



# SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN ADOLESCENCE EDUCATION

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## Abstract

Adolescence Education is an emerging curricular area, conceptualized in response to a long pressing demand to impart sex education which can encapsulate the crucial concern of adolescents, not covered so far by the school curriculum. In a national seminar organized by the NCERT in April 1993, a consensus was taken which recommended the introduction of adolescence education in the school curriculum. Adolescence is a stage primarily of sexual development. The major concerns of this new curricular area identified in the seminar; focused on adolescence reproductive and sexual health (ARSH). As defined in the programme of action, adopted at the international conference on population and development (ICPD) Cairo 1994, - "Reproductive health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in matter relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and process." The conceptual framework of adolescence education concretizes the reproductive and sexual health (ARSH) concerns for adolescents under three major components: the process of growing up, HIV/AIDS and drug abuse. The content of these components are related to the most intimate human behavior and hence are culturally very sensitive. Moreover, the objectives of adolescence education are primarily related to non-cognitive domain. Its main emphasis has to be on the inculcation of healthy attitudes and responsible behavior and more importantly on the development of appropriate skills among them for managing ARSH related problems and situation.

**Keywords:-** Adolescent, Adolescence education, Life skill development, Co-curricular approach

## Introduction

Adolescence is a period marked by physical, physiological and emotional changes and extends from the age of 10-19 years. Some development physiologists consider it a period between 13 and 18 years. However adolescence is not associated with the precise number of years. It begins with the onset of puberty and also when adolescent reaches reproductive maturity. World health organization (WHO) defines "adolescence as the progression from appearance of secondary sex characteristic (puberty) to sexual reproductive maturity development of adult mental processes and adult identity and transition from total socio-economic dependence to relative independence." The period of adolescence is a phase of rapid physical, emotional and behavioral changes. These changes occur due to the hormonal changes that results in sudden increase in the activity of certain glands. All these changes are highly correlated with sexual development. Besides, the adolescence also experience psychological changes. They display a tendency to be independent like an adult, rather than remaining dependent on parents like a child. They start distancing themselves from their parents and depends more on their peer group. They feel intense sex drive and attraction towards the opposite sex. With these characteristics, the stage of adolescence occupies a distinct place in the life span of human beings.

## Problems of adolescents

An adolescent is a critical period during which significant personality reorganization occurs. Adolescents confront problems because of their inability to properly manage the sudden changes that take place in the body and mind. Their interest in the opposite sex, the tendency to distance themselves from their parents and to become deeply involved with the peer group creates apprehension and anxiety among them. In the absence of any well informed adult intervention to help them understand and appreciate the problems and issues, they turn towards the peer group who are ill-informed or cheap literature which provides wrong information. Being misinformed, they fall prey to myths and misconceptions which adversely affect the process of personality development in them.

Generally, adolescents are vulnerable to peer pressure and a number of them are pushed into an action without going any thought to its consequences. Many are found experimenting with smoking, alcohol, drugs and sex for various reasons including group pressure.

## What is adolescence education?

Adolescence education (AE) may be defined as an educational intervention to help learners acquire accurate and adequate knowledge about reproductive and sexual health with a focus on the process of growing up during adolescence and its biological, psychological, socio-cultural and moral dimensions. It aims at inculcating in them rational attitude and responsible behaviour towards sex and sexuality, HIV/AIDS and substance abuse or by equipping them with a needed life skills.

Adolescence education has been conceptualized as an educational response to the special needs of adolescents in respect of their reproductive and sexual health (ARSH). Since the present school curriculum already incorporate a number of elements relating to adolescents world, the general framework of adolescence education focuses only on those aspects of adolescence reproductive and sexual health which are not incorporated in the existing school curriculum. The general framework incorporates contents related to the three major components. These are – process of growing up, HIV/AIDS and drug and substance abuse.

#### **Need for adolescence education**

The current generation of adolescence is more than a billion strong, and will be the largest generation in history to make the transition from childhood to adulthood. As they stand at the threshold of adulthood, they need authentic knowledge that will help them understand the process of growing up in particular reference to their reproductive and sexual health needs.

It is in this context, that the need for an educational intervention is strongly felt. There is a need to focus on physiological, emotional and socio-cultural dimensions of the adolescents. Therefore adolescence education in school is to be introduced with a view to providing authentic knowledge to students regarding the process of growing up, HIV/AIDS and drug abuse, influencing their attitude, behavior and value orientation and development in them appropriate skills.

#### **Meaning of skills**

Skill may be defined as abilities acquired by individuals in his/her education and working life. Generally skills are viewed as the basic courtesies of living and working with other human beings. Some skills are very simple (e.g. holding a pen) while some skills are very complex (e.g. skills of a cricket player). Some skills (e.g. walking) appear to develop naturally and some skills (e.g. talking) do not develop automatically but through environment. Skills such as dribbling a ball by a soccer player or driving a motor vehicle are developed through practice, whereas skills like critical thinking and creative expression are essentially the products of understanding and learning.

Skill development is a lifelong process. It is a process that helps individuals grow and mature, learn to have confidence in one's own decision and discover sources of strength within and outside one's self. Some skills develop naturally and some through environment, whereas some skills are developed through learning and practice. School education play a vital role in skills development among individuals, as it exposes them to a variety of experiences during their formative years and has the potential of providing them with ample opportunities to learn and practice. Almost all curriculum designs are expected to delicate skills-related objectives along with knowledge-related, understanding-related and attitude-related objectives.

#### **Life skills**

The concept of life skills is based on life skills approach which is an interactive educational methodology that focuses on acquiring knowledge, attitude and interpersonal skills. It aims at developing various skills among learners to empower them to face the challenges of life. Life skills as defined by WHO are-“abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enables individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.” The 1986 UN Ottawa Charter described life skills as the process of ‘healthy health choices.’ Life skills help individuals in dealing with stresses and pressures in life. They enhance the coping resources and personal and social competencies of individuals.

Life skills help individuals in dealing with stresses and pressures in life. They enhance the coping resources and personal and social competencies of individuals. As a psychological competence, life skills are different from other significant skills that individuals may have such as literacy, technical, numeracy and practical livelihood skills.

A set of life skills known as generic life skills for psychological competence was identified by WHO as core life skills applicable across a wide range of context in daily life and risk situation. Based on the definition by WHO life skills are a reference of core life skills has been made as “the five foundation life skills areas.” These are-

1. Decision making-----problem solving
2. Creative thinking-----critical thinking
3. Communication-----interpersonal skills
4. Self awareness-----empathy
5. Coping with emotions---- coping with stress

#### **Adolescence Reproductive and Sexual Health Skills**

Life skills approaches appear to cover all aspects of human life. But skill development in adolescence education only to adolescent reproductive and sexual health concerns. It is therefore, may not be known as Adolescent reproductive and sexual health skills (ARSH skills) and may be conceptualized as follows:-“Adolescent reproductive and sexual health (ARSH) skills are abilities and competencies that help promote physical, mental and social well being in respect of reproductive and sexual health among adolescence and youths, empowering them to take positive action, to protect themselves from risky situation and to promote healthy and social relationship.”

#### **Why Education in ARSH skills**

It is felt that the curriculum transaction process being adopted in school education has not been able to lay the desired emphasis on skill building. The existing teaching-learning methods focus mainly transaction/transmission of information and imparting of knowledge to learners. In recent years, some efforts have been made to bring about a change in the teaching methods and to make them activity-oriented and joyful. There is an urgent need to ensure that education in schools laid greater emphasis on the development of ARSH skills mainly because of the following reasons:

- Skills will enable individual to translate knowledge, attitude and values into actual abilities i.e. “what to do and how to do.”
- It may contribute to developing among learners proper perception of self efficacy, self confidence and self esteem.
- It is believed that a person who is educated is equipped with the needed skills or abilities but this is not true.
- Young people are not adequately equipped with skills to deal with the increased demands and stresses they experience.
- It can help the young learner to manage the demands and challenges of everyday life caused by the changing cultures and life styles.
- The threat of AIDS pandemic and the fast growing risk of drug abuse among adolescents and the youth demands urgent efforts for skill development among them.

### Skill Development through Co-curricular Approach

School education aims to all-round development of the learners. It enables them to acquire knowledge, develop concepts and inculcate attitudes, values and skill conducive to not only their intellectual development but also their physical, psychological and social development. The curricular approach which is popularly used by teachers in school is mainly cognitive and helps learners acquire knowledge. Co-curricular activities include all school sponsored and school directed activities that are not part of the regular curriculum, but are designed and organized to enrich and extend it. Co-curricular approach may prove effective especially in innovative area like adolescence education. Co-curricular activities facilitate the coverage of the entire content areas of adolescence education. Appropriately designed co-curricular activities may provide opportunities for learners to participate in such experiences on an individual basis or in groups, at school and at public events as it would promote skill development in them. These activities are expected to be effective as these provide opportunities for interactive and participatory learning and are focused simultaneously on imparting knowledge and developing positive attitude and interpersonal skills.

#### Different Co-curricular activities to enhance life Skills in Adolescents

- **Question box-** Question box is an important co-curricular activity through which questions asked by the students are answered by teachers, experts and professionals. It may provide students opportunities to discuss sensitive topics with their teachers.
- **Role play-** role play is an activity representing small spontaneous play which describes possible real life situations. In role play, participants imitate someone else's character. Role play allows students to practice situation before they meet them in real life. It also gives them an opportunity to have experiences in the application of skills that are important to protect them from risky situations.
- **Value clarification-** value is normative standards or criteria, which determine how persons act upon available choices. Values influence the way an individual behaves or takes decision on an issues. Learners are given an opportunity to examine and clarify different value positions.
- **Group discussion-** group discussion as an educational activity provides opportunities to involve students in an interactive process of experiential learning.
- **Debate-** debate is an interesting activity for probing into controversial issues. In a debate, the pros and cons of an issue are presented. The issue to be debated should have positive and negative aspects that can be argued for and against by students. The whole process leads to the development of thinking and communication skills.
- **Case study-** case study is an effective tool, in that it focuses on a particular problem and leads the persons consulting case studies to understand almost all the aspects of that problem. The use of case study as an activity in the area of adolescence education will help students understand the significant problem of ARSH in a more comprehensive way and promote appropriate skill development among students.
- **Painting and poster competition-** Painting and poster competition have become popular co-curricular activities. Students are involved in these competitions so that they think on a given issue seriously and thereafter translate their ideas into painting/posters. In order to draw a painting or poster, students gather necessary information from various sources and also give serious thought to the style of expressing critical ideas in the form of painting/poster. This activity may prove very effective in respect of sensitive issues/topic relating to reproductive health.
- **Essay competition-** essay competition is a popular activity in school. While writing the essay, students understand and appreciate various aspects of the given topic, an exercise which develops in them the competence of logical and rational thinking which is an important objective to be attained through a curricular area like adolescence education.
- **Quiz competition-** Quiz competition is a popular activity both within and outside educational institution. It enables students to get gather information on the concerned theme or topic and understand the implications of different aspects of the concerned issue.

#### Conclusion

Life skills are a large group of psycho-social and interpersonal skills which can help people to make informed decisions, communicate effectively and develop coping and self management skills that may help an individual to lead a healthy and productive life. The research paper highlights the importance of life skill education for adolescent and how it help adolescents to transit successfully from childhood to adulthood by healthy development of social and emotional skills. Since the conventional teaching methods may not be effective for skill development among students, teachers need to develop certain specific skills to be able to the process of skill building among students.

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