

Developing the concept of Life Skills among the student teachers of Pune city

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Abstract: The present study focuses on knowing the knowledge among the student teachers about life skills. A sample of 50 student teachers was selected by purposive sampling. It was found that the level of the knowledge among the student teachers was critically low. The terminologies related to the life skills were unknown to most of the student teachers. An attempt was made to bring in awareness among the student teachers related to the concept of life skills, various life skills which are present among the student teachers. As a result it was found that the student teachers after these sessions of orientation were able to tell the various life skills, the skills which they could identify in themselves and how they can use these life skills in their life.

Keywords: Life skills, student teachers.

Introduction:

The World Health Organization (1999) has suggested that life skills are important for healthy development and preparing adolescents for the future. Life skills have been defined as the skills that are required to deal with the demands and challenges of everyday life (Hodge & Danish, 1999). They can be physical, behavioral, or cognitive, and may be transferable to other life domains (Papacharisis, Goudas, Danish, & Theodorakis, 2005).

UNICEF, UNESCO and WHO list the ten core life skill strategies and techniques as: problem solving, critical thinking, effective communication skills, decision-making, creative thinking, interpersonal relationship skills, self awareness building skills, empathy, and coping with stress and emotions.

Life skills training is an efficacious tool for empowering the youth to act responsibly, take initiative and take control. It is based on the assumption that when young people are able to rise



above emotional impasses arising from daily conflicts, entangled relationships and peer pressure, they are less likely to resort to anti social or high-risk behaviors. Education in India stresses acquisition of information, knowledge and technical skills rather than psychosocial competence or realization of one's potentials. It is achievement oriented rather than child oriented. It does not address the needs of all the children who in spite of various levels of scholastic competence are capable of learning and need to develop those skills, and become empowered to live effectively in this world. The expected education system needs to fulfill the demands of 21st century, and should equip the children with all the skills required for facing the challenges of this century. For this very important purpose a knowledge of the life skills, and its utility is very essential. The present study focuses on the same.

Objectives of the study:

1. To find the existing knowledge among the student teachers related to the concept of life skills.
2. To orient the student teacher about the various life skills.
3. To identify the life skills which the student teachers possess.
4. To help the student teachers to learn utility of these skills in their day-to-day life.

Population:

All the student teachers studying in colleges affiliated to University of Pune.

Sample:

For the present study a sample of 50 student teachers were selected by incidental sampling method.

Tools used for data collection:

A questionnaire and semi-structured interview were used.

Module design:

The module comprised of 4 major stages, which are described below. The study took place by following given stages so as to find out the desired objectives.

Stage 1: Knowing the knowledge of the students related to life skills:

At the very first stage the student teachers were asked about their knowledge about the life skills. A general discussion related to the same was carried. The researcher in this case asked the students about what they know about the concept of life skill, whether they were given specified training related to the uses of the life skills in their day-to-day life and so on. This stage basically was used to determine the knowledge of life skills among the student teachers.

Stage 2: Orienting / explaining the students about the concept of life skills:

At this stage the students were oriented about the concept of life skills, what are the various life skills. The student teachers were given various examples related to the various skills.

Stage 3: Identification of the life skills among the students.

This stage comprises of an activity, where students in the group are given a flash card and asked to write the life skill which they feel they possess. All the students were expected to write atleast one most prominent life skill which he/she feels is present in him/her. Once all the student teachers had written the skills, these were then grouped into 3 groups, namely, the once which all of us have, the once which some of us have and the once which no one of us have. The data was further grouped.

Stage 4: Utilizing these life life skills in their day-to-day life.

The skills which were identified by the students, were then given proper direction and their uses in the day-to-day life were properly told to the students. The sample was divided into three group. The groups were communication/interpersonal skills group, decision making/critical thinking skills group and coping/self management skills group. The students in each of the groups were asked to record the skills pertaining to their group. And a task was given to each of the group. The task to the groups was as follows:



- Discuss and list the benefits of possessing the life skills that have been noted by each group.
- Discuss and list the problems one would face if s/he did not have

these life skills?

Then, the three groups were asked to sit in three different locations and discuss on the same, and further present their work to the other groups.

Analysis of the data:

The present study was divided into 4 stages, and accordingly the data analyzed is presented:

Stage 1:

The data obtained from the questionnaire was analyzed. It was found that very few student teachers were aware of the concept of life skills. Further it was also found that very few those who were aware of the skills had the knowledge gained through their own personnel efforts, i.e., internet, certain research articles, etc. It was also found that no input was given by the colleges or teachers to help the students to get acquainted with the life skills and its concept. To add on the data a semi- structured interview was also used. During the interaction with the group, it was found the certain terminologies for life skills were known to the students by their name, i.e. Decision making, creative thinking, communication, self-awareness, etc. these things were not known to them as life skills but as certain characteristics.

Stage 3:

At this stage the student teachers were aware of the fact that each one of us possess certain life skills which are very essential for us to live a happy and healthy life. This stage comprised of identifying the life skills which the student teachers felt that they possess. The skills which student felt they posses was written down on a flash card by the students. By involving all the flash cards a matrix was prepared with the various life skills which came up from the students and a analysis of who all posses that particular life skill. The matrix obtained was as follows:



Life skill	problem solving	critical thinking	communication skills,	decision-making,	creative thinking	interpersonal relationship skills,	self-awareness	empathy	dealing with stress and emotions
All of us have	✓		✓	✓		✓			✓
Some of us have		✓			✓		✓	✓	
None of us have									

From the above matrix it was found that most of the defined skills were posed by all the student teachers. Apart from that the remaining skills were considered to be present in some of them. No skill out of the mentioned ones was absent in all of the students, which means that some or the other life skill is always present in each and every individual, no matter whether training for the same is provided or not.

Stage 4:

At this stage making the group realize the importance of life skills, and how they can be used in their day-to-day life was accomplished. The tasks given to groups were done in proper manner. The groups presented their work regarding to the task given, followed by a discussion and cross-questioning from the other groups. The groups were able to define their skills, how these skills are essential in day-to-day life, and what if these skills were not present. It was found that the student teachers were now well equipped with the various life skills which they possess and feeling a need further to develop the others as well.

Discussion:



The present study attempted to find the various life skills which the student teacher possess. Throughout the activity sessions the students were upgraded by the knowledge of the life skills. It is expected that the student teachers as a whole should have the knowledge of what life skills are, but the scenario in this study was a bit contradictory, wherein the concept of life skills was missing among the students. But their eagerness and curiosity to know and learn about it helped them in accomplishing the task of knowing, identifying and applying these life skills for the betterment of their life. The student teachers were now in a state to talk and discuss about these life skills, and how can they use them.

Conclusion:

Every individual possesses various life skills in himself/ herself. But the only thing is to make them realize about it and how they can be further nurtured and used essentially. For a life skill approach to be successful, the skills, the content and the method should be seriously given a thought and must be undertaken. In the present study it was found that the student teachers to very small extent had a knowledge of the skills, but later on developed a sense of identifying various life skills. The idea of acquainting the student teachers with these life skills was to enable our future teachers to know and understand the various life skills, and how they work for all of us, knowingly or unknowingly, and to further promote them to their students in the actual classrooms. Since the need of the hour is to be upgraded with more of practical and behavioural skills rather than technical skills. The concept of life skills and the education underlying it will certainly bring out one's potential and various psychosocial skills essentially required for healthy, prosperous and happy life.

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