

**ENHANCEMENT OF LIFE SKILLS THROUGH COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN
SOCIAL SCIENCES AMONG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS**

AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Guide

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1. INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

Adolescence is a crucial phase of growth marked by physical and emotional changes. They face stress from academics, peer pressure and future decisions and therefore guidance is essential for them. Life skills help them manage challenges, build confidence and develop problem-solving abilities. According to WHO (1999) life skills education strengthens young people to handle daily struggles. It promotes communication, cooperation and decision-making. Integrating life skills into classrooms helps students think critically, adapt to change and make responsible choices. The World Health Organisation (1993) has described Life skills as “the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life”. Life skills as stated by WHO (1996) has been adopted for the present study they are decision making, problem solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationship, self awareness, empathy, coping with emotions, coping with stress.

Life skills are built using clear and effective techniques. They give practical experience in understanding and solving problems by following specific rules and conditions. Life skills help students think critically, make good decisions and improve their ability to handle challenging situations and interact well with others. Life skills are crucial because they provide youth with more freedom to enhance their quality of life. Young people who possess life skills are better able to comprehend others and themselves, which helps them to make wiser decisions and adapt to the always changing environment they live in. In India various initiatives have been working for the upliftment of life skills like NCERT (2005), CBSE (2010), Akshya Patra (2012), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2017), University Grants Commission (2019), (NIMHANS), Adolescence Education Programme (n.d.), NIMHANS (2022). Life skills are essential for young people as they help improve decision-making, adaptability, and overall quality of life. They enable students to understand themselves and others, manage stress and navigate challenges. Research shows that life skills education positively impacts social, emotional and cognitive development (Roodbari et al., 2013; Parvathy & Pillai, 2015; Surma, 2016).

Teaching life skills helps students build confidence, enhance communication, develop discipline and become responsible citizens. It prepares them to handle real-world situations, make ethical choices and maintain healthy relationships. Schools play a key role in shaping these abilities by providing a supportive environment for students to grow academically and personally. By promoting decision-making, emotional stability and adaptability, schools

nurture well-rounded individuals who can overcome life's challenges. Life skills education not only benefits students academically but also equip them with essential tools for success in life, making them productive and responsible members of society. Life skills also build emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills and leadership qualities making students more confident and responsible. Studies show that life skills training boosts self-esteem, coping abilities and academic performance (Srikala & Kishore, 2010). Teaching life skills in schools helps students think creatively, work well in teams and handle challenges effectively. As Santhosh (2022) states, schools are the best place to develop these skills for future success.

No skill can be attained merely by reading book or taking up any course. To make this strategy effective life skills along with content method have to be put together. It can be inferred from this that specific techniques and resources can be used to acquire Life Skills. Such working in group is known as cooperative learning. Cooperative learning involves students working together in groups composed of individuals with varying ability levels. In this approach, the focus is on the group's overall success rather than the individual achievements of its members. Cooperative learning is effective for a number of reasons. Cognitive psychologists and effective teachers have recognized that students learn better when they are actively involved in the learning process rather than passively observing and listening to lectures.

Cooperative learning gained recognition in 1961 with contributions from educators like John Dewey, Kurt Lewin and later Robert Slavin and Johnson & Johnson. It became more popular in the mid-1980s (Jacobs, 2008). Cooperative learning is based on constructivism, a learning theory emphasizing active participation. Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky and John Dewey contributed to its principles. Constructivism suggests that students create knowledge through experiences and reflection rather than passively receiving information. Key principles include active engagement, prior knowledge, meaning-making, multiple perspectives, scaffolding and knowledge construction. Unlike traditional teaching, constructivism focuses on students building understanding rather than just memorizing facts. NCF (2005) promotes cooperative learning, where students work in mixed-age groups to complete tasks together. Experts like Slavin (1987), Cohen (1992) and Johnson & Johnson (1994) define cooperative learning as small groups working toward a common goal. In this method, students collaborate, share responsibility and support each other's learning. It enhances understanding, teamwork and accountability. Cooperative learning is active, helping weak students persist and strong students refine their knowledge. It also boosts productivity, self-esteem and independence. Cooperative

learning has five key elements: Positive Interdependence, where students rely on each other for success; Individual and Group Accountability, ensuring everyone contributes; Interpersonal and Small Group Skills, promoting teamwork and communication; Face-to-Face Promotive Interaction, where students support and help each other; and Group Processing, where they reflect on their teamwork to improve learning and cooperation.

Life skills of the students can be nurtured through school subject such as social sciences this will not only help the child in academics but will also help in maintaining and having healthy relationships with the people and the society. The content of social sciences has drawn from the society and the social environment; therefore, it has an ample scope on inculcating life skills among the students.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Enhancing life skills through cooperative learning through social sciences among school students were studied. The studies are divided into those conducted in India and those conducted internationally. The review has been categorized into three areas that has been presented in three sections.

Section I: Research studies related to life skills education on adolescents

Section II: Research studies related to developing of life skills through cooperative learning

Section III: Research studies related to effectiveness of cooperative learning on teaching of social sciences/studies

3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Adolescence is a critical transitional stage that can lead to challenges and conflicts if not properly managed with adequate knowledge, supervision, guidance and counselling. The specific needs of young people necessitate incorporating life skills into education, as life skills education is one of the most effective preventive measures for addressing the challenges faced by adolescents globally. The CBSE has mandate its schools to incorporate Life Skills Education into the curriculum for classes VI-X to foster self-confidence, eco-sensitivity and positive attitudes toward life among students. This implies that schools are the ideal place to achieve

the most effective outcomes of life skills education at the elementary level. Schools, where students spend a significant portion of their day and much of their productive time, are well-positioned to promote holistic development by incorporating life skills education into the regular curriculum.

Life skills can be enhanced in number of ways. One of the ways to enhance life skills is through cooperative learning. Cooperative learning is one of strategy which can be used in daily teaching learning environment. Research indicates that cooperative learning methods improve student knowledge and academic achievement, increase student engagement with their learning, improve verbal communication skills, foster social skills, boost student confidence and contribute to positive race relations, along with positive outcomes in other areas. Despite the numerous cooperative learning techniques proposed by various scholars, only a limited number have seen widespread use, as reflected in the literature review. This raises the question as to why other techniques have not been more commonly implemented. Therefore, the researcher aims to explore the effects of these less commonly used techniques to assess their impact on student enhancement. Therefore, for the present study the researcher has taken cooperative learning as one of the strategies to enhance life skills.

One of the solutions that can be made is teaching life skills is through school subjects. WHO (1997) has suggested that life skills programme can be designed in such a way that it can be infused into other subjects and integrated either as a new subject, or withing the existing subject, this would offer greater potential for programme success. Therefore, researcher has taken social sciences as one of the subjects to enhance life skills.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

4.1 Research Questions

1. What is the level of life skills among elementary students?
2. How can life skills be enhanced in social science class?
3. To what extent cooperative learning strategy will be helpful in enhancing Life Skills among elementary school students?

4.2 Objectives

1. To study the current level of life skills among elementary school students.

2. To design lesson plan using cooperative learning techniques.
3. To study the process of enhancement of life skills through cooperative learning among elementary school students.
4. To study the reaction of students on cooperative learning techniques.

4.3 EXPLANATION OF THE TERM

Life Skills: For the present study 10 core life skills as laid by WHO (1996) have been selected:

(i) Self-awareness, (ii) empathy, (iii) critical thinking, (iv) creative thinking, (v) problem solving, (vi) decision making, (vii) interpersonal skill, (viii) effective communication, (ix) coping with stress, (x) managing emotions.

Cooperative learning: Cooperative learning is a teaching method where small teams of students, usually four to six works together to accomplish a common task.

4.4 DELIMITATION OF THE PROPOSED STUDY

The proposed study is delimited to class VI students (of one section) from a private unaided primary school in Vadodara district, affiliated with the Central Board of Secondary Education. (CBSE) for the academic year (2023-24).

4.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

To reveal the process of enhancement of life skills among the students ‘Qualitative descriptive case study’ was adopted as a research design.

4.6 UNITS OF DATA ANALYSIS

CBSE students of grade VI A of Gujarat Public School forms the case and its units were the thirty students.

4.7 TOOLS USED FOR DATA COLLECTION

- Life Skills assessment scale was used to check the pre and post status of life skills among students
- Situational Test was used to check the pre status of life skills among students
- Observation was conducted to observe the ongoing daily interactions among students in a cooperative learning environment.

- Video recording was done to capture the students' discussions, peer interactions and their engagement during activities.
- Rubrics on ten life skills were developed to observe the process of enhancement of life skills among students
- Situational test to check the level of life skills among the students after the implementation of CLT.
- Reactional scale on Cooperative learning techniques was developed to know the reaction of the students towards cooperative learning techniques.

4.8 PROCEDURE FOR DATA COLLECTION

The data collection process spanned four distinct phases:

Phase I:

1. Collection of background information of students
2. Administration of LSAS and ST before the execution of lesson plan

Phase II: Enhancement of life skills through the implementation of CLT.

With the help of different subtopics of social sciences of history, civics and geography, topics were taught using seventeen cooperative learning techniques to enhance students' life skills.

Phase III: Administration of LSAS and ST at the end of execution of CLT.

Phase IV: Administration of reaction scale

4.9 PROCEDURE OF DATA ANALYSIS:

The data analysis was conducted in three distinct stages.

Stage 1: Administration of Life Skills Assessment Scale (LSAS) and Situational Test (ST) before the execution of CLT

LSAS was analysed quantitatively as per the manual. ST was analysed quantitatively. Students were scored on the scale very high, high, average, low and very low.

Stage 2: Understanding the process of enhancement of Life skills

To obtain a comprehensive understanding of the enhanced life skills, the video recordings, the researcher's observations and the rubrics were triangulated.

Stage 3: Administration of Life Skills Assessment Scale (LSAS) and Situational Test (ST) after the execution of CLT

LSAS was analysed quantitatively as per the manual. ST was analysed quantitatively. Students were score on the scale very high, high, average, low and very low.

Stage 4: Knowing the reaction of the students towards cooperative learning technique

Data was collected using a reaction scale, assessing both positive and negative statements. Analysis involved calculating percentages, frequencies, intensity index and average intensity index.

5. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. The study revealed that implementing Cooperative Learning Techniques (CLT) significantly enhanced all ten life skills
2. By participating in cooperative learning techniques students were able to remember the content of social science.
3. The implementation of cooperative learning techniques significantly enhanced the students' life skills, fostered inclusive participation and promoted constructive dialogue.
4. It is found that all students expressed a preference for cooperative learning techniques (CLT) over traditional teaching methods.
5. Few activities were found to enhance the creativity among students by fostering shared perspectives and understanding, allowing students to bring out their creative thinking skills collaboratively.
6. It was observed that students enjoyed working in groups in open environments such as gardens and playgrounds. This setting contributed to enhanced engagement and enthusiasm among students towards learning.
7. The activities which involved students to work in pairs were also found to be effective as each student coached their partner and provided corrective suggestions.
8. Cooperative activities like "Numbered Heads" and "Three Stay One Stray" encouraged engagement, interaction, active listening, and valuing peers' contributions.
9. Students fostered a sense of empathy among each other while working in group.
10. A positive correlation was observed between various skills. Problem-solving skill demonstrated a strong relationship with decision-making skill, while critical thinking

skill had a close connection with coping with stress. Additionally, empathy showed a significant link with interpersonal skill.

6. IMPLICATION OF THE PRESENT STUDY

- For teachers, the study provides an in-depth analysis of strategies to manage difficult topics and develop new tasks that support innovative methods of instruction.
- Curriculum should be prepared where skill-based activities are included in the textbooks that is used in both central and state government schools.
- For policy maker it is important to include life skills education as a key part of the curriculum at all the level of school education.

7. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

- The case study can be conducted to enhance life skills at secondary stage students in central board and state board.
- A survey can be done to check the level of life skills among teacher educators all over India.
- A case study can be conducted to identify the various teaching methods adopted by teachers or the enhancement of life skills among students.
- An experimental study can be conducted to find out the alternative means of enhancing life skills among students.

8. CONCLUSION

The study looked at how well elementary students life skills were improved by cooperative learning (CL). Students were able to participate inclusively, thoughtful consideration and have involved in constructivist conversations. Students' responses to the cooperative learning approach (CLT) were also found to be positive. Students' improved life skills were demonstrated by the observations made during various cooperative learning activities and the behavior displayed by them throughout these activities.

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