

Impact and Roll of Life Skills Education at Secondary Education Level

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ABSTRACT

Today's education system is lopsided as it provides more of knowledge related concepts than skill, attitude and value oriented education. The education, today, needs to enable a child to deal effectively with the environment, make maximum use of resources, discern available opportunities and face the challenges of society. Life skills are essentially those abilities that help promoting mental well being and competence in young people as they face the realities of life. Life skills education is an effective tool for empowering the youth to act responsibly, take initiative and control over stress and emotions. Swami Vivekananda has said that education is the divine perfection already existing in man. The United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF) defines life skills based education as basically being behaviour change or behaviour development. Generally the term life skills refers to a group of psycho- social and interpersonal skills which can help people make informed decisions, communicate effectively , and think critically. Adolescence is a period when the intellectual, physical, social, emotional and all the capabilities are very high, but, unfortunately, most of the adolescents are unable to utilize their potential to maximum due to various reasons. They face many emerging issues such as global warming, famines, poverty, suicide, population explosion as well as other issues like alcoholism, drug abuse, sexual abuse, smoking, juvenile delinquency, anti-social acts, etc. Education" is important, but education to support and live life better is more important. In this paper the need of life skill education has been discussed and some activities are suggested to develop the life skills among students. The present discourse will focus on the above mentioned issue through the article entitled as "Impact and Role of Life Skills Education at Secondary Education Level"

Keywords: Life skills education, Importance, strategies, Adolescent, Life Skills Education in West Bengal.

INTRODUCTION

Learning is a long term process, where in one understands something through experience or study. To make the process of learning scientific, we need education and it is the acquisition of specific and deep knowledge pertaining to a particular area. Life skill is in existence from the period man started living on earth, but life skill education as a concept started emerging only during recent years UNICEF says that the term 'Life Skills' refers to a large group of psycho- social and interpersonal skills which can help people to take decisions, communicate effectively and develop coping and self management skills that may help them lead a healthy and productive life. The recent focus on development, based on human resource development emphasized the need for life skill development of all people. Life skills are the improved form of personal skills which help us to do



day to day activities effectively.

In 1986, the Ottawa charter for health promotion recognized life skills in terms of making better health choices. The 1989 convention on the rights of the child (CRC) linked life skills to education by stating that education should be directed towards the development of the child fullest potential. Introduction of Life Skills based curriculum by Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) act like a catalyst in the National education system. Life Skills are the set of 10 skills proposed by World Health Organization which addresses student's psychosocial and psychological attributes and yields in good moral character building and healthy behaviour. According the National Curriculum framework (NCF 2005) where "learning without burden" is the basic agenda, wanted to regularize that education must be connected with daily life activities and more practical based knowledge by elimination rote learning. As Education is in the concurrent list of the constitution the State board of education has equal rights to frame the curriculum for the students residing at the regional states.

Therefore, this makes the parents to enrol their children in schools controlled by CBSE board because of its diversity in regulating the procedure of education system. CBSE students benefitted largely from the in-depth knowledge of life skills programs imparting at different grades in the school curriculum. In 1986, the Ottawa charter for health promotion recognized lifeskills in terms of making better health choices. The 1989 convention on the rights of the child (CRC) linked life skills to education by stating that education should be directed towards the development of the child fullest potential.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Life skills education is an essential part of being able to meet the challenges of everyday. Life skills are skills, strengths and capabilities that help individuals to face problems of their everyday life with a positive attitude and go about with their everyday tasks effectively. Life skills are essentially those abilities that promote overall well -being and competence in young people as they face the realities of life Mental health promotion among adolescents in schools using life skills education and teacher as a life skill educators is a need of the hour. The School based life skill education appears capable of communicating key information and helping youth develop skills .In this aspect, education is important, but education to support and live life better is more important. The present paper focuses on importance of Life Skills Education at secondary education level.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out the present status of life skills among the students at secondary level in West Bengal.
2. To find out the various type of life skills education to help us to survive in this secondary education level.
3. To find out the differences of overall life skills in between the students at Bengali and English medium schools.



HYPOTHESES

1. There is no significant mean difference of life skill scores between male and female students at secondary level in West Bengal.
2. There is no significant mean difference of life skill scores between students of class 9 and class 10 at secondary level in West Bengal.
3. There is no significant mean difference of life skill scores among students at secondary level in West Bengal in terms of their locality of residence.
4. There is no significant mean difference of life skill scores between students at Bengali medium schools and English medium schools at secondary level in West Bengal.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present study attempts to describe the importance of Life Skills Education at secondary education level. Therefore, the researcher considered the title of the problem as **“IMPACT AND ROLE OF LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION AT SECONDARY EDUCATION LEVEL”**

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A literature review is an evaluative report of information found in **the literature related** to your selected area of study. The review should describe, summarise, evaluate and clarify this literature. Literature review is a documented summary of works on the problem of research which lays the foundation of evidences necessary to advance the present study. The related studies are as followed –

Albert et al. (2004) in his study life skills training enhance critical thinking abilities, which further impacts were living life actively, being responsible in the job and in future planning too. **Tuttle et al., (2006)**, during their investigation, add the life skills to students' curriculum. The results of this study suggested the extraordinary capability of teens to positive promotion and flexibility.

Ndirangu et al. (2013) in his study in secondary schools in Nairobi District, Kenya to find out gender related factors in implementation of life skills education. During transitional stage from childhood to adulthood dynamic changes like psychological, emotional and social changes occurs which are characterized by new and various feelings of excitement, desire to explore new things and take their own decision and choices. Findings of the study implied that gender limitation was there in selecting life skills education teachers and life skills were mostly taught by female teachers and study also showed that teachers feel not comfortable in explaining sensitive topics to opposite sex which leads to incompleteness of syllabus.

Puspakumarag (2013) in his study showed that life skills training was effective in preventing a wide range of problems such as substance abuse, teenage pregnancies, violence Bullying & to promote self-confidence and self esteem among the adolescents.

Singh & Sharma (2016) clearly implied in their study the need of Life Skills as a curricular component or separate training in school apart from reading and mathematics. Imparting life skills education to school students helps them in incorporating the qualities like healthy sociability, tolerance and self-esteem which will help them in generating a sense of freedom and abilities to decide things in life's difficult situations.



Kawalekar (2017) in his study to ascertain the significance of life skills Education in improving quality of student's life. Higher Education system in India plays a major role and aspiration in the knowledge economic globally..The present paper focuses on how enhancing social, emotional and thinking skills through life skills education, helps the 21st- century youngsters to achieve their goals strengthens the abilities to meet the needs and demands of the present society and be successful in life.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The Survey method has chosen for the study to collect details about the Life Skills of the students. This type of research is carried out through personal interviews, questionnaires and discussions.

Population:

Children at secondary schools from six districts of West Bengal.

Sample:

The sample of the present study was consisted of 1330 (nearly four times of the required sample size) students and therefore assumed to be a good representation of the entire population of students studying at class 9-10 of the above-mentioned districts in West Bengal. Purposive method was opted to select schools from districts.

Variable:

In this study following independent and dependent variables

Independent Variable:

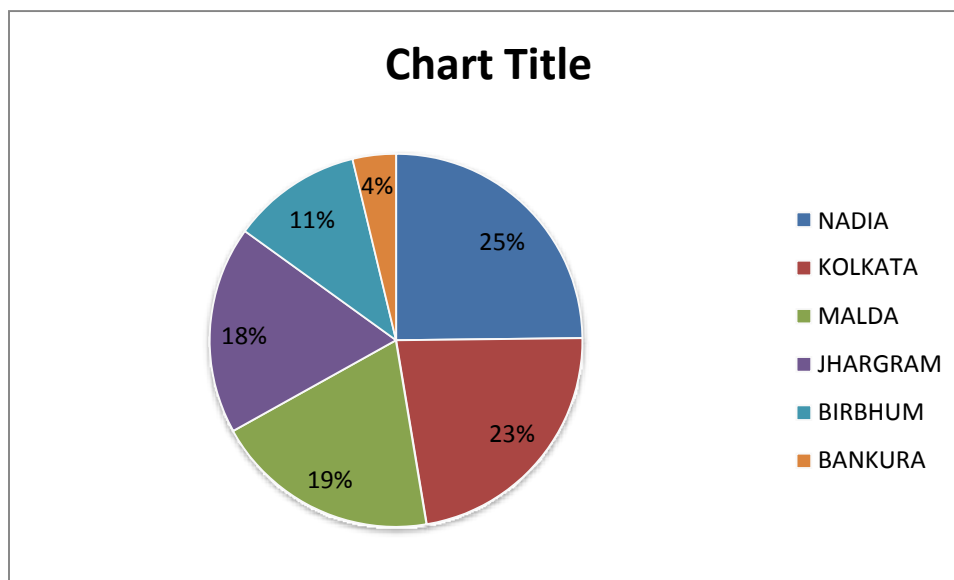
1. Gender- Male and Female
2. Class or Grade – Students of two classes 9 and Class 10.
3. Locality of residence - There are three levels Rural, Urban, and Semi-urban.
4. Medium of Instruction – Students from Bengali medium schools WBBSE and English medium schools CBSE.

Dependent Variable: Life Skills -Ten core life skills. Self-esteem, Empathy, Interpersonal Communication, Interpersonal Relationship, Decision Making, Problem Solving, Creative Thinking, Critical Thinking, Coping with Emotion, and Coping with Stress.

7.1 Sample Distribution by districts:

District	No. of Sample	Percent of Total
Nadia	330	24.8%
Kolkata	300	22.6%
Malda	260	19.5%
Jhargram	240	18%
Birbhum	150	11.3%
Bankura	50	3.8%
Total	1330	100%

7.2 Pie Chart showing sample distribution by districts



7.3 Sample distribution by Levels of Independent Variables

Variable	Levels	No. of Students	Percent of Total
Gender	Male	904	68%
	Female	424	32%
Class	Class-9	746	56.1%
	Class-10	584	43.9%
Locality	Rural	622	46.8%
	Urban	684	51.4%
	Semi- urban	24	1.8%
Medium	Bengali	699	52.6%
	English	631	47.4%

Dependent Variable: The 115-item Life Skill Scale (Vranda, 2009) is a widely used scale for assessment of life skills considering psychosocial competencies. The maximum score possible is 575 (115 x 5) and minimum possible score is 115 (115 x 1). There are three levels of life skills score are indicated in the scale. Less than 397 : Low Life Skills 398 – 437 : Moderate Life Skills 438 and above : High Life Skills. Ten core life skills.

LIFE SKILL EDUCATION

According to UNICEF, Life Skills are a behavior change or behavior development approach designed to address balance of three areas:

- Knowledge
- Attitude
- Skills.



The world bodies such as **UNICEF**, **UNESCO**, and **WHO** list the ten core Life Skills as:

1. Self-awareness
2. Critical thinking
3. Creative thinking
4. Decision making
5. Problem Solving
6. Effective communication
7. Interpersonal relationship
8. Empathy
9. Coping with stress
10. Coping with emotion

Life skill has been classified into three broad categories

- **Thinking skills:** Thinking skills are the skill that enhances the logical faculty of the brain using an analytical ability, thinking creatively and critically, and developing problem-solving skills and improving decision-making abilities.
- **Social skills:** Social skills include interpersonal skills, communication skills, leadership skills, management skills, advocacy skills, co-operation and team building skills, etc.
- **Emotional skills:** Emotional skills, involves, knowing and being comfortable with oneself. Thus, self-management, including managing/coping with feelings, emotions, stress and resisting peer and family pressure.

IMPORTANCE OF LIFE SKILLS

- Enable us to adapt to situations and people.
- Help us to have a positive approach and not get depressed with problems.
- Reduce vulnerability and high risk behavior.
- Life skills bring greater acceptance, better relationships and a healthy, positive life.
- Manage self and other peers to solve problem in workplace and educational institutions.

Need of the Life Skills Education for Adolescents

The important goals of the life skills approach are to enhance young's peoples abilities to take responsibility for making healthier choices, resisting negative pressures and avoiding risk behaviour. The following points represents the need of the life skill Education for adolescents:

- ✓ To deal with the stressful situations in life.
- ✓ To make independent decisions
- ✓ To understand the importance of practical life.
- ✓ For the nation's prosperity because the adolescents are the future of the country.
- ✓ To develop cognitive abilities .i.e. intelligence, interests, thoughts, problem solving, attention and other such abilities.
- ✓

Life skill Education Strategies

Life skills education can be designed to be spread across the curriculum, to be a separate subject or to be in integration. Following are some techniques to enhance life skills in students:



- **Brain Storming:**

Students actively generate variety of ideas about a particular topic or question quickly and spontaneously by using their imagination. Whole class can generate the creative ideas and a healthy discussion can be started on these ideas, it is essential to evaluate the pros and cons of each idea according to certain fixed criteria.

- **Story Telling:**

A story is told or read by students or teacher by using picture, book, comic, slide etc. Students are motivated to think critically about this story raised through the plot of story. It helps the students to use their creative thinking to write stories, making comparison and helping people to discover the solution of problems through healthy discussion.

- **Debates:**

Debate a definite problem or issue is presented before the students and they must take a position on resolving the problem or issue. Various issues and problems related to health, social evils can be raised and discussed.

- **Discussion:** Discussion helps the students by deepening their understanding about the content and provides opportunities to learn from one another. Discussion helps in developing skills of listening, assertiveness and empathy. It also helps to develop the communication skill of students.

- **Role playing:**

It provides an excellent opportunity for developing various life skills especially empathy as in role playing students have to play the role of other person. A student learns how one might handle a potential situation in real life. This helps in increasing insight into one's own feeling.

- **Buzz Group:**

Students during this activity are divided into small group of five or six members and they have to carry out a task. By doing so, students know each other better and learn to help their peers.

- **Games:**

Games promote active learning, decision making, discussion and fun. It promotes healthy competition among participants as they work hard to prove their talents. It enables students to use their knowledge, attitude and skills.

- **Social works :**

Social work is another activity which helps learners to acquire essential life skills. It integrates different life skills like decision making, interpersonal, intrapersonal, creative thinking, critical thinking etc. Students develop effective communication skills while performing various field works.

- **Situation Analysis:**

During situation analysis, students are allowed to explore problems and safely test solutions. It provides opportunities to work hard, share feelings and develop critical thinking. Other important methods to facilitate life skills learning include peer supported learning, practical community development projects, audio-visual activities i.e. music, dance and theatre. Life skill education cannot be facilitated on the basis of information or discussion alone.



Life Skills Education in West Bengal

The West Bengal Board of Secondary Education introduced life skills education in 2004 for classes VI to X under the name of 'Lifestyle Education' as non-scholastic subject aspects. The programme did not yield satisfactory result due to lack of proper approach and departure from the core generic skills. As a result, the effort failed within few years. In this state life skills is an integral part of curriculum only in the CBSE schools. At present, there is rising demand for life skills education at school level across the globe.

RESULTS

The first part represented descriptive statistics i.e. Mean and Standard deviation which was calculated to find out variations in life skills construct measured in terms of life skills score on basis of different. The second part inferential statistics which was computed in order to draw inferences about the population of students at secondary schools from six districts of West Bengal. The analyses include –Independent samples t-test, ANOVA and Chi-square test.

8.1 Overall life skills score in terms of different variables:

Variable	Levels	No. of Students	Mean	Sd
Gender	Male	904	402.2	38.535
	Female	426	399.75	39.598
Class	Class-9	746	402.85	40.26
	Class-10	584	399.3	36.977
Locality	Rural	622	396.33	40.364
	Urban	684	405.43	36.998
	Semi-Urban	24	412.08	37.463
Medium	Bengali	699	396.37	40.142
	English	631	406.74	36.696

Male students were found to have better deal of life skills than female students. Although the difference in between male and female was low, but the life skills scores were more consistent among males (sd=38.535) than that of female students (sd=39.598). Students of class 9 showed better life skills score (mean=402.85, sd=40.26) than students of class 10 (mean=399.3, sd=36.977). Students from semi-urban areas possessed better life skills (mean=412.08, sd=37.463) than students from urban areas (mean=405.4, sd=36.998) and rural areas (mean=396.33, sd=40.364). Therefore, it was seen that locality of residence do have an impact on development of life skills among the children. Medium of instruction in schools found to have some sort of effect on development of life skills among the students where it was seen that children who studies in English medium (CBSE) schools scored higher (mean=406.74, sd=36.696) than that of Bengali (WBBSE) medium schools (mean=396.37, sd=40.142).



8.2 .Male students were found to be more self-aware (mean=37.39, sd=5.09) than female (mean=36.95, sd=5.158) students. Students of class 9 showed better self-awareness score (mean=37.47, sd=4.941) than students of class 10 (mean=36.97, sd=5.318). Students from urban areas were more self-aware (mean=37.82, sd=4.904) than students from semi-urban areas (mean=36.79, sd=6.115) and rural areas mean=36.64, sd=5.235). Therefore, it was seen that locality of residence do have an impact on self-awareness of the children. Medium of instruction in schools found to have some sort of effect on self awareness skills among the students where it was seen that children who studies in English medium (CBSE) schools scored higher (mean=38, sd=4.883) than that of Bengali (WBBSE) medium schools (mean=36.58, sd=5.226).

8.3 .Female students were found to be more empathetic (mean=38.92, sd=5.53) than male (mean=38.09, sd=5.305) students. Students of class 9 showed slightly better empathy score (mean=38.38, sd=5.243) than students of class 10 (mean=38.32, sd=5.577). Students from semi-urban localities were more empathetic (mean=39.91, sd=5.822) than students from rural areas (mean=38.65, sd=5.764) and urban areas (mean=38.03, sd=5.005). Therefore, it was seen that locality of residence do have an impact on empathy of the children. It was seen that children who studies in Bengali medium (WBBSE) schools scored higher (mean=38.76, sd=5.67) than that of English medium (CBSE) schools (mean=37.9, sd=5.027) in terms of empathy.

3. Male students were found to be more communicative (mean=33.1, sd=4.458) than female (mean=32.08, sd=4.872) students. Students of class 9 showed slightly better communication skills (mean=32.98, sd=4.61) than students of class 10 (mean=32.51, sd=4.618). Students from semi-urban areas were more communicative (mean=34.46, sd=4.128) than students from urban areas (mean=33.81, sd=4.145) and rural areas (mean=31.56, sd=4.831). Therefore, it was seen that locality of residence do have an impact on development of communicative skills of the children. The study found that children who studies in Bengali medium (WBBSE) schools were less communicative (mean=31.66, sd=4.856) than students of English medium (CBSE) schools (mean=34, sd=4).

8.4. Male students were found to be slightly more efficient in managing relationships (mean=63.6, sd=6.518) than female (mean=63.4, sd=7.054) students. Students of class 9 showed much better interpersonal relationship skills (mean=64.02, sd=6.66) than students of class 10 (mean=62.92, sd=6.689). Students from semi-urban areas were more skilled in managing interpersonal relationships (mean=65.04, sd=7.153) than students from urban areas (mean=64.51, sd=6.107) and rural areas (mean=62.41, sd=7.108). The study found that children who studies in Bengali medium (WBBSE) schools were less skilled in managing interpersonal relationships (mean=62.36, sd=7.165) than students of English medium (CBSE) schools (mean=64.83, sd=5.865).

8.5 .Male students were found to have slightly more decision-making skills (mean=34.76, sd=4.636) than female (mean=34.73, sd=4.918) students. Students of class 9 showed slightly better decision-making skills (mean=34.78, sd=4.827) than students of class 10 (mean=34.71, sd=4.599). Students from semi-urban areas were more decision-makers (mean=37.58, sd=5.098) than students from urban areas (mean=35.08, sd=4.5) and rural areas (mean=34.27, sd=4.89). Therefore, it was seen that locality of residence do have an impact on development of decision-making skills of the children. The study found that children who studies



in Bengali medium (WBBSE) schools were less able in making decisions (mean=34.36, sd=4.981) than students of English medium (CBSE) schools (mean=35.18, sd=4.392).

8.6 Female students were found to have slightly more problem-solving skills (mean=47.65, sd=5.904) than male (mean=47.41, sd=5.5) students. Students of class 9 showed slightly better problem-solving skills (mean=47.64, sd=5.488) than students of class 10 (mean=47.3, sd=5.809). Students from semi-urban areas were more able to solve problems (mean=49.58, sd=5.299) than students from rural areas (mean=47.47, sd=5.962) and urban areas (mean=47.43, sd=5.319). The study found that children who studies in Bengali medium (WBBSE) schools were slightly weaker in solving problems (mean=47.41, sd=5.918) than students of English medium (CBSE) schools (mean=47.57, sd=4.392).

8.7 Male students were found to have slightly more creative thinking skills (mean=50.07, sd=7.021) than female (mean=49.48, sd=7.573) students. Students of class 9 showed slightly better creative thinking skills (mean=50.07, sd=7.216) than students of class 10 (mean=49.64, sd=7.19). Students from urban areas were more creative thinkers (mean=50.62, sd=7.294) than students from rural areas (mean=49.13, sd=7.066) and semi-urban areas (mean=48.08, sd=6.093). The study found that children who studies in Bengali medium (WBBSE) schools were slightly weaker in creative thinking skills (mean=49.12, sd=7.055) than students of English medium (CBSE) schools (mean=50.71, sd=7.282).

8.8 Male students were found to have slightly more critical thinking skills (mean=35.79, sd=5.863) than female (mean=35.53, sd=5.73) students. Students of class 9 showed slightly better critical thinking skills (mean=35.74, sd=6.072) than students of class 10 (mean=35.66, sd=5.486). Students from semi-urban areas were more critical thinkers (mean=38.04, sd=6.054) than students from urban areas (mean=35.91, sd=6.125) and rural areas (mean=35.39, sd=5.432). The study found that children who studies in Bengali medium (WBBSE) schools were slightly weaker in thinking critically (mean=35.09, sd=5.479) than students of English medium (CBSE) schools (mean=36.06, sd=6.161).

8.9 Male students were found to have slightly more emotion coping skills (mean=30.38, sd=4.487) than female (mean=29.8, sd=4.483) students. Students of class 9 showed slightly better coping with emotion skills (mean=30.39, sd=4.695) than students of class 10 (mean=29.94, sd=4.209). Students from semi-urban areas were more able to cope with emotions (mean=32.13, sd=4.812) than students from urban areas (mean=31.09, sd=4.356) and rural areas (mean=29.12, sd=4.391). The study found that children who studies in Bengali medium (WBBSE) schools were relatively weaker in coping with emotions (mean=29.24, sd=4.363) than students of English medium (CBSE) schools (mean=31.24, sd=4.403).

8.10 Male (mean=31.18, sd=4.723) students. Students of class Female students were found to have slightly more skills to cope with everyday 10 showed slightly better coping with stress skills (mean=31.39, sd=4.747) than students of class 9 (mean=31.04, sd=4.817). Students from rural areas were more able to cope with stress (mean=31.28, sd=4.886) than students from urban areas (mean=31.13, sd=4.718) and semi urban areas (mean=30.63, sd=4.271). The study found that children who studies in Bengali medium (WBBSE) schools were relatively weaker in coping with stress (mean=31.14, sd=4.918) than students of English medium (CBSE) schools (mean=31.25, sd=4.643).



- ❖ There is no significant mean difference of life skill scores between male and female students at secondary level in West Bengal. Statistically significant mean difference was found between male and female students { $t(1328)=.992, p>.05$ } (see table 4.13). So Null hypothesis H01/B is rejected.
- ❖ There is no significant mean difference of life skill scores between students of class 9 and class 10 at secondary level in West Bengal. Statistically significant mean difference was found between students of class 9 and class 10 { $t(1328)=1.654, p>.05$ } (see table 4.14). Null hypothesis H02 is rejected.
- ❖ There is no significant mean difference of life skill scores among students at secondary level in West Bengal in terms of their locality of residence. Statistically significant mean difference was found among levels of locality of residence of students {ANOVA (2,1327) = 9.994, $p<.01$ } (see table 4.21). Null hypothesis H03 is rejected.
- ❖ There is no significant mean difference of life skill scores between students at Bengali medium schools and English medium schools at secondary level in West Bengal. Statistically significant mean difference was found between students at Bengali medium schools and English medium schools { $t(1328)=4.903, p<.01$ } (see table 4.15). Null hypothesis H04 is rejected.

DISCUSSION

In order to promote adaptive and positive behaviour, the World Health Organization suggested a set of psychosocial competencies that enable adolescents and young adults to effectively and efficiently deal with the challenges and demands of daily life. Life skills are expected to enhance individuals' personal and social resources, identify challenges and catastrophes and finally develop resilience through balancing between the resources and challenges of everyday life. Life skills education is therefore a significant mention in the school education curriculum across the globe irrespective of culture and context. In India, where the majority stakeholders of education are adolescents, limited resources are planned and designed to ensure their physical and mental health as well as develop social coherence. Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), New Delhi have, very recently, taken initiative to incorporate teaching of psychosocial skills among the school going adolescents through incorporating life skills education in the school education curricula. The present study aimed to seek the status of life skills among the students at secondary level studying both in CBSE board and state education board i.e. West Bengal Board of Secondary Education. Life skills education on prevalence of life skills as the students of English medium schools i.e. schools following the CBSE curriculum demonstrated better deal of life skills in almost all the ten core life skills except empathy.

CONCLUSION

A proper implementation of life skill education is an need of an hour, for today's society. Imparting life skills education to the students, can be helpful as it specifically addresses the needs of children, helps in motivating, providing practical, cognitive, emotional, social and self-management skills for life adjustments. Yadav P, Iqbal N(2009) showed positive results of



imparting life skills education to students and bringing the change in adolescent's attitude, thought and behavior by providing supportive environment to them. On the whole, life skills education, have found to be an effective psychosocial intervention strategy for promoting positive social, and mental health of adolescents which plays an important role in all aspects such as strengthening coping strategies and developing self-confidence and emotional intelligence, as well as enhancing critical thinking, problem solving and decision making skills as has been well documented in the aforementioned studies.

Thus, there is, significance and importance of life skills education to be integrated into the regular school curriculum and given on a daily basis by a life skills trainer/ teacher/counsellor to enhance the mental health of students, equip them with better adapted skills to face the challenges of changing life situations and empower them to become fully functioning contributors to the host society in particular and the world in general. In the light of above discussion, it could be concluded, that, Life skill education has its importance and significance in overall development of students.

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