



Effectiveness of a Life Skills Programme on teacher trainees

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Abstract:

The tremendous changes in knowledge explosion and rapid technological advancement in the social and economic spheres at national and international level necessitate for improvement of national educational quality. Teachers' role is larger in that sense. Many countries are concerned with lifting up educational standards through compulsory school education to meet the demands of an active, happy and fulfilled life in the globalization era. To be prepared for the demands of the knowledge economy, students' need to know how to use their knowledge and skills, applying knowledge to new situations, analyzing information, comprehending new ideas, communicating, collaborating, solving problems and making decisions (Saltpeter J., 2003). They are responsible to develop essential skills and abilities among adolescents and youth. Therefore the need is realized to introduce life skills programme for the prospective teachers at pre service teacher education programme. Hence, it is desired that the future teachers would develop essential constructs of life skills which not only help them to face challenges in life confidently but also to train their students, in future, to utilize the skills in their personal and professional life. The present study was an attempt to develop the life skills programme and evaluate its effect on teacher trainees in enhancing their life skills.

Key Terms: *Life Skills, Life Skills Programme, Effectiveness*

Introduction:

Knowledge explosion and rapid technological advancement during the era of globalization has caused tremendous changes in the social and economical spheres at national and international level. These changes necessitate for improvement of national educational quality. Many countries are concerned with lifting up educational standards through compulsory school education to meet the demands of an active, happy and fulfilled life. It is worldwide now increasingly recognized that the educational objectives must be revised if the country wants to prepare students for life in the 21st century. Life skills play very vital role in leading a successful, enlightened and empowered life. Life skills enable an individual to deal

with the demands and challenges of society through which one can make predictions, inferences and also form hypotheses.

Background of the Study

National Council for Educational Research and Training published a document called the National Curriculum Framework in the year 2000. National Curriculum framework: 2000 (NCF: 2000, published by NCERT) and National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education: 2009 (NCFTE: 2009) has rightly focused on life skills education among the prospective teachers. The NCF provides the following guidelines for life skills education:

- *The document sketched out four aspects of education in India. The first of these, “context and concerns” included a clause about “linking education with life skills and the world of work and value education” (NCERT, p. 12).*
- *True education is a process of developing the human personality in all its dimensions – intellectual, physical, emotional, social, moral and spiritual (NCFTE, 2009:32).*
- *Every person has ability of thinking and making ethical decisions independently or in a group. It is essential to sensitize students regarding emotions then only they can survive in the world of satisfaction. To understand others, cooperation, social responsibility and good interpersonal relations are essential for prospective teachers. (NCFTE, 2009)*
- *NCF, 2005 acknowledged Adolescent Education and Life Skills linked to health, consumer rights and legal literacy as important areas in school education and included accordingly in secondary school curriculum. After 2005, over countrywide debate, sex education was restructured as the Adolescence Education Program (AEP) which focused on enhancing life skills among the adolescents, so that they can be responsible to deal the real life situations. The NCF, 2005 clearly outlined that the AEP should not be practiced separately rather be included in school education (NCFTE, 2009).*

It is clear from the above abstract that the need is realized to envisage life skills programme for the youth, adolescents and the teachers to be introduced at all levels of education. Very less has been done to provide life skills education in Indian schools. Indian educational practices give much importance to numeral and literacy/language skills i.e. 3R-skills (reading, writing and arithmetic skills). It is more concentrated on developing the cognitive aspects rather than on the applying reflective practices and developing psychological dimensions. School administrators have to recognize that teaching core subjects alone is not sufficient to equip students for the knowledge economy. “To be prepared for the demands of the knowledge economy, students “need to know how to use their knowledge and skills,

applying knowledge to new situations, analyzing information, comprehending new ideas, communicating, collaborating, solving problems and making decisions (Saltpeter J., 2003). Acquiring knowledge and information mere is not sufficed; students need to train their thinking skills and to be able to apply knowledge acquired. Teachers' role is larger in that sense. The teachers and school administrators are responsible for fostering learning environment which emphasizes on arranging practical exercises, organizing activities to enable learning from actual experiences and encouraging learners to improve their skills. For that the teachers themselves need to be trained first with life skill elements so that in future they would be able to cope with adolescents' and youth's related issue and events.

Rationale of the Study

The first aspect of NCF document "context and concerns" included a clause about "linking education with life skills and the world of work and value education", which necessitates teacher trainees to be trained with life skill elements so that in future they would be able to cope with youth's related issue and events. Its main focus is to equip the teachers not only for teach but also to understand the students and community of parents so that they could able to understand the problems of students and their children.

It is Teachers who spend maximum time with the children more than parents or family. So that teachers should be given life skills training as they are the ones who contribute most in the development of the children. If teachers would not be competent enough, then that would affect the development of students at a large scale as development of children is directly related to teachers' competency (Jones, 1983). Hence, it is desired that the future teachers would develop essential constructs of life skills which not only help them to face challenges in life confidently but also to train their students, in future, to utilize the skills in their personal and professional life. So it was an attempt of the investigator to check how much equipped the teacher traineeseducators are with the life skills. The investigator in this study has tried to develop a Life Skills Programme for the teacher trainees to enhance life skills among them along with the activities, procedure and evaluation tools.

Statement of the Problem

Effectiveness of a Life Skills Programme on teacher trainees

Operational Definitions of the Key Terms

Various key words used in the present study - Life Skills, Life Skills Programme, Effectiveness and Pre service teachers are operationally defined as below:

LIFE SKILLS

Core skills include (WHO 1997: p.1) for the present study are Self-awareness skill, Interpersonal relationship skill, Effective communication skill, Problem solving skill, Decision-making skill, Creative thinking skill, Critical thinking skill, Empathy, Coping with emotions and Coping with stress.

LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMME

For the present study, the Life Skills Programme consists of the programme outcomes targeting to develop life skills, a series of learning activities and tasks based on the programme outcomes, techniques and the procedure to be employed which will involve the participants in working towards the achievement of one or more learning outcomes for developing core life skills mentioned above.

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMME

Effectiveness of the Life Skills Programme for the present study means to study the enhancement in the life skills of teacher trainees as evident through the difference between the pre-intervention scores and post-intervention scores.

Research Objectives of the study

The research objectives of the study were:

1. To construct a life skills scale and to explore the ways and strategies to impart life skills education.
2. To develop and validate a Life Skills Programme for trainees of pre service teachers.
3. To study the effect of a Life Skills Programme on Pre Service Teachers' life skills.
4. To study the effect of a life skills programme on pre service teacher's life skills with respect to gender, area, degree.
5. To find out the opinions of teacher trainees regarding the Life Skills Programme.

Variables of the study:

Research scientists manipulate variables in order to test their hypotheses and learn more about the factors or conditions that are changeable during the course of investigation. The independent variable in this study was delivery of the Life Skills Programme to enhance life skills of teacher trainees. The dependent variables in this study were the pre-test and post-test scores that measured effect of Life Skills Programme with respect to gender, area and discipline of the teacher trainees.

Research Hypotheses

The present study is directed by following null hypotheses:

1. There is no significant difference in pre-test scores and post-test scores of teacher trainees of experimental group.
2. There is no significant difference in pre-test scores and post-test scores of teacher trainees of experimental group with respect to gender.
3. There is no significant difference in pre-test scores and post-test scores of teacher trainees of experimental group with respect to area they belong to.
4. There is no significant difference in pre-test scores and post-test scores of teacher trainees of experimental group with respect to discipline they opted at higher secondary level.

Area of the Research

Fifth survey of educational Research (1988-92) mentions thirty-eight areas of educational research. The present research is having more relevance with certain areas: (1) Life Skills Education, and (2) Teacher- Education.

Research Design

The research design adopted for pilot study was pre-experimental design named one group pre-test post-test experimental research design. This design is sometimes referred to as a ‘repeated measures’ design because subjects are observed or measured twice on the dependent variable.” Seliger and Sohamy (1989) further state that “the design is efficient because it controls a number of extraneous variables which can affect the homogeneity of subjects when more than one group is involved”.

The design can be represented as follows:

$$\boxed{X1 - T - X2}$$

where, X1 is the pre-test, T is the treatment, that is, the intervention of the LSP (Life Skills Programme), and X2 is the post-test used to measure the effect of the life skills programme on the subjects.

Target Population & Sample

Population:

The target population for the present study was comprised the teacher trainees of all 29 Colleges of Education affiliated to the Veer Narmad South Gujarat University.

Sample:

Therefore the researcher employed convenient sampling technique which falls under non-probability sampling method. It is a type of non-probability sampling which involves the sample being drawn from that part of the population which is close at hand and readily available. The sample comprised 24 teacher trainees of Vivekananda College for B.Ed., Jahangirpura. The sample comprised 87 pre-service teachers from the Vivekananda College for B.Ed.

The details of the selected sample are given as under in below table.

Instruments for Data Collection

The following tools/instruments were produced, which was subsequently translated into Gujarati. *These master tools were:*

1. Life Skills Scale (as pre- test and Post-test)

In the present study, the Life Skills Scale was used as pre-test and post-test. A five point Likert type rating scale was prepared for the present study to rate their life skills. It included behavioural statements related to each core life skill. The participants were asked to read the statements and put a tick mark at the number how they rated their life skills on an ordinal scale from 1 to 5 (Strongly agree-5, Agree-4, Not decided-3, Disagree- 2, Strongly Disagree-1). For each Life skill about ten to fifteen behavioural statements were constructed. These statements were related to the daily life situations and challenges of the pre service teachers and their dealing mechanism with those situations. The questionnaires needed to be translated in the respondents' mother tongue, and were administered by investigator.

2. Treatment: Life Skills Programme

For the development of Life Skills Programme, the investigator referred documents of World Health Organization (WHO) and NIMNHAS Model for providing Life Skills Education. In the documents on Life skills Education, World Health Education (WHO) has suggested certain methods/techniques like situational discussion, Role Play, Story Telling, Brain Storming and Games. The investigator had referred modules prepared by NIMNHAS for adolescents to understand and conceptualize the group activities for programme development and adopted certain methods/techniques tried depends on the needs of different life skills. The programme includes total thirty activities to develop core life skills with a focus on various techniques like situational discussions, games, puzzles, role Play, story making/telling, brainstorming, self reporting; and videos shows and clippings from films/you tube.

3. Field Notes & Participatory Observations:

Field Notes were maintained by the investigator on the basis of her observations and participants' responses and expressions in Focused Discussions. By the participatory observation, the investigator had noted down behaviours of the teacher trainees and their experiences shared in the Focused Group discussion throughout the implementation of the programme. Through participatory observations, the interactions of the teacher trainees within their groups and with other groups were observed in terms of life skills used by them.

4. Focused Group Discussion.

Focused Group Discussion was used to collect information for many purposes, such as conducting a need assessment or evaluating a program. In the present study focused group discussion with focused facilitative questions was carried out. Through Focused Group Discussion, earlier experiences of teacher trainees were collected and how these activities helped them to think and reflect for their improvement was drawn out.

Data Analysis

For statistical analysis, the data from the life skills scale (as Pre test and Post test) and situational test were statistically analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 15.0). Various tests were performed for clear interpretations like paired t-test and content analysis. The idea behind using these statistical tests was to quantify the outcome in order to develop better insight, which ultimately helped in wider generalisation.

Major Findings

- The programme was found effective for teacher trainees who underwent the treatment: Life Skills Programme.
- There is a significant difference between the male and the female pre-service teachers' life skills. Life Skills Programme was found more effective for male teachers trainees than female teacher trainees.
- There is no significant difference in life skills between the urban and the rural teacher trainees. Life Skills Programme had shown similar and equal effect for urban as well as rural teacher trainees on both measurements.
- Life Skills Programme was proved equally effective for arts teacher trainees having arts discipline and teacher trainees having science discipline after the intervention: Life Skills Programme.
- Reflections from focused group discussions and field notes indicated that a significantly large number of teacher trainees agree that the life skills programme

brought positive impact on them. They agreed that the programme and the activities were found most helpful to them in planning their lessons and handling the class while practice teaching. They realized the responsibility to develop life skills among their students. They shared their views that such activities and sessions should be planned in B.Ed. / M.Ed. curricula as well as in school curricula as they realized the importance of life skills in one's life.

Conclusion:

Teachers need to possess healthy life skills for the development of healthy society. The present study was undertaken to develop the life skills programme to enhance the life skills of teacher trainees and to check the effectiveness of Life Skills Programme on teacher trainees. The post intervention scenario on the life skills of teacher trainees reveals that there was a remarkable gain in their life skills. The research study establishes the need based and user friendly Life Skills Programme to enhance life skills at the pre service teacher education.

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