Life skills education for young ones

Dr. Mirza Mahefooz Baig
Assistant Professor, Marathwada College of Education, Aurangabad, Maharashtra, India

Abstract
Life skills are the skills we need to deal effectively with the challenges in everyday life, whether at school, at work or in our personal lives. Life skills is a term used to describe a set of basic skills acquired through learning and/or direct life experience that enable individuals and groups to effectively handle issues and problems commonly encountered in daily life. Life skills-based education is now recognized as a methodology to address a variety of issues of child and youth development and thematic responses. There are various skills like self-awareness, self-esteem, assertiveness etc., the life skills do have lot of benefits.

Keywords: Life, Skills, education, whether

Introduction
Human beings are a complex mixture of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour. People constantly interact with other people, with their inner selves and with the environment as a whole. Thus, as children grow up into adolescence and adulthood, they need to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to handle themselves and their environment successfully.

Why life skill education for young ones
Life skills-based education is now recognized as a methodology to address a variety of issues of child and youth development and thematic responses. Expected learning outcomes include a combination of knowledge, values, attitudes and skills with a particular emphasis on those skills that related to critical thinking and problem solving, self-management and communication and inter-personal skills.

In the 21st century world, students entering the job market are expected to have flexible skills in order to adapt to a changing work environment. But life skills go well beyond choosing a major in college or impressing a potential employer in the future. Life skills provide children with important tools for development, such as independent thinking, how to socialize and make new friends, and how to take action in situations where their parents or teachers may not be around to help or intervene (dealing with a bully or personal insecurities and fears, for example.) Unlike motor skills and basic intelligence, executive function and decision-making skills are not innate but learned.

Life skills
Life skills are the skills we need to deal effectively with the challenges in everyday life, whether at school, at work or in our personal lives.
Life skills is a term used to describe a set of basic skills acquired through learning and/or direct life experience that enable individuals and groups to effectively handle issues and problems commonly encountered in daily life.

Life skills are examined in more detail below:
(i) The skills of knowing and living with oneself

Self-Awareness
Young people need to know and understand themselves first, their potential, their feelings and emotions, their position in life and in society and their strengths and weaknesses. They need too to have a clear sense of their own identity, where they come from, and the culture into which they have been born and which has shaped them.

Self esteem
Self-awareness leads to self-esteem as people become aware of their own capabilities and place in their community. It has been described as an ‘awareness of the good in oneself. It refers to how an individual feel about such personal aspects as appearance, abilities and behaviour and grows on the basis of their experiences of being competent and successful in what they attempt.

Assertiveness
Assertiveness means knowing what you want and why and
being able to take the necessary steps to achieve what you want within specific contexts. It can cover a wide variety of different situations, older man to children convincing their parents that they need to continue with their education, to adolescents taking the lead in bringing people together for some beneficial act in the community such as protecting or developing the environment.

Coping with emotion
Emotions, such as fear, love, anger, shyness, disgust, the desire to be accepted etc. are subjective and usually impulsive responses to a situation. That is why they can be very unpredictable and often lead to actions which are not based on logical reasoning.

Emotions are strong reflections of what we are. Thus, identifying and then coping with emotions implies that people can recognise their emotions and the reasons for them and make decisions which take account of but are not overly influenced by them.

Coping with stress
Stress is an inevitable part of life. Family problems, broken relationships, examination pressures, the death of a friend or family member are all examples of situations that cause stress in people’s lives. Stress can be a destructive force in an individual’s life if it gets too big to handle. Therefore, as with emotions, young people need to be able to recognise stress, its causes and effects and know how to deal with it.

(ii) The skills of knowing and living with others
Interpersonal Relationships
Relationships are the essence of life. Relationships also come in different shapes and sizes. As children grow up, they have to develop relationships with:
- Significant adults in their lives such as parents, relatives, neighbours, teachers etc.
- Peers in and out of school.
- People they meet in life, friends of their parents, the local leaders, shopkeepers etc.

Friendship formation
At the level of peers, this is one of the most important aspects of interpersonal relationships. An individual needs friends to share life with, activities, hopes, fears and ambitions. Friendship formation starts from the earliest stages of life but children and adolescents need to understand how friendships are formed and how to form and develop those which will be mutually beneficial. They should be able to recognise and, if necessary, resist friendships that can lead them into dangerous or unnecessary risk taking behaviour such as taking alcohol or other drugs, stealing and dangerous sexual behaviours.

Empathy
Showing empathy involves putting oneself in other peoples’ shoes, particularly when they are faced by serious problems caused by circumstances or their own actions. It means understanding and internalising other peoples’ circumstances and finding ways to lessen the burden by sharing with them rather than condemning or looking down on (or even pitying which is another form of looking down on people) them for whatever reason. Thus empathy also means supporting the person so that they can make their own decisions and stand on their own feet as soon as possible.

Peer resistance
Peer Resistance means standing up for one’s values and beliefs in the face of conflicting ideas or practices from peers. Friends, or colleagues, can come up with unacceptable or dangerous suggestions and may put pressure on one to accept. One needs to desist from doing things that one believes to be wrong and be able to defend one’s decision, even if it means being threatened with ridicule or exclusion from group membership. With young people in particular, the pressure to be like other group members is great. Thus, if the group is turning to negative influences and habits, peer resistance is a very important skill.

Negotiation
Negotiation is an important skill in interpersonal relationships. It involves assertiveness, empathy and interpersonal relations and also the ability to compromise on issues without compromising one’s principles. It involves being able to cope with potentially threatening or risky situations in interpersonal relations, including peer pressure, state one’s own position and build mutual understanding.

Non-violent conflict resolution
This is connected to interpersonal relations, negotiating skills and coping with emotions and stress. Conflicts are unavoidable and sometimes necessary but the skill of non-violent conflict resolution ensures that such conflicts do not become destructive. This can either involve a person resolving his/her own conflict situations or assisting others to come to an understanding without resorting to fighting.

Effective communication
Communication is the essence of human relationships. Therefore, one of the most important life skills is being able to communicate effectively with others. This includes listening skills and understanding how others are communicating as well as realising how one communicates in different ways. For example, while one’s mouth is saying one thing, one’s body may be saying something completely different.

(iii) The skills of making effective decisions
Critical Thinking
Children growing up in the world of today are confronted by multiple and contradictory issues, messages, expectations and demands from parents, peers, teachers, the media, religious leaders, advertisements, music etc. These interact with their own aspirations and ambitions and constantly require them to make decisions. They need to be able to analyse critically the environment in which they live and the multiple messages that bombard them.

Creative thinking
Coming up with new things, new ways of doing things, new ideas, arrangements or organisations is called creative thinking. This is important in life skills because people are continually placed in unexpected or unfamiliar situations where creative thinking is required to make an appropriate response.
**Decision making**
There are frequently conflicting demands all of which cannot be met at the same time. One must make a choice but at the same time one must be aware of the possible consequences of one’s choice. Thus it is important to weigh the consequences before making a decision and have a framework for working through these choices and decisions.

**Problem solving**
Problem solving is related to decision making and needs many of the same skills. It is only through practice in making decisions and solving problems that children and adolescents can build the skills necessary to make the best choices in whatever situation they are confronted with.

**Importance of life skills education**
In a constantly changing environment, having life skills is an essential part of being able to meet the challenges of everyday life. The dramatic changes in global economies over the last decade have been matched with the transformation in technology and these are all impacting on education, the workplace and our home life. To cope with the increasing pace and change of modern life, students need new life skills such as the ability to deal with stress and frustration. Today’s students will have many new jobs over the course of their lives, with associated pressures and the need for flexibility. According to Macmillan Education, “In a constantly changing environment, having life skills is an essential part of being able to meet the challenges of everyday life. The dramatic changes in global economies over the past few years have been matched with the transformation in technology and these are all impacting on education, the workplace, and our home life.”

**Benefits of life skill education**
The World Health Organization suggests the following:

**Health benefits**
1. Life skills education addresses the combination of psychological and social (i.e. psychosocial) factors that contribute to healthy behaviour.
2. The implementation of life skills education in schools addresses the needs of all children.
3. The promotion of personal and social skills is important aspects of health promotion interventions that aim to empower the individual to promote his/her own health as well as the health of others and of the community.

**Educational Benefits**
1. Life skills education introduces learner-centred and interactive teaching methods which can have a positive impact on:
   - The relationships between teachers and pupils.
   - Young people’s enjoyment of learning.
   - Teacher’s job satisfaction.
   - Rates of drop out and absenteeism from school.
2. Life skills have an impact on the teaching of academic subjects, e.g. because of the introduction of interactive methods.
3. (There are indications that life skills education can have a positive impact on academic performance. Once the students or pupils feel that they are involved in issues of relevance to their own lives, they participate more and learn more.

**Social benefits**
Life skills education can promote more pro-social behaviour and so result in less delinquency among adolescents.

**Cultural benefits**
1. Life skills education helps to clarify the needs of young people growing up in modern societies.
2. Life skills education is of particular value to young people growing up in multicultural societies.

**Economic Benefits**
1. Life skills education, and the skills promoted, appears to be amongst the ones most highly valued by the future employers of young people.
2. Early prevention can be expected to reap maximum rewards in regard to a healthy society, especially since the health and social problems prevalent today have at their root a component of human behaviour.

**Political benefits**
Research into the effectiveness of life skills education have shown similar results.
1. Several studies have reported positive changes in self-reports of health-related behaviour following educational programmes based on life skills, for example research on self-reports of drug use and smoking.
2. Several reviews of programmes have found that those based on skills learning are more effective than traditional approaches based on information.
3. Numerous studies have reported improvements in mental health status. In particular, improvements in self-esteem and self-confidence are frequently reported.
4. Numerous small studies have indicated teacher satisfaction after training and implementation of a life skills programme. In addition, improved teacher-pupil relationships and classroom behaviour have obvious benefits for school staff.
5. The pretest for this manual shows potentially the same results as the ones mentioned above.

**Conclusion**
Life skills is a term used to describe a set of basic skills acquired through learning and/or direct life experience that enable individuals and groups to effectively handle issues and problems commonly encountered in daily life. Life skills provide children with important tools for development, such as independent thinking, how to socialize and make new friends, and how to take action in situations where their parents or teachers may not be around to help or intervene. Unlike, motor skills and basic intelligence, executive function and decision-making skills are not innate but learned. The Life skills like self-awareness, self-esteem, assertiveness, coping with emotions etc. can be developed through life skill-based education, like skills do have many benefits.
References
2. https://k12.thoughtfullearning.com/FAQ/what-are-life-skills
   http://www.nzdl.org/gsdllmod