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Developing life skills education for sustainable development of students

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to analyze the development of a life skills education in students. Sample of the study consisted of 200 students were randomly selected from 5 schools of Panchkula. The methods for collecting data were Interview and Observation. The findings of the study showed Life skills education can be beneficial in targeting negative behaviors in children and encouraging sound values and actions

Keywords: Education, Life Skills, Students, Sustainable Development etc.

1. Introduction

Life skills education represents a shift in educational focus from information to methodologies. Children are empowered with skills rather than knowledge that can help them to function and make sound personal choices in areas of education, health, careers, and social interaction. Life skills training has the potential to strengthen various development initiatives such as HIV/AIDS prevention, peace brokering, and improving education by using a skills-based approach to shaping children's behavior patterns.

1.1 Life skills

The concept of life skills is often interpreted in different ways. It can mean vocational skills that teach a trade or prepare participants for pursuing a job or vocation and it can also mean teaching participants various external skills that help them navigate through daily life, such as sewing, fixing a bicycle, or washing hands. According to (Mangrulkar; Cheryl; and Marc, 2000) life skills build the needed competencies for human development and to adopt positive behaviors that enable them to deal effectively with the challenges of everyday life.

1.2 Sustainable Development

Sustainable development means development of knowledge, skills and values required to accomplish the needs of present generation without compromising with the ability of future generation to gratify their needs. According to United Nations General Assembly (1987) sustainable development aims to maintain economic advancement and progress while protecting the long-term value of the environment; it provides a framework for the integration of environment policies and development strategies.

2. Objectives

- To analyze the present condition of life skills education in the students of Panchkula district.
- To suggest some measures to improve life skills education for sustainable development of students.

3. Sample

Sample of 200 students has been randomly selected from the 5 schools of district Panchkula. Out of the 200 samples 40 each has been selected from 5 schools.

4. Tools Used

The methods for collecting data were Interview and Observation.

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5. Findings and Analysis

During the survey a lot of things about the present condition of life skills education are coming in to light. Based on several variables of observation like the Age, Gender, and Class in which they study etc. data was collected accordingly. The data collected from the field are analyzed to assess the life skills of students. The results are as follows:

5.1 Physical Environment of Classrooms: The most salient characteristic is that in each school children were crowded into small classrooms that often had nothing in the room or on the walls other than a blackboard. They did not have desks or benches on which they could sit comfortably or arrange their books so as to be able to concentrate on learning. There were up to 80 students for one teacher. Classrooms had open windows and doors so that noise from the entire school echoed throughout them. Additionally, other students or people outside the school would often come to the windows and distract the class. When there was an overflow of children, classes would be conducted in the hallways or stairwells. There were no teaching materials in the room for the children to use nor were there posters on the walls. Some classrooms had quotes or pictures painted on the walls, but nothing that was directly related to the topics children were learning. There was little to stimulate the children or aid in their learning process.

5.2 Teaching-Learning Methods: The teaching methods generally amounted to one-way didactic process, where the teachers and students did not really interact. Teachers read from textbooks and went at one pace regardless of whether or not the whole class was following. Generally the teachers tried to be strict with the children, but did not always have a great amount of control over the students. Many teachers seemed unengaged and would do paperwork or leave the room in what seemed to be an attempt to pass the time until the school session would be over. In most schools there would be an older student who was in charge of keeping the students in order for the teachers. Many teachers resorted to threatening, shouting at, and hitting the children on their backs in order to discipline them and no teaching aids other than the textbook being used.

5.3 Clarity of Concepts: Given that the teaching method was generally talking at the children without encouraging questions, the children's understanding seemed quite low. Teachers repeatedly told children not to take notes and only to listen. When teachers would read a passage from a book and ask the students about what was just read, few, if any, would respond. Similarly, once the majority of the class seemed to understand a concept, the teacher might ask about it in a new or rephrased way, and again student were unable to respond.

5.4 Children's Behavior: Children were generally disengaged. There were a handful of students who took on the responsibility of responding to the teacher's questions and so the other children were free to chat with their friends. Many children looked bored and many would talk or play with classmates, write or draw in their notebooks, or run around the classroom. They did not ask questions or indicate whether they understood what was being taught. Children took many bathroom breaks and some would not return after recess.

5.5 Total Effects: The way the students were being taught was not effective. They did not have a nurturing environment where they could focus on learning. They were being taught to simply memorize and regurgitate facts rather than fully process and understand concepts. The children were not learning how to think for themselves or how to apply concepts to different situations. Creativity was being stifled by the non-interactive lecture format and lack of stimulating teaching materials. The forms of discipline prevented teachers from gaining the trust of the children or promoting a sense of respect for children or adults. Children learned to communicate both verbally and physically in an aggressive manner. Besides not properly learning the academic subjects, the thinking and learning techniques that are imbibed through schooling and that are important in non-academic life, were not being learned. So these and other life skills lessons were necessary for the development of the children. Modules on to respect, non-aggressive communication, critical thinking, and problem solving were therefore included in the life skills curriculum.

6. Measures for promotion of life Skills Education for Sustainable Development of Students

6.1 Confidence: Belief in one's abilities allows a person to aspire and achieve. For children to make life choices that may go against societal norms, they would have to be confident enough to stand up to pressure and believe in their own decisions. Many children were reluctant to participate, speak up, or voice their opinions.

6.2 Conflict resolution: Different levels of conflict arise on a daily basis so it is important for children to learn how to address them. They, girls in particular, face many pressures from family and society, and this skill would be useful in finding a balance when these pressures clash. Additionally, violence is a common occurrence in slum areas, so developing ways to resolve issues without resorting to violence is beneficial.

6.3 Time Management: School-going children in India have various stresses and time commitments. Besides going to school, they attend tuition, maybe go to work, and have various responsibilities in the house, particularly girls. They also face strong competition in school and if they have a desire to get high marks, they have to devote a lot of time to study. Children have to find a way to juggle different activities and pressures so it is important for them to learn stress and time management skills. As they grow older, time management will be important in study and work and balancing a home life.

6.4 Creativity and Resourcefulness: Creativity allows children to utilize and express their individuality. It provides an outlet for energy that may not be applicable elsewhere. Since schools do not encourage originality, children seemed to rarely tap into their creative sides. Even while doing arts and crafts, children tended to follow the model rather than creating something of their own. This lack of creativity transcended artistic creativity and also showed itself in children's problem solving and critical thinking capabilities. They were so used to memorizing single answers to questions that they never considered how to find answers and solutions to questions and problems.

6.5 Critical Thinking: Critical thinking skills allow one to fully analyze and assess problems or situations. They are tools to put pieces of a puzzle together and understand the different parts. Based on the common occurrence of children being unable to answer the same question posed in different ways, critical thinking skills would be beneficial to them. They had not been taught how to analyze and understand different parts of issues and situations. Critical thinking skills will equip children with the ability to think through situations carefully and will aid in their decision making and problem solving skills.

6.6 Decision-making: With this skill, children would learn how to assess all their options before making a decision and also start recognizing that there are many options out there. They would learn that they should have sound reasons behind the decisions they make. This way they could hopefully make good choices for their futures and avoid child labor and hazardous occupations.

6.7 Communication: Communication is a skill every person needs in life to build relationships and interact with other people. Lot of the children were uncomfortable talking in front of others and when they did many of them spoke in a similar manner that they must have been taught in schools: arms folded, looking distantly, and talking quickly as if reading off a list. So it important, how to speak effectively and to recognize that their body language also conveys messages to other people. If they wanted to enter a professional job, they would have to learn these skills.

6.8 Independence: Independence allows children to feel comfortable completing tasks on their own and making their own choices. Many grow up without ever having left the area immediately surrounding their homes or have not gone beyond that on their own. This is especially common amongst girls. They then become afraid to travel beyond these limits and have to rely on others to complete any work. This is a problem when they have to change schools or enter high school, which is often farther from home than primary or secondary schools. Many children opt not to go to school because they do not feel comfortable getting there on their own. Independence would help solve this problem and would also build confidence.

6.9 Interpersonal Skills: It is necessary to know how to interact with different types of people at home, school, and work. Children sometimes behave the same way with adults as they do with their peers and may therefore create an unfavorable impression of themselves. Once children learn how to behave with different types of people, they will build better relationships and will be able to get what they want.

6.10 Leadership: Leadership skills help people excel in work and activities. Children often wait for others to start a group activity or volunteer first, so it is important to encourage leadership amongst them. With leadership skills they will be able to address issues they face in their communities by gathering groups or committees.

6.11 Problem Solving: Children face various issues at home, school, work, and in society. Often problems seem overwhelming and it is difficult to see or find a solution to them. With problem solving skills, children will learn to break down problems into manageable parts so that they can

work to find a solution. Problem solving is a key component, which aims to address children's problems.

6.12 Responsibility: Learning to be responsible will hopefully make the children better students and eventually better employees. They will also be able to manage their homes and families better. If children understand their individual and societal responsibilities they will likely become more law abiding and respectful citizens.

6.13 Self-Awareness: This topic deals with how a child views him or herself. It relates to self-worth and topics that stem from that such as looking after oneself. As such it includes concepts such as hygiene and personal safety. In particular communities, a lack of self-awareness was quite evident. Children were either unaware or uninterested in minding their health and safety. If someone does not feel she/he has any worth, she/he will not make efforts to improve and sustain him/herself. Self-awareness will encourage children to perform a self-assessment so that they can recognize their strengths and work on improving themselves. It will also include a component of self-discipline, which is lacking in many children.

6.14 Unity and Equality: This value would help to bridge divisions in society and allow for cross caste and class exchange. It would lead to decreased gender discrimination, which is an issues girl's face on a daily basis in school and at home.

7. Conclusion

Life skills education can be beneficial in targeting negative behaviors in children and encouraging sound values and actions. The focus on methodology and skills rather than simple information dissemination allows life skills programs to mimic children's natural learning processes. As a result, these programs can effectively mold children's characters and behaviors. Life skills are a necessary complement to academic education, especially in India, where schools do not emphasize developing character. They also provide an option to non-school-going children who find regular school curricula to be irrelevant to their lives, because life skills are generally universally applicable and can be further tailored to meet the needs of a specific community.

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