

21st CENTURY SKILLS: Special Reference to the Need of Life Skills

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Abstract

The way of life and work is transforming rapidly in the 21st century due to various reasons, specifically due to the technological advancement. As a result the skills to be acquired by a person are also transforming. Skill is nothing but the expertise to perform a task. NEP 2020 stresses on certain skills which can be grouped in to three main categories namely learning skills, literacy skills and life skills. NEP recognizes the importance of these skills and lays out a comprehensive framework for their development. In today's complex life we come across different situations which essentially need certain life skills along with learning skills and literacy skills. The concept of life skill is referred as psychosocial competency, as it is psychological in nature and comprise of thinking and behavioral processes. The major classification of life skills includes thinking skills, personal skills or emotional skills and social skills. Thinking skills include self awareness, critical thinking, decision making, creative thinking etc. Personal skills include emotional intelligence, resilience, coping with stress etc. Social skills include interpersonal relationship, effective communication, empathy etc. As our education system becomes more technology based and mechanical, it is the need of the time to create proper environment for the development of different life skills in our new generation. This paper tries to discuss life skills and its importance in connection with NEP 2020, need of life skill development and measures to be adopted for the development of life skills in students through the process of education.

1. INTRODUCTION

The National Educational Policy 2020 is a bold move that revolutionized the Indian education system by the introduction of skill based learning. It is expected to improve the educational standards of school as well as college students. The major attribute of the policy is the transition from a learning-based approach to a skill-based model. It says a noticeable fact about the development and nurturing 21st Century skills.

2. NEP 2020 AND SKILLS

The term '21st century skills', identified by educators, business leaders and certain government agencies, are a set of skills and abilities which is essential for success at workplaces in the 21st century. More specifically, the knowledge, life skills, habits, traits, and career skills that are crucial for the success of a student in the current world are referred to as 21st-century skills. As the students move on to college and work life these skills are helpful. In the strategic plans of educational institutions 21st C skills should be included for their better careers and life. The NEP 2020 stresses on a reformed

curriculum for the development of these skills. There are 12 skills identified are listed as: Critical thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, Communication, Information literacy, Media literacy, Technological literacy, Leadership, Initiative, Productivity, Social and Flexibility.

- **Learning Skills (4C's):** critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaborationskills
Logical and rational thinking comes under critical thinking. Developing a skill set to critically analyze information with confidence and without false narrations and fake information creates acceptance in the society. Creating something with original ideas and with the use of imagination is creativity. It is not the quality of gifted one but everyone has different ways of thinking and can apply their own thoughts and ideas to solve a certain problem. So every child can be creative in his or her own way. Working for a productive cause with someone is collaboration. Collaboration ensures equal contribution of all and equal accountability of outcomes. It helps to consider multiple perspectives, avoid biases and acknowledge each other's strengths and weaknesses. Expressing one in clear words and also understanding what others say is said to be the communication. Learning becomes an enjoyable experience through all the 4C's.
- **Life Skills (FLIPS's):** flexible, leadership, initiative, productive, and social
The ability to adapt to changing circumstances and deviating from plans whenever needed is Flexibility. Leading and motivating a team to accomplish a goal is Leadership. One's ability of starting projects, strategies and plans is initiative. Maintaining and keeping efficiency even in stage of distractions is productivity. Networking and keeping in touch with others for mutual benefit is social skills.
- **Literacy Skills (IMT's):** information, media, technology
Information literacy deals with understanding facts, figures, statistics, and data. Understanding the methods and sources which information is published is included in Media literacy. Technology literacy means knowing the machines and platforms that make the Information access possible.

3. LIFE SKILLS

In our daily life we come across different tasks which essentially need certain life skills. The World Health Organisation defines Life skills as the ability for adaptive and positive behaviour that enables individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. The principles of NEP 2020 gives stress on certain constitutional values and life skills including empathy, scientific temper, co operation, communication, resilience etc which in turn specifies the significance of life skills. Even though any skill useful in life can be life skill, the major classifications includes thinking skills, personal skills and social skills. Thinking skills include self awareness, critical thinking, problem solving, decision making, creative thinking etc. Personal skills include emotional intelligence, resilience, coping with stress etc. Social skills include interpersonal relations, effective communication empathy etc.

Effective teaching is a great challenge in the present post covid era where the interactions between student and teacher are more mechanical and highly technology based. In this case we are less in to the reality of society and it gives a very negative impact on our thinking skills, personal skills and social skills. So it is the need of the hour to teach life skills to raise young people who will be agile in adapting to newer ways of thinking.

UNICEF India also suggested four dimensions of Life Skills which include total ten core skills allocated in to different dimensions and the dimensions are interdependent and complementary to each other. The four dimensions are Empowerment (self awareness, communication, resilience), Citizenship (empathy, participation), Learning (critical thinking, creativity, problem solving), and Employability (negotiation, decision making).

4. NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF LIFE SKILLS

The 21st C demands citizens with multiple abilities, rather than knowledge acquisition. Some of the characteristics essential for them are, they are respectful of their rights and duties, involved in social and political topics, concerned about other's well being, able to express their ideas and arguments, active in their neighbourhood and capable of making an impact on the society.

The traditional teaching learning process was content-heavy and stresses on rote-learning, but NEP emphasizes a more holistic approach. It advocates a creative and multidisciplinary curriculum that includes the humanities, languages, culture etc in addition to science and mathematics. It recognizes life skills such as communication, cooperation, teamwork, and resilience. This modified approach is intended to assist students in developing academic expertise as well as critical leadership skills that will aid them in their career paths.

21st century gives immense importance to Life skill aspect. Life skills play an important role in the life of every individual. Many people are failed to succeed in their dream path only because of their poor presentation of what they know. The reason behind every success is both talents as well as its presentation. Inculcation of life skills makes them more adaptable and prepares them to face and overcome difficulties, recovers from failures, helps them to work in collaboration with others and teaches them to be accountable for all their actions. There is no definite list of life skills. Certain skills may be more or less relevant to people according to their life circumstances, for example: study skills, negotiation skills, employability skills, presentation skills, organising skills, problem solving skills.

Some of the importance of developing life skills is mentioned.

To develop personal and social ethics: For the upliftment of society, ethical values are essential. It helps to groom your personality as well as the status in the society. Inculcation of life skills helps to cultivate ethics and helps to become responsible, accountable and moral to others in future.

To improve presentation skills: Acquiring life skills helps to overcome stage fear and thereby improve the presentation skills which are one of the unavoidable factors of success. During growth stage life skill play an important role in exploring and enhancing hidden talents and present it in front of society.

To become self-confident: To achieve best out of anything, self confidence play a vital role. By watering life skills, it is possible to achieve self confidence. It helps to develop a growth mind set and set back to normal state after any undesirable incidents known as resilience.

To adopt new skills: Life skills help to empathies with people and nature and prepare children open-minded to adopt new skills as well as knowledge through effective grasping capability.

To choose the best option: Life skills help to identify evaluate as well as a selection of best option among alternatives to achieve expected output.

To take the best life-changing decisions: To achieve a destination many times you have to think out of box and to take some crucial decisions. Life skills help in right decision-making as well as its implementation.

5. MEASURES FOR LIFE SKILL DEVELOPMENT

This section discusses certain measures for life skill development.

Recognition of Emotions: Identify the emotions of the students and encourage them to talk about their feelings. This can be accomplished by small activities and simple games. Expressing their emotions openly has an added advantage of improving language skills and presentation skills.

Collaboration: Allow students to work in groups or include activities that enable learners to act together or solve problems together.

Practice empathy: Encourage students in recognizing others emotions and empathizing with them.

Develop self awareness: Motivate students to find their capabilities and weaknesses and admitting the mistakes or failures which help them to rectify the imperfections.

Goal setting: Teach the students to set a goal and to attain it with constant effort by making use of different learning and literacy skills.

Discussions: Participation of students in deep conversations and discussions allow understanding the real and rooting cause of behaviour pattern of others.

Target on Interpersonal skills: Encourage students to communicate verbally and nonverbally, thereby enhancing listening skills as well as presentation skills.

6. LIFE SKILL EDUCATION IN CLASSROOM

Past researches indicates different methods of implementation of life skills such as training programs, activities, learning modules etc but along with the curriculum there should be some alternatives so that implementation of life skill education is done in classroom. A proper plan has to be executed to ensure the acquisition of required skills by the students. Some of the steps that can be taken are explained below:

Inquiry- based learning: Keep the classroom environment active in such a way that they can ask questions freely. Let them ask loudly and without hesitation what they want to know for gaining knowledge. It keeps students self motivated in their learning and improves their communication and coping skills.

Collaboration: Help students to work in pairs or small groups so that they learn to share their ideas and resources together to attain their goals. Analysis of situations, case studies, educational games, small projects and group activities helps to improve their social skills.

Encourage creativity and critical thinking: Apart from rote memorization and remembering, learning should focus on creative and critical thinking skills which come under learning skills. A

creative student can express ideas in his /her own ways and critical thinking skills helps to move beyond mere comprehension of information. With these skills students can criticize, generalize and conclude things based on the patterns and evidences available for them. Brainstorming sessions, storytelling, and role play can help students think about problems creatively and critically.

Assessment of skills: Measurement and evaluation of skills should be done on regular basis like the assessment of academic achievement so that a positive attitude of these skills is developed in students. This measurement can be done in quantitative or qualitative way. This can be included in their report cards also.

Allow students to lead learning: Let the students learn by themselves, so that they love the process of learning and in turn the guide of their life. This prepares the students best for their life after school or college. Teachers should also pay attention on students who are off the track and align them to right goals. Teachers should understand the best learning environment rather than the strategies implemented by the institute. Teachers also need to be self equipped with the essential skills so that the competencies can grow in students.

CONCLUSION

Life skills can be utilized in many content areas: prevention of drug use, sexual violence, and also can be extended into environmental education, peace education or education for development, livelihood and income generation. In short, life skills strengthen young people to take positive action to promote health and positive social relationships. Implementing the above strategies can be useful for students to acquire 21st-century skills besides the regular knowledge from textbooks. They will begin to face challenges and grow efficiently in the competitive world with critical and creative thinking skills and social skills.

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