

LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT



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PRINCIPAL
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Life Skills

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Dr. M. J. Leo

**READING AND WRITING: INDISPENSABLE
LIFE SKILLS FOR YOUTH**

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Introduction

The challenges of today's world remain with everyone and need to be encountered; in a rapidly changing society, due to fast-paced growth of technology and subsequently the day-to-day life style of a person, the humans are to equip themselves with adequate skills which would strengthen the minds and body to bravely oppose mentally, socially and physically all types of perils and complications. No matter an individual is currently busy with, the approaches that he/she employs towards the world and the reality stipulates a set of skills; they are basically the abilities of a person to deal with any upcoming situation. Unfortunately, today's youth stumble a lot in identifying the right directions which would engage them fruitfully and mould them into a suitable and global personality. Reading and writing are the two best competences that would inject a person to the top of his career and offer the optimum satisfactions of his existence. This chapter will deliberate on how the reading and writing assumes significant role as life skills in the life of a person.

Skills and Life Skills

Every human being is in need of some abilities which would enable him or her to survive in the society and make the life meaningful; they would also anchor the person to have a deeper socialisation process and make him or her well-connected with neighbours. Skills are nothing but abilities and any skill that is useful in one's life may be considered as



a life skill. Regular activities such as cooking, decorating, tying the shoe laces, swimming, cycling, driving a car, operation of computer etc., are a few life skills. Broadly speaking, the term 'life skills' is usually used for any of the skills needed for a fruitful living. Life skills are basically the abilities that empower the humans to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of day-to-day life (Davis, 2022). Termed also as psychosocial skills or psycho-social competency, they involve the basic social, cognitive, behavioural and interpersonal capabilities of a person, acquired through direct life experiences or learning (Rezayat et al., 2017). Since they are psychological in nature and exhibited through behaviours, the life skills enable the individuals to succeed in various domains of life and they are defined as behavioural, cognitive, or interpersonal skills (Hodge, Danish, & Martin, 2013).

Who decides Life Skills?

There is no definite list of life skills as such; rather the list may be varying, depending upon the life circumstances, culture, beliefs, age, geographic location, etc and certain skills may be more, less or completely irrelevant. Also, depending upon the utility of the skill, one would rate them as important or less significant; for example, driving a car is a basic life skill today for westerners whereas in India, for women, driving is a sophisticated life skill. The segment of one's life will decide the appropriate skills; for example, a student will seek for proper study skills, a parent looking for effective motivational and parenting skills, a business person wanting to equip with problem-solving strategies, an administrator to be soft-skilled, a teacher to be innovative, and a youth hunting for new employable skills. The best skill would be the ability and willingness to learn throughout life so that ultimately the life will be unceasingly productive and progressive on this earth. Needless to say, only the life-long learning could improve the understanding of the world and the quality of life.

In 1999, the World Health Organization identified six key areas of life skills: Communication and interpersonal skills to work with other people, Decision-making and problem-solving to understand and find solution, Creative thinking and critical thinking to think in different and unusual ways about problems, Self-awareness and empathy to feel with others, Assertiveness and equanimity, or self-control to stand-up and remain balanced in stormy situation and Resilience and ability to recover from setbacks (Skills you need, 2023). According to Davis (2022), Life skills sometimes, are also generally classified into three types: Thinking skills, involving the ability to conceive multiple solutions to a problem or develop new innovations in a creative way; Social skills, encompassing the abilities to develop healthy relationships and to communicate in effective ways; and Emotional skills, comprising your abilities to deal with emotions of yours and others effectively (Prajapati, Sharma, & Sharma, 2017). However, the above life skills may be catalogued into four comprehensive skills namely, personal skills, interpersonal skills, literacy skills and numeracy skills; Reading and Writing skills become part of the literacy skills (Skills you need, 2023).

Are Life Skills indispensable?

Before we place our arguments for visualising the reading skill as life skill, it will justify if we could describe, how life skills contribute to the making of man or woman. Life skills ultimately specifies the abilities, attitudes and psycho-social competencies of a person which directly or indirectly supports him or her on earthly travels; they enable the person to be learned, well-informed, mentally balanced and physical fit to be able to lead a healthy and productive life. (Drishti, 2022). Being swiftly carried away by the new technologies and discoveries, today's young generation is caught up in between modernism and the age -old customs, being imposed and expected of by the conservative parents and family siblings. Therefore, the 2k kids are in a dilemma, where to

side with and how to decide; they stumble a lot before arriving at a decision and look for peer support.

Succumbed to various illusion life styles, self-centred thinking, easy-going diplomacies and disguised or pseudo human relationships, the mental health of the person is at stake and hence a constant accompaniment of a trained counsellor or an elderly person has become a must to maintain the well-being. Added to the above, the degradation of values, mismanagement of time, lack of critical thinking on social media and print media, the attitude of being satisfied with minimum, becoming a part of mass mentality than being unique etc., are a few human-induced diseases. Eventually they land up in mental health disorders such as stress, aloofness, phobia, impatience, depression, anxiety, and other behavioural problems. The survey of US Department of health & Human Services(2019) on youth mental health revealed that 32% of youth, age between 12 to 18, suffer with anxiety disorder due to intense feelings of excessive worry and fear, 13% with depression having lethargic mood that affects thoughts, interests, sleep and eating habits; another 9% has the inability to concentrate but hyper activity that disturbs the daily life and 3% enslaved by eating disorder along with feelings of low self-esteem and low self-confidence.

How is Reading a Life Skill?

Every human is an interactive creature, commonly called as social animal; we need to interact, to agree, to disagree, to make decisions, to comprehend, to understand and to appreciate the life. Therefore, it presumes the presence of basic skill of dialoguing and conversing with neighbouring creations (González,2020); consequently, he or she needs to read and learn so that the accumulation of information and other abilities strengthen the conversing ability and enables a better interaction with fellow humans, universe and life. Remember, reading is a skill that will stay forever with a person; analysing the advantages of reading skill will evidently position the reading skill as the important

life skill. it is not to be seen as a boring task to pass tests, but as a skill that will accompany persons and will make them informed and assertive human beings for life (González,2020). Reading skills are the abilities that allow an individual to understand, interpret and derive meaning from texts (Drew, 2023).

Humans are sensitive beings, being enriched by what happens at every moment; every interaction, communication and event they experience, do have impact on their mindset. Reading a book or a script is that deep experience that makes a person more emotional, empathetic and understanding, impelling him or her to have a better human relationship. It helps the reader to build the competence to handle complex, deep-rooted social relationship; the person is able to detect and understand other people's beliefs, thoughts, desires, and emotions (Rafia, 2024). A wandering mind can achieve nothing but only make noise about anything; to have a focussed and triggered mind, for concentrated effort in daily activity, to restructure cognition, to re-erect the memory etc., the regular reading skill will have to be strengthened. It is scientifically proved that 'reading regularly and engaging in other mentally stimulating activities may help ward off severe forms of cognitive impairment, such as Alzheimer's disease' (Rafia, 2024).

Reading is a high-level activity of a brain and automatically stimulates the reader to think critically; in other words, challenging the reader to identify the problem or the core issue, discussed in the article or book and thus, skill of analytical thinking is developed. For instance, if the reading happens to be a novel, the reader needs to be travelling with characters that are portrayed and has to predict, guess and conclude about the issue to bring out the best out of the reading; it keeps the brain alert, agile and alive to the reality. Should it be said, the reading makes one immersed in ocean of knowledge and fills with capacity to navigate the world; the basket of knowledge will enable the person positively to candidly converse with anybody on any topic at any time. Authors of

books and articles, generally pour out their experiences in a creative and interesting ways; they lead us into new worlds, life styles, thought patterns, culture, horizons, new realities and eventually tickle the minds for imagination and creativity.

Research places before us that reading, even for six minutes, can reduce stress up to 68% and relieves tension effectively than the conservative techniques of listening to music, playing pet animals and holding a cup of tea (Rafia, 2024). It is a commonly accepted fact that reading leads to deep sleep and solid rest, minimising the stress. For effective communication, as we need more vocabulary, reading will amass the vocabulary in memory bank and easy to remember since we read it in the context. In summary, we may say for sure, reading will certainly enhance the life skills of anyone who wants to live a fruitful living.

Is Writing a Life Skill?

Yet another part of literacy life skills is the skill of writing; written communication is an exceptional characteristic of the human species. Years and years, writing has enabled the humans to inform, communicate, pass on and retain the history, culture and knowledge. Writing is not only an essential job-related skill but also a life skill, because it reflects one's learning, values, ideas and thought process. The success of the writing, depends on individuals (Brink, 2020). The effect of one's writing skills is determined when we receive the desired reaction from the reader. Therefore, the writing can affect the daily life and life course outcomes; which also means, miscommunication can have serious consequences and unintended effects (Brink, 2020). Writing is personal; the ownership of the copyright rests with individual. The content represents the owner in his or her absence in space and time. It makes knowledge, personal aspirations and work for the future visible to others.

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