

Enhancing life skills of pre-service teachers

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Abstract

The tremendous rapid technological developments in global economies is impacting everyday lives. To be prepared for the new demands of new era, everyone needs to know how to use their knowledge and skills. This necessitates improvement in educational quality. The teachers' role is larger in that sense. They are responsible for developing essential skills and abilities in adolescents and youth. Hence it is desired that the future teachers would develop essential construct of life skills and which help them to face challenges in life confidently and also to train their students. The present study is an effort to evaluate the effectiveness of Life Skill Enhancement Program on pre-service teachers. The researcher administers Life skill scale and situational scale to identify pre and post program levels of life skills in the Pre-service teachers. The Life skill program consists of activities and tasks to be performed individually as well as in team. The study shows that the program has statistically significant effect for pre-service teachers through enhancement of their life skill levels. Keywords: Life Skill Education, Pre-service Teachers, Life Skill Program

Introduction

Leading success by an individual in any field or occupation depends not only upon the knowledge, intellect or talent but it is also affected by certain skills or abilities like communication skills, problem solving, decision mak-

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ing, team work, leadership skills, empathy and many more. The group of such skills together is known as Life Skills.

The training of life skills hardly finds any place in regular school curriculum. Today we are more inclined towards developing competency and knowledge in prime subjects with paying less or no attention towards developing life skills. Dissemination of life skill theory and training is accountable to be in the hands of 'Teacher'. Teachers' philosophy, methods, knowledge of contents, aptitude and attitude for teaching, command over language, social skills, managing stress and emotions, general knowledge etc. are the backbone of future progress of the person-society-nation. To meet the challenges faced by society today, it demands skill-based manpower and creative problem-solving skills. There is a need to develop an approach to prepare students to face real life situations. Incorporating life skill education at the level of Teacher education program may enhance the acceptance of future teachers towards changing educational parameters.

Life skills are essential strategies developed in the form of insights, values or one's perception towards self that helps the individual to address the challenges of real life successfully. These skills or abilities essentially help improve mental and physical strength amongst adolescents and youth by avoiding indulging in issues like violent behaviours, suicide attempts, drug addiction etc.

Life Skills

Life Skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable humans to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. The skills that can be said to be life skills are innumerable.

Life Skills by WHO

In the present study the researcher considers Life Skills defined by World Health Organization. (World Health Organization 1997)

Decision Making helps us to deal constructively with decisions about our

lives. It refers to the ability to evaluate information and advice to make informed decisions, assess advantages and disadvantages of different options, change decisions to adapt to new situations, and plan for the future.

Problem Solving enables us to deal constructively with problems in our lives. It refers to the ability to find solutions to the problems, ability to incorporate past experiences to solve the problem.

Creative Thinking refers to the ability to think beyond our direct experience. It helps us respond adaptively and with flexibility to the situations of our daily lives.

Critical Thinking is an ability to analyse information and experiences in an objective manner. It helps analyse social and cultural influences on attitude, values and behaviour, question inequality and injustice.

Effective Communication refers to ability to verbally or non-verbally express own ideas, emotions, views, opinions etc. in appropriate way.

Self-awareness refers to the ability to identify personal strengths, weaknesses, desires and dislikes, clarify personal values and beliefs, and recognise personal worth.

Interpersonal Skills helps to relate in positive way with the people we interact with. It refers to being able to make and keep friendly relationships for mental and social wellbeing.

Empathy is the ability to imagine what life is like for another person. Empathy helps to encourage nurturing behaviour towards people in the need of care and assistance.

Coping with Emotions involves recognising emotions in ourselves and others. Being aware of how emotions influence behaviour and being able to respond to emotions appropriately. Coping with Stress is about recognising the sources of stress in our lives and acting in a way that can help lower the levels of stress.

Life skill education helps building a society that is equipped with a creative

spark, problem solving attitude, horned with critical thinking ability, rationalistic individual, decision making potentialities, high level of sociability, effective communication and skill of interpersonal and empathy for tuning in to the society. All these skills are the basis of good quality life and therefore students/ youth needs to be given training in life skills right from Primary Education. At the United Nations Inter-Agency meeting held at WHO, Geneva (WHO, 1999:4) Life skills education was considered crucial for healthy child and adolescent development, to prepare them for socialisation, lifelong learning and promote quality life and Peace. Life skills education can prevent violent and disruptive activities and behaviour. (Botvin et.al. 1984).

When we consider teaching life skills from the level of Primary Education, we need to assure that the teachers are in possession with such life skills and they are able to teach the skills effectively. Pre-service teaches are enrolled into Teacher education programs which are aimed at professional preparation and development of teachers. The National Curriculum Framework on Teacher Education, while articulating the vision of teacher education considers that student teachers should be given opportunities for self-learning and reflection, develop capacities for self-directed learning and ability to think, be critical and work in groups (NCFTE, 2009).

Methodology

The major aims of present study include to study level of life skills among the preservice teachers and to study the effect of life skill program on their current level of life skills. The study is based on the hypotheses that there is no significant difference in pre test scores and post test scores between pre-service teachers of experimental and control group.

An experimental pre-test post-test study design with a control group is used for the study for analysing impact of life skill program. The population for the study is Pre-service teachers undergoing professional teacher education program. The researcher has selected 87 pre-service teachers from Education colleges using purposive sampling. Randomly divided in two groups

Experimental (41) and Control Groups (46).

Life skill Program was administered to experimental group. The life skill program consists of series of learning activities and tasks to be performed individually or in groups. The Life skill Program uses various activities like brain storming, discussions, role plays, storytelling debates, creative writing etc. Data is collected using Life skill scale and situational scale pre-phase and post- phase of life skill program.

Life skill Education Strategies

Life skills education can be designed to be spread across the curriculum, to be a separate subject or to be in integration. Following are some techniques to enhance life skills in students:

Brain Storming: Students actively generate variety of ideas about a particular topic or question quickly and spontaneously by using their imagination. Whole class can generate the creative ideas and a healthy discussion can be started on these ideas, it is essential to evaluate the pros and cons of each idea according certain fixed criteria.

Story Telling: A story is told or read by students or teacher by using picture, book, comic, slide etc. Students are motivated to think critically about the issue (health related, cleanliness, drug addiction etc.) raised through the plot of story. It helps the students to use their creative thinking write stories, making comparison and helping people to discover the solution of problems through healthy discussion.

Debates: Debate a definite problem or issue is presented before the students and they must take a position on resolving the problem or issue. Various issues and problems related to health, social evils can be raised and discussed. Debate allows the students to defend a position (favour or against) that may means a lot to them and provide opportunities to practice higher thinking skills.

Discussion: Discussion helps the students by deepen their understanding

about the content and provide opportunities to learn from one another. Discussion helps in developing skills of listening, assertiveness and empathy. It also helps to develop the communication skill of students.

Role playing: It provides an excellent opportunity for developing various life skills especially empathy as in role playing students has to play the role of another person. A student learns how one might handle a potential situation in real life. This helps in increasing insight into one's own feeling.

Buzz Group: Students during this activity are divided into small group of five or six members and they have to carry out a task. By doing so, students know each other better and learn to help their peers.

Games: Games promote active learning, decision making, discussion and fun. It promotes healthy competition among participants as they work hard to prove their talents. It enables students to use their knowledge, attitude and skills.

Situation Analysis: During situation analysis, students are allowed to explore problems and safely test solutions. It provides opportunities to work hard, share feelings and develop critical thinking. Other important methods to facilitate life skills learning include peer supported learning, practical community development projects, audio-visual activities i.e. music, dance and theatre. Life skill education cannot be facilitated on the basis of information or discussion alone. It is not only an active learning process, but it must also include experimental learning i.e. practical experience, and reinforcement of the skills for each learner in a supportive learning environment.

Results and Findings

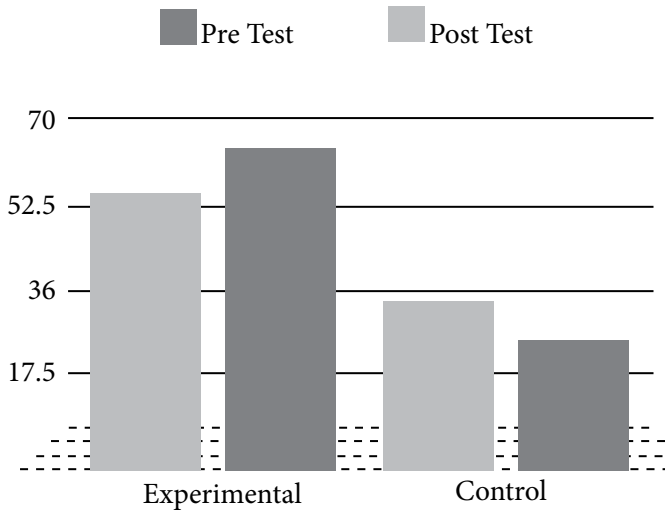
The data gathered during the study was analysed qualitatively as well as quantitatively. The qualitative analysis done by feedback questionnaire, field notes, focussed group discussions. It shows that openness to participate and interact during the activities has gradually increased during program. Positive changes were observed in classroom behaviour and classroom interaction of

the student teachers. Participants learned to interact and argue for fruitful discussions rather than criticising others. The participants appreciated role plays, dramas simulation and games as these activities encourage to interact and work cooperatively. Many pre service teachers identified creative spark in them that they felt never existed before. The pre service teachers realised responsibility as a teacher to develop and enhance life skill among themselves and the children.

The quantitative analysis shows significant enhancement in the Life skill levels of the participants. The hypotheses tested during the study and the statistical interpretation of data revealed increased level of life skills for each core life skills. The data clearly depicts that there is positive difference between the level of life skill scores of experimental and control groups before and after the program intervention.

Hypothesis 1- There is no significant difference in Pre-situational score and Post-situational scores of Pre- service Teachers in Experimental Group and Control Group.

Graph 1 Mean Rank of Pre and Post Situational Scores of Experimental

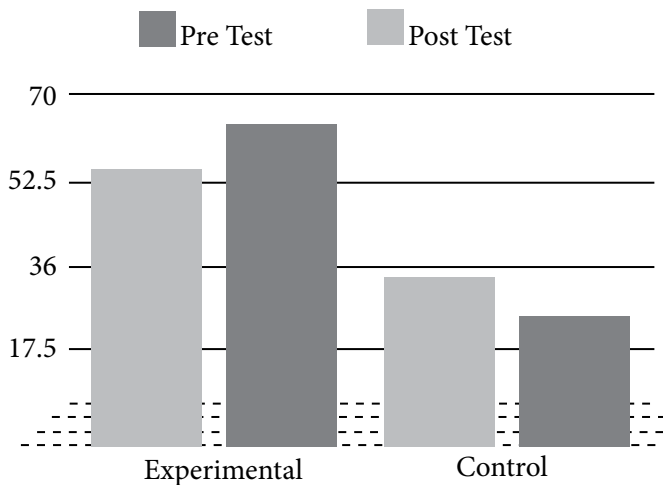


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Graph 1 represents Mean Rank of Experimental and Control Group Situational Scale Scores before and after intervention of the Life Skill Program

The mean rank of situational scores of experimental group and control group is not same in Pre-test. An examination of mean ranks of post situational scores demonstrate that the Pre-service teachers in experimental group had higher life skill level than control group. We can conclude that the Life skill program has enhanced life skill levels of Pre-service teachers.

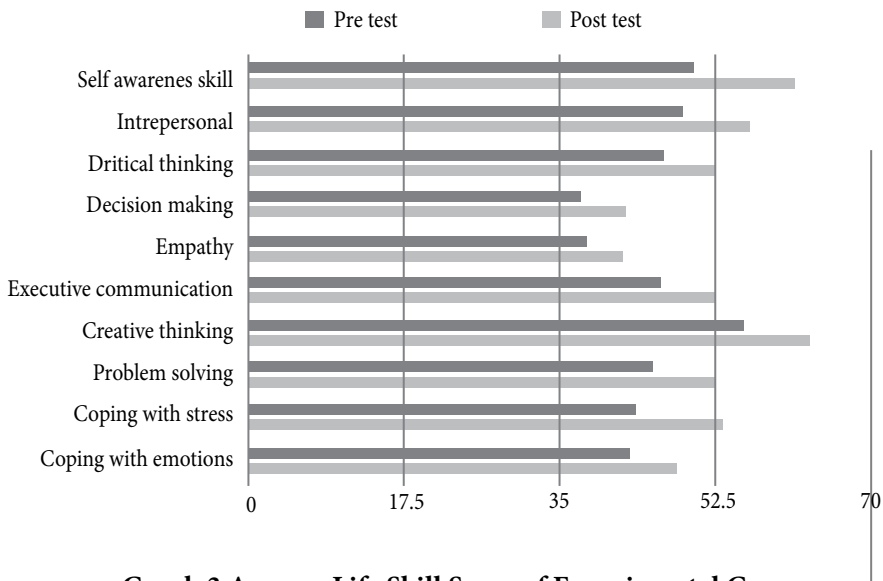
Hypothesis 2- There is no significant difference in Pre-Life skill score and Post-life skill scores of Preservice Teachers in Experimental Group and Control Group.



Graph 2 Mean Rank of Pre and Post Life skill scores of Experimental and control groups

The Mean Rank in Graph 2 indicate that before the experiment, experimental group had higher life skill scores than control group. The mean rank of experimental group participants is increased after life skill program. It can be concluded that the program was effective for pre-service teachers.

Hypothesis 3- The Average life skill scores before the program and after the program according to each life skill are depicted in Graph 3. There is increase in average level of each life skill after the Life skill program intervention.



Graph 3 Average Life Skill Score of Experimental Group

The intervention of life skill program has positive effect on the life skill level of Preservice teachers. The research study was significant in establishing that the life skill program provided innovative and creative ways for enhancing pre-service teachers’ life skills.

Conclusion

To conclude, the life skill program helps to get insight into the use of life skill program for teachers, students and society as a whole. The life skill training through integration of life skill strategies into the classroom setting for pre-service training program as well as in-service training program. The teaching-learning process can be integrated with life skills development activities to improve life skills of adolescents. Continuous practice of these activities ascertains the mastery over life skills and application of such skills into

real life lead to happy and healthy life.

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