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IMPARTING LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION THROUGH CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH

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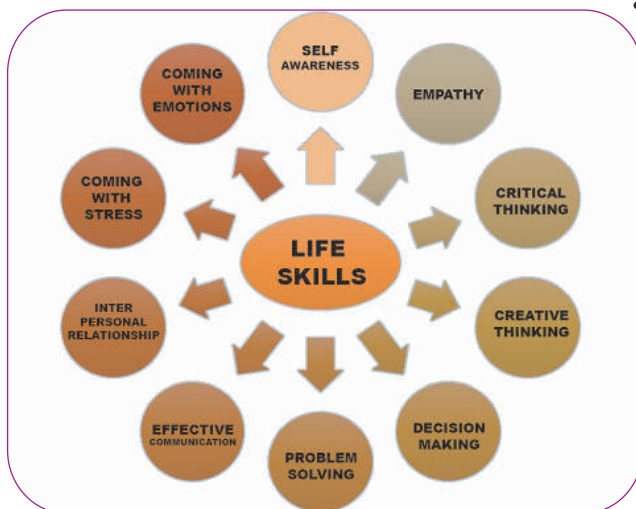
ABSTRACT: -

In this worldwide time extraordinary rivalry has happened in every single field of life and Education isn't an exemption of this. In this way fundamental abilities education has more significance for youthfulness. Fundamental abilities are the characteristics which help the general population to alter with society and set them up for the difficulties of everyday life. Accordingly fundamental abilities education is essentially identified with the mental and social competency of individuals which empower them to do their work, to comprehend their conduct and their results, to understand the duty of their demonstrations. In show times constructivist approach is being taken after for educating and learning. As indicated by this approach individuals build new information on the premise of their current learning structure and in this procedure of information development individuals' cooperation with their condition has an imperative part. Constructivist approach is the best approach for giving fundamental abilities education since this approach draws on a scope of dynamic showing works on including request based learning, agreeable learning and undertaking based exercises. In constructivist approach understudies can be prepared in fundamental abilities by various co-agent and productive exercises, for example, class-cooperation, dialog, pretend, narrating, verse composing and recitation, amusement and so on. This exploration paper endeavors to feature the utility of constructivist approach for giving fundamental abilities education.

KEYWORDS: fundamental abilities education , Life Skills Education , current learning structure .

INTRODUCTION :

Adolescence is the most crucial stage of any individual. It is the period of "stress and storm" when the surge of life reaches its highest peak. Adolescents are full of energy, hopes, courage, joyousness, and aggressiveness but in this transitional phase, they undergo several physical, mental and psychological changes. These changes are so intense and dominant that young people confront many types of problems, conflicts and challenges which are not communicated to their teachers and parents. This situation generates stress, anger, low self-esteem, role diffusion or negative identity, uncertainty, self-doubt and disappointment etc. which affects their behavior and academic performance too (Berk, 2007). To cope up with these challenges, it is necessary to train them in those basic life skills which are helpful to learn better ways to communicate with others, develop their self-esteem, to take responsibilities for their actions and make right decisions (Nasheeda, 2008).



WHAT ARE LIFE SKILLS?

Life skills term is referred to those psychological and interpersonal abilities of any individual which helps him to understand himself, others and society (Lakshmi, 2009; Verma, 2011). World Health Organization (1997) defines life skills as “Psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.”

Generally these are loosely grouped into three broad categories of skills: cognitive skills for analyzing and using information, personal skills for developing personal agency and managing oneself, and inter-personal skills for communicating and interacting effectively with others. In addition WHO has identified ten important life skills which are listed below-

- Critical Thinking
- Creative Thinking
- Decision Making
- Problem Solving
- Interpersonal Relationship
- Effective Communication
- Coping with Feelings
- Coping with Stress
- Self-Awareness
- Empathy

CONCEPT OF LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION-

Life skills education is a structured programme of needs- and outcomes-based participatory learning that aims to increase positive and adaptive behaviour by assisting individuals to develop and practice psychosocial skills that minimize risk factors and maximize protective factors. Life skills education programmes are theory- and evidence-based, learner-focused, delivered by competent facilitators, and appropriately evaluated to ensure continuous improvement of documented results (UNESCO, 2003). Thus it is a powerful tool which enables young students to work in a responsible manner and to control their selves.

WHAT IS CONSTRUCTIVISM?

Constructivism is a theory about knowledge and learning. It describes what ‘knowing’ is and one ‘comes to know’ (Fosnot, 1996). It is basically an epistemological belief or philosophy which assumes that nature of reality is subjective not objective. This philosophy argues that people individually and socially (through social interaction) construct their own reality and knowledge by reflecting on their experiences. Thus, Constructivism is a philosophy of learning founded on the premise that, by reflecting on our experiences, we construct our own understanding of the world we live in. Each of us generates our own ‘rules’ and ‘mental modes’, which we use to make sense of our experiences. Learning, therefore, is simply the process of adjusting our mental models to accommodate new experiences (Clarke, 1999, cited in Jha, 2009).

WHAT IS CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH?

It is a learning approach based on constructivism. This approach is based on observation and scientific study which tells how people learn. According to this approach, Learning is an active process in which learner is not a passive recipient of knowledge. On the contrary learner actively participates in the process of learning and creates his own understanding by doing various activities like experimentation, observation, reflection, explanation etc. Thus, it is an approach of learning based on the premise that cognition or learning is the result of mental construction (Dwivedi, 2010; Gautam and Kulshrestha, 2012; Gupta, 2012).

Constructivist Approach: A More Effective Approach to Impart Life Skills Education-

Constructivist approach views learners as actively engaged in learning process. They are not empty boxes to be filled by knowledge. The main focus of this approach is to engage students in the process of learning

and making meaning because it believes that knowledge is actively constructed by the learner not passively received from the outside (Zainuddin & Ahmed, 2008). In the context of life skills education, this approach has an important role to play because the primary aim of life skills education is to train an individual in basic life skills. This is a well-known fact that learners' participation is a basic necessity for any skill training programme because skills cannot be developed and sustained without practise and constructivist approach undoubtedly promotes active participation of students. In constructivist approach various methods can be employed for creating vibrant, healthy and appropriate learning environment to impart life skills education. Some important and major constructivist methods are as mentioned below:-

Distributed cognition method and Co-operative learning method

- Class discussion
- Brain Storming
- Story telling
- Debate
- Situation analysis and Case study method

Other creative methods

- Role play
- Games
- Poetry recitation, dance and music

Distributive cognition and Co-operative learning method-

The concept of distributive cognition is based on the interaction among people, environment and their cultural artefacts. It argues that cognitive development and growth of people are not isolated activities. These changes happen in the form of reciprocal process (Jha, 2009). On the other hand, co-operative learning method is mainly based on following five elements (Johnson & Johnson, 1993)-

- Positive Interdependence
- Individual and group accountability
- Explicit teaching of social skills
- Face-to-face interaction
- Group processing of learning

Under distributive cognition and co-operative learning method life skills education can be imparted through different activities such as class discussion, peer tutoring, brain storming, storytelling in live and active manner.

In class discussion people draw any conclusion after discussing collectively and logically over different issues (Tyagi, 2008). As a result of this, people can be trained in different life skills such as critical thinking, creative thinking, problem solving and competency to take right decision. Apart from this, different qualities such as socialization, mutual co-operation, and respect to antagonist thoughts can also be developed in the students.

Brain storming is a creative method for generating ideas and suggestions on particular subject (W.H.O, 1997). This method is based on the premise that more clear knowledge can be given to the students by stimulating mutual interaction among them. Actually it is a problem solving method which is based on the concept that group is more competent in presentation of new solution of any problem than an individual. The desired outcomes of brainstorming include, according to Renner (1994), the development of new solutions to existing problems, inspire collective creativity, and effect group synergy. It supports constructivist learning principles through the facilitation of a collaborative group process where shared understandings are negotiated through a social-linguistic process (Jha, 2009).

To explore the facts with the help of any incident and then kindle the emotions is the essence of Storytelling method. The main objective of storytelling is to develop interest, imagination, emotions and logical

abilities of students. In this method a story is told by the teacher or students. Pictures, comics, filmstrips and slides can be used as supplementary aids. After this students are given chance for discussion over different points raised by the story and they think over them (Tyagi, 2008). Thus, Students can be trained and encouraged to think critically about local problems by using this method. Apart from this, creative skills also can be developed successfully by using this method.

Debate-

The debate is an instructional method that facilitates articulation of thoughts and argumentation through the use of language. This method is very useful for the training of life skills as by using debates teachers can enhance their students' self-confidence and ability to think, air their ideas and listen to others' viewpoints. Whatever is the form of debate, formal or informal, moderator and judge have an important role in the debate. The moderator is responsible for enforcing the rules of debate and the judge's role is to determine the winning side (Jha, 2009).

Situation Analysis-

Situation Analysis is a medium to present those unknown situations in front of students which they might encounter any point of time in reality. In this method students are provided with valuable opportunities to think about variety of problems and dilemmas of real world. In this whole process they explore, analyze and discuss situations together, share their ideas and safely test their solutions. By using this method students can be easily trained in life skills like decision making, critical thinking, and interpersonal relationship.

Case Study Method-

Case studies are strong catalysts of experiential learning. Case studies provide one such opportunity to enhance learning through the testing of real life situations tailored to raise those issues that are important for students to think (Boyd, 1980; Dixon, 1991, cited in Jha, 2009). It makes students to understand about a simulated (or sometimes real) situation; enable them to comprehend that why an individual or group act in one way or another. The desired learning outcome of case studies is to improve learners' critical thinking and decision making skills.

Other Creative Methods-

Role play is one of the most powerful methods for practicing life skills. Role play is the acting out of a scenario, either based on text or based on example situations described by the teacher or students. It provides opportunities to students for experiencing how a person feels in a similar real life situation. It also helps them to observe those sensitive issues that may cause problems in real encounter in a safe and controlled environment (W.H.O., 1997). In addition, Role play is also very useful in developing abilities like empathy, self-confidence, self-expression, to understand own emotions in a better way and to understand others' viewpoints (Tyagi, 2008). Thus, role playing is experiential learning at its best and can be used to insert a slice of life into the classroom, connect theory with everyday practice, practice unfamiliar skills in a safe setting, and learn to appreciate contradictory viewpoints (Renner, 1997, cited in Jha, 2009).

One of the basic principles of constructivist approach is that rich, healthy and favourable environment is essential for learning because learners learn more when they are enjoying themselves. Games are very important for promoting active and fun learning. They make life skills education class interesting and joyful. In all types of games- motor, creative, mental and competitive, unification of knowledge, attitude and skills is required (Tyagi, 2008). These different types of game are helpful in developing abilities like creative attitude, discipline, self-dependence, understanding their responsibilities, respect diligence etc. Apart from this, games also provide opportunities to students to test their abilities and assumptions in relatively safe environment.

Life skills education can also be given effectively by Poetry recitation, Dance and Music. By using these creative methods students can be trained in various life skills such as self-awareness, creative thinking, effective communication, coping with feelings, coping with stress in a joyful and interesting manner.

CONCLUSION-

Constructivist approach is a popular approach in contemporary education. It respects learner as a unique individual and accept their role as a knowledge constructor. In this approach, students autonomy is encouraged which makes learning more authentic, real and meaningful. This approach of learning is relatively more beneficial in achieving desirable educational goals; thus it should be preferred for imparting life skills education. To conclude, we can say that constructivist approach is not only an appropriate approach for giving life skills education but also a better approach for this.

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