CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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1.1 Introduction:

Adolescence is a critical stage of growth and development and marks a period of changeover from childhood to adulthood. It is marked by swift physiological changes and psychosocial maturation. As adolescents mature cognitively their mental expression becomes logical and investigative. They grow capable of intangible thinking and better articulation. These are really the years of imagination, resourcefulness and ingenuity. These are also the years of trial and risk taking, succumbing to peer pressure and of taking ignorant conclusions on critical issues.

Though this period carries a mixed bag, which of these aspects presumes controlling proportions in life depends on the support, help and direction received from parents, teachers, peers and the world, in general. This period represents, in many cases, a phase when foundation is laid for a booming career and a fruitful life. Adolescence, thus, is a turning point in one’s life - a period of increased potential but also one of greater susceptibility.

Life is never easy for an adolescent. For a large majority of youth, Adolescence is a time of revolt, crisis, pathology and deviance. It is time for assessment, making promises and decisions and also finding a new place in the world that seems to be against you for everything and appears like a mysterious planet.

In fact, the gamut of adolescent problems is enormously vast. The problems vary in their gravity and as also for how for girls versus boys and also vary vastly across different socio-economic group.

The key issues of adolescents generally revolve around the following: managing sentiment, a strong need for identity, relationship building, resisting peer pressure, communicating one’s feelings and emotions, negotiating safer life situations, etc. Since this a very critical and often confusing time of one’s life, the adolescent does not know how to feel and act.

The situation is further aggravated by puberty that brings physiological changes like hormonal changes that add to the existing anxiety and confuse them even more. This is not all, for the physical changes are accompanied by unlimited behavioral changes. Given the situation they find themselves in, there is an urgent need in them to be independent and at the same time there
is the need to belong. When these needs are not fulfilled they adopt rebellion as a trait in every act and behavior.

The problems faced by adolescents can be classified as developmental, psychological, social and educational. While most of the problems are perceptual, effective guidance can solve most of the problems. This is where Life Skills Education helps adolescents deal effectively with real life situations and overcome the anxiety, confusion and mental turmoil that they keep experiencing.

1.2 What are Life Skills?

World Health Organization (1997) defines Life Skills as “abilities and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life”. While there is no definitive list of life skills, dealing with psychosocial and interpersonal skills are generally considered important. The skills result in greater maturity levels and helps them tide over situations perceived as ‘difficult’. Ultimately the interplay between skills and the way events are handled, is what produces demanding behavioral results, especially where the approach is supported by other strategies.

In other words, life skill is the ability of being accommodative and reflecting positive behaviour that empowers us in making informed choices to deal efficiently with the demand and challenges of complex everyday life situation. ‘Adaptive’ suggests that a person is accommodative in approach and is able to adjust to different circumstances. ‘Positive behaviour’ suggests that a person is open-minded & innovative and even in difficult situation can find hope and prospect to find solutions and tide over the situations.

Life skills can be understood in different ways without giving it a universal definition. In fact, life skills are non-academic abilities, knowledge, attitudes and behaviour necessary for successful living and learning and enhancing one’s quality of life. In that sense, any skill that enables a person to adapt and master life situation in any contexts are called Life Skills.

In this context one feels that, Life skills education is an important aspect of any learning and imparting a complete and holistic education. Life skill education includes skills that enhance empowerment like developing self-esteem, self-concept, identity, critical thinking and assertiveness.
- Promote personal health like HIV/AIDS prevention and health education.
- Are further orientation needed such career education and goal setting.
  [Bender & Lombard 2004:88; Kadish et al 2001].

Having listed life skills, it is to be understood that life skills cannot be apprehended in an abstract and conjectural way. Rather it requires the individual to subject his own knowledge and know how, the contexts and observations about problems, to create an analysis and to collect, probe and discuss his experience where it happens in real life.

Life skills are in constant progression both in terms of one’s personal and also fiscal, societal and ethnic background.

1.3 Need for Study:

Acquiring life skills are critical for they help an individual to / in:
- Translate knowledge, attitude and values in to healthy behaviour.
- Developing self confidence and in making them self reliant and helping them take decision successfully.
- Help them in self management and in taking right and appropriate career decisions.
- Interpersonal skills to be established, to improvise and have a healthy relationship in life.

Thus, including life skills is really essential as it helps in building and moulding capable adults who eventually become effective leaders bringing laurels to nation.

Life skill learning is indispensable and its need in holistic approach to education which cannot be disputed. Bender and Lombard (2004:101) expressly advocated those adolescents should be asked to identify their skill preferences.

Successful research has been accomplished in this field in the American sub-Continent and also in Africa, but very little research has been done in the Indian sub-Continent. It is important to remember that life skill are not static and disparities in social and economic backgrounds along with international cultural variations play an important role in deciding the required life skills in that region. Knowing that very little has been done in the Indian sub-continent undertaking a thorough study in Mumbai Region, a cosmopolitan metro and the commercial capital of India.