



Significance of Life Skills

This editorial is based on [“Life skills: The missing link between education and employment”](#) which was published in Hindustan Times on 01/09/2022. It talks about the role of Life Skills in bridging the gap between Education and Employment.

For Prelims: National Education Policy, UNICEF, Covid-19, ASER

For Mains: Role of Life Skills in bridging the gap between Education and Employment

The [National Education Policy \(NEP\) 2020](#) was a landmark initiative for the Indian education system, calling for deep sector reform and a systemic overhaul. The policy **recommended incorporating life skills as part of the curriculum**, taking into account the view that education must go beyond academic outcomes to focus on the holistic development of our future generations.

Coincidentally, this came at a time when the world was in the grips of [Covid-19](#) — a period marked by health crises upending and exacerbating learning loss across the board.

The findings of a 2019 [UNICEF](#) Report states that **more than half the youth of South Asia will have neither the education nor the skills** needed to be employable in 2030, highlighting the dire reality of our future.

The problem with **India is not only unemployment, but also unemployability**. There are **650 million Indians under the age of 25**, the largest youth population in the world, which presents a unique situation: Almost 22% of the incremental global workforce over the next three decades will come from India. With the right interventions, this [demographic dividend](#) can easily be converted into a sustainable opportunity.

What do we understand by Life Skills?

▪ About:

- Life skills are a **set of abilities, attitudes and socio-emotional competencies** that enable individuals to learn, make informed decisions and exercise rights to lead a healthy and productive life and subsequently become agents of change.
- Life skills promote mental well-being and competence in young people as they face the realities of life.
- These skills **support the development of foundational skills** such as literacy, numeracy, digital skills and can also be utilized in several areas, such as gender equality in education, environmental education, peace education or education for development, livelihood and income generation, and for positive health promotion among others.
- **Life skills empower young people to take positive action** to participate in their communities, engage in continuous learning, protect themselves and promote health and

positive social relationships.

What is the Need for Life Skills in the Indian Context?

- **Adapting to the Situation:**
 - **Time management skills for kids, student self-awareness, interpersonal relationship skills** give the ability to adapt to situations, persevere and constantly reevaluate, reassess and restructure life.
- **Allow Students to Comprehend and Address Situations:**
 - Critical thinking skills allow **students to comprehend and address situations** based on the available information and facts.
 - Critical thinking **involves organizing and processing facts**, information and other data to outline a problem and develop effective resolutions.
- **Creative Thinking Skills:**
 - Having the ability to think creatively allows us to reconsider things from a fresh perspective and from new angles.
 - It's an **innovative thought process which results in surprising deductions** and new ways of doing things.
 - Creative thinking can be aided by lateral thinking or brainstorming to create ideas.
- **Fragile Knowledge Society:**
 - Knowledge is the core of a productive society, however the **ability to learn and apply critical thinking skills to solving problems (both defined as “skills”) is more important than the accumulation of knowledge.**
 - **This ability supports the individuals to invent and innovate**, leading to social and economic growth.
 - In India, **children and adolescents have low levels of understanding and conceptual clarity** around learning, analytical skills and knowledge of human rights, including gender equality.
 - **National Achievement Survey (NAS), State Learning Achievement Surveys (SLAS), [Annual Status of Education Report \(ASER\)](#) and [Programme for International Student Assessment \(PISA\)](#)** are large scale assessments that have consistently pointed to the poor learning levels of children in language and mathematics even after eight years of education.
- **Depleting Human Capital:**
 - A fragile knowledge society has **ramifications on the ability of its members in understanding and applying learning to** gain opportunities and build a productive society.
 - This is driving inequalities in health, education and life chances and is most pronounced in some states and pockets of India.
 - The country is **experiencing abject poverty and underdevelopment** in several geographical concentrations, where young people do not have necessary skills for productive employment and livelihoods and lack key competencies aligned with the changing demands of the dynamic market and lack workforce readiness.
 - This is **driving inequalities in health, education and life chances** and is most pronounced in some states and pockets of India.
- **Inequity:**
 - Post-independence, **patterns of inequality and exclusion continue to exist in India, largely due to deep rooted** social (e.g. caste, tribal, minorities and gender) and class structures that perpetuate and limit opportunities for people, systematically blocking them from availing of the rights, opportunities and resources that are usually available to all members of society.
 - Within these groups, girls are further discriminated due to their sex. The degree to which the inequity exists varies between regions and geographies.

What should be the Way Forward?

- **Creating a Common Vocabulary:**
 - Without an agreed-upon vocabulary and assessment framework, it is not possible to effectively scale up life skills delivery in India.

- The most meaningful way to enable this is to **create a common vocabulary at the national level.**
 - If the 2005 **National Curriculum Framework (NCF)** helped create a baseline for academic competencies, the new frameworks envisioned by **NEP 2020 are expected to do the same for life skills education.** The groundwork for this has already begun.
 - The Life Skills Collaborative, a consortium of over 30 organisations with multi-sector expertise, working in tandem with state governments and educational institutions, has spent the last 18 months coming up with a glossary of key life skills terms and a framework for life skills training.
- **Creating Assessment Tools:**
 - A **robust assessment tool would enable us to assess the impact of each framework of life skills training** and organise our efforts toward implementing the most effective framework.
 - For instance, the **“Future Readiness” assessment tool deployed across the 15 different pilots** under Young Warrior NXT was designed to provide comparable evaluations and learning across three key metrics – enrolment, engagement and learner feedback.
 - It would inform sustainability and future scalability, which becomes particularly important when dealing with large systemic shifts in education departments that span millions of students.
- **Curating Content on Life Skills:**
 - **Making age-appropriate, relevant and contextual learning content available** to all is the cornerstone to building life skills for the 21st century.
 - **Multiple e-learning solutions that aggregate high-quality learning content on the most basic of academic subjects** have indeed revolutionised education.
 - A similar solution to curate content on life skills could greatly benefit stakeholders invested in transacting life skills at scale. This would not only enable young people to take charge of their own learning, but also offer opportunities for collaboration with learning experts in the space and building on existing efforts in the ecosystem.
- **Using our Existing Systems:**
 - Finally, to deliver life skills at scale, **existing school systems and vocational training infrastructure must be leveraged.**
 - There are **over 10 million teachers and over 1.5 million schools in India** – a significant asset base and delivery channel that can be tapped into.
 - However, it is important to note that **teachers are already overburdened** and the pressure of post-Covid catch-up is putting more stress on the system.
 - Hence, **it is essential that we adequately aid, support and guide the teachers with pedagogical frameworks,** lesson plans and assessment tools to enable the delivery of life skills training within the mainstream curriculum.

Drishti Mains Question

The pandemic led to an increase in India’s youth unemployment rate, making their already insecure position in the job market even more precarious. Discuss the role of Lifeskills in bridging the gap between education and employment.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Mains

Q. “Demographic Dividend in India will remain only theoretical unless our manpower becomes more educated, aware, skilled and creative.” What measures have been taken by the government to enhance the capacity of our population to be more productive and employable? **(2016)**

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