

Life Skills Education in School Setting

A Review of Research in the Indian Context

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ABSTRACT

Life skills education is linked to almost all areas of human life, such as education, physical education, medical, psychology, mental health, sexual and reproductive health, wellness, environment, etc. Education has an abundant potential to develop life skills wherein, schools play an important role in the inculcation and internalisation of these life skills. So, more understanding is needed of the research held in the school area. The present review examined the literature on the status of life skills education in school settings with the view of gaining a comprehensive understanding and holistic picture of the status of life skills education in Indian schools and identifying research gaps and priorities. Seventy-seven studies were included for review, which was categorised into six different themes through content analysis. Findings reveal that a large number of studies focused on bringing in positive change in students' attitudes and behaviour and enhancing their psychosocial competencies. Studies were also conducted to find out the status of life skills education in Indian schools and the curriculum and strategies to be adopted to internalise these skills. More research is needed to identify the problems with its implications. The review will be helpful in organising enriched programmes with effective life skills training for teachers and develop an effective life skills training module by involving major stakeholders for all the levels of education.

Keywords: *Life Skills Education, Life Skills, Review, Psychosocial Competency, Adolescents.*

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सार

जीवन कौशल शिक्षा मानव जीवन के लगभग सभी क्षेत्रों जैसे शिक्षा, शारीरिक शिक्षा, चिकित्सा, मनोविज्ञान, मानसिक स्वास्थ्य, यौन और प्रजनन स्वास्थ्य, कल्याण, पर्यावरण आदि से जुड़ी हुई है। शिक्षा में जीवन कौशल विकसित करने की प्रचुर क्षमता है। विद्यालय जीवन कौशल के विकास और आंतरिककरण में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाते हैं, इसलिए विद्यालय क्षेत्रों में किए गए शोधों के गहन अध्ययन की आवश्यकता है। वर्तमान समीक्षा, भारतीय विद्यालयों में जीवन कौशल शिक्षा की स्थिति की व्यापक समझ और समग्र चित्र हासिल करने और अनुसंधान अंतराल तथा प्राथमिकताओं की पहचान करने के लिए साहित्य की जाँच पर आधारित है। समीक्षा के लिए 77 अध्ययनों को शामिल किया गया था जिन्हें सामग्री विश्लेषण के माध्यम से छह अलग-अलग विषयों में वर्गीकृत किया गया था। निष्कर्षों से पता चलता है कि लगभग सभी शोधों में छात्र दृष्टिकोण और व्यवहार में सकारात्मक बदलाव लाने और उनकी मनोसामाजिक दक्षताओं को बढ़ाने पर ध्यान केंद्रित किया गया है। भारतीय विद्यालयों में जीवन कौशल शिक्षा की स्थिति और इन कौशलों को आत्मसात करने के लिए अपनाए जाने वाले पाठ्यक्रम और रणनीतियों का पता लगाने के लिए भी कई शोध एवं अध्ययन किए गए हैं। इसके निहितार्थों में समस्याओं की पहचान करने के लिए और अधिक शोध की आवश्यकता है। यह शोध समीक्षा शिक्षकों के लिए प्रभावी जीवन कौशल प्रशिक्षण के साथ-साथ समृद्ध कार्यक्रम आयोजित करने और शिक्षा के सभी स्तरों के लिए प्रमुख हितधारकों को शामिल करके प्रभावी जीवन कौशल प्रशिक्षण मॉड्यूल विकसित करने में सहायक होगी।

Introduction

Life Skills Education

In the present, ever-growing and competitive world, life has become quite challenging, and, thus, in order to keep pace with it, there is a need for the next generation to learn how to adapt with changes. Life skills can help them to do so. By learning and then applying life skills, one will be able to take on life's challenges and complexities with confidence and courage. Life skills education is a basic learning need for all the individuals, which empowers them to face obstacles and maintain balance in adverse situations. It is essential for the promotion of physical, mental, and emotional well-being as well as for individual, social and national development. Life skills education is a general approach which can be applied in all spheres of life, irrespective of age and occupation. However, it assumes more important for adolescents. Adolescence is a transitional phase from childhood to adulthood. It involves rapid psychological changes, maximum physical and mental growth

and development. During this phase many adolescents engage themselves in bad activities, such as alcoholism and drug abuse under constant peer pressure and get diverted from their set goals, leading to anxiety and depression among them. So, dealing with such significant changes requires a lot of mental strength, which can be induced by educating young adults about life skills. Life skills are important for adolescents to enable them to meet life's challenges by enhancing their psychosocial competencies. This will help them to make the right choices and enjoy a healthy state of mind and a successful life.

The Mental Health Promotion and Policy (MHP) team at the World Health Organisation (WHO) Department of Mental Health defined it as, "Life Skills Education is designed to facilitate the practise and reinforcement of psychosocial skills in a culturally and developmentally appropriate way; it contributes to the promotion of personal and social development, the prevention of health and social problems, and the protection of human rights" (WHO, 1999).

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2016) defined it as, "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 minimise risk factors and maximise protective factors. Life Skills Education programmes are theory and evidence-based, learner-focused, delivered by competent facilitators, and appropriately evaluated to ensure continuous improvement of documented results".

Life Skills

Life skills are inborn abilities that can be developed gradually. These abilities have to be developed in individuals by making them aware about their potential and leading them towards excellence by practising. Life skills are important for each and every individual, at any stage of life for enhancing psychosocial competency and accepting the challenges of life in a positive way. WHO, in 1997, defines life skills as — "The abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable the individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of every day life". Here, 'adaptive' means that a person is flexible in approach and is able to adjust in different circumstances and 'positive behaviour' implies that a person is forward looking and can, even in challenging situations, find a ray of hope. United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

(UNICEF) defines life skills as, “a behaviour change or behaviour development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: knowledge, attitudes and skill. WHO has identified ten core life skills classified into three broad categories—

- Thinking Skills—self-awareness, problem solving, decision making, critical thinking, creative thinking
- Emotional Skills—managing emotions and stress
- Social Skills—interpersonal relationships, communication, empathy

All these skills are interrelated with each other which compliment, supplement and reinforce each other. Life skills are inherent as well as acquired. Inherent life skills are those which an individual inherits by birth, while acquired life skills are those that are taught to an individual or which have been imbibed from others over a period of time. Acquired life skills can be formal and informal. School education plays an important role in cultivating acquired formal life skills among adolescents.

Policies for Life Skills Education

In many parts of the world, life skills form a significant and regular part of school and adult curriculum. In India, life skills education is still at the blooming stage. In last twenty years there has been increasing awareness regarding life skills education and a lot of initiatives have been taken by the government to enhance the life skills education programme at all levels of education. In 2001, the *Sarva Siksha Abhiyaan* (SSA) took the initiative and introduced life skills training for upper primary girls along with providing quality elementary education (Pathak, 2017). The National Curriculum Framework and National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009) strongly emphasis on life skills education for students and teachers respectively. The NCF 2000 recommended linking education with life skills. Education ideally must prepare students to face the challenges of life. For this, it needs to be intimately linked with different life skills, the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour (NCF, 2000, p. 17). The NCF 2005 also focussed on life skills and clearly stated that rather than a stand-alone programme, the Adolescent Education Programmes (AEPs) should become an integral part of school education and the responsibility of transacting life skills based education to secondary school students is fixed up on secondary teachers.

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) introduced life skills education as the integral part of the curriculum for Class VI in 2003–04, Class VII in 2004–05 and subsequently in Classes VIII, IX and X and introduced the assessment of life skills under Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) with grading system during 2010–2016. The CBSE introduced life skills training programme as part of CCE for adolescent students of 10–18 years old in 2012. CBSE also published a *Teacher's Manual for Life Skills for Teachers Handling* (Classes VI to X) in 2013. The teachers were advised to make the best use of these manuals, which provide guidelines for each of the 10 core life skills as identified by WHO. Looking into the importance of life skills for the teachers, the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) strongly emphasised that life skills should be essential for prospective teachers (NCFTE, 2009).

Recently, National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) has laid stress on the importance of life skills. It is based on the principle that education must develop not only cognitive capacities—both the ‘foundational capacities’ of literacy and numeracy and ‘higher-order’ cognitive capacities, such as critical thinking and problem solving—but also social, ethical, and emotional capacities and dispositions (NEP 2020, p. 4). Seeing the worth of life skills, in 2020, NEP has included it as one of the fundamental principles that will guide the whole education system. It focused on life skills such as communication, cooperation, teamwork, and resilience; (NEP 2020, p. 5). It also mentions that creativity and critical thinking encourage logical decision-making and innovation (NEP 2020, p. 5). It means NEP 2020 emphasises on the development of creative potential of each individual. Apart from school education, realising importance of life skills for adults, NEP 2020 has also recommended to develop an adult education curriculum enriched with life skills in Adult Education and Life Long Learning. As mentioned in 21.5—critical life skills (including financial literacy, digital literacy, commercial skills, health care and awareness, child care and education, and family welfare) is one of the five types of programmes, that will be included in the curriculum framework for adult education (NEP 2020, p. 51). So, for committing towards human rights, sustainable development and global well-being, developing values is necessary and, therefore, life skills have been given value in the *National Education Policy, 2020*.

Objectives

The study focussed on examining the researches related to life skills education in school setting in India. It particularly aimed at:

- identifying the different themes of researches on life skills education in the school setting,
- studying the outcomes of researches related to identified themes of life skills education, and
- studying the practices (strategies, activities, problems in its implementation) followed for life skills education in schools especially in the Indian context.

Methodology

In order to address the review purpose, the following steps were taken:

- Identification of inclusion and exclusion criteria for article selection
- Identification of the search strategy
- Data extraction—identification of the relevant work
- Data analysis
- Results

Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion of Articles

This review solely focussed on life skills education in a school setting. The articles related to school, students, adolescents, teachers, curriculum, strategies, factors affecting implementation were included in the study. Articles related to life skills education in the medical field, physical education, sports, the environmental field, mental health, etc., were excluded.

Search Strategy

PhD dissertations, articles published in journals (International and National), newspaper and books were searched, both online as well as offline.

Literature searched online for the present review was done based on the following criteria:

- Research conducted for articles published during 2000–2020;
- Published or unpublished articles related to life skills education in school settings only.

- Keywords, such as life skills, life skills education, life skills education in school, implementation, India, etc., were used for searching the articles.
- Online sites surfed were: Shodhganga, <<http://shodhganga.com>>; Google Scholar, <<https://scholar.google.co.in>>; Academic.edu, <<http://academic.research.microsoft.com>>; Taylor and Francis, <<https://www.tandfonline.com>>; Research Gate, <<https://www.researchgate.net>>, <<https://inlibnet.ac.in>>, <<https://eric.ed.gov>>; Sage Journals, <<https://journals.sagepub.com>>; books, <<https://books.google.co.in>>.

There is a few offline material available on life skills education in school setting (books, journals, PhD thesis) which were also used for review purpose.

Data Extraction

Relevant studies are extracted from the pool of studies related to life skills education following the inclusion and exclusion criteria for article selection and search strategy. After removal of articles that did not meet the search criteria, 77 studies were included in the review.

Data Analysis

For identifying the themes, interpretation, and outcomes, the searched materials were examined carefully. Content analysis method was used to group the materials into related themes and for further analysis and synthesis of the result.

Results

After visualising the searched materials, six broad themes were identified. The 77 extracted studies were classified into six themes, (Table 1) and their year-wise details are given in Table 2.

Table 1
Number of Studies Reviewed Theme-wise

S.No.	Studies Related to	Number
1.	Life Skills Education and Types of Schools	13
2.	Life Skills Education and Students' Competencies	28
3.	Life Skills Education and Teachers	15
4.	Inclusion of Life Skills Education in Curriculum	07
5.	Strategies used for Life Skills Education	07

6.	Factors Influencing Implementation of Life Skills Education	07
	Total	77

Table 2
Number of Studies Reviewed (year-wise)

Year	No. of Studies	Year	No. of Studies
2000–2010	11	2016	23
2011	05	2017	08
2012	06	2018	05
2013	03	2019	03
2014	05	2020	02
2015	06	Total 77 Studies	

Numerous studies are available in different areas of life skills but the present review was done only for studies of life skills education related to the school setting. Year-wise analysis of studies indicates that out of 77 studies extracted, only 11 were conducted during 2000–2010, while 25 were done during 2011–2015, however 41 studies were reported from the last five years (2016–2020). This shows that efforts are continuously being made and there seems to be a rise in interest in research in the area of life skills education in school setting in the last decade.

Life Skills Education and Types of Schools

This section covers 13 studies related to life skills education and types of schools; Of these, 11 studies were related to the Indian schools. In a study, Suresh and Subramoniam (2015) revealed that in schools in Kerala, the teachers focussed on the development of arithmetic, writing, and reading skills and considered life skills as non-academic activity. However, some teachers were aware of it, but they were hesitant to speak about it due to time constraint. Soni (2016) also observed similar findings in the secondary schools of Lucknow.

The school environment plays a vital role in developing life skills. Amandeep (2016) conducted a study in Delhi schools and found that schools were practising various essential ways of developing life skills and life skills of public schools' students were

better than that of government school students. In line with this, Kaur, M. (2019) also concluded that the school environment, family environment and socio-economic status play important roles in the betterment of life skills for students. In addition, the study also observed that senior secondary school students of private schools, especially female students studying in urban areas were better at life skills. In a comparative study, Chandra (2016), in the schools of Lucknow, found that private schools provide better opportunities to explore life skills than the government and government-aided schools. Similar type of study was done by Soni (2016) in senior secondary schools of Lucknow and found that the private schools were in a better position and these schools had no time allocation for life skills education. Tiwari (2018) studied the practises followed for life skills education in CBSE schools of Varanasi and observed similar findings. She (Tiwari, 2018) further observed that, majority of the teachers had knowledge about life skills education and *CBSE Life Skills Teacher's Manual*. Students with high life skills and internal locus of control had better well-being and private school students had higher well being as compared to government school students.

Since, CBSE has included life skills education in its curriculum, these students showed a considerable depth of understanding and knowledge of life skills education (Nanaware and Palanethra, 2017) as compared to state board students of Bangaluru. Kushwaha and Bajpai (2019) also noticed similar type of findings in the comparative study of the CBSE and UP board. Behrani (2016) reflected about methods, assessment and problems in the implementation of life skills education programme in CBSE schools in Gujarat. The Gujarat Council of Educational Research and Training (GCERT) and UNICEF had jointly undertaken a project on life skills education during the academic session 2004–05 and implemented them in the primary schools and found that almost all life skills were merged in the contents of the subjects and established a model for life skills education in the state (Pathak, 2017). The content of books selected for study were good and sufficient to inculcate life skills as observed by Chandra (2016) in schools of Lucknow.

Two studies conducted in foreign countries were also included in the review. Bwayo (2014) explored the way life skills education is being implemented in Ugandan primary schools and found that all stakeholders value life skills. Wurdinger, et al. (2020) in a correlational study reported that hope and life skills, such as

self-direction and collaboration positively impact academic achievement in maths as well as reading test scores.

It is evident that despite the emphasis on the National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2005), schools give more focus on reading, writing and arithmetic skills, schools have no time allocation for life skills education in their schedule. The private schools provide better opportunities to explore life skills than the Government and Government-aided schools. However, the CBSE schools are in a better position as CBSE has implemented it in its co-scholastic part of curriculum. CBSE students showed a considerable depth of understanding and knowledge of life skills education than the State boards, this validates that they have benefitted from a well formulated life skills enhancement programmes as part of CBSE curriculum. However, more studies are needed from other parts of country for comprehensive understanding of the status of life skills education in the school setting.

Life Skills Education and Students' Competencies

Life skills education plays a significant role in influencing varied behaviours of adolescence, such as social behaviour, sexual behaviour, cognitive competencies, and socio-emotional behaviour. Verma (2007) found the life skills programme manual effective for adolescents as it increases knowledge (health, nutrition), skills (to manage stress, relationships and emotions, decision making) and abilities (for leadership, assertiveness and communication). Yadav and Iqbal (2009) also observed positive effects of life skills training on adolescents' attitude, thought, and behaviour, thereby accepting to social adjustment. Akfirat and Kezer (2016) also observed similar findings among primary school Grade IV students. The NIMHANS model of life skills education programme was effective in bringing about significant improvements in adolescents' self-esteem, coping skills, and adjustments (Srikala and Kumar, 2010). Chhadva and Kacker (2013) reported the effectiveness of life skills education in helping adolescents to deal effectively with life's challenges. Parvathy and Pillai (2015) explored the impact of life skills education training on adolescents in rural schools and revealed its significant impact on adolescents. Continuous life skills training along with structured counselling helped in developing positive changes and friendly behaviour among the children showing problems (Bardhan, 2016). Surma (2016) also examined the effectiveness of life skills counselling in enhancing the personality of high school students

and found it effective. Life skills training contributes positively as it equips children with psychosocial competencies that help them to cope up with the school adjustment and academic achievement (Kaur, 2017). Khera and Khosla (2012) found a positive correlation between core effective life skills and the self-concept of adolescents, where adolescents with these essential skills had better confidence in all aspects. Daisy (2018) observed significant relationship among life skills, learning behaviour, self-confidence and presentation skills of adolescents and concluded that life skills intervention has helped adolescents modify their behaviour, which will help them to lead a positive life.

In an exploratory cum intervention study, students showed varied coping skills. The majority of the students were found lacking in reasoning skills, planning leisure time, creative thinking, critical thinking, systemic thinking skills, reflective skills, research skills, learning skills, skills of synergy, skills of problem solving and self-directional skills (Purohit, 2016). Vranda and Rao (2011) mentioned various life skills programmes initiative in India and evaluation of life skills programme and suggested for life skills training as, it enhances the psychosocial competencies of adolescents to become successful and independent in this competitive age. Daisy (2016) in an article mentioned that cognitive, social and emotional skills of children may be negatively affected when they grow up in disadvantaged learning contexts without proper life skills competency and learning of different aspects of life skills, which directly relates to the academic development of adolescents as well.

Life skills practises are found to be effective for adolescent girls in increasing awareness about reproductive health. Rathinasabapathy (2011) observed a change in the level of knowledge and attitude towards reproductive health and enhancement in the perceived level of self-esteem in all domains such as personal, family, social and self-concept in adolescent girls in Puducherry while assessing the effectiveness of a teaching module on selected life skills. Azad (2016) also recommended life skills practises for the alleviation of the socio-economic and traditional causes that hindered the reproductive and sexual well-being of adolescent girls, who are unaware of reproductive health in 10 muslim dominated villages of Assam. Experiential environmental education lays the foundation for developing life skills and pro-environmental

behaviours among adolescents as concluded by Punam (2011) in the experimental study.

J. Kaur and K. Kaur (2016) found life skills as a predictor of attitude of college students towards alcohol and drug abuse. Study depicted a significant and negative relationship between self-awareness, empathy, effective communication and coping with emotional dimensions of life skills and attitude of college students towards alcohol and drug abuse. Kaur, J. (2016) in a correlational study found positive correlation between life skills and the adjustment of university students in Patiala. Mistry (2016) conducted a study in Gujarat to understand the need for career guidance and proposed a road map for strengthening the required set of skills in decision making and self awareness among college students to guide them on the path of career building. Raj and S. Raju (2016) found a significant relationship between life skills and quality of life. In addition, the study revealed no difference in the level of life skills due to age, gender and education of college students. Prakash and Devi (2015) found a moderate level of life skills among undergraduate students and observed significant differences in life skills with respect to the stream of study, medium of instruction, place of living, whether attended any life/ soft skill courses and no significant difference in gender and type of management. Yankey, T. (2011) found life skills training as an effective psychological intervention strategy for promoting social and mental health of Tibetan refugee adolescents studying in India.

The studies carried out in other countries also advocate the necessity of life skills training for adolescents. Magnani et al. (2005) reported that school-based life skills education appears capable of communicating key information and helping youth develop key life skills relevant to reducing sexual risk behaviours of the adolescents in South Africa. Teachers and pupils acknowledged the importance of life skills education in the development of character (Okech and Role, 2015). In Kenya, Salonen et al. (2017) published an article to communicate the reasons behind the lack of interest in choosing science studies and science-related careers by school students in eastern Finland. It revealed that, although students have a great deal of knowledge about working life skills, they need more wide-ranging information about scientific careers and competencies; such information can be acquired by interacting with professionals and observing real working life problems.

Cicily and Jebastina (2016) found that need-based life skills interventions enhanced the adolescents in self-awareness and their capacity to deal with emotions in daily life situations. However, Springs (2002) did not find any significant difference while conducting the effectiveness of life skills training in promoting the positive social behaviour of the students (as cited in Kaur, 2017).

Researchs, thus, report a positive effect on the intervention of life skills education programmes in adolescents, particularly their social adjustment. Mostly, life skills training shows positive results among adolescents as it promotes social and mental health, enhanced their academic performance, reduced anxiety, and reduced high-risk behaviour and developed confidence, strengthened positive behaviour to live a balanced life and helps in preparing them to become better individuals. The preceding reviews clearly indicate the importance of life skills education for the students of all the levels, but more essentially for adolescents, so schools should supplement them with life skills education along with academics.

Life Skills Education and Teachers

Helaiya (2010) implemented a life skills programme for students–teachers, who were weak in many life skills and found it to be very effective. Rawat (2014) found life skills training effective on the teacher–trainees in Lucknow, as it improved their perception of work environment, performance and self-efficacy. Kalaiselvi (2016) found that the life skills programmes enhanced life skills of B.Ed. trainees. Pathak (2017) in his book *Life Skill Oriented Teacher Education* dealt about an experimental research and concluded that life skills education programme is effective for the B.Ed. trainees. It was found significant with respect to the identified basis of the programme, viz., concepts of life, self-concept, personality traits, and role of art—literature and media. Patil (2018) found significant positive effects of life skill enhancement programme in enhancing the life skills of pre-service teachers. In an experimental research, Pandya (2019) concluded that life skills are important for future upliftment. Student–teachers found life skills module activities very interesting for developing life skills. Intervention developed innovative ideas, improved writing skills, thinking power, enhanced confidence level, and creative thinking of student–teachers (Pandya, 2019). A study conducted by Sandhu (2014) revealed that there is a need to train students–teachers by consequently developing

life skills amongst them. Teaching performance can be predicted by correlated variables (life skills) either separately or collectively (Jayachithra, 2015). Victoria (2017) suggested integration of life skills with the teaching profession, especially in pre-service teacher education programmes.

Research has reported the gender differences. Chauhan (2016) found life skills training more effective in the case of male teacher-trainees. On the other hand, it was revealed from the study of Victoria (2017) that female teachers were better at relating life skills with teaching effectiveness, human relations skills and holistic wellness, but in the case of teacher leadership, male teachers were better.

Srivastava (2019) observed a significant linear relationship between digital competence and life skills of higher education teachers. MOOC course had been proved helpful making use of digital tools in the teaching-learning process, which in turn enhanced life skills too (Srivastava, 2019). Dakshinamurthy (2012) in an article, published in *The Hindu* (Life Skill Training for Teachers to help Students) suggested that life skills education training is very important for teachers who prepare young minds (as cited in Kaur, 2017). Gulati (2006) found that life skills education programme strengthened the student-teacher relationships and students became more participative, creative and interactive on life skills training (as cited in Bhawna and Joshi, 2016). The science courses provided significant setting to teach life skills. Teachers used some in class and some with extracurricular activities to teach life skills. It was suggested that teacher training programmes should also contain activities to improve pre-service teachers' and in-service teachers' information and skills concerning life skills (Fidan and Aydoğdu, 2018). Bhawna (2017) reported the effectiveness of computer-aided instruction in enhancing the teacher trainees' achievement in life skills education.

The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009) recommended that life skills should be essential for prospective teachers as they transact these life skills to students. Thus, the studies supports that life skills education programme was effective for the teachers at all levels (school, college, and university) across different subjects. Thus, teachers need to update themselves with best quality life skills for transacting it to their students. Teachers need to be competent enough to plan an effective strategy (methodology, tools, techniques and approaches)

to deliver the life skill-related content appropriately. This requires the teachers to be properly trained. As life skills training brought a positive impact on teachers, it is suggested to provide intensive training at both the levels, i.e., in-service and pre-service teacher education with regard to life skills education.

Inclusion of Life Skills Education in Curriculum

The Central Board of Secondary Education has introduced life skills education as an integral part of its curriculum and provides guidelines for transaction of the 10 core life skills to the teachers and developed life skills materials for students too. Bharath (2002) designed and developed three activity manuals (for Classes VIII–X) for teachers on health promotion using a life skills approach with the help of the Child and Adolescent Health and Development unit of WHO—South East Asian Regional Office (SEARO), New Delhi. It is aimed at empowering adolescents with 10 core life skills by providing them with the necessary skills to be facilitators and confidence with the help of experiential learning, using the vehicle of participative activities (as cited in Pathak, 2017). Choudhary and Mehta (2012) found that life skills education programmes helped and empowered adolescents to develop better insights about their physical changes, build self confidence, and gender-related issues among economically backward adolescent belonging to tribal community in Gujarat. This study strongly recommends that this kind of life skills education intervention programme should be made an integral part of the school curriculum. Geeta (2011) also suggested to implement life skills training as the core component of the curriculum at school level. Results from an experimental study highlighted significant and positive effects on the development of life skills among Dyslexic children. Perceptions about the high-level life skills are positively associated with perceptions about the essence of humans and it was suggested that human rights education and life skills education can be successfully integrated in the school curriculum (Sengupta, et al., 2012, cited in Kaur, 2017). Monterio and Shetty (2016) also suggested an effective and creative life skills education package for the curriculum, which can better prepare youth to enter and contribute to a competitive and global workforce. Amalgamation of life skills education with other core school subjects is also important for optimum results. Thote and Mathew (2016) explored the amalgamation of life skills education with language teachings in a private English medium school and

found that seven life skills, out of 18, empirically amalgamated with English language teaching.

NCF 2005 strictly recommends the inclusion of life skills education in school curriculum. It can be designed to be spread across the curriculum, either as a separate subject or can be integrated with the contents. The research, thus, strongly recommends life skills education to be made an integral part of the curriculum, and for which well-formulated life skills enhancement programmes are required. However, the existing studies related to inclusion of life skills education in curriculum advocates that these do not occupy any specific place in the school curriculum. There is an urgent need to implement life skills as the core component of the present curriculum compulsorily in schools of all the boards.

Strategies Used for Life Skills Education

Life skills education need to be imparted in a comprehensive way through viable usage of strategies, exploratory learning approaches, practical and activity oriented teaching and learning process for skill development among youth (Kumar, 2016). Classroom discussions, brainstorming, role plays, small group/buzz group, educational games and simulations, storytelling, debates, situation analyses and case studies have been found effective in the classroom setting (Kumar P., 2017; Nivedita and Singh, 2016; Prajapati, et al. 2017; Tiwari and Bajpai, 2018). These strategies are also suggested in *The Teachers' Manual for Life Skills Education and CCE of IX and X* (pp. 10–15).

Peer tutoring approach along with strategies like brainstorming, role-plays, small groups, games and simulations, situational analyses and case studies, storytelling, debate for imparting life skills education to the adolescents are mentioned in an article by Saravana Kumar and Devi, (2020). Nagaraju (2016) also supported the peer educator approach. It was suggested that the peer educator approach needs to be integrated with syllabi and materials development, transaction of materials, organisation of learning experiences and evaluation in imparting life skills education to the adolescents in order to build the skill India. There is an urgent need to train and prepare a large contingent of 'trainers of trainers' (TOTs) and different teaching methods have been suggested by Sharma (2012) that can be used to enhance life skills among students.

Further, constructive approach as a more effective and appropriate approach facilitates students for developing life skills

(Yadav and Kesharwani, 2017). The researchers specified some important and major constructivist methods like Distributed Cognition Method and Co-operative Learning Method—class discussion, brainstorming, storytelling, debates, situation analyses or case study methods and other creative methods (role play, games, poetry recitation, dance and music).

On an international level, the participatory teaching-learning methods are recommended for the teaching of life skills education (Abobo 2012). Abobo (2012) further included case studies, brainstorming, field visits, panel discussions, storytelling, music, group discussion, debates, posters, role-plays, games, projects, poetry recitals, and drama for enhancing life skills. According to studies of Adhiambo (2013) the use of discussion and case studies were the major teaching activities and role-plays, games and storytelling were also used in giving life skills education in secondary schools. Existing reviews highlight that teachers adapt participatory, experiential, facilitative pedagogy, and innovative practices for its transaction among students.

Adoption of a variety of strategies (methodology, tools, techniques and approaches) that facilitate life skills transaction can facilitate its internalisation among students. Strategies like classroom discussion, brainstorming, role-plays, small group or buzz group, educational games and simulations, storytelling, debates, peer education, situation analyses and case studies have been found effective.

Factors Influencing Implementation of Life Skills Education

Exploring the awareness and application of life skills education, James (2010) identified problems faced by the teachers, such as lack of time, funds, and life skills materials. Adhiambo (2013) also identified the factors for effective implementation of life skills education as lack of qualified teachers, time, syllabus, textbooks and other materials necessary for learning. Mugambi and Muthui (2013) also found several factors, such as teaching approaches, poor conceptualisation of life skills, limited human resource, lack of supervision, poor teacher preparation, poor choice of teaching learning strategies, limited use of instructional resources, poor assessment methods, and negative attitude of students towards life skills. Abobo (2012) while studying the factors focussing on implementation of life skills education observed that most teachers had not been trained on life skills education. Teachers had negative attitude while students had positive attitude towards life skills

education. Abobo and Orodho (2014) also noticed that most teachers had not been trained on life skills education. Wairimu (2015) found lack of training in teaching methodologies in life skills education and recommended that teachers and head teachers need to be provided training for effective implementation. Githaiga et al. (2014) revealed that there is inadequate attention of teachers towards life skills education due to heavy workload and under staffing. Some other reasons included the level of preparedness by teachers and school managers, which was fairly low and this hampered effective implementation of life skills education (Abobo and Orodho, 2014).

Tiwari, P. (2018), while observing the practices followed for life skills education in CBSE schools, also highlighted the problems related with teachers, students and parents. Lack of suitable methods, interest and a separate period for life skills, lot of burden on the teachers, and a few immeasurable life skills were some of the other factors that affected its implementation. Behrani (2016) also noticed similar problems in her study. The problems were found to be very critical that affected the implementation of life skills education significantly in school setting.

Life skills education can be well inculcated through formal setting yet schools fail to implement it properly due to several problems, such as training of teachers, negative attitude of students, etc. The schools need to focus on these aspects to promote life skills education.

Conclusion

The present review reveals useful information regarding the status of life skills education, practices and challenges being faced in its implementation in the Indian context. From the six identified themes, it can be observed that the interest of researches related to school, teachers and strategies have increased in the recent years. A large number of studies related to students are available across the globe, but only a few studies have been found to be related to the strategies. There is limited researches related to curriculum and the factors affecting implementation of life skills education. These identified gaps open up arena to conduct more research in the recognised field.

Overall, studies indicated that schools of other boards do not give much attention to life skills education. The CBSE schools are in better position. More studies are needed from the whole country for a comprehensive understanding of the status for it to

be made an integral part of the curriculum in the school setting in the Indian context. There is a need for life skills education programmes for teachers, parents, educators, policy makers and stakeholders to spread awareness. Life skills education would be more effective at the adolescent stage. Therefore, schools need to provide life skills education to adolescent students. Teachers should be trained to design instructional strategy and educational activities to develop an effective life skills training module and organise enriched programmes for teachers and students. The teachers as well as students should be encouraged to participate in training programmes with great enthusiasm. The school authorities too need to understand the importance of life skills education and accordingly need to make necessary policies, and plan and implement guidelines to overcome these challenges.

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