

Inculcation of Life Skills in Teacher Training Program: Strategy from the Past

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Abstract

The development of one's physical, moral, and intellectual faculties was the primary goal of Vedic education, and in order to attain salvation, a strong emphasis was placed on focus, attention, and yoga. Vedic education has an answer for each challenge troubling our world today. Now that we have the answers and solutions, we must search farther. The aim of Vedic education was the development of morally sound and emotionally sound character. After the Britishers invaded India, our Indian education system took a huge turn. With technological advancement and work pressure, desire to lead a happy life, today's youth need to learn how to cope up with change. Their ability to overcome obstacles in life with bravery and confidence stems from their life skills. Students who acquire life skills are better equipped to handle stress and other challenges in life with poise and composure. Life skills are the aptitudes that support young children's mental and social development as well as their ability to deal with life's realities. Teachers play a very pivotal role in every child's life. Their proactive engagement in the skill-building process of students makes a substantial contribution to their overall success and growth. This paper focuses on challenges in implementing life skills education and the importance of inculcating life skills education in the teacher training program.

Key words: *Vedic Education, Life Skills, Curriculum, Teacher Training.*

Introduction

The system of education that originated in ancient India is referred to as the Vedic system. In Vedic education system children were taught Vedas in Gurukul. Rig Veda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda were the Vedas that were studies during the Vedic education. Learning wasn't just theoretical during the Vedic era. It had something to do with the truth of life. Vedic education was student centered. Students in the Vedic education system memorized the texts that their teachers recited to them. The earlier Vedic educational system was regarded as an extremely sophisticated kind of education that emphasized life's purity and happiness. Debate, discussion, storytelling, introspection, travelling, practical exposure, hands on experience were the methods used to teach the students in Vedic system. The teacher was expected to have a solid foundation in his field of expertise. He used to teach his students skills that were essential in their life such as problem-solving skill, decision making skill, empathy skills, self-awareness skill. These skills were required for students' wholesome personality development, emphasising discipline, character development, mental development, and moral development. Today we term these skills as life skills. In addition to

creating a knowledge-based approach that children can utilize to grow throughout their lives as they learn to understand, perform, become and coexist with others, education aims to prepare such human beings who are happy both inside and outside of themselves. Life skills are those that can support and encourage happiness and well-being in young people. It is imperative to educate children about the value of life skills. They need to developing self-sufficiency in fulfilling their own mental, physical, emotional, and financial requirements is crucial. Students can work with this great model to accomplish their goals. The role of a teacher is very important in imparting life skills among students. A creative and skilled teacher provides children a variety of learning environments in order to develop into productive and efficient individuals in the future (Shridevi, 2019). The teachers must receive training before they can impart the vital life skills to the students. Therefore, it is imperative to include life skills in teacher training curriculum.

Objectives of Vedic Education

The goal of the Vedic educational system was to shape the young students into people who could live ideal and fulfilling lives by adhering to the Dharma. Vedic education focused on virtues like independence, discipline, compassion, and reverence for all living things. Pupils were instructed to value the harmony that exists between nature and humans. The primary goal of Vedic education was to attain salvation by the development of one's mental, ethical, or spiritual, and physical capabilities. Some objectives of Vedic education are mention below that is relevant with life skills.

1. Personality development

The main goals of Vedic education were the development of character and personality. Morality was considered very essential in Vedic system. Moral principles were instilled in students to be followed throughout their lives. The teacher attempted to instil in his students the values of self-worth, self-assurance, self-control, and self-respect by setting an example.

2. Practical education

Vedic education placed equal emphasis on gaining practical expertise and academic knowledge from sacred texts such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata. In addition to receiving other occupational training, children were taught how to perform manual labor. Among the professions were weaving, ceramics, etc.

3. Infusion of Spiritual & Religious Values

The main goal of education in the past was to inculcate in students a spirit of piety and religiosity for the benefit of mankind and the honor of God. The search for information was a

search for moral principles. It was thought that rigorous practice of sacred rituals was the only way to promote greater awareness of spiritual values.

4. Civic Responsibilities and Social Values

Students were required to return to society after completing their education at the Gurukul and contribute in various ways to enhance and develop it. They had to extend kindness and hospitality to those in need.

5. Emphasising Discipline

It was necessary for a student to give up overjoy, lust, rage, desire, ego, and arrogance. He was told not to gamble, gossip, deceive, backbite, or harm other people's sentiments. Every student, regardless of wealth, was expected to live a modest life in the Ashram or Gurukul.

6. Character building

If a person lacked morality, their intelligence was meaningless. The higher "Dharma" was regarded as ethical or acting in the proper way. Values like self-control, honesty, truthfulness, and rigorous deference to elders were thought to be instilled through education.

7. Promotion of Social Efficiency and Welfare

Education was given to all members of society in order to prepare them for the professions they were expected to pursue, not just to preserve culture or advance mental abilities.

What are Life Skills?

A person can develop life skills gradually; they are innate abilities. Students must be guided towards success through practice and awareness of their potential in order to develop these skills. The world Health Organisation (WHO) has defined Life skills as "the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life". 'Adaptive' means that a person is flexible in approach and is able to adjust to different circumstances. 'Positive behaviour' implies that a person is forward looking and even in difficult situations can identify a ray of hope and opportunities to find solutions. (CBSE, 2013, p. 13). United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has defined life skills as "A behaviour change or behaviour development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: Knowledge, Attitudes, and Skills" (UGC, 2023, p. 7). World Health Organization (1997) has laid down 10 core life skills:

- **Decision making** enables us to approach life's decisions in a positive way. If youth actively choose their activities in connection to health by weighing the available options and potential repercussions, this could have negative health implications.

- **Problem solving** is the ability to deal effectively with the challenges in our life. If major issues are not handled, they can lead to psychological distress and physical strain as well.
- **Creative thinking** assists us in responding adaptably and flexibility to the events that arise in our daily lives, even in the absence of a problem or choice that has to be taken. It allows us to see beyond our immediate experience.
- **Critical thinking** helps in assisting us in identifying and evaluating the elements—such as ethics, peer pressure, and the media—that shape our attitudes and behaviors, critical thinking can improve our health.
- **Effective communication** is the ability to communicate effectively involves being able to express ourselves in ways that are appropriate for our cultures and circumstances, both orally and nonverbally. This entails having the capacity to communicate wants, anxieties, and viewpoints. It could also indicate having the ability to seek guidance and assistance when needed.
- **Self-awareness** entails our understanding of who we are, our personality, our likes and dislikes, as well as our strengths and shortcomings.
- **Empathy** is quite helpful in understanding and accepting others who may be very different from ourselves. This is especially true when there is ethnic or cultural diversity.
- **Coping with emotions** identifying emotions in oneself and others, understanding how emotions affect behaviour, and knowing how to react to emotions.
- **Coping with stress** is the understanding of the underlying causes of stress in our lives, how they influence us, and taking actions to assist manage our stress levels.

Importance of Life Skills Education

Life skills enable us to be competent in knowing how to simplify our lives, make them positive, and choose the best ways to spend our time. As a result, life skills are crucial to our success. Students can gain self-confidence by learning life skills. It encourages cooperation and communication in them. It equips them to act quickly in any bad situation. Life skills are interpersonal and social abilities required by all the people, in order to operate competently and confidently toward one another as well as within their communities and society (Kumar, P. 2017). In order to help students make wise decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, form healthy relationships, empathize with others, and deal with managing their lives in a healthy and productive way, life skills education and training take into account psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills (Prajapati, R et al. 2017). The World Health Organization (WHO) states that life skills are beneficial in many aspects of

life and in a wide range of issues, such as preventing drug and substance abuse, HIV and AIDS prevention, sexual violence prevention, teen pregnancy reduction, suicide prevention, peace education, environmental education, livelihood and income generation, and more. We acquire life skills through our personal encounters, perspectives, revelations, narratives, literature, parents, clergy, educators, the media, and so on. People need to acquire life skills, also known as survival skills, in order to fulfill their unique or particular demands. Life skills enable a person to deal with various life circumstances in an appropriate manner. The complete growth of a child's personality is the primary objective of education, since it is the only means of instructing and training someone. Education can therefore play a significant role in equipping student with life skills (Kaur, N. 2022).

Challenges of Implementing Life Skill Education

Worldwide the teaching of life skills education has faced many difficulties. Children today are bewildered lot due to the contemporary conditions of rapid industrial development, urbanization, and globalization. Teachers and parents place a great deal of emphasis on performance and achievement. The first obstacles to life skills education in India most likely stem from the British colonial era. Under the British Empire, modern education was established. The medium of instruction was changed from vernacular to English. The fundamental principle of British education was to produce a workforce of clerics rather than knowledge seekers. The second change is the rapid shifts in the workplace, society, morals, ethics, religion, and familial beliefs have altered modern society's lifestyles, particularly for young people. Children today are particularly lacking in experiences because they are not required to perform household chores or are not encouraged to do so, especially in urban, affluent families.

Thirdly, the concept of life skills education in Indian schools is similar to that of value or character education. Teachers also claimed that all school teachers lacked access to LSE teaching, learning, and assessment approaches, and that in-service training was inadequate. Since LSE is not graded, parents and students gave it less importance. Teachers and students were also overburdened with extracurricular and academic activities that would be tested in final exams (Grover, J 2018). Wangchuk (2019) reported that time constraint, teachers' lack of knowledge of life skills, inadequate teaching-learning materials, absence of fulltime counsellor, and lack of school-parent partnership are the major challenges that impeded the implementation of life skills education in school. Behrani (2016) pointed out that few teachers are unaware of modes of introducing life skills, teachers require time for preparation to incorporate life skills

in curriculum, students felt LS to be an extra burden due to academic and extracurricular activities. The study suggested that the best way to guarantee that life skills curricula are implemented in schools is for teachers to receive life skills training both during pre-service and during in-service training. To make the teaching of life skills more engaging and dynamic for the students, additional resources such as board games, digital activities, and audiovisuals must be created.

Kitimo (2104) stated that Inadequate resources for teaching and learning, the LSE's non-examinable status, the excessive workloads brought on by shortage of teacher, and the absence of qualified teachers on the LSE are the major challenges for implementing life skills.

Kitivui (2013) stated that Teachers who have received life skills training are better able to execute the curriculum, and those who have not should not instruct students in life skills. In order for LSE to be implemented successfully, it is important to make sure that teachers receive sufficient and pertinent training for the subject, that time set aside for LSE in schools is not used for syllabus coverage, and that instructors are encouraged to use participatory strategies when teaching life skills.

Ranjekar (2008) The current educational system is frequently criticized for being overly theoretical and disconnected from reality. The majority of education appears to be concentrated on simple cognitive abilities centered on memorization of course material. Education rarely consciously addresses life skills like critical thinking, interpretation, self-reflection, communication, interpersonal skills, and, most importantly, learning and relearning how to adapt to constantly changing new situations in life.

Kolosoa and Makhakhane (2010) focus attention on that the program was only made available to pre-service teachers and students in person. Open and distance learning delivery, or ODL, was never thought of as a way to accommodate teachers and students who had attended training sessions prior to the introduction of life skills education. Education on life skills has suffered from the lack of clear standards for assessment and evaluation procedures.

Abobo & Orodho (2014) Highlighted the fact that the students opined that the aims and objectives of teaching life skills education was irrelevant and unattainable. Due to the lack of examinations, life skills education is not taken seriously by teachers or students. These principals made it abundantly evident that, given the examination-oriented curriculum interpretation of learning in most schools, teachers and students only take examinable subjects seriously.

Otieno (2015) highlighted that curriculum's implementation requires careful consideration of the importance of teacher preparation. The institutions of teacher preparation curricula do not

incorporate LSE pedagogy. Teachers become incompetent and incapable of effectively teaching LSE. In order to carry out the curriculum, the teachers must rely on their general knowledge and expertise. Some teachers are incredibly inept at teaching LSE and have very little experience.

Singh & Sharma (2016) pointed out that in India, teachers must be given the tools and encouragement to incorporate life skills into their teaching methods. It is obvious that life skills instruction in schools must take place in the framework of more extensive reforms to the educational system. Teachers who are qualified and driven and who can use experiential and interactive teaching methods to teach life skills must implement age-appropriate, inclusive curricula in schools.

Teacher training institutions and universities have not included life skills education in their curriculum. Teachers who are expected to teach Life Skills Education lack the necessary skills to effectively teach the material, which makes them ineffectual at teaching it. Teachers used LSE minimally and were ill-prepared to teach it. Most teachers approach teaching LSE education in the same way they teach other subjects because they lack the necessary training. There is a contradiction between principle and execution when it comes to teaching values because they appeal to the heart rather than the head.

In India various efforts have been made to impart life skills education among the students. Realising the importance of LS, CBSE has introduced life skills manual for the teachers. But if look at the ground reality; many teachers are not aware of the concept of life skills, teachers are unable to implement LS activities in their daily teaching learning process. Most teachers in schools focuses on education and exam preparation for their pupils. Teachers play an integral part in helping students to develop their psychosocial competencies. By encouraging young children to take initiative, teachers support and encourage their development. The transition of young people into adolescence requires this support. It is acknowledged that a teacher's character influences a student's character in significant ways. "Teachers who model the values of character that they want their students to aspire to will be the primary source from whom pupils will learn good character habits." (Arthur & Revell, n.d. p. 9, Cited in Otieno, 2015). The LSE's pedagogy requires re-evaluation. Since LSE is not just a topic for the cognitive realm. Indeed, the affective domain of a child's development is more stimulated by this subject. It is imperative for teachers to adopt a non-cognitive strategy for teaching and create learning objectives that resonate more with the affective aspect of students' personalities. To make life skills learning a lifetime endeavour, more hands-on activities must be incorporated into the curriculum.

Importance of Inculcating Life Skills in Teacher Training Program

Teachers must implement a learner-centered approach and design creative group and/or individual life skills activities in order to instill life skills in their students. Games, project work, assignments, case studies, brainstorming sessions, surveys, role plays, dramas, poster presentations, group discussions, quizzes, debates, and so on can all be included in these individual or group activities. In order to fortify these life skills through the content and the planning and execution of suitable activities in the classroom, an efficient and high-quality teacher preparation program is necessary. Therefore, teachers need to be trained in integrating these skills into their lessons. As a result of these modifications, learners may gain comprehension and be empowered to acquire and produce new types of knowledge as they mature. For their life to be innovative, beneficial, and cheerful, this understanding is essential. It is now necessary to apply life skill education in a relevant and appropriate manner. Giving students life skills instruction is a good way to meet children's needs as well as to provide them with useful, self-management, social, emotional, and cognitive skills for life adjustments (Kumar, 2017). Therefore, it is necessary that teacher training institutions should include life skills education in their curriculum.

Conclusion

A variety of psycho-social and cognitive skills are referred to as life skills, and they help children make decisions that will guide their emotional health and improve their communication skills. To live a successful life, one must possess life skills. Around the world, life skills education is a huge and essential component of the educational system. However, life skills education has not yet been fully implemented and acknowledged as a crucial component of the curriculum in Indian schools. Adolescents must be taught life skills through interactive activities that simultaneously affect their cognitive and affective domains. School teachers must receive pre-service training and in-service interventions regarding pedagogy and recent advancements in the area of teaching life skills in order to prepare them for the challenges facing life skills education. Vedic education has always emphasised on the education in which the student can become independent and can face the challenges of life.

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