

COPING AS A LIFE SKILL FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

Jaswinder Kaur* and Anoop Beri**

Lifelong learning is a continuous, voluntary, and self motivated act to expand one's own knowledge, not only for a specific reason but to know more transferable skills in readiness for next move, to improve quality of life, to adjust or deal with the life events and rewarding all experiences of life. Coping life skills are for the betterment of all aspects of life and prepare individuals for changing circumstances of life. Coping as a life skill can obviously change the negative impact into positive, so individual as a learner should start to acquire and build up coping skills in the beginning of their education. This article provides the knowledge to readers with a rationale that coping life skills are important for students to learn while completing their formal education and how teachers can teach these coping skills in classrooms. In the present paper, general skills and strategies for teaching and learning of coping life skills as a part of curriculum are discussed.

Key Words: Coping, Life Skills, Students, Lifelong Learning

Learning never has boundaries like classroom or age, it always takes place throughout life and in all positive and negative circumstances it also helps in moving towards achieving excellence in life. For lifelong learning, learners are self inspired to learn and develop positive attitude towards purposefully learning which enhance their understanding of the world around, and improve quality of life. During 21st century, students are emphasizing to gather knowledge which develop them exponentially and to communicate, share and use information to minimize complexities, new demands of uncertain changes. The routine skills seem less useful for these, to make them able as well as to adapt innovate views of life. Without education, valuable knowledge, accurate objectives and healthier life skills, overall development and personality formation of individuals are not possible. Learning of life skills for lifelong learning also plays a major role to prevent, and prepare them for difficult times with better coping skills. When individuals become disturb and want revitalization from dreadful experiences, life skills are more effective for them through regulate use of wellness skills to emotional resilience. While getting a formal education, there are a lot of other opportunities to gain knowledge and develop the skills that need throughout life. These skills develop the ability of the students to solve problems via creative and critical thinking, help them to make decisions, cope up with new challenges which come in their social relationships as well as life.

* Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Education, Lovely Professional University (India), *E-mail:* tanejaj3@gmail.com

** Associate Professor, Department of Education, Lovely Professional University (India), *E-mail:* anoop.16085@lpu.co.in

LIFE SKILLS

Life skills are multidimensional competencies and skills, which influence whole personality of individuals. A research study by Camfield and Takaferre (2009) shows that the quality of relationships with adults and peers, in school while childhood, is one of the most important aspects of well-being. World Health Organization (1996) defined life skills as, the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. UNICEF (2013) defined these as a behavior change or behavior development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: Knowledge, attitude and skills. Ruchi Smita (2015) wrote in '*Essay on the Concept and Importance of Life Skill Education*' life skills as, "abilities for adaptive and positive behavior" as "psycho-social and interpersonal skills". To ever maintain eternal peace and happiness and build up efficiency life skills are a definite a path towards success. Therefore, life skills are becoming the need of basic education in the present era for every student. WHO (1996) depicted core life skills are:

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| 1. Social Skills | Self Awareness, Effective Communication, Interpersonal Relationship, Empathy |
| 2. Thinking Skills | Creative Thinking, Critical Thinking, Decision Making, Problem Solving |
| 3. Emotional Skills | Coping with Stress, Coping with Emotions |

Nair (2005) emphasized that life skills education equips individual to behave in a pro-social ways and supported mental well-being and behavioral preparedness for healthy living. All these skills are essential to deal with the demands and challenges of day to day life (Hodge & Danish, 1999) and these might be physical, behavioral, or cognitive in nature and also transferable into other life domains (Papacharisis, Goudas, Danish, & Theodorakis, 2005). Emotional life skills are helpful for students to being able; to react to each life event either they give eustress or distress. Emotions have a crucial for the process of coping because they may be both a cause and an effect of coping (Lazarus, 1991). Coping skills help to learn, how to be relaxed or calm, in unavoidable situations of life. The **"Indian Association of Life Skills Education"** has been registered on 31st March 2011, under The Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act, 1975, Sl.No.47/2011, with the aim **"To ignite the minds, to unleash the power and empower individuals to face challenges in life"** to strengthen the theoretical framework for life skills (<http://www.ialse.in/>).

COPING SKILLS

Coping is the behavior that attempt to protect oneself from psychological damage (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). Coping skills are the ways or acquire defense

mechanisms in which individual learns to adjust, deal or avoid with multiple stressors and negative emotions. Coping skills can be innate and acquired skills to solve a behavioral and psychological as well as personal and interpersonal problem and helpful to overcome, minimize, or tolerate the conflict life events. Coping skills have been assembled into broad categories with differently naming by researchers.

<i>Sr.</i>	<i>Researchers</i>	<i>Categories</i>
1	Folkman and Lazarus (1988)	Problem focused and emotion focused coping.
2	Ebata and Moos (1991)	Approach coping and avoidant coping approaches.
3	Greenglass (1991)	Palliative coping and instrumental coping styles.
4	Cox, Gotts, Boot, and Kerr (1988)	Functional and dysfunctional coping strategies.
5	Frydenberg and Lewis (1993)	Productive, non-productive coping and reference to others.
6	Seiffge-Krenke (1993)	Active coping, internal coping, and withdrawal.

On the above mentioned classification, coping skills can be categorized into two groups: problem solving copings skills and avoidance coping skills. Both coping skills combine the different strategies to solve problems with taking active steps and efforts for regulating the emotions which are resulting from the problems.

1. **Problem solving coping skills:** Problem solving coping considered as the most valuable way to cope up with the situation and solve the problem for long time, by alleviating the problem directly. It includes the ways attended by students to reduce or manage the result of unpleasant or problematic life events. Problem solving skills for coping comprise with the techniques like explore information or knowledge, planning, strategizing, monitoring, self modification, seeking support, positive re-appraisal, humor, positive reframing, adjusting expectations, physical recreation, focus on problem, being optimistic, hard work to achieve goals, social connectedness and with any given positive change to self or event and also consist all those coping actions, that allows students to point toward a preference for handling with the life problem. Shah & Thingujam (2008) found positive correlation between the appraisal of emotions and planfull problem solving coping styles. Villegas-Gold & Yoo (2014) revealed a significant mediating effect of problem solving which was associated with elevations in subjective well-being. Problem solving coping skills are often effectively and supportive in hard situations.
2. **Avoidance coping skill:** Avoidance coping also known as non-coping or maladaptive coping, and described as the effort to avoid dealing with stressors or negative emotions (Moshe & Norman, 1995) which includes behaviors that solve issues or manage emotions by escape the reality, avoid a unpleasant and threatening circumstances, distraction, selective attention,

discounting, psychological and physical distancing, and keeping the self away from the problems of life rather than dealing with them. One can easily use avoidance coping but these are vulnerable to relapsing such as denial, displacement, passive aggressiveness, procrastination, rationalization, staying ridiculously busy, compartmentalization, intellectualization, trivialization. Sarfraz & Sitwat (2010) found association of avoidance coping with the better adjustment among orphan children. The positive forms of avoidance coping may be particularly useful for alleviating stressful conditions when the individuals do not currently have the resources to face or accept the problem directly, and they engaged with the advantage of flexibility of coping (Carver & Connor, 2010) via exercise, jogging relaxation techniques and meditation give quite better outcomes for managing their negative emotions; as compared to negative forms of coping e.g. consumption of alcohol or drugs, blaming oneself or others, over or less eating habits, day-dreaming etc. Avoidant coping gives solution for short term pressure in the first attempt to solve the problems.

NEED OF COPING SKILLS FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

In the fast-paced society, students are facing more stressors than ever before. So, it's important to teach coping skills in early stages of life that help them to efficiently cope with the daily hassles and overcome the negative emotions. Coping involves to recognizing emotions among oneself and others and their influence on behavior as well as help to being able to respond to emotions appropriately is important because intense emotions (like anger or sorrow) can have negative effects on health. The research studies indicate that the lack of coping skills among students increase the substance abuse, anti-social activities, disturb personal and academic life, and lead to poor health. (Lin, 2006; Welle and Graf, 2011). As well as research findings showed that problem specific life skill programs are effective approach to deal with, e.g. peers pressure to use drugs, having unprotected sex, involved in vandalism (Errecart et al., 1991; Caplan, 1992; Perry & Kelder, 1992). Mehta and Khamkar (2015) identified that the practice of Rajyoga as a life skill helped the people to manage stress, ability to cope and contributed for the betterment of their lives.

There are number of coping skills that may very helpful to the students to etc. can be dealt cope with targeted different life events e.g. difficulties in relationships, managing emotions, tolerating distress or workload (academic and personal life activities) and being peaceful mind etc. Fallahchai (2012) investigated academic and life skills training among an experimental group attended for 10 weekly sessions (35 hours). The results showed that the students who had received academic and life skills training gained significantly higher scores in life skills and academic achievement than without training and also found no significant different between

male and female students. The coping skills are essential for lifelong learning as well as to make life meaningful. Coping skills enable students to:

- Increase knowledge or skills that will in some way enhance academic study skills for chosen subject to further study e.g. research or other higher study
- To maximize own potential to find better opportunities in life
- Understanding and accepting the worldly norms
- Take and manage risks to solve the problems and resolve conflict
- Find new ways out of a potentially to deal with stressful situation.
- Rapid adjustment with life changes
- Decision making
- Making changes in physical surroundings or lifestyle
- Manage relationship, working and understanding with others
- Make life meaningful.

The perspectives of coping will be only beneficial when it moves the responses of negative emotions positively towards a goal management; including the formation of opportunities with the learned experiences of positive stress (Schwarzer & Taubert, 2002; Schwarzer & Knoll, 2003). Individuals who use coping skills become better able to undertake challenges and rebound their selves to back from hard and harsh times, but they are also much happier and satisfied with their life. Students should learn to use coping skills regularly. When students are disappointed, unable to express their emotions, stressed; coping skills provide them inspiration, encouragement, positivism, and console them to deal with present situations. Students, who can cope with the circumstances, lead their academic as well as social life smoothly.

INTEGRATION OF COPING AS A LIFE SKILL IN CURRICULUM

Coping skills are also life skills in itself. Every individual go through many changes in each developmental stages of his life. Coping skills and/or life skills are the series to self building which consist of all basic skills for the personal and social development, always be helpful to students while cope up with the challenges they face. Talukder & Das (2015) suggested that effective ways of coping with emotions as an essential life skill to help the individuals to deal with emotional crisis.

The present system of education in India is a result of continuous process of refining education from pre-independence to till present date. Integration of life skills in curriculum may be necessary for prosperous living, to built a successful career as well as be with family. But still in present era life skills are not taught in our schools which will be helpful in daily lives of our students. UNESCO (1998) with the “Ministry of Human Resource and Development” organized a workshop

on life skills education, emphasized on the workshops for life skills approaches, and suggested that life skills approaches can also be integrated with the curriculum of non formal education to school children. According to “Evaluation Report of Life Skills Project Implementation in the Armenian Education System” (2001), the implementation of life skills in curriculum is a chief contributor for the improvement of education system because it focuses on development of the life skills that are the contributor for the changes sought in Armenia. In the “International Workshop on Life Skills Education for Youth Development” by the Department of Adult and Continuing Education (2006) in University of Madras, gave emphasis on the workshops for integration of life skills education in the curriculum even at college level, as well as to develop and design the training manual, learning modules, training methods and programmers of life skills education for college students and community, to promote the mental well being with the competence among young people as they have to face the realities of life.

Zollinger *et al.*, (2003) assessed the impact of the life skills training curriculum on students’ knowledge, attitude, and ability to make good lifestyle decisions and found that the students who are completing the life skills training curriculum were more knowledgeable regarding the effects of smoking on health. Botvin prepared a life skills training program for seventh to high class students, teachers and parents in which he prepared lessons with different basic general skills to teach life skills with the learning objectives: personal self management skills, general social skills, and drug resistance skills. Nair (2005) wrote in his article “family life and life skills education programs” that life skills provide good support system for adolescents at the community level for the guidance to cope up with stress, emotion management in addition to decision making, self-awareness, critical thinking, and developing interpersonal skills for life. Life skills program enable students to learn skills that are necessary to effectively handle challenging situations. A mix approach is beneficial to teach life skills i.e. teach coping with the help of social and thinking skills, e.g. having good social and thinking skills mean to also have good emotional skills to lead a happy life.

Lineo (2009) introduced life skills education at the both basic and tertiary levels for students to improve quality education, to provide appropriate learning and facilitating as per the initiatives of Education for All and Millennium Development Goals. Yadav & Iqba (2009) found positive changes in adolescents’ thought, attitude, and behavior by providing supportive environment to them with the life skills training. Lolaty, Ghahari, Targari, & Fard (2012) concluded that life skills training program, the levels of emotional intelligence, stress tolerance could be increased among students along with academic success, and reduced substance abuse. Khera & Khosla (2012) found core affective life skills positively correlated with self concept of adolescents which means essential life skills make them more confidence in all aspects. Sandu (2014) revealed that majority of the students have

just average level of life skills which are not adequate. There is a need to train the teachers and consequently develop the life skills among the students.

Coping as a life skill inculcate through education and facilitate the students to deal with the difficulties. The curriculum for coping activities contain different ways of coping for students and they also learn how these ways of coping influences their life events and also provides strength to the different prospective to know the consequences of the choices of coping made by them. Life skills education might be different on local and country level in the world. In each society, the cultural and social factors always decide the life skills for each person. For example, eye contact or movement of gesture while communication sometimes arise gender issues. In different countries, life skills define differently; such as, in Cambodia life skills recognized as basic life skills and career skills, two types of life skills in Indonesia are generic life skills and specific life skills, and Malaysia these are known as basic skills, psychosocial skills, practical & contextual skills and living skills. Education system imparts life skills as an integral part of curriculum as it is proficient to positive behavior, interpersonal relationships and welfare of individuals. Skill based approaches in education can establish the techniques to develop innate capacities among students and motivate them to become socially acceptable in particular life style of society. It will be beneficial for students to implement the life skills for coping should develop in the beginning of their education process.

WAYS TO INTRODUCE COPING AS A LIFE SKILLS IN CURRICULUM

The curriculum for coping skills is a need of both teachers as well as students to learn and improve their coping skills to be satisfied with their lives. The curriculum should be a milestone for the students' balanced development as well as inculcate the values related to democracy, responsibilities and maintain the quality assurance for education system. In *Social Learning Theory of Bandura* (1977), learning considered to be an active acquisition, processing and structuring of experiences. So, it might also be that the basic contents to teach coping skills support students' abilities and fulfill their leaning requirements.

1. For successful implementation of coping life skills education, professionally trained teachers, planned programs for study which prepared by experts and provide resources to teaching learning process are required.
2. Curriculum for coping life skills should be associated with the new information and knowledge which can be mixture of different approaches such as environmental changes, social and cultural factors which affect the human behavior.
3. Education programs should be planned to make possible the practice and strengthening of coping life skills in appropriate way. For example, give simple risk situations to students to apply life skills for empowering, adjust

and protect themselves which are necessary to cope up with daily hassles of life.

4. Lessons should be planned according to the needs of the students e.g. coping with changes, daily hassles, anxiety, dealing and resist negative with peer pressure, adjustment etc.
5. Lessons also designed to facilitate for the acquisition of coping life skills to be aware while selection of coping strategies, and evaluate honestly e.g. are chosen strategies useful or not, for their future?, What will be their outcomes?
6. Techniques like role play, games, sociodrama, brainstorming, debates, group discussion, practice of moral values, behavioral rehearsal can play an important and dynamic role in teaching-learning process for coping life skills by the active participation of teachers and students.
7. Programs to facilitate communication skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) as pedagogy for students should be prepared with the extensive use of audio-visual aids.
8. Organizing workshops to explore new knowledge, to use in specific situations change the mindset of individuals and help them to accept the changing values of worldwide.
9. Social skills training should be essential part of curriculum and provide continue feedback to students regarding their acquisition of skills for the development in advance.
10. Health issues can be included in coping life skills program to prevent students from substance use and abuse, and psychological or emotional problems as well as causes of suicide rates, violence etc.
11. Programs for life skills should have relevant content, potentiality and appropriate methodology for evaluation and feedback.
12. The lessons can be introduced through exploring new ideas or knowledge about a particular situation with the joint effort of teachers and students. The students may encourage discussing the issues as a debate.
13. Ensure that the effectiveness of teaching of coping life skills in a group because it would be possible to share, learn, and understand the other students' emotions, who may belong to different social and cultural background with different values as well as socio-economic status on the other hand it will provide opportunity to accept, respect and value each others.
14. The teaching methods for coping life skills should be based on the students' own experience and observation to how others behave in specific situation and up to what limit their behavior is acceptable for the societal norms.

15. The sessions to facilitate for the progress of coping life skills curriculum may be carried out through research projects or social work.
16. To enhance the quality of teaching of life skills for coping professional support by in-service teachers is needed with the educational opportunities, training workshops, interschool visits, and peer discussions for teachers.
17. Coping life skills curriculum mix with the topics of ecology, anthropology, physical-mental health, literature, history and culture, and this should be planned for execution in separate or for integrated courses in classes on regular basis.
18. Financial responsibilities and investment, logically thinking, memorization of information and how to apply these quickly and safely in particular situations, can also be included in the curriculum for coping as a life skills.
19. They should also learn the importance of saying 'no' to negative peer pressure as well as control on emotions for contentment of life.
20. Teachers should be encouraged for training to teach life skills, and also provide them the opportunities to see themselves as a learner along with their students.
21. The teachers should allocate home assignments to promote coping life skills among students, and to discuss and practice the skills with their families and friends.
22. Guidance and counseling should be a part of curriculum to students for the selection of coping skills to find the solutions of problems as well as support.

So, Integration programs required for coping life skill with academic curriculum to fulfill the need of students for the future. Acquire and maintain good coping skills does take continue practice. Regular utilizing good coping skills make for good mental health wellness for lifelong learning.

DISCUSSION

Learning needs of students met through ensuring the unbiasedness for education and life skills for coping. There is an equal need of teachers and parents for the help of students to learn coping life skills for change whenever possible. Learning coping skills, is creativity, initiatives of students that enabling to direct them from uncertainty, communicate across and within cultures, sub-cultures, families and communities, negotiates conflicts. WHO (1999) emphasized that life skills are significantly contributor for healthy development of individuals that prepare them for the future. Life skills include general skills of life to practice positive behavior and it's worth noting that coping skills will work better depending on the efforts of learner while particular events/situations. These skills are also helpful for students

to learn how accept themselves for who they are as well as to take responsibilities for their actions. Therefore, the life skills for coping should be taught to students, to acquire it through learning and practice. It will be cooperative to discover talents among students and develop a passion for lifelong learning through a wide range of learnt experiences that they need for life as well as reframing the reality and refine self.

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