

Importance of life skills education in schools

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School is the platform for learning for the student. The main objectives of school are to build a productive generation in the future. The teacher focuses on the overall development of the students. Teacher builds reading writing and arithmetic skills among students. Apart from these skills it is the duty of the teacher as well as school setting to enable the students to face challenges in life. It is the generic life skills like self-awareness, empathy, effective communication, inter personal relationship, problem solving, decision making, creative and critical thinking, coping with stress and emotions that help the students to overcome challenges in real life. I visited many schools of Udham Singh nagar, collected the opinion of teachers as well as students regarding life skill education. I observed majority of the schools focus on development of arithmetic, writing and reading skills. They feel that improvement in marks of the students will increase their reputation. The teachers in the school are concentrated on training the students to score high in their respective subject. The transition in this focus of education created much impact in the life of student. They are not able to satisfy their psycho social needs, unable to communicate with others, inability to identify risk factors, unable to make good decisions and finally ended up in frequent failures and suicidal attempts. My post-doctoral research is on Life skill training programme for adolescence. Through this study I am going to describe the importance of life skill education in school setting. The main objective is to identify the relationship between principles and methods in teaching process and life skill education and to identify the gap in the implementation level of the process of teaching and learning in school setting. Before giving training on life skill observations were made and pilot study was conducted to know about teachers and students understanding on life skill education. Some teachers are aware about the relevance of life skill education in handling the issues faced by students but hesitate to apply this 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 authorities are worried about the

discipline of school while engaging in participatory learning approach and due to excess consumption of time they cannot finish their syllabus on time will affect their result. We can conclude that before integrating life skill education we have to handle the perception of teachers and school authorities regarding the benefits of this type of teaching.

School is the temple of learning. Teachers are the facilitators of learning process. The teacher focuses on overall development of the students. The way of teaching the subjects will influence the student's behaviour. It is the duty of the teacher to build the character of a student. Gage defined teaching as a "form of interpersonal influence aimed at changing the behaviour potential of another person". The main objective of teaching are it helps the students to understand the realities and adjust in a better way, enable them to analyze the truth and take decisions, make the students a best worker and best thinker. When we relate this in the context of life skill education we can see a lot of similarities like life skills enables the individual to deal effectively with demands and challenges of everyday life, development of cognitive skills including problem solving, decision making, creative and critical thinking, and finally enabling behaviour modification of the individuals.

General principles in teaching and life skill education: Teaching process is based on some general principles like principle of motivation and interest in which the teaching should create interest in the mind of students. Interest can be created within the students through participatory learning approach. When the students apply what they learned in daily activities it satisfy the principle of activity. It persists in their mind for a long time and is much effective then note writing and passing the exam. The principle of creation and recreation says teaching should have recreational activities that impart creative thinking and innovations among students. Recognizing individual difference and identifying talents of each student is another principle of teaching. The teacher should analyze the intelligence, nature, ability, interest, potential, needs and concerns of students. The next principle details with enabling the student to set a goal in their life. In this the teacher should help the student to recognize his/her talents

and set directions to achieve the goal. The final principle of teaching says a teacher should relate everything to real life. Every subject should be linked to the reality. For example in science class if a teacher took class on health and nutrition the student should be able to relate different dimensions of health and should analyze whether he/she is following healthy lifestyle. The principles emphasize on practice of things that is learned and thus develop a good productive citizen.

Now-a-days the implementation of these principles in teaching is minimal. The teachers are more focused on completing the syllabus. They teach reading, writing and arithmetic skills to students and consider it as overall development of the student. Here comes the relevance of life skill education through which we can implement all these principles effectively. The techniques in life skill education like activities, games, role play, debate, discussion etc. will make learning process interesting and the student automatically develop the motivation to study. Each content in life skill focus on learning by doing that improves the creativity of students. Life skill education helps the students to recognize their talents and abilities. The awareness about themselves help them to set goal in their life. Finally enhancement of these skills are useful to address the needs and concerns of their daily life. If a teacher who is well trained in life skill education will effectively implement the principles of teaching through life skill education.

Methods of teaching and life skill education : Methods of teaching play a vital role in learning process of the student. Method is the style of presentation of contents in the classroom. Methods can be classified under following three heads:

Telling – Lecture, Questioning, Discussion etc.

Showing – Demonstration, visual aids etc.

Doing – Project, Role play, Practical etc.

A teacher can use any of these methods or combination of these methods in their teaching. But the method of doing is not much projected in current teaching. The method of learning by doing can be implemented easily by life skill education.

Let us analyze what is the relevance of applying life skills in current teaching methods. UNICEF defines life skill based education as tool for behaviour modification. That is a behaviour development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: knowledge, attitude and skills. Knowledge can be provided through class room teaching but the attitude and skills can be produced only through practice. Let us analyze what are problems faced by students due to this lack of attitude and skills. And

what are the areas that need behaviour modification for the student.

Problems among students : The student population faced a lot of problems in the school, family and society.

The major problems are:

- Handling physical changes in the body.
- Academic achievement
- Choosing a career
- Handling peer pressure
- Interpersonal relationships issues
- Parental pressure
- Lack of protection from violence
- Inability of community to channelize their energy
- Lack of trust, recognition and respect
- Media influence
- High risk sexual behaviour
- Parental discord and disharmony
- Environmental factors like poor access to education and health services
- Vulnerabilities like poverty, single parenting,
- Drug abuse
- Child labour
- Adjustment issues
- Emotional instability
- Mental health issues etc.

All these needs and concerns are to be addressed. The next question is who authority to deal these issues is. Everyone who is relating to these issues is responsible to address these problems. It included the parents, teachers, peer group, community and the student himself. Since the student spend most of his time in school we can say teachers play a major role in providing support and directions to students to handle these problems. Before give support and directions the teacher should perceive this problem in an empathetic manner. Teacher should be able to identify the root cause of the problem. For example if a student always come late to class a teacher should find out the reason behind it because sometimes the student is the bread winner of the family and he has to finish his work and come to school. The skill of empathy helps the teacher to understand the situation of latecomer of the class. If the teacher lacks this attitude he/she may punish the child sometimes dismiss him/her from the class forevermore. So to perceive the root cause of absenteeism the teacher needs the skill of empathy. If a student explores the insecurity that he faced at his home to the teacher, he can help the student by teaching the skills of problem solving, decision making, coping with stress and

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