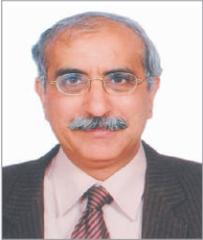


DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS OF THE YUVA SCHOOL LIFESKILLS PROGRAMME (SLP)

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India is a young country. Children in India live in diverse circumstances and have diverse needs and rights. Along with their need to be educated, healthy and skillful, they need, and have rights to adequate nutrition, to live in a safe and supportive environment, have opportunities to reach their optimal potential and generally lead healthy, joyful and fulfilling lives so that they can be productive and well adjusted citizens of tomorrow. Children in our country face many challenges. Many of them are first generation learners and face myriad problems throughout their schooling. They, due to the socio-economic and cultural determinants may be vulnerable in many ways. Peer pressure and lack of positive role models may prompt them to make unsafe and unhealthy choices. Anxiety and depression amongst the students, to the point of turning them suicidal, have been a cause of concern in the recent past. Girls are more vulnerable and face discrimination at many levels from being unwelcome since birth to being pulled out of school for a variety of reasons. Dropping out of school, low motivation for academics and general disinterest in sports and physical activities too are some of the problems that need to be addressed. Child malnutrition is rampant in most parts of the country. Up to 89% of girls and 67% of boys are found to be anaemic, and up to 1/4th are stunted, in some parts of the country. This has an adverse bearing on their cognitive capacities, learning performance and physical capacity. The various issues and the "needs" of the children are not only important for the individual or the family but also impact the national economic, social, and public health indicators adversely.

Our children have a right to age appropriate education, skills building, a safe and supportive environment, positive role models, empowerment, and friendly health services and counseling. They require these for metamorphosing into responsible and productive citizens. Well informed and skilled children are likely to make better decisions concerning not only their careers and relationships, habits, physical and mental health, but will be socially adept, successful and an asset to the society. They, to take advantage of the winds of globalization, also need to understand and deal with emerging issues like newly available career choices, pollution, water and energy conservation, global warming, protection of environment, terrorism and disasters. Dealing with anxiety and depression, negative peer pressure, violence, accidents, are some other significant issues that impact individuals health and also the social, economic and health indicators of the country. Gender sensitivity, prevention of female foeticide and good parenting are some important social issues that all children need to understand. Children require guidance and assistance - both covert and overt- from their Parents, Teachers, peers and society in general to complete the various "tasks" of development and deal with such issues.

Responding to the needs of children:

No society can sit back and watch its young people remain unskilled, unhappy and unutilized in the process of nation building, feel unsafe and unwanted, or become unhealthy. Every society and nation has to strive to promote the education, skill building and health of its young ones. **Children and adolescents benefit from acquiring appropriate knowledge, attitudes, values and skills in a variety of ways. Such knowledge and skills can improve their scholastic performance, foster healthy relationships, help deal with peer pressure, lead to behaviors that prevent disease and injury, and enable young people to play leadership roles.** The developing child can be engaged actively in learning experiences that will enable him/her, to have a positive attitude, make 'correct choices', lead a 'values based' life, practice basic hygiene and sanitation practices; listen and communicate effectively, have healthy, respectful and mutually beneficial relationships; contribute towards environment protection, reduction in global warming and effectively preparing for their healthy and joyous future.

The Government of NCT Delhi is committed to the holistic development of children and young people under its care. To fulfill this commitment, the Department of Education, GNCT, Delhi has taken a number of far reaching steps to improve the dimensions and quality of education, skill building, provision of a safe and supportive environment, health promotion, and providing opportunities to the young people at every level. It, under the YUVA umbrella, has added many innovative methodologies and initiatives to achieve these aims, make learning joyful and interesting, and take away the stress related to schooling, examinations and daily life situations. It has also provided space to the students in the decision making bodies like Vidyalya Kalyan Samiti (VKS) under the Bal Bhagidari scheme. At the same time special focus has been provided to lift teacher morale and build their capacities through various initiatives. The phenomenal increase in the pass percentage of students taking up the CBSE examination, visible improvement in the school infrastructure and increase in the number of students who have enrolled themselves are some of the pointers reflecting the improvement in the quality of the education and ambience in the Government schools of Delhi.

The YUVA School Life Skills Programme (SLP) handbook that you hold in your hands utilize a combination of "Life Skills" that will address the important and emerging issues that have an impact on the society and nation, help build student's thinking, social and negotiating skills, learning capacities, personality, effective relationships and promote their health. It also incorporates and links with the other initiatives like BaLA, Self Defence, Yoga, Mental Maths, Excursions and visits, Laughter therapy, Caltoonz, Kitabi Magic, Yuva clubs, VKS and Chalta Firta School to provide a holistic package. Separate sections that provide strategies on making learning 'joyful, interesting and meaningful' and to address the needs of the teachers as teachers and parents have been developed. **In essence the YUVA- SLP codifies and further strategizes the vision and the various initiatives taken up by the Department in the last few years.**

Scope and role of Life Skills Based Education:

"Life Skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life." (WHO) The effective and appropriate utilization of life skills can influence the way one feels about oneself and others and can enhance one's productivity, efficacy, self-esteem and self-confidence. In particular, life skills are a group of psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people

make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build relationships, empathies with others, and cope with and manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner.

Life Skills are generic skills, relevant to many diverse experiences throughout life, and they should be taught as such, to gain maximum impact. However, for an effective contribution to any particular domain of prevention, Life Skills should also be applied in the context of typical risk situations. Life Skills may be directed toward personal actions or actions toward others, as well as actions to change the surrounding environment to make it conducive to healthy and joyous living. Life Skills are needed for creating a demand and effectively utilizing the existing education, health and other services. *Life Skills are individual skills/abilities that each one of us possess and yet, need to enhance in order to meet the challenges of life.*

Life Skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life (WHO definition).

In particular, Life Skills are a group of psycho-social competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, communicate effectively, and develop coping and self-management skills to lead a healthy and productive life. Life Skills may be directed toward personal actions or actions toward others, as well as to actions to change the surrounding environment to make it conducive to health.

A significant body of theory and research provides a rationale for the benefits and uses of Life Skills Education. Behavioural science, and the disciplines of education and child development, placed in the context of human rights principles, constitute a primary source of these foundation theories and principles. Those who work in these disciplines have provided insights - acquired through decades of research and experience - into the way human beings, specifically children and adolescents, grow and learn; acquire knowledge, attitudes, and skills; and behave. Research and experience have also revealed the many spheres of influence that affect the way children and adolescents grow in diverse settings, from family and peer groups to school and community.

- (1) In the school setting, late childhood and early adolescence are critical moments of opportunity for building skills and positive habits. During this time, children are developing the ability to think abstractly, to understand consequences, to relate to their peers in new ways, and to solve problems as they experience more independence from parents and develop greater control over their own lives.
- (2) The wider social context of early and middle adolescence provides varied situations in which to practice new skills and develop positive habits with peers and other individuals outside the family.
- (3) Developing attitudes, values, skills, and competencies is recognised as critical to the development of a child's sense of self as an autonomous individual and to the overall learning process in school.
- (4) Within this age span, the skills of young people of the same age and different ages can vary dramatically. Activities need to be developmentally appropriate.

There is a growing body of research focusing on determinants and factors that influence a person's choices that form her or his behaviour. Some determinants have a promotive effect ('protective' factors) whereas others enhance the vulnerability ('risk' factors) of children. **Life Skills Education (LSE) is designed, in addition to other things, to promote 'protective' factors and reduce the impact of 'risk' factors.** It facilitates the practice and reinforcement of psychosocial skills in a culturally and developmentally appropriate way. By improving decision making and focusing on appropriate choices, it contributes to the promotion of personal and social development, the prevention of health and social problems, and the protection of human rights.

As health education and Life Skills have evolved during the past decade, there is growing recognition and evidence that as young people grow from their earliest years through childhood, adolescence, and into young adulthood, **developing psycho-social and interpersonal skills can build competencies to adopt positive behaviors, protect them from health threats, and foster healthy relationships.** The Skills Based Health Education approach states that LSE helps children and adolescents learn how to deal with the difficulties of daily life, growing-up and deal with risk situations. Life Skills have been tied to specific health choices, such as choosing not to use tobacco, eating a healthy diet, or making safer choices about relationships.

A well-designed and implemented LSE curriculum addresses diverse needs and problems through learning and application. Life Skills Education is an essential component of promoting healthy and socially accepted individuals. Experiences from the world over show that the LSE approach has shown gains in the following areas:

- ◆ LSE is useful in the promotion of healthy child and adolescent development;
- ◆ LSE provides inner power and strength to deal with daily life.
- ◆ Life Skills put children in a better position to translate their dreams and values into constructive actions.
- ◆ LSE helps preparing young people for changing social circumstances.
- ◆ Life Skills are effective tools to empower young people to act, take initiative and take control/charge of their lives.
- ◆ Life Skills process transfers knowledge, skills, attitudes that one has acquired into application/strategies for a healthy life.
- ◆ Life Skills lay the foundations for good health and mental well-being.
- ◆ LSE also impacts on adults (trainers, teachers, administrators and health professionals) -when they improve their Life Skills.
- ◆ Life Skills Education contributes to: basic education; gender equality; democracy; good citizenship; child care and protection; quality and efficiency of the education system; the promotion of lifelong learning; quality of life; the promotion of peace, and the utilization of appropriate health services by young people.

Life Skills Education can....

- ◆ Assist in development of coping skills that are **essential components for healthy development in childhood and adolescence** and needed for making a successful **transition from childhood to adulthood**.
- ◆ Specifically address the needs of **children growing up in disadvantaged environments** who may otherwise lack opportunities to develop these skills.
- ◆ Develop social competence and problem-solving skills which are among the characteristics that promote **resiliency**, positive development and effective ways of coping.
- ◆ Develop "**emotional intelligence**" and skills for managing emotions and interpersonal relationships.
- ◆ **Be more effective** than programs that focus only on transferring information.
- ◆ Positively influence the **mediators of problem behaviors**
- ◆ Have an impact on **multiple adolescent health and development needs**
- ◆ Help schools address multiple demands for prevention education curricula by presenting a **comprehensive, unified approach** to meeting many needs
- ◆ Promote communication skills, decision-making skills, critical thinking skills, and negotiation skills needed for healthy development and are also **skills that are valued by employees in the workplace**
- ◆ **Promote positive social norms** that can impact the broader environment of adolescent health services, schools, staff and families
- ◆ Engage Teachers, students, and their families much more than didactic approaches because of the focus on **participation and relevance** for the program participants
- ◆ Be **more exciting and rewarding** for Teachers and students because the content tends to be more realistic and the methods more fun and effective than traditional (didactic) approaches
- ◆ Help to achieve the **Education For All** goal of developing Life Skills, along with literacy and numeracy among all children and young people

Initiatives to develop and implement Life Skills Education in schools have been undertaken in many countries around the world. The need for Life Skills Education is highlighted, directly and indirectly in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and a number of international recommendations. Life Skills Education is aimed at facilitating the development of psychosocial skills that are required to deal with the demands and challenges of everyday life. It includes the application of Life Skills in the context of specific risk situations and in situations where children need to be empowered to promote and protect their rights.

Many countries have incorporated the development of Life Skills Education in response to the need to reform 'traditional' education systems, which appear to be out of step with the realities of modern social and economic life. Problems such as violence in schools, student drop-out, peer pressure, media influences and disruptions in the family system are crippling the ability of school systems to achieve their goals. Furthermore, in addition to its wide-ranging applications in primary prevention and the advantages that it can bring for education systems, Life Skills Education lays the foundation for learning skills that are in great demand in today's job markets.

Following the study of many different Life Skills programmes, the WHO Department of Mental Health identified five basic areas of Life Skills that are relevant across cultures incorporating ten Life Skills:

- Self Awareness and Empathy;
- Creative Thinking and Critical Thinking;
- Decision Making and Problem Solving;
- Effective Communication and Interpersonal Skills;
- Coping with Emotions and Coping with Stress

Operationalizing Life Skills Education (LSE):

Skills are abilities. Hence it should be possible to practice Life Skills as abilities. Self-esteem, sociability and tolerance are not taught as abilities: rather, learning such qualities is facilitated by learning and practising Life Skills, such as self awareness, problem solving, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills.

Facilitating the learning of Life Skills is a central component of programmes designed to promote healthy behaviour, mental health and holistic well-being. The YUVA SLP is a programme in this very mould for it envisions holistic development of all children. To be effective, the teaching of Life Skills is coupled with the teaching of information related to hygiene, health, environment and the promotion of positive (health promoting and pro-social) attitudes and values. The development of Life Skills requires modelling of Life Skills by school staff and a "safe", supportive classroom environment that is conducive to the practice and reinforcement of skills. Furthermore, Life Skills Education needs to be developed as part of a *whole school initiative* designed to support the healthy psychosocial development of children and adolescents, for example, through the promotion of child-friendly practices in schools. **Thus the involvement of ALL Teachers, Principals, other staff members is essential for ensuring a successful and complete roll out of Life Skills Education in the system.**

Life Skills can be operationalised through content, thematic or activity approach. Content approach focuses on information for increasing knowledge related to specific subject areas. In thematic approach, appropriate themes for the target group are built into the sessions (e.g., understanding self). The activity approach is built around activities that have scope for providing experiential learning for building Life Skills (role-play, quiz etc). In any of the approaches adopted, boys and girls can be enabled to make sound decisions about choices and relationships and stand up to those decisions, especially those which involve saying 'No'.

Life Skills learning is facilitated by the use of participatory learning methods and is based on a social learning process which includes: hearing an explanation of the skill in question; observation of the skill (modelling); practice of the skill in selected situations in a supportive learning environment; and feedback about individual performance of skills. Practice of skills is facilitated by role-playing in typical scenarios, with a focus on the application of skills and the effect that they have on the outcome of a hypothetical situation. Skills learning is also facilitated by using skills learning "tools", e.g. by working through steps in the decision-making process. Different combination of Life Skills are emphasized depending on the purpose and topic.

Life Skills Education should be designed to enable children and adolescents to practise skills in progressively more demanding situations, for example, by starting with skills learning in non-threatening, low-risk everyday situations and progressively moving on to the application of skills in threatening, high-risk situations. Young people can also acquire advocacy skills to have an effect on the broader policies and environments that affect their health, such as advocating for the creation of tobacco free and weapon free zones, the addition of safe water and latrines to school grounds, or the availability of medical services.

The introduction and firm placement of Life Skills Education requires teacher Training to promote effective implementation of the programme. This can be provided as in service training, but efforts should also be made to introduce it in Teacher Training Colleges. The successful implementation of a Life Skills programme depends on:

- ◆ Teacher training and continuing support in the use of the programme materials.
- ◆ A teaching manual, to provide lesson plans and a framework for a sequential, developmentally appropriate programme;

The Department of Education and SCERT had organized exhaustive trainings of the Teachers belonging to the Department, MCD and other institutions. A group of 60 'master trainers', who were trained by a select group of trainers and TSG members, trained nearly 400 'resource persons' belonging to the Department, who in turn trained the Teachers on the YUVA SLP.

Development of the Handbooks for the YUVA- SLP

To give the initiative a structure and form, and to assist the Teachers to carry out effective activities in the classroom, it was found imperative that they be provided with quality standardized material that is culturally appropriate. It was decided to develop modules and sessions on the issues of importance utilizing the 'Life Skills Education' and 'experiential learning cycle' approaches. Various factors like simplicity, clarity, available time in the classroom, age and developmental level of the target audience, appropriate methodology, cultural and religious sensitivity and gender consideration were kept in mind by the Technical Support Group (TSG) while developing these sessions. Two 'Handbooks for Teachers' were developed and field tested in the year 2005. The material was extensively revised and field tested in 2007 and 2008. However, as a matter of precaution and reflecting a spirit that invites participation and inputs from stakeholders and others, it was decided to circulate some copies and put these volumes on the Department's website in April 2008 inviting feedback and comment.

The feedback received on the earlier YUVA handbooks, the 'draft material' of April 2008, and the experiences of the nodal Teachers, Field testing units, Technical Support Group (TSG) members, Teachers, Principals, Parents student and others were carefully incorporated while designing the sessions in these volumes. Some oversights that were brought to the notice of the TSG and the Department of Education by various individuals, groups and institutions have now been corrected.

The sessions are carefully designed so that the students learn and internalize the conclusions utilizing the Life Skills and "experiential learning" methodology. The overall themes, that all individuals are unique and worthy of love, that communicating with parents and adults helps in preempting many problems, and that our attitude and choices determine our destiny, are woven into the sessions. The sessions, without preaching or sermonizing, assist the students to reach conclusions that help them lead a happy, healthy and productive life in the present and in future. They incorporate activities like role plays, case studies, games and exercises that the students find 'fun', in addition to brain storming, discussions and group work that give the students enough scope to think, listen, debate, argue and learn to respect diverse opinions. Most sessions have newspaper stories attached to them so that a sense of topicality and its place in 'real life' could be reflected. Due care has been taken to enlarge the Fact Sheets and improve their relevance. Some issues and sessions have deliberately been repeated so as to cover a large number of students.

Some sessions predominantly utilize Critical and Creative Thinking and Decision Making, whereas others favour Self Awareness, Empathy and Effective Communication. Though Inter Personal Relationship, Coping with Stress and Emotions are spread out in many sessions, the Team Leader and the TSG keeping in view the various press reports related to stress related suicides among young students decided also to add specific sessions that help students cope with various kinds of

stresses and emotions. Incorporating these have not only made the sessions incisive and sharper but have considerably enlarged their scope.

The sessions have been field tested to further refine the methodology and to obtain valuable feedback from the students and Teachers. As a matter of abundant precaution some sessions have been field tested in more than one setting. Many schools and Teachers along with the TSG field testing core group were involved in carrying out the field test. The results of the field test provided reassurance and encouragement that the sessions not only work in the real setting but have been welcomed by students and Teachers alike.

The sessions are so designed that less than '24 hours' are required to carry them out for any one class. Surely this modest amount of time can be found to implement the initiative in the classroom. However YUVA SLP is based on the vision that ALL interactions inside and outside the classroom- are meaningful, empowering and joyous for both students and teachers alike.

A separate section on "Making learning joyful, interesting and meaningful" has been added. It introduces to the Teachers interesting pedagogical methodologies to carry out lessons in the classroom in a joyful manner so that the interest of the students is enhanced, and they are able to consciously and unconsciously develop linkages between various subject areas. A committed and motivated Teacher is the backbone of the programme and the Team Leader and the Technical Support Group felt that the YUVA SLP must address the needs of the Teachers and find mechanisms to enhance their motivation. A Teacher, in addition to carrying out the school work is also a Parent and a concerned citizen. A separate section addresses the needs of the 'Teachers and Parents'. It attempts to enhance their motivation, addresses their health related concerns and introduces them to the strategies to deal effectively with emerging challenges related to technology and internet.

Developing these modules has been a fascinating journey and a result of focused hard work and perseverance by numerous people. The Core TSG members have worked tirelessly over a period of three years to refine and revise these modules. As the Chairperson of the Technical Support Group, it is my pleasant duty to thank them and others for the exemplary dedication and commitment that has brought about a qualitative change in the sessions.

No enterprise can succeed without the active assistance and involvement of all concerned. It is expected that the Principals and Education Officers, who have been oriented to the initiative, will guide the process and be able to iron out the day to day difficulties.

Though most of the activities and sessions have been field tested earlier, the Technical Support Group, as a matter of abundant precaution and from abundant humility expects you to provide your valuable feedback on various aspects so that they can be incorporated in future editions. The members of the Technical Support Group seek your active co-operation in turning the vision of our children becoming healthy, happy and joyous individuals into a reality. It needs to be done and its time has come!



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