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## **Enhancement of Life Skills among Secondary School Students: Role of Teachers and School Environment**

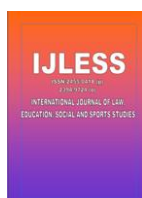
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### **Abstract**

This study investigates how teachers and the school environment help secondary school students develop life skills. Life skills such as communication, decision-making, emotional management and teamwork are required for students to successfully navigate personal and academic problems. The study emphasizes the critical role that instructors play in leading and modeling these abilities, as well as how a supportive and good school environment encourages children to practice and grow them. The study's focus on these characteristics intends to demonstrate how life skills education may be effectively promoted in secondary schools, resulting in student development and well-being. The findings will assist educators and policymakers in determining the best approaches to promote life skills development in Indian schools.

**Keywords:** Life Skills, Secondary Education, Students, Teachers, School Environment

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### **I. Introduction**

In today's fast changing, technologically driven and socially dynamic world, providing student with life skills is just as crucial as academic success. According to the World Health Organization (1999), life skills are "abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of daily life." Adolescents in secondary school in India confront many transitions - emotional, cognitive, intellectual and social - which necessitate the development of life coping mechanisms.

According to NCERT (2012), life skills are an important component of overall education and must be included into school programmes to help children deal with stress, peer pressure, academic expectations and future job choices. Communication, interpersonal interactions, critical thinking, emotional regulation, problem solving as well as decision-making are all important abilities for students' personal and social growth.

India's National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) actively supports for the integration of life skills, emotional intelligence and 21st-century skills in the curriculum from the primary to secondary levels.

It continues: "Education must aim not only at cognitive development but also at building character and creating holistic and well-rounded individuals equipped with the key 21st-century skills such as creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving and life skills" (NEP, 2020).

Teachers, as direct facilitators of student learning, have a significant impact on forming students' character, perspective and coping capacities. Kaur and Kaur (2017) found that students who received life skills-integrated instruction had higher self-confidence, decision-making ability and emotional regulation. Teachers affect pupils not only through teaching, but also by acting as role models as well as mentors.

Furthermore, the educational environment, including student relationship, teaching methods, school climate and extracurricular activities, has a significant impact on children's life skills development. According to Sharma (2018), schools that encourage democratic ideas, inclusive practices and student participation greatly improve children's interpersonal and coping abilities.

Given this context, the current research investigates the interconnected roles of teachers and school environments in developing life skills among Indian secondary school students. Understanding these roles assists policymakers, school administrators and teachers in implementing measures to promote the well-rounded development of students in accordance with national educational goals.

## **II. Objectives of the study**

The following objectives are made by the investigator

1. To identify the key life skills required by secondary school students.
2. To examine the role of teachers in promoting life skills in the classroom.
3. To analyze the influence of the school environment on life skills development.
4. To suggest strategies for effective life skills integration through teaching and school culture.

## **III. Importance of life skills for secondary school students**

Adolescents in secondary school confront a variety of developmental obstacles, including academic pressure, peer influence, identity formation and emotional volatility. In this transitional period, life skills serve as a core tool for students to effectively manage these challenges and develop into confident, socially responsible and emotionally resilient adults.

According to NCERT (2012), essential life skills for adolescents include:

- Self-awareness and empathy;
- Critical thinking and decision-making;
- Effective communication;
- Interpersonal relationships;
- Stress management; and
- Emotional regulation.

These life skills are important not only for academic performance, but also for personal and social development, and they help students cope with exam stress and anxiety, communicate effectively with students, teachers and family members, make informed and responsible decisions in academic and personal contexts and resolve conflicts constructively, fostering a peaceful and respectful school environment.

Furthermore, life skills help to establish a positive self-image, resilience and sense of purpose, all of which are required for success in a competitive and rapidly changing culture like India. When these

abilities are taught consistently and encouraged by teachers and school regulations, the foundation is laid for the development of emotionally aware and socially competent citizens.

#### **IV. Role of Teachers in Life Skills Enhancement**

Teachers are the foundations for forming students' character and behavior and they play an important role in life skills education at the secondary school level. Through both formal instruction and casual encounters, teachers serve as facilitators, mentors and role models for their children and their everyday interactions with children provide multiple chances to model and reinforce adaptive and positive conduct that promotes personal as well as social development.

##### **a) Developing Life Skills-Integrated Lesson Plans**

Teachers can effortlessly integrate life skills education with subject teaching. For example, during a Social Science class, a teacher starts group discussions to promote communication, cooperative learning and critical thinking. Similarly, mathematics can promotes rational thinking and decision-making, whereas language programs improves communication and empathy through narrative and peer interactions. According to NCERT (2012), integrating life skills into topic areas allows students to develop real-world relations and get a better knowledge of both content and behaviour.

##### **b) Applying Participatory Teaching Methods**

Through experience and active participation, life skills are best learnt. Role-playing, debates, case studies, peer teaching and storytelling are among tactics that teachers uses to assist students improve interpersonal skills, self-expression and problem-solving abilities. The CBSE (2012) standards on life skills education emphasize that experiential learning methodologies allow students to absorb abilities like as empathy, cooperation and leadership, making learning more engaging and successful.

##### **c) Offer emotional support and guidance.**

A teacher's empathy and emotional availability are critical in assisting pupils in managing their emotions and difficulties. Adolescents frequently experience stress, fear of failure, peer pressure and identity confusion. Teachers who establish a safe and supportive classroom environment allow students to freely express themselves and learn coping skills. According to Kaur and Kaur (2017), children in emotionally supportive classrooms are more self-aware, have better emotional regulation and are more motivated to learn.

##### **d) Acting as role models.**

Students frequently emulate teachers' behavioural features, thus educators must model values such as honesty, integrity, patience, cooperation and fairness. Teachers that display these actions not only acquire the trust of their students, but also passively instill these ideals in them. According to Sharma (2018), pupils who are taught by ethical and emotionally intelligent teachers exhibit improved moral reasoning and social responsibility.

##### **e) Life Skills Classes and Workshops**

Aside from classroom education, schools have dedicated life skills courses and workshops led by teachers certified in life skills pedagogy. These programs, when implemented on a regular basis, have shown considerable improvements in students' self-confidence, assertiveness with peer interaction. NCERT and UNESCO's Adolescence Education Programme (AEP) promotes such interventions and encourages teachers to address issues of health, stress and relationships constructively (NCERT, 2012). In summary, teachers serve multiple roles in life skills education, including instructors, mentors, counselors and facilitators, and their ongoing professional growth in life skills facilitation, together with institutional policies, leads to overall student development and assist meet the NEP 2020 objectives.

## **V. Influence of the School Environment**

The educational environment has a significant impact on students' behaviour and morals, particularly during adolescence. A well-structured, inclusive and value-driven educational environment allows children to internalize and practice life skills like empathy, communication, leadership and self-discipline in real-world situations. The environment in which students interact on a regular basis determines how they manage relationships, solve problems and cope with emotional obstacles.

### **a) Supportive infrastructure**

A clean, safe and inclusive physical environment has a substantial impact on students' well-being, which is essential for developing life skills. Schools that offer gender-sensitive sanitation, well-ventilated classrooms, accessible amenities and emotional safety create an environment in which children feel safely and protected. According to Sharma (2018), inclusive and accessible infrastructure encourages children to participate more positively, improves school attendance and minimizes behavioural concerns, hence promoting the practice of life skills such as responsibility, care and personal hygiene.

### **b) Democratic school culture.**

An environment that encourages democratic involvement and shared decision-making empowers children while also developing leadership and accountability. Schools that foster student councils, class monitors and participatory assemblies empower students to take the initiative, listen to others and make educated choices. The National Curriculum Framework (NCERT, 2005) endorses such approaches, claiming that student involvement in governance fosters civic consciousness, negotiation skills and collaborative problem-solving. These techniques prepare children for future societal roles while also educating them on their rights and duties.

### **c) Peer relationships and extracurricular activities.**

Positive peer interaction and participation in extracurricular and co-curricular activities are essential for developing life skills including empathy, cooperation and dispute resolution. Group sports, sports clubs, music bands and art competitions all provide opportunities for individuals to express themselves, collaborate and respect one another. According to Sivapalan and Krishnaveni (2015), team-based activities help students build greater emotional intelligence, better peer relationships and more mature answers to social issues, all of which improve their social competence.

### **d) School Policies and Programs.**

Structured programmes like the National Service Scheme (NSS), Scouts and Guides, value education workshops and community outreach initiatives promote social ideals, civic responsibility and discipline and these programmes provide students with practical opportunity to practice decision-making, leadership and service-oriented life skills. According to the CBSE Life Skills Education Manual (2012), these efforts play an important role in teaching school children about diversity, teamwork and goal-setting.

### **e) Parental Engagement and Community Participation**

Schools that actively engage parents and community stakeholders foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for life skill development. Regular parent-teacher meetings, community celebrations and guest lectures by local leaders or professions all serve to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world application. Gujjar and Malik (2013) highlight that community-supported schools likely to see increased student motivation and moral development because students receive consistent messaging from both home and school environments.

Overall, the school environment serves as a living laboratory in which children constantly engage in real-life simulations of responsibility, teamwork, decision-making and emotional balance. Schools that promote a comprehensive, democratic and supportive environment dramatically improve life skill development among secondary school students, preparing them to tackle life with confidence as well as competence.

## **VI. Challenges in implementation**

Despite the recognition of life skills as essential, certain challenges persist:

- Lack of trained teachers for life skills facilitation
- Academic pressure prioritizing marks over overall development.
- Inadequate integration of life skills in school curricula.
- Limited teacher autonomy and support from school administration.

## **VII. Suggestions**

- Integrate life skills education in regular classroom teaching.
- Organize regular co-curricular activities to practice life skills.
- Conduct teacher training programmes focused on participatory methods and emotional intelligence.
- Establish school-level policies encouraging a life skills-based approach.
- Encourage peer mentoring and student leadership opportunities.
- Promote collaboration between schools, parents and communities.

## **VIII. Conclusion**

Student success both personally and academically depends on the development of life skills in secondary school. Teachers and the school environment play critical roles in developing these abilities through curriculum, teaching methods and school environment. As highlighted by NEP 2020 and CBSE/State recommendations, life skills education should be integrated into regular school life rather than a distinct subject. By empowering teachers and fostering supportive school settings, helps students develop into emotionally aware, socially responsible and capable adults.

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