

## Life Skills Education at the Secondary Level (Phase II) in Different States of India: A Review

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### Abstract

*Life skills education has gained prominence in the educational frameworks of many countries, including India. This study aims to explore the implementation and integration of life skills education at the secondary level (phase II) across different states in India. By examining policy documents, curriculum frameworks, and educational outcomes, this study highlights the variations and similarities in LSE practices and their implications for holistic student development. The findings revealed that while some states have formally incorporated structured LSE modules into the curriculum with trained facilitators and assessment mechanisms, others rely more on co-curricular approaches with limited formal integration. States like Kerala and Delhi show relatively advanced implementation, whereas others face challenges due to lack of trained personnel and inconsistent policy execution.*

### Keywords:

*Life Skills Education, Secondary Education Phase II, Curriculum Integration, holistic development, NEP 2020.*

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### Introduction

Life Skills Education (LSE) is a transformative approach to learning that emphasizes the development of psychosocial abilities essential for adaptive and positive behavior. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 1997), life skills include competencies such as decision-making, problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, interpersonal relationships, and coping with emotions and stress. These skills are particularly important during adolescence, a developmental stage characterized by significant emotional, cognitive, and social changes.

Recognizing the importance of LSE, international organizations like WHO and UNICEF have advocated for its integration into school systems to foster holistic development, healthy behaviors, and responsible citizenship (UNICEF, 2012).

In India, national policy documents such as the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 have highlighted the need to integrate life skills into the school curriculum to equip students with essential 21st-century competencies (NCERT, 2005; Ministry of Education, 2020). Despite these policy endorsements, the actual implementation of LSE at the senior secondary level varies widely across Indian states due to disparities in resources, training, and institutional readiness. As the senior secondary stage is a transition point to adulthood, embedding life skills into this phase can enhance students' resilience, self-efficacy, and emotional well-being. Therefore, a comparative analysis across different states is essential to assess the scope, challenges, and best practices of LSE implementation and to recommend strategies for a more equitable and effective integration nationwide.

### **Significance of the Study**

Life Skills Education (LSE) plays a vital role in fostering the overall development of learners, especially during the senior secondary stage, when adolescents experience rapid physical, emotional, and psychological transitions. This period is often marked by heightened academic stress, complex social interactions, and critical career-related decisions. As highlighted by Mangrulkar, Whitman, and Posner (2001), life skills empower students to manage stress, build resilience, enhance interpersonal relationships, and make responsible decisions, all of which are essential for success in both personal and professional spheres.

The importance of integrating life skills into secondary education is further supported by the World Health Organization (1997), which emphasized that LSE enhances students' psychosocial competencies and their ability to deal effectively with the demands of daily life. In the Indian context, studies such as those by Sharma (2015) and Meena et al. (2016) have demonstrated that students exposed to structured life skills programs exhibit better emotional regulation, social behavior, and academic performance. However, the implementation of LSE across states remains inconsistent due to differences in policy focus, teacher preparedness, resource allocation, and community involvement. This study is significant as it aims to evaluate

these variations, identify best practices, and offer recommendations for a more uniform, inclusive, and impactful LSE framework across senior secondary education in India.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To examine the implementation status of Life Skills Education (LSE) in the secondary
2. (Phase II) curriculum across selected states in India.
3. To compare the effectiveness of Life Skills Education programs in enhancing students' personal, social, and academic skills across different states.
4. To identify the challenges and best practices in integrating Life Skills Education at the senior secondary level in various state education systems.

### **Research Questions**

1. How is Life Skills Education implemented in the secondary (phase II) curriculum in different states of India?
2. What are the differences in the outcomes of Life Skills Education among students of various states in terms of personal development, social behavior, and academic performance?
3. What are the key challenges and successful strategies in promoting Life Skills Education at the senior secondary level across different states?

### **Literature Review**

Life skills are defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as "abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" (WHO, 1997). These skills include problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, and decision-making, coping with stress, and managing emotions— core competencies necessary for personal and social development.

- The **National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005**, developed by NCERT, strongly advocates for the integration of Life Skills Education (LSE) into the formal school curriculum. It emphasizes that education must go beyond textbooks and rote learning and promote holistic development, including social, emotional, and ethical aspects of learners. According to the NCF, life skills such as empathy, self-awareness, and interpersonal skills are essential for democratic citizenship and responsible behavior in a complex society (NCERT, 2005).

- Despite such recommendations, studies have shown that the implementation of LSE in Indian schools remains inconsistent. The level of integration varies widely across states and educational boards, depending on factors such as policy priorities, teacher training, curriculum design, and local socio-cultural contexts (Singh, 2014; Sharma & Sharma, 2016). For instance, some schools incorporate life skills as part of co-curricular activities, while others embed them in specific subjects like moral science or social studies. However, there is often a lack of structured pedagogy and assessment mechanisms for life skills.
- A study by **UNICEF (2012)** highlighted that while many teachers recognize the value of life skills education, they often lack the proper training or resources to implement it effectively. Furthermore, the existing teacher education curriculum does not always provide sufficient emphasis on LSE methodologies, making it difficult for educators to translate theory into practice in classrooms (Kapur, 2018).
- Research by Kumar and Ahmed (2017) also notes that in rural and under-resourced schools, challenges such as teacher shortages, lack of awareness, and rigid academic pressure further hinder the systematic delivery of life skills programs. In contrast, pilot initiatives in some states, such as Maharashtra and Kerala, have shown that with targeted interventions and capacity building, LSE can lead to improved student self-esteem, school engagement, and reduction in behavioral issues.

Globally, life skills education has gained importance as a tool to enhance psychosocial competence and prepare students for 21st-century challenges. UNESCO (2017) and other international bodies recognize life skills as part of global citizenship education and sustainable development goals (SDG 4.7), which aim to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to live responsibly and peacefully in diverse societies.

In the Indian context, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 further strengthens the case for integrating life skills into school education. It stresses on the development of 21st-century skills including critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity as part of a new holistic and multidisciplinary approach to education.

## **Methodology**

This research employs a qualitative approach, involving analysis of policy documents, curriculum frameworks, and educational reports from various states. Data is collected from official state education websites, government publications, Books, journals etc. The states selected for this study include Assam, Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, and Rajasthan, representing diverse educational landscapes.

## **Analysis and Interpretations**

This section presents a detailed analysis of the status and implementation of Life Skills Education (LSE) at the secondary level (Phase II) across different states of India. As a continuation of Phase II, which focused on the secondary level, this phase aims to evaluate how Life Skills Education is incorporated and practiced in senior secondary education (Classes XI–XII), where students are at a crucial transitional stage in their academic and personal development.

The analysis compares various states in terms of curriculum design, pedagogical strategies, teacher training, availability of resources, co-curricular integration, and student engagement related to life skills. Given the diversity in educational policies and practices across India, the comparative approach helps in identifying both strengths and shortcomings in the current implementation of LSE at the senior secondary level.

## **Assam**

In the context of Assam, the integration of Life Skills Education at the secondary level (Phase II) is still evolving. While the state recognizes the importance of LSE, its implementation across schools remains inconsistent. The curriculum lacks a dedicated and structured life skills component, and LSE is often addressed informally through co-curricular activities or moral education classes. However, under the *Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)*, Assam has initiated several steps to strengthen LSE. These include teacher training programs focused on competency-based education, value education, and psychosocial support, which indirectly promote life skills among teachers and students. SSA has also supported the development of curriculum materials that incorporate elements of critical thinking, communication, and

emotional well-being. Despite these efforts, challenges such as lack of trained life skills educators, limited monitoring, and rural-urban disparities continue to affect the overall effectiveness of LSE in Assam. Nonetheless, the initiatives under SSA represent a positive move towards integrating life skills into mainstream education in the state. (Samagra Shiksha, Assam. (2022). Annual Report 2021–22.)

### **Kerala**

Kerala has been a pioneer in implementing life skill education. The state integrates life skills into the curriculum through its "Comprehensive Health and Physical Education" program. Kerala is often lauded for its progressive education system. The state's approach to LSE is integrated within the curriculum, focusing on health education, environmental awareness, and vocational training (Government of Kerala, 2019). Kerala's emphasis on comprehensive education, including extracurricular activities and community involvement, fosters a holistic development model (Jolly, 2017).

### **Maharashtra**

Maharashtra has adopted a more structured approach to LSE, with dedicated periods for life skills in the school timetable. The curriculum includes modules on communication skills, financial literacy, and digital literacy (Government of Maharashtra, 2020). However, challenges such as large class sizes and varying teacher competencies impact the effectiveness of LSE delivery (Deshmukh & Patel, 2019).

### **Tamil Nadu**

Tamil Nadu integrates life skills education through its Samacheer Kalvi (Uniform System of School Education), which emphasizes values education, civic sense, and life skills (Government of Tamil Nadu, 2018). The state has implemented teacher training programs to enhance the delivery of LSE, but disparities in urban and rural areas remain a concern (Subramanian, 2018).

## Delhi

Delhi's Directorate of Education has introduced the Happiness Curriculum, which incorporates mindfulness, emotional well-being, and life skills into the school day (Directorate of Education, 2019). This innovative approach has received positive feedback for improving student engagement and mental health, though scalability and consistency across schools pose challenges (Kumar, 2020).

## Rajasthan

Rajasthan has made efforts to integrate life skills education through its State Institute of Educational Research and Training (SIERT) initiatives, focusing on health and hygiene, vocational training, and social skills (Government of Rajasthan, 2017). Despite these efforts, rural areas face significant barriers, including lack of trained teachers and resources (Sharma, 2018). Assam, Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, and Rajasthan. Each state has adopted unique strategies to integrate life skills into their educational frameworks, reflecting their specific priorities and contexts.

Table 1: Life Skills Education initiatives undertaken by the selected states in India

State	Key Initiatives	Focus Areas	Target Group	Collaborative Agency
<b>Assam</b>	- Samagra Shiksha Assam conducted residential training for Master Trainers.- Developed a state curriculum framework on life skills for government schools.	Activity-based, experiential learning	Upper primary, secondary, and higher secondary students	Magic Bus India Foundation, SCERT, SEBA
<b>Kerala</b>	- <i>Student Police Cadet (SPC)</i> : Two-year training for high school students on discipline and civic duty.- <i>E. Sreedharan Centre</i> : PG	Discipline, civic responsibility, emotional intelligence, critical thinking	High school students, postgraduate students, general student	Kerala Police, Central University of Kerala

State	Key Initiatives	Focus Areas	Target Group	Collaborative Agency
<b>Maharashtra</b>	diploma in life skills.- <i>School Pravesanolsavam</i> : Annual event promoting holistic learning.		population	
	- <i>Nipun Maharashtra Mission</i> : Empowered over 11 lakh mothers to teach foundational skills.- Military education introduced from Class 1 for patriotism and discipline.	Foundational literacy and numeracy, patriotism, discipline, leadership	Children up to 8 years, primary school students	Pratham NGO, Maharashtra Education Department
	- <i>Samacheer Kalvi</i> (Uniform System of School Education) integrates life skills and values education.	Values education, civic sense, life skills	School students	Government of Tamil Nadu
<b>Delhi</b>	- <i>Happiness Curriculum</i> : Mindfulness and SEL from Nursery to Grade 8.- <i>Desh Ke Mentor Program</i> : Career mentoring.- <i>Maa Yamuna Swachhta Abhiyan</i> : Student-led environmental drives.	Mindfulness, emotional well-being, career guidance, environmental responsibility	Students from Nursery to Grade 12	Delhi Government, various NGOs, industry partners
	- Life skills included in Adolescence Education and co-scholastic domains.- Club-based, activity-driven assessments.	Activity-based assessments via club activities	Student population	SCERT Rajasthan, UNICEF, and external partners

Above table highlights a comparative analysis of the diverse approaches of five Indian states adopting to integrate life skills into education, reflecting their unique socio-cultural contexts and policy priorities.

### **Challenges of Implementing Life Skills Education**

Implementing life skills education (LSE) across different states in India faces several challenges, here are the key challenges:

#### **1. Resource Constraints**

**a. Funding:** Insufficient financial resources allocated to education in general, and LSE in particular, limit the ability to develop and sustain comprehensive programs. According to the Ministry of Education's Budget 2023–24, only Rs. 37,453 crores were allocated under Samagra Shiksha, which must support multiple interventions including infrastructure, teacher training, and inclusive education leaving limited specific allocation for LSE components. Additionally, state budgetary documents (e.g., Assam's Annual Plan 2022–23) show that less than 2–3% of the total education budget is directed towards value education, adolescent education, or life skill initiatives. This persistent gap between policy expectations and financial commitment underscores the need for a more targeted investment strategy to institutionalize LSE effectively."

**b. Infrastructure:** Lack of adequate infrastructure, including classrooms, educational materials, and technology, especially in rural areas, hinders the effective delivery of LSE.

#### **2. Teacher Training and Development**

##### **a. Inadequate Training:**

Teachers often lack proper training in life skills education, resulting in ineffective delivery. Many are not equipped with the skills or knowledge to integrate LSE into their teaching practices.

**b. Teacher Shortage:**

High student-to-teacher ratios, particularly in the government schools, reduce the time and attention that can be devoted to LSE.

**3. Curriculum and Content Development****a. Standardization:**

Lack of a standardized curriculum for LSE leads to disparities in what is taught and how it is taught across different states and schools.

**b. Integration:**

Integrating LSE into existing academic curricula without overburdening students and teachers is a significant challenge.

**4. Awareness**

Lack of awareness among parents and communities about the importance of life skills education can lead to resistance or indifference towards such programs.

**5. Monitoring and Evaluation:**

There is often a lack of effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact of LSE programs and make necessary adjustments.

**6. Geographical Challenges**

**a. Remote Areas:** Delivering LSE in remote, rural, and tribal areas is challenging due to geographical barriers and lack of access to educational resources.

**b. Urban-Rural Divide:** Significant disparities exist between urban and rural areas in terms of educational quality and resource availability, affecting the consistent implementation of LSE.

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach involving increased funding, better teacher training programs, community engagement, and policy reforms. Collaboration between government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the private

sector can help bridge the gaps and ensure that life skills education reaches all students, regardless of their socio-economic or geographic backgrounds.

## **Recommendations**

### **1. Policy Standardization:**

The Ministry of Education should work towards a more standardized framework for the integration of life skills across all states. This would ensure uniformity in content and teaching methodologies.

### **2. Curriculum Revamp:**

States with weak integration (e.g., **Assam** and **Gujarat**) should focus on embedding life skills into the curriculum explicitly, rather than as part of co-curricular activities or under other subjects.

### **3. Teacher Training Programs:**

Regular, formal teacher training programs on Life Skills Education should be implemented across all states. Teachers should be equipped with the necessary tools and methodologies to deliver effective LSE.

#### **1. Evaluation Mechanisms:**

States should develop structured evaluation tools to assess students' life skills development. These could include both formative and summative assessments aligned with national educational objectives.

#### **2. Collaboration with NGOs and Private Sector:**

States with limited resources (e.g., **Assam**, **Gujarat**) could collaborate with NGOs and private sector partners to introduce and scale LSE programs.

**Suggestions:** Following are some suggestions based on the findings:

➤ **Research and Innovation:**

Further research on the impact of existing life skills programs (e.g., in **Delhi** and **Kerala**) should be conducted to evaluate their long-term effects on students' emotional and psychological well-being.

➤ **State-Specific Adaptations:**

States should tailor LSE programs to their local socio-cultural contexts, ensuring relevance to the diverse needs of students. For instance, **Assam** could integrate traditional life skills from indigenous cultures alongside modern skills.

➤ **Involvement of Parents and Communities:**

Life Skills Education should not be limited to the school; there should be efforts to involve parents and communities in fostering life skills, especially in rural and underserved areas.

➤ **Use of Technology:**

Online platforms and digital tools can be leveraged to disseminate life skills content, provide virtual training for teachers, and engage students in interactive life skills activities.

➤ **Teachers training:**

More teachers training should be provided to the teachers.

Above all, to strengthen the integration of Life Skills Education (LSE) in different states, it is essential to address existing challenges such as limited resource allocation, inadequate teacher training, and socio-economic disparities. A focused approach involving increased funding, comprehensive capacity-building programs for educators and targeted interventions for marginalized communities can enhance the effectiveness and reach of LSE. Collaborative efforts between government bodies, educational institutions, and civil society organizations are also crucial to ensure that life skills education becomes more inclusive, impactful, and sustainable across diverse socio-economic contexts.

## **Conclusion**

The integration of Life Skills Education (LSE) at the secondary level in India shows significant variation across states. Kerala and Delhi have made notable progress in embedding

LSE into their educational systems, demonstrating innovative practices and stronger curriculum integration. However, challenges remain, including limited resources, insufficient teacher training, and socio-economic disparities.

While national policies emphasize the importance of LSE, actual implementation is inconsistent. States like Assam and Rajasthan lag behind, particularly in formal policy adoption, structured programming, and teacher preparedness.

To ensure all students are equipped with essential life skills for personal and professional success, it is crucial to consistently and comprehensively integrate LSE into the senior secondary curriculum nationwide. Addressing existing gaps through targeted recommendations can help create a more inclusive and effective framework, ultimately fostering resilient, emotionally intelligent, and well-rounded youth.

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