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**Life Skills through Teacher Education Programme***Dr. D. Sivakumar**Principal, CK College of Education, Cuddalore (T.N.), India***Abstract**

Many teachers are already engaging in activities related to the development of life skills, but need support to create effective approaches to life skills education for health promotion and primary prevention. Life skills are generic skills, relevant to many diverse experiences throughout life. It should include the spirit, as such to gain maximum impact from life skills lessons. However, life skills can apply for an effective contribution to any particular domain of prevention, in the context of typical risk situations.

**Key Words:** Life skill, Teacher, cognitive, co-native and affective

**Introduction**

Life skills are defined as psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. They are loosely grouped into three broad categories of skills: cognitive skills for analyzing and using information, personal skills for developing personal agency and managing oneself, and interpersonal skills for communicating and interacting effectively with others.

**Life Skills-Based Education**

Life skills education is a structured programme of needs- and outcomes-based participatory learning that aims to increase positive and adaptive behaviour by assisting individuals to develop and practice psychosocial skills that minimize risk factors and maximize protective factors. Life skills education programmes are theory- and evidenced-based, learner-focused, delivered by competent facilitators, and appropriately evaluated to ensure continuous improvement of documented results.

A term which came into use to describe life skills education addressing specific content or undertaken to achieve specific goals, e.g., life skills-based peace education or life skills-based HIV & AIDS education. The term makes it clear that a life skills approach will be used to teach the subject matter, meaning that participatory teaching/learning methods will be used to help learners develop not only knowledge, but also the psycho-social life skills they may need to use knowledge to inform and carry out behavior.

Life skills from a psychological standpoint are those mental and emotional skills which enable us to better cope and succeed in our lives. They include such vital skills as how to cope with anger, have successful relationships, get along with your boss, learn to plan (think ahead), be consistent in your studies and at work, cope with frustration, etc. They also include learning to be on time, give your best effort, see your problems in perspective, etc.

From a behavior standpoint, life skills also involve practical matters such as managing your finances, scheduling your time, using public transportation, etc. Life skills have been defined as “the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life” (WHO). ‘Adaptive’ means that a person is flexible in approach and is able to adjust in different circumstances. ‘Positive behaviour’ implies that a person is forward looking and even in difficult situations, can find a ray of hope and opportunities to find solutions. The terms ‘Livelihood skills’ or occupational/vocational skills refer to capabilities, resources and opportunities to pursue individual and household economic goals and relate to income generation. Thus, Life skills are distinct from livelihood skills.

### **Key Life Skills**

Life skills include psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with managing their lives in a healthy and productive manner. Essentially, there are two kinds of skills - those related to thinking termed as "thinking skills"; and skills related to dealing with others termed as "social skills". While thinking skills relate to reflection at a personal level, social skills include interpersonal skills and do not necessarily depend on logical thinking. It is the combination of these two types of skills that are needed for achieving assertive behavior and negotiating effectively. “Emotional” can be perceived as a skill not

only in making rational decisions but also in being able to make others agree to one's point of view. To do that, coming to terms first with oneself is important. Thus, self-management is an important skill including managing/coping with feelings, emotions, stress and resisting peer and family pressure. Young people as advocates need both thinking and social skills for consensus building and advocacy on issues of concern.

### **The Ten core Life Skills as laid down by WHO are:**

1. Self-awareness
2. Empathy
3. Critical thinking
4. Creative thinking
5. Decision making
6. Problem Solving
7. Effective communication
8. Interpersonal relationship
9. Coping with stress.
10. Coping with emotion

**1. Self-Awareness:** It includes recognition of ‘self’, our character, 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 often a prerequisite to effective communication and interpersonal relations, as well as for developing empathy with others.

**2. Empathy:** To have a successful relationship with our loved ones and society at large, we need to understand and care about other peoples’ needs, desires and feelings. Empathy is the ability to imagine what life is like for another person. Without empathy, our communication with others will amount to one-way traffic. When we

understand ourselves as well as others, we are better prepared to communicate our needs and desires. We will be more equipped to say what we want people to know, present our thoughts and ideas and tackle delicate issues without offending other people. At the same time, we will be able to elicit support from others, and win their understanding. Empathy can help us to accept others, who may be very different from ourselves. This can improve social interactions, especially, 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.

**3. Critical Thinking:** It 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 behaviour, such as values, peer pressure and the media.

**4. Creative Thinking:** It is a novel way of seeing or doing things that is characteristic of four components – fluency (generating new ideas), flexibility (shifting perspective easily), originality (conceiving of something new), and elaboration (building on other ideas).

**5. Decision Making:** It helps us to deal constructively with decisions about our lives. This can have consequences for health. It can teach people how to actively make decisions about their actions in relation to healthy assessment of different

options and, what effects these different decisions are likely to have.

**6. Problem Solving:** It helps 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.

**7. Interpersonal Relationship Skills:** It helps 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.

**8. Effective Communication:** It 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, and also needs and fears, and it may mean being able to ask for advice and help in a time of need.

**9. Coping With Stress:** It means recognizing the sources of stress in our lives, recognizing how this affects us, and acting in ways that help us control our levels of stress, by changing our environment or lifestyle and learning how to relax.

**10. Coping With Emotions:** It means involving recognizing emotions within us and others, being aware of how emotions influence behaviour and being able to respond to emotions appropriately. Intense emotions like anger or sadness can have negative effects on our health if we do not respond appropriately.

## Life Skills Model



### Life Skill Training and Training Techniques

Training is the process that helps people to practice the knowledge they have acquired so that it can be put to use in social situations or the area of operations. It helps to develop and improve knowledge (Cognitive Domain), attitude (Affective domain) and skills (conative domain) to achieve better result in the work that doing as part of employment and also the various personal and social activities that are accomplished in day to day activities. Training is the planned and systematic

approach of learning new things through education and application in a controlled way for practical use and application in future.

The life skills training programme consists of the following objectives:

- To enable the students to understand the concept of life skills and its need in successful life.
- To make the students realize their potentials.



- To equip the students to plan and implement new skills and techniques for meeting future problems.
- To help the students to aspire for higher performance.

The students met every day in a big hall away from class rooms and it was made sure that they are present on time for the programme. Initially, the openers and warm ups was utilized as an ice-breaker which helped them to overcome inhibitions by stimulating, challenging and motivating the participants to have free interaction with others. The activity enabled the trainer to build rapport with the subjects. This led to warm friendly and understanding condition, which was essential for an effective relationship between students and the facilitator. By establishing the rapport by accepting and understanding the level of participants and each other's role as well as objective of the programme, the facilitator proceeded with the process.

### Types of Training

There are three main objectives for training programme. They are the cognitive objective, Conative objective, and affective objective. Based on the training objectives, four types of training programmes are designed. They are:

**1. Cognitive Type Training:** In this type of training programmes primary importance is given to knowledge input. This helps to get sufficient back ground information about the area, where the individual has to perform his activities.

**2. Conative Type Training:** Conative type training gives priority to skill development

activities so as to make the individual fit to do a specified job in a better way. This is generally given to a group who has sufficient cognitive background about the area of operation.

**3. Affective Type Training:** The importance is given to attitudinal change. This type of training views that positive attitude is first and foremost requirement in any behavioral modification and hence affective type training has more importance than the other two types of training.

**Composite Type Training:** It is the appropriate combination of the above three types of training programmes. A joint venture by the three will fetch the desired behavioural change in the individual.

### Types of Training Based on Approach

Based on the approach, training can be divided into three major types. They are:

- Informative method.
- Participatory method.
- Experimental method.

**Informative Method:** It is similar to the cognitive type of training method. Here importance is given to impart some relevant information that will create a general awareness about the working environment and social situations. Here, the trainer delivers the information and the participant listens and understands the information. The trainer decides what is to be taught, how much to taught and what method to be adopted for the training.

**Participatory Method:** Participatory type of training is designed to avoid the **one-way** training method as in the case of conventional training and make the training

programme fully interactive with the involvement and participation of the trainees. The participatory training approach encourages the participants to become part of the training programme, to see themselves as a source of information and knowledge and develop them by adding more knowledge to their existing level of knowledge.

**Experimental Method:** In experimental methods, there is the element of direct experience through which the participants learn. Simulation exercises such as role play comes under this method.

### Types of Training Based On Structure

Based on the structure training programmes can be divided into three such as

- Fully structured programme.
- Semi-structured programme.
- Unstructured programme.

**Fully Structured Programme:** This is the most commonly used traditional training. In this structure, the training centre prepares the curriculum for the training programme, plans the daily schedule of the programme based on their view and what they believe relevant to the participants of that particular training. Various experts are fixed for talking to the participants mainly through lecture, panel discussion or symposium.

**Semi-Structured Programme:** This model is little more advanced when compared with the structured model. In this model, the trainers design the programme for a given group of trainees on the basis of information of the trainees collected in advance. On the arrival of the trainees, the content of the training programme is discussed with the

trainees with a view to make desired additions, deletions and modifications in the proposed programme and ensure that it caters the need of the participants. Here the outcome solely depends on the experience, skill, confidence, and maturity of the trainees.

**Unstructured Training Programme:** This is the best method of training and also the most difficult method to operate. The success of this type of training programme depends on the skill and maturity of the trainees. In this model, the trainer only initiates the programme with the general guidelines and objectives. Rest of the programme is finalized and managed by the participants. This programme will work well with a small group of dedicated trainees. The trainers have to work hard to coordinate the activities and make it fruitful to achieve the objective.

### Conclusion

Many teachers are already engaging in activities related to the development of life skills, but need support to create effective approaches to life skills education for health promotion and primary prevention. Life skills are generic skills, relevant to many diverse experiences throughout life. It should include the spirit, as such to gain maximum impact from life skills lessons. However, life skills can apply for an effective contribution to any particular domain of prevention, in the context of typical risk situations.

The skills learnt in the school may be considered from two points of views. One is learning of livelihood skill which means vocational education. This type of education

is development of skill with the intention of capacity building. This type of skill training will help an individual to earn his livelihood and ultimately the person will be able to contribute in the economic development of the country. But education for the development of livelihood skill is narrowly conceived. Along with it a person needs psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills which are the essence of

life skills. WHO had defined life skills as abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individual to deal effectively with the demands of challenges of everyday life. The psychosocial competencies are instrumental in developing physical, mental and social well being and as such it is imperative that school system should strive to develop these competencies among the students.

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