
Life Skills and Adolescence of Rural Background in India

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Abstract

Education plays an important role towards the overall development of human being. Education is preparing child to live life effectively in the contemporary society. Societies change over time and are not same at any point of time. Today, more and more societal pressures, greater complexity, uncertainty and diversity, rapid changes in the environment and continued deprivation put adolescents at the crossroads of their lives facing an uncertain future in facing the responsibilities of adulthood and to enter the world of work. Rural children in India largely attend government schools, which often lack basic facilities such as libraries, sports materials, water and sanitation facilities. The traditional system of education can no more provide inputs to lead life for the kinds of complexities in contemporary societies. Life skills education is suggested by many as a prevention and development approach to cope with this present complex scenario of life. Thus the present paper focuses on the problems faced by the rural adolescence and how life skills education helps these students to face problems of everyday life with a positive attitude to go about with their everyday task effectively especially when they face prejudice and discrimination because of the rural background and when they transit to higher education.

Key words: *life skills, rural background and adolescence*

Introduction

Today, 1.2 billion adolescents stand at the crossroads between childhood and the adult world. Around 243 million of them live in India. About one-quarter of India's population are adolescents. (UNICEF)

Adolescence has traditionally being viewed as beginning with the onset of puberty, a rapid growth accompanied by sexual maturation, and as ending when individuals assume the responsibilities associated with adult life- marriage, entry into the workforce and so on. Adolescents are a positive resource for the country, and need to be respected, appreciated and accepted as such. They have unlimited energy, vitality and idealism, as well as strong urge to experiment and create a better world.

Adolescents are, at the same time, a critical period for the development of self identity. The process of acquiring a sense of self is linked to physiological changes and learning to negotiate social and psychological demands of being young adults.

In India today's adolescents are exposed to more information and cultural alternatives than in earlier periods. This provides the adolescents with culturally diverse choices, which cannot be easily exercised due to economic dependence on parents and significant others. The adolescents have to prepare for global successful adult life of competition and independent functioning which is possible only through enhancing their psychological competencies.

The education of young people and adolescents has been an issue of major concern in all parts of the world. Adolescence can be a stressful time not only for adolescents but also for

parents and adults who work with the adolescents. Adolescents are dealing with the challenges of growing. They are going through puberty, meeting the changing expectation of other, and coping with feelings they not have experienced before.

Problems Faced by Students from Rural Background in India

While the environments in which adolescence live are certainly important, it's crucial to note that these environments interact with characteristics of adolescents themselves to generate contrasting levels of adjustment. The rural context is very much different from the urban one and bring with it, its advantages and concerns.

The students from the rural background, transmitted from their racially and culturally homogenous home environments to be more ethnically and culturally diverse environments. Exposure to a plethora of course offerings academic majors and occupation choices can be overwhelming and lead rural students to frequent changes in occupational interests and college majors.

Adolescents of rural background have lack of information and skills which effect their potential and establishing a positive image and sound career perspective. They do not have a supportive environment in order to share their concerns with others. Counseling facilities are not available for these children's to share their problems.

The traditional system of education can no more provide inputs to lead life for the kind of complexities that have developed as a result of increasing complexities in contemporary societies.

The problem arises when they came to gain higher education; the transition to university is already recognized as complex. With a large literature it was found that the maximum problem faced by the student when they move from secondary to tertiary education.

The most important problem which students face is lack of communication skills. Rural primary schooling are at a significant disadvantages as they transition to higher education, because India's best universities teach exclusively in English.

The problems they face could be as a result of the lack of knowledge in English language such as not being able to buildup adequate vocabulary. It is also due to the reason that the students do not know how to write words, phrases, and sentences. They may also not be good at all in all the skills of the language. They may face a lot of native language interference or they may lack motivation.

In India, the teachers in rural India often try to educate students by making them repeat section of text over and over again. They do not explain the meaning of the text, which results in stunted reading comprehension skills over the course of the children's education.

Teachers in rural India used to teach the students in Hindi language. Government-school-educated children from rural India struggle to speak even basic sentences in English. Students from rural primary schooling are at significant disadvantages as they transition to higher education, because India's best universities teach exclusively in English.

Rural areas where group harmony and interdependence are strongly encouraged adolescence with individualistic values may experience more difficulties in social interaction; as a result, these adolescence may feel frustrated and develop negative attitudes toward others and self. They lack the confidence, knowledge, connections, and family support needed to move into good careers.

Although the process of socialization takes care of these needs and concerns, the formal education system also plays a decisive role. Society particularly the education system has a

responsibility to support youth especially rural children in navigating this transition phase in a positive manner, so as to enable them to realize their potential.

Life skills and adolescents of rural India

In India today's adolescents are exposed to more information and cultural alternatives than in earlier periods. This provides the adolescents with culturally diverse choices, which cannot be easily exercised due to economic dependence on parents and significant others. The adolescents especially from the rural background have to prepare for a global successful adult life of competition and independent functioning which is possible through enhancing their psychosocial competencies through life skills training because these children are deprived from the basic facilities which children's of urban area have.

Life skills: what it is?

Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable humans to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life; in other words, **psychosocial competencies**. They are a set of human skills acquired via teaching or direct experience that are used to handle problems and questions commonly encountered in daily human life.

Adaptive means that a person is flexible in approach and is able to adjust in different circumstances. Positive behavior implies that a person is forward looking and even in difficult situations, can find a ray of hope and opportunities to find solutions.

Life skills include psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with managing their lives in a healthy and productive manner. Life skills are usually associated with managing and living a better quality of life. They help us to accomplish our ambitions and live to our full potential.

Essentially, there are two kinds of skills - those related to thinking termed as "thinking skills"; and skills related to dealing with others termed as "social skills". While thinking skills relate to reflection at a personal level, social skills include interpersonal skills and do not necessarily depend on logical thinking. It is the combination of these two types of skills that are needed for achieving assertive behavior and negotiating effectively. "Emotional" can be perceived as a skill not only in making rational decisions but also in being able to make others agree to one's point of view. To do that, coming to terms first with oneself is important. Thus, self management is an important skill including managing/coping with feelings, emotions, stress and resisting peer and family pressure. Young people as advocates need both thinking and social skills for consensus building and advocacy on issues of concern.

Life skills are a generic framework for learning; they encompass the ability to respond to situations in logical, sensitive and positive ways without harming either self or society. Hence, every society should develop a set of skills relevant to its realities and then empower and encourage its youth to internalize and practice these skills. Life skills are abilities that each one of us possesses, and yet conscious efforts need to be made to enhance these abilities within oneself and others.

It was realized that life skills development should be emphasized in order to empower adolescents to adequately meet the challenges confronting them.

The Life Skills Education is a good support system for adolescents at the community level. Effective acquisition and application of life skills can influence the way one feels about others, ourselves and will equally influence the way we are perceived by others. It contributes

to perception of self confidence and self esteem in turn promotes overall well being of an individual (Anuradha, 2014), especially for the adolescence of rural India because when they came for higher studies they face many problems due to which they suffer from low confidence and low self esteem.

Benefits of teaching life skills

Imparting life skill education in children and adolescents from rural background will bring valuable benefits which include

- a) Promotion of self esteem, peace education, self confidence etc [TACADE, 19902]
- b) Prevention of antisocial activities and behavior [Botvin et.al. 19843, Pentz, 19834]
- c) Helps in the promotion of general well being and primary prevention [Errecart et al., 19915; Perry and Kelder, 19926; Caplan et al., 19927]
- d) Life skills enable individuals to translate knowledge, attitudes and values into actual abilities and enable individuals to behave in healthy ways, given the desire to do so and given the scope and opportunity to do so.
- e) Results of research studies also prove that life skill education improves the academic performance of individuals [Weissberg et.al. 1998]

Conclusion

Adolescence is a period when the intellectual, physical and all the capabilities are very high but their antisocial activities and behavior are deteriorating all their capabilities and they are becoming a burden to the society. Imparting life skill training through inculcating life skill education will help our adolescents to overcome such difficulties in life. Life skill education can serve as a remedy for the problems as it helps the adolescents to lead a better life. There for life skill education is a need of the society and every education system should impart life skill education as a part of its curriculum as it is capable of producing positive health behavior, positive interpersonal relationships and well being of individuals. GESJ: Education Science and Psychology 2011 | No.2 (19) ISSN 1512-1801 7

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