

# Life Skills Practices in Teacher Education: Role of Art of Living

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## I. Introduction

Student's teenage life is a vital stage of growth and development marks the period of transition from childhood to adulthood. It is characterized by rapid psychological and physical changes. At this stage of life these young people extend their relationships beyond family. They are now capable of abstract thinking, better articulation and of developing an independent ideology these are truly the years of creativity, idealism, buoyancy and a spirit of adventure. But these are also the years of experimentation and risk-taking, of giving in to negative peer pressure, of taking uninformed decisions on crucial issues, especially relating to their bodies and their sexuality. Student's teenage life is thus a point in one's life, a period of increased potential but also one's greater vulnerability. Life skills are essentially those abilities that help in promotion of overall wellbeing and competence in young people as they face the realities of life. Life skills education involves a dynamic teaching process. Teacher education is no longer a training process but an education strategy for enabling teacher's not only to teach successfully, but also to inspire and infuse the students with commitments and concerns for their wellbeing. We will discuss here about the role of Art of Living life skill education in teacher education program.

## II. Key Issues and Concerns of Teenage students

### A. Developing an Identity

Self-awareness helps students understand themselves and establish their personal identity. Lack of information and skills prevent them from effectively exploring their potential and establishing a positive image and sound career perspective.

### B. Managing Emotions

Students have frequent mood change reflecting feelings of fear of anger, sadness, happiness, shame, guilt and love. Very often, they are unable to understand the emotional turmoil. They do not have a supportive environment in order to share their concerns with others. Counseling facilities are not available.

### C. Building relationships

As a part of growing, students redefine their relationships with parents, peers and members of the opposite sex. Students have high expectations from them and do not understand their feelings. Students need social skills for building positive and healthy relationships with others including peer of opposite sex. They need to understand the importance of mutual respect and socially defined boundaries of every relationship.

### D. Resisting Peer Pressure

Students find it difficult to resist peer pressure. Some of them may yield to these pressures and engage in experimentation. Aggressive self conduct, irresponsible behavior and substance abuse involve greater risks with regard to physical and mental health.

## E. Acquiring Information, Education and services on Issues of Student's Life

Exposure to media and mixed messages from the fast changing world, have left students with many unwanted questions. The widening gap in communication between students and their parents is a matter of great concern. Teachers still feel inhibited to discuss issues frankly and sensitively. Students seek information from their peer group who are also ill informed and some may fall prey to quacks.

## III. Life Skills Education in Teacher Education Program

Life skills have been defined as "the abilities for adoptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal with the demands and challenges of their everyday life" (WHO).

'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 different situations, can find a ray of hope and opportunities to find solutions.

The term 'Livelihood Skills' or occupational/vocational skills refer to capabilities, resources and opportunities to pursue individual and household economic goals and relate to income generation. Thus, life skills are distinct from livelihood skills.

Methods that can be used to enhance Life skills in students include:

- Class discussion
- Brainstorming
- Demonstration and guided practice
- Role play
- Audio and visual activities
- Decision making or problem tress
- Forming small groups
- Educational games and simulations
- Case studies
- Story telling
- Debates

## IV. Art of Living

Art of Living was founded in 1981 by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. The Art of Living is an educational and humanitarian movement engaged in stress management and service initiatives. The organization operates globally in 155 countries and has touched the lives of over 370 million people. The Art of Living foundation is dedicated to creating peace from the level of individual and fostering human values within the global community.

Techniques and methods used by Art of Living in overall development of students:

- Physical development through Yoga (Padmasadhna)
- Mental development through meditation and knowledge sessions
- Overall development through the divine 'Sudarshan Kriya'

Ten core life skills as laid by WHO and followed by Art of Living includes:

1. Self-awareness includes recognition of self, our character and strength and weakness, desires and dislikes. Developing

self-awareness can help us to recognize when we are stressed or feel under pressure.

2. Empathy- To have a successful relationship with our loved ones and society at large, we need to understand and care about people's needs, desires and feelings. Empathy can help us to accept others, who may be very different from ourselves. This can improve social interactions, especially in situations of ethnic or cultural diversity.
3. Critical thinking is an ability to analyze information in an objective manner. Critical thinking can contribute to health by helping us to recognize and assess the factors that influence attitudes and behavior, such as values, peer pressure and the media.
4. Creative thinking is a novel way of seeing or doing things that is characteristic of four components – fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration.
5. Decision making helps us to deal constructively with decisions about our lives. This can have consequences for health. It can teach people how to actively make decisions about their actions in relation to healthy assessments of different options and what effects these different decisions are likely to have.
6. Problem solving helps us to deal constructively with problems in our lives.
7. Interpersonal relationships skills help us to relate in positive ways with the people we interact with. It may also mean being able to end relationship constructively.
8. Effective communication means that we are able to express ourselves, both verbally and non-verbally, in ways that are appropriate to our cultures and situations.
9. Coping with stress means recognizing the sources of stress in our lives, recognizing how this affects us, and acting in way that help us to control our lives of stress by changing our environment or lifestyles and learning how to relax.
10. Coping with emotions means involving recognizing emotions within us and others, being aware of how emotions influences behavior and being able to respond to emotions appropriately.

#### V. Need of Art of Living for Life Skills Education

The host of factors that promotes high risks behavior such as alcoholism, drug abuse and casual relationships are boredom, rebellion, disorientation, peer pressure and curiosity. The psychological push factors such as the inability to tackle emotional pain, conflicts, frustrations and anxieties about the future are often driving force to high risk behavior. Art of living life skills training is an effective tool for empowering the youth to act responsibly, take initiative and take control. It is based on the assumption that when young people are able to rise above emotional impasses arising from daily conflicts, entangled relationships and peer pressure, they are less likely to resort to anti-social or high risk behaviors. We find that behavior does not always follow the mind. This is when incidents of "I know but I can't help it" occur. What we need is a person should have the ability to act responsibly. Art of living enables us to translate knowledge, attitudes and values into actual abilities. The latest report of the UNESCO entitled "Learning: Treasure Within" seems to have been based on an Indian dictum "Know thyself" or know yourself (Atmanobiddhi). The chairman of the International Commission which developed this document is Jacques Delros and the entire Report offers a theoretical paradigm constructed upon the 4 pillars of learning such as Learning to Know, Learning to Do, Learning to Be and

Learning to Live Together. The UNESCO report thus reinforces the Indian Vedic concept of self-knowing, self-learning, self-doing and learning to living together. The different programs of Art of Living offer ample opportunities to develop all 4 pillars of learning among learners.

#### VI. Conclusion

Teacher education program must be revised in such a way that future teachers should be capable of doing overall development of their pupils and hopefully Art of Living will prove as a great asset in achieving this noble cause.

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