



LIFE SKILLS AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Parul Aggarwal

Assistant Professor, Khalsa College of Education, Amritsar

Abstract

The rapid social change consequent upon modernization, urbanization, globalization and media boon has made the lives of youth, their expectations, values and outlook very different from those of older generations. Youth is considered as the most powerful members of the society due to their physical and intellectual capabilities. But it is sad to see the fact that most of them are unable to utilize their potential in a suitable and pertinent way due to lack of guidance and motivation. Now, the main question arises that if the normal youth is unable to utilize their potential then what about the excluded groups who are deprived of vision, hearing, movement, communication, perceptual-motor, social-emotional, intelligence and adaptive behavior? Therefore, the challenges faced by normal children as well as children with special needs are many and they require more than even the best numeracy and literacy skills. That is why, many countries have included “Life Skills” as basic learning need for all the children including normal children as well as children with special needs (UNICEF).

Keywords: Domains of Learning, Inclusive Education, Life Skills



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“Educating a citizen intellectually but not morally will be a threat to the society.”

~ Theodore Roosevelt

The rapid social change consequent upon modernization, urbanization, globalization and media boon has made the lives of youth, their expectations, values and outlook very different from those of older generations. Youth is considered as the most powerful members of the society due to their physical and intellectual capabilities. But it is sad to see the fact that most of them are unable to utilize their potential in a suitable and pertinent way due to lack of guidance and motivation. Now, the main question arises that if the normal youth is unable to utilize their potential then what about the excluded groups who are deprived of vision, hearing, movement, communication, perceptual-motor, social-emotional, intelligence and adaptive behavior? Therefore, the challenges faced by normal children as well as children with special needs are many and they require more than even the best numeracy and literacy skills. That is why, many countries have included “Life Skills” as basic learning need for all the children including normal children as well as children with special needs (UNICEF).

Now, how can we prepare inclusive children with positive strengths? Human development aims at improving people’s capabilities, liberties in all dimensions: economic, Copyright © 2017, Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies

social, cultural, political and ethical. Education is one of the most powerful instruments for reducing poverty and inequalities. It is a key to enhance India's competitiveness in the Global economy. Access to education is often the only way to break the vicious cycle of poverty and social exclusion. However, access is not enough if quality education is not granted. Therefore, ensuring access to quality education for all, particularly for inclusive children is central to economic and social development of India. Hence, quality education and empowerment of inclusive children are very much needed in the context of globalization and liberalization. India has been facing the challenges in providing quality education with special reference to curriculum and teaching practices for children with special needs. There is a need to impart more relevant skills such as learning to learn, learning to live, development of critical and independent thinking, basic life skills etc.

In order to impart essential life skills effectively and successfully to youth, we must take into account the four pillars of education as mentioned in Delor's Report i.e.

- Learning to know
- Learning to do
- Learning to live together
- Learning to be

So, educating life skills is not less important than theoretical teachings. The process of developing social character, morality and sentiments of the children is as important as the formation and development of knowledge.

The generic understanding of life skills from the dual angle of personal fulfillment and realization of responsibility includes both empowerment and self-fulfillment. It also includes the capacity to be a part of heterogeneous group and to strive for common goals.

UNICEF has defined life skills as psychosocial and inter-personal skills that are generally considered important.

World Health Organization (WHO) in 1993 defined life skills as the ability for adaptive and positive behavior that enables the individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. The organization identified the following life skills covering three domains of learning.

Life skills Identified by WHO

Cognitive Domain	Affective Domain	Psycho-motor Domain
↓	↓	↓
Creative Thinking	Self-Awareness	Interpersonal Relationship Communication
Critical Thinking	Coping with Emotions	Decision Making
	Empathy	Problem Solving
		Coping with Stress

Teachers in particular have a responsibility for ensuring that all students develop life skills and participate fully in society. A teacher is the real executor who can help these students in the following ways:

Strategies to support a Student with Cognitive Impairment

Students lacking in critical thinking and creative thinking experience difficulties with various functions of the brain, particularly short-term memory, concentration and planning. Each student has different needs and will require various support mechanisms. Following are some of the Inclusive Teaching Strategies.

Teacher should:

1. Give regular prompts to initiate critical thinking and to stay on task in workshops/practicals/tutorials.
2. Break the task down into smaller steps. Encourage the students to start with what they can do before moving on to a harder step and go back to an easier step if they encounter any problem. For example, in learning to draw a circle; the students can color in the shape; move to joining up dots to make a shape; then copy shapes from a sample and so on.
3. Practice the skill using different materials. For instance, reading words from flash cards, worksheets as well as reading books. Writing can be practiced on the sand with finger paint, crayons as well as with pencil and pen (called as generalizing the student's learning).
4. Use simple words while giving instructions and then check whether the students have understood.
5. Use real objects that the students can feel and handle rather than doing paper and pencil work. Try to link the lessons with the student's experiences and everyday life.
6. Do one activity at a time and complete it. Make clear when one is finished and a

new one is starting.

7. Pair the students with more able students who can help them to focus their attention and assist in the activities given in the class.

Strategies to support a Student with Affective Impairment

Some students can be disruptive in a class but they need to learn how to behave in a socially acceptable way. All the teachers (and others) involved with the students at school should agree on a common approach of responding to the student's behavior, especially in the use of rewards and punishments. A teacher should observe and record when the behavior occurs as it is a common saying that 'Rather than wait for the behavior to occur and then deal with it; made a plan for how to reduce the chances of its starting. It puts oneself in control rather than the child'. Following are some of the Inclusive Teaching Strategies.

Teacher should:

1. Try to divert the students when they show warning signs of disruptive behavior. For example, he moves closer and puts his hand on the student's shoulder as he continues with the lesson or motivates the student to do an activity he knows the student is capable of and enjoys doing like giving out books to the class and so on.
2. Re-position the students in the classroom. Students who are inclined to run around, could be seated next to the wall or between two other students so that they cannot get out easily. A better strategy is to give active students the meaningful tasks to do such as giving out worksheets and tidying the room so that the tendency of running around can be directed towards an appropriate behavior.
3. Reward the students when they are behaving appropriately and have successfully completed the work set. Do this through praise and class recognition. Any plan for dealing with inappropriate behavior must include the encouragement of positive behavior. Otherwise, the students will learn what they are not to do but will not learn what they should do. Rewards often work best when the whole class earns a 'treat' for good behavior. This puts 'peer pressure' on disruptive students to behave appropriately.
4. Use tone of voice, facial expression, short and simple sentences to convey his displeasure at student's behavior. Remain calm and in control.
5. Make clear to the students the consequences of their behavior. For example, if the student hits another student, then the offender will stay in the class at lunch time and will not go to play outside.

6. Beware of handing over his authority to others. For example, sending a disruptive student to the head teacher gives the message that the teacher is not as important as the head. Rather both the teacher and the head should see the students together.
7. Discuss with the students the effects of their behavior on one another. The use of drama and role-play can let the students experience and release their emotions.

Strategies to support a Student with Psycho-motor Impairment

Teachers need to make their communication very clear while teaching. All the learners are different. Some learn best by seeing, other by hearing or doing. A good communicator always uses various channels or ways to communicate and repeats essential contents by using different learning activities in the classroom and elsewhere. Following are some of the Inclusive Teaching Strategies.

Teachers should:

1. Use gestures and facial expressions alongside language to get the meaning across. These are especially useful while organizing or managing the class. But these gestures should also be used while explaining and teaching.
2. Check out whether the students have understood. Ask them to repeat what has been said or to explain in their own words what has been told.
3. Encourage the students to indicate if they have not understood by raising their hands and asking questions. They should also do this when they do not understand what other students have said.
4. Encourage the students to show a gesture if he cannot make out what they are trying to say.
5. Talk clearly and project his voice (slightly raised) but not shouting.
6. Learn the local sign language and to fingerspell if he has a student with hearing impairment. The whole class can learn some signs or sign language so that they too can communicate with their peers.
7. Augment verbal communication with pictures, drawings and writings. Use the 'four-point plan' while teaching new skills which are as follows:
 - Get the student's attention
 - Present the activity
 - Observe the student's performance
 - Give feedback.

Therefore, teaching based on life skills could promote a more inclusive and

sympathetic classroom. Generally, a healthy school environment is beneficial not only for the students but for all the actors involved (teachers, students, parents and schools in general). A teacher enables all human beings to develop their full potential, contribute to society and above all, to be enriched by their differences and not devalued. In our world constituted of differences of all kinds, it is not the disabled but society at large that needs special education in order to become a genuine society for all.

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