

Looking at some of the recent developments in Life Skills Education, in India



India's New Education Policy 2020 states, "Education must build character, enable learners to be ethical, rational, compassionate, and caring, while at the same time prepare them for gainful, fulfilling employment".

A read-between-the-lines expands the possibilities of India's academic education to include Life Skills, which equip young learners to cope with the myriad challenges that they will face in the course of their lives. We see an immediate impact of NEP 2020 in the revised curriculum for all UG and PG programs for students admitted in academic year 2021-22. It been revised to incorporate modules such as Communication Skills, Life Skills and Professional Skills.

In our rapidly changing environment, inclusion of Life Skills education, alongside academic subjects, will go a long way to build confidence and prepare students to develop skills such as problem-solving, conflict-resolution, effective communication, financial-literacy, crisis-management, self-discipline, tolerance, unity and collaboration – all extremely necessary to develop into mindful individuals, and also to find, manage and sustain employment in the future.

In addition to the Government of India's NEP 2020, several steps are being taken by academic institutions, educators, paediatric experts, NGOs, civil society, policy makers and corporates to roll out different Life Skills programs across the country.

- UNICEF India, in collaboration with Udhyam Learning Foundation (Udhyam) and YuWaah (Generation Unlimited in India) has launched, through Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp, an engaging way for young people to learn 21st century Life Skills which include self-awareness, collaboration, communication, critical thinking and problem solving
- The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), India has launched a financial literacy programme for children, to create awareness on managing finances. The four modules - Evolution of Money, Banking, Growing My Money and Protecting My Money is intended to help children imbibe financial literacy as a critical Life Skill.
- Nudge Centre for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (CSDE) runs a flagship program – Gurukul. The 90-day residential training program for underprivileged youth aims to achieve job and life-readiness using techniques like gamification to drive higher engagement.
- Tata Steel's Project RISHTA, an acronym for Regional Initiative for Safe Sexual Health by Today's Adolescents is aimed at creating awareness on reproductive and sexual health, nutrition, consequences of early marriage, substance abuse and family planning. It imparts Life Skills training amongst youth to pave way for their overall holistic development
- School Radio a Life Skills learning module set up by Aruna Gali gives students a platform to discuss and learn varied non-academic subjects like gender issues, water scarcity, 21st century Life Skills such as showing empathy, taking responsibility and leading a team.

These examples are just a tip of the iceberg.

In recent years, there's been growing acknowledgement that examination success does not necessarily translate into success in life. There is a vital missing chunk in our education process – i.e., the acquisition of Life Skills which prepare children to cope with life's diverse challenges. Several studies establish the vital connection between productivity at the workplace with essential skills of problem solving, confidence and communication. The movement towards adopting Life Skills learning as an integral part of our education system is gathering more steam each day and we believe that the day is not far, when we will see these skills being imparted in every school and college in India.