the outcomes desired by society and individual. Life skills are important for everybody (Rychen and Salganik, 2003). The OECD definition has emphasized “Competence” rather than “Skills”. It says that competence is more than just skills: It is also the ability to cope with complex demands by drawing and mobilizing all of one’s psychosocial resources (including skills in a given context (Malti and Perrens, 2011). Therefore, life skills consist of behaviour, attitude and knowledge. OECD has classified life skills into competencies: (1) The ability to use a wide range of tools to interact constructively with the social context. The tools may be either physical or socio-cultural. The physical tools are – application of information technology and sociological tool is language. To use these tools, people must understand them and be able to interact effectively. (2) The ability to engage with others in an increasingly interdependent world. (3) The ability to take responsibility for managing one’s life, place it in the broader social context. OECD has strongly emphasized the ability to balance different types of skills, which include behaviour, cognitions, values, attitudes and emotions.

The Core Dimensions of Life Skills:

Life skill is composed of generic life skills. Generic life skills are required for holistic development of the personality. Generic life skills include ten core skills. WHO has also classified life skills into ten core dimensions. These ten dimensions are mentioned below:

Self-Awareness:

Self-awareness means awareness about oneself (self-consciousness). A self-aware person knows about his strength, character, desires, likes, dislikes and weaknesses. It helps the students to comprehend his/her self-worth and develop the confidence to face the challenges of life. The student will be able to identify the negative personality traits so as to improve them. Some synonym terms are self-image, self-concept and self-esteem.

Empathy:

It is the ability to understand and accept their problems and difficulties. Empathy is our mental ability to accept others without any prejudices and biasness. It enables a person to understand the feelings of others in distress and helps in providing emotional support to them. Empathy encourages nurturing behaviour for those who need care and assistance. It helps a student to know and accept persons from diverse culture and origin.

Effective Communication:

Social relationship with peoples can be established and maintained with the help of effective communication. It is the technique of exchanging ideas, facts, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, emotions, attitudes and values through verbal or non-verbal ways. It enables a student to express his opinion, desires and fears clearly and train him to take advice and help from others in adverse conditions.

Interpersonal Relationship:

Such relationship may be termed as survival skills also. They help in establishing and maintaining social relationship. It encourages initiating and maintaining positive relationship with other persons and avoiding destructive relations with minimum disturbance. Interpersonal relationship is an important life skill. It is the most important dimension of human intelligence. It is also called people skill. It provides warmth, caring, support and collaboration which provide excitement and potential in life for joy and personal fulfillment. Interpersonal relations teach students to establish positive relationships with other people. It also enables the students to end relationships constructively.

Creative Thinking:

Creativity is the act of generating new ideas, approaches or actions. Creativity is the ability of performing novel task (original and unexpected) which is useful and appropriate to achieve the goal. Creativity is the ability to produce innovative ideas and translate them into action. It involves original thinking. It helps a person to react in a flexible way to various challenges of life. It is the ability to explore available possible alternatives and evaluate them. Creative thinking assists in problem solving as well as decision making.

Critical Thinking:

Critical thinking is self-directed, self-disciplined thinking based on logical reasoning and objectivity. Critical thinking may be referred to as logical thinking and reasoning. Critical thinking improves the quality of thinking by taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standard upon them. Critical thinking enables a person to analyse information and experiences logically and objectively. Critical thinking helps to commit to life- long practice towards self- improvement.

Decision Making

Decision making enables a person to choose the best amongst the various alternatives. This is the ability to analyse and weigh the pros and cons of various alternatives. It also develops the courage to own responsibility of his decisions with confidence. It develops the ability in person

to make constructive decisions in his/her life. The students learn that decision should be made only after proper assessment of different options and their consequences.

Problem Solving

Problem solving ability helps in solving the problem constructively. This skill assists in resolving a conflict, reaching a solution and settles an issue. It develops the ability to get out of difficult situation and achieve the goal without using anger, coercion, defiance and aggressive behaviour. Problem solving is a process that provides an opportunity for a positive act. It enables a student to solve the problem by adopting creative and critical thinking.

Coping with Emotions

Coping with emotions assists a person to know the feelings of himself and others. This skill makes a person to understand that strong feelings are normal and that feelings are neutral. Acceptance of feelings is the first step to control them. This enables a person to learn healthy, positive and safe way to express their feelings. It increases the ability to identify his/her emotions and others. It helps the students to know the effect of emotions on behaviour and learn to react to emotion appropriately. Students learn the techniques to control the excessive emotions like anger and sorrow.

Coping with Stress

Coping with stress makes a person to identify the sources of stress. It also enables a person to understand the effects of stress and how to relax before worsening the situation. This skill helps in gaining the strength to cope with positive or negative stressful situation. It enables a person to deal with accompanying emotions and finding the most beneficial solutions. This skill enables the students to recognize the sources of stress, the effect of stress and technique to control stress and overcome it.

2. Review of Related Literature

Botvinet *et al.*, (1984) found that drug abuse prevention program conducted during junior high school yielded significant and durable reductions in tobacco, alcohol and marijuana use, if a combination of social resistance and general life skills are taught and if they are properly implemented and included at least two years of booster sessions. Other positive effects include improved school attendance (Zabin *et al.*, 1986), less bullying, fewer referral to specialist support services and better relationships between children and their parents. Evaluative studies of life skills programmes suggest that the methods used can help to improve teacher and pupil relationship (Parsons *et al.*, 1988). There are also research indications of improved academic performance as a result of teaching life skills (Weissberg *et al.*, 1989). When teens cannot successfully overcome the crises and development challenges, they will experience psychological distress and substantial disorder will occur in the normal flow of daily life and the emotional, social and cognitive aspects and consequently their personality will be disturbed (Garber *et al.*, 2002). Young *et al.*, (2003) revealed that life skills oriented physical education curriculum increased the magnitude of effects on physical activity behaviour in high school girls. Tarmyan (2003) found that life skills training program plays major

role in providing of psycho-social specificity of children and adolescents. An empirical research showed that life skills training are effective in efficient social communication in first grade female students of secondary schools (Safarzadeh, 2004). Hamidi (2005), in his research indicates that life skills training significantly improve adolescent behavioural condition. Bhardwaj and Vashishtha (2006) revealed that majority of students preferred problem solving to be the most relevant and interpersonal relationship to be the last relevant to science and technology. The term life skills refer to a large group of mental, social and interpersonal skills, and can help people to make their decisions with awareness, communicate effectively, develop coping skills and self-management and having healthy living and productivity (Sepah Mansour, 2007). Sepah Mansour (2007) indicated that life skills training are effective in enhancement of students' achievement motivation, self respect and social adjustment. Emanuel (2008) concluded that integrating life skills into different subject matter provide a positive environment for development. Social problem-solving training can improve social adjustment and academic performance of shy students (Ahadi and colleagues, 2009). Lineo (2009) highlight a number of issues and potentials emanating from assessment and evaluation, quality and teacher capacity. Learning is enhanced by the intrapersonal skills used to reflect on one's learning and adjust learning strategies accordingly – a process called “metacognition” (National Research Council, 2001 ; Hoyle and Davisson, 2011). Research has shown that development of cognitive skills, such as the ability to stop and think objectively about a disagreement with another person, can increase positive interpersonal skills and reduce antisocial behaviour (Durlaket *et al.*, 2011). And the interpersonal skill of effective communication is supported by the cognitive skills used to process and interpret complex verbal and non-verbal messages and formulate and express appropriate responses (Solaset *et al.*, 2011). Khera and Khosla (2012) revealed that there is a positive correlation between Core Affective Life Skill and self concept of adolescents which means those who possess these essential skills have better confidence in all aspects. Zahra *et al.*, 2013, indicated that life skill training have a significant positive effect on social development and emotional adjustment.

Objectives of study

- 1) To find out the life skills of pupil teachers.
- 2) To find out the difference in life skills between male and female pupil teachers.
- 3) To find out the difference in life skills between science and arts pupil teachers.
- 4) To find out the difference in rural and urban pupil teachers.

Hypotheses

- 1) Significant number of pupil teachers may have high level of life skills.
- 2) There may exist significant difference in life skills between male and female pupil teachers.
- 3) There may exist significant difference in life skills between the pupil teachers belonging to science and arts subject groups.

- 4) There may exist significant difference in life skills between the pupil teachers residing in rural and urban areas.

Research Method and Sample

Survey or descriptive method was used for conducting the research. A sample of 300 pupil teachers was taken for analysis and interpretation. The sample was taken through stratified random sampling technique. The sample was taken from 150 male and 150 female, 150 rural and 150 urban and 150 science and 150 arts pupil teachers from 10 colleges of GautamBudha Nagar U.P

Tools: Self structured Life skill Assessment Scale will be used by researcher and standardized by experts.

Statistical Techniques Used: After data collecting the scoring was done and after scoring the test the following measures were used to analyses and interpret the results and to test hypotheses. The researcher used mean, standard deviation and t- Test for the interpretation of data.

3. Analysis and Interpretation

Hypothesis 1: Significant Number of Students Have High Level of Life Skill.

Sr. No.	Percentage	Level of skill
1	4%	Have high level
2	(72%)	Average level
3	24%	Low level

The analysis of data show that only 4% pupil teachers have high level of life skills while majority (72%) of pupil teachers have average level of life skill. About 24% pupil teachers have low level of life skill. It shows that a hypothesis 1 is rejected because a large number of students have either average or low level of life skills.

Hypotheses 2: There May Exist Significant Difference in Life Skill between Male-Female Pupil Teachers.

Significance of difference between the mean values

Variable (Pupil Teachers)	Mean Values	N	S.D.	t-ratio	Level of Significance
Male	349.00	150	24.91	1.76	Non-significant at 0.05 level
Female	344.00	150	23.80		

The table shows that value of t-ratio for gender is 1.76 which is non-significant at 0.05 level of significance. It means that there is no significant difference in the mean score of life skills between male and female pupil teachers. Therefore, hypothesis 2 is rejected.

Hypotheses 3: There May Exist Significant Difference in Life Skill between Science-Arts Pupil Teachers.

Significance of difference between the mean values

Variable (Pupil Teachers)	Mean Values	N	S.D.	t-ratio	Level of Significance
Science	347.34	150	21.64	2.03	Significant at 0.05 level
Arts	341.79	150	25.64		

The table shows that value of t-ratio for subject group combination is 2.03. This value is significant at 0.05 level of significance. It means that there is significant difference between the life skills of science and arts pupil teachers. The mean life skill score of science pupil teachers is higher than that of arts pupil teachers. Therefore, science pupil teachers have higher level of life skill as compared to art pupil teachers. Thus hypothesis 3 is accepted.

Hypotheses 4: There May Exist Significant Difference in Life Skill between Rural-Urban Pupil Teachers.

Significance of difference between the mean values

Variable (Pupil Teachers)	Mean Values	N	S.D.	t-ratio	Level of Significance
Urban	344.39	150	25.87	0.21	Non-significant at 0.05 level
Rural	344.97	150	21.48		

The table shows that value of t-ratio for locality is 0.21 which is non-significant at 0.05 level of significance. It shows that there is no significant difference in the mean score of life skills between urban and rural students (pupil teachers). Thus the hypothesis 4 is rejected.

4. Results and Discussion

The results show that very few students have high level of life skill and majority of the students have average or low level of life skills. Thus, there is a dire need of integrating life skills in the curriculum of schools as well as colleges. In order to transact the curriculum successfully, teachers must be trained continuously. Only professionally trained teachers can develop the life skills in the students properly. Research studies show that development of life skills in the students have increased their academic achievement, reduced the violence in the schools and colleges, have prevented the students from the abuse of drugs and alcohol, and developed their self- confidence, self -concept and self- esteem. Life skills help in creating an environment of peace. High level of life skill helps in becoming good citizen and productive worker. It helps in reducing the antisocial activities and suicidal attempts. Life skills reduce the stress, help in controlling the emotions and making the informed decisions. Thus life skill development is an important subject which must be taught in our educational institutions. The results further indicate that there is no significant difference in the life skills of male and female students. This result is in conformity with many research studies. The result indicates that science pupil teachers have higher level of life skills as compared to arts pupil teachers. This may be due to high level of problem solving, decision making, coping with stress, critical and creative thinking abilities. Such abilities should also be developed among arts students (pupil teachers) also.

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