

The evolving face of 'Everyday Challenges' in the context of Life Skills learning



Life Skills, as defined by the WHO in 1999, refers to ten areas of development that enable an individual to deal with the challenges of everyday life in a manner which is positive, mindful and sustainable. The WHO recommended that these skills be imparted to children/ students as part of the curriculum in schools and colleges, to provide future generations with mechanisms to live a fulfilling life amidst constantly evolving realities.

Since the WHO rolled out its recommendations, two decades have passed. Much has changed in terms of 'everyday challenges'.

Twenty-two years ago

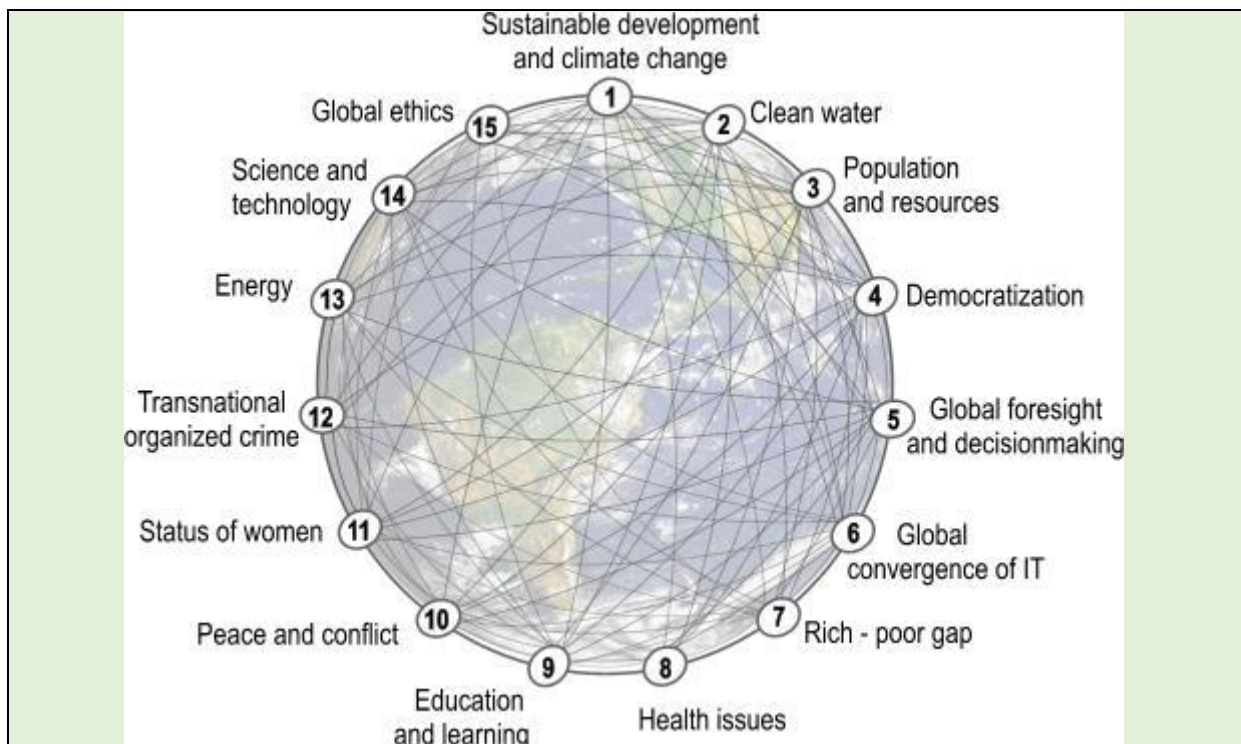
Twenty-two years ago, world population was at 6 billion. According to a World bank report, less than half this population lived in urban areas. Workplace was a brick-and-mortar environment, as were institutions that imparted learning and education. Leadership spelt domain expertise and a certain level of entrepreneurial spirit. Cell-phones were only beginning to make their presence felt. They were primarily seen as luxury add-ons for personal or work-related emergencies. The internet was still very young and was used for research or once again, for official reasons. A dial-up was necessary to access the then popular browser – the internet explorer. Television was king, and it pretty much rolled out all the in-house entertainment you were going to get. Newspapers brought to us, most of what we learnt about the world and the world was still a relatively safe place.

Parallely, ecological developments over the course of human history allowed humans to exert a greater influence over natural resources and ecosystems. As a result, there was economic growth and rising standards of living in some parts of the world, for some people.

Challenges of the new millennium

In the early years of the new millennium, urbanisation began to make an impact like never before, leading to dramatic increases in resource and energy consumption. As new realities of our time, we have urbanisation, population growth, resource depletion, climate change, terrorism, organized crime and disease to grapple with.

The 15 global challenges identified by the Millennium Project are as illustrated below:



1. How can sustainable development be achieved for all while addressing global climate change?
2. How can everyone have sufficient clean water without conflict?
3. How can population growth and resources be brought into balance?
4. How can genuine democracy emerge from authoritarian regimes?
5. How can decision-making be enhanced by integrating improved global foresight during unprecedented accelerating change?
6. How can the global convergence of information and communications technologies work for everyone?
7. How can ethical market economies be encouraged to help reduce the gap between rich and poor?

8. How can the threat of new and re-emerging diseases and immune micro-organisms be reduced?
9. How can education make humanity more intelligent, knowledgeable, and wise enough to address its global challenges?
10. How can shared values and new security strategies reduce ethnic conflicts, terrorism, and the use of weapons of mass destruction?
11. How can the changing status of women help improve the human condition?
12. How can transnational organized crime networks be stopped from becoming more powerful and sophisticated global enterprises?
13. How can growing energy demands be met safely and efficiently?
14. How can scientific and technological breakthroughs be accelerated to improve the human condition?
15. How can ethical considerations become more routinely incorporated into global decisions?

Source: <http://www.millennium-project.org/projects/challenges/>

The need to find answers to these questions, we must look towards several opportunities that the new millennium has thrown up - Advancement in science and medicine, quick and easy access to information, new revolutionary technologies, better learning delivery mechanisms and better awareness of physical as well as mental health, to name a few.

A key solution lies in equipping young minds to deal with these challenges, so they may emerge as well-rounded individuals who have the necessary skills to deal with the realities of their times. Fortunately, Life Skills Education modules have evolved over the years to address these changes and deliver results.