

Research on Life Skills Education for Preschool Children at Tri Ton Kindergarten, Vietnam

Nhut Minh Tran¹ and Nhung Thi Hong Ngo²

¹ Faculty of Education, An Giang University,
Vietnam National University - Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

² Master Student of Education Management, An Giang University,
Vietnam National University - Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Abstract

The role of life skills education in the personal development of children is extremely important. Currently, many kindergartens in Tri Ton district have incorporated life skills education into their childcare and educational programs. The effectiveness of life skills education for preschool children depends on the awareness and organization of kindergarten teachers regarding this education and the management of these activities. There are several key issues to consider in managing life skills education activities for preschool children in Tri Ton district.

Keywords: *Preschool education programs, life skills education, preschool children*

1. Introduction

1.1. Life skills education

The concept of life skills is defined in various ways. Below are some key ideas compiled by the author from multiple sources to help parents understand and educate preschool children in life skills. According to UNICEF, life skills education is a method of behavior change or development that aims to achieve a balance between three domains: knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines life skills as “the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to effectively deal with the demands and challenges of everyday life”.

Therefore, life skills are personal skills in everyday communication aimed at effectively solving tasks or situations in life, actively applying acquired knowledge to practical life, and developing social and emotional skills to manage oneself and interact with others.

If life skills are introduced into schools, children will grow up with a strong self-awareness as they mature. Life skills equip them with better adaptive skills to face challenges that arise and resolve them effectively.

1.2. Some basic life skills

Life skills are seemingly infinite, and it is considered as irrational number. However, when applying life skills education to preschool children, parents just need to grasp a few fundamental life skills, such as:

- Communication skills for preschool children.
- Self-awareness skills.
- Goal-setting skills.
- Critical thinking skills.
- Decision-making and problem-solving skills.
- Empathy skills.

1.3. Teaching life skills to preschool children

Teaching life skills to preschool children involves cultivating essential skills such as communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving. This helps preschoolers adapt better to their environment, interact harmoniously with peers, teachers, parents, and develop the ability to handle and cope with situations they encounter in their daily lives.

- *The role of life skills education for preschool children*

In addition to providing children with cultural knowledge at school, parents should also focus on educating life skills from an early age, even during the preschool years. The role of life skills education in the development of children's personalities is crucial. The selected skills should be simple and highly applicable in daily life, allowing children to form good habits

from a young age. Moreover, educating preschool children in life skills brings many other benefits, such as:

- Establishing a foundation for future development;
- Helping children develop confidence to face obstacles and challenges;
- Cultivating a sense of independence from a young age;
- Enhancing children's thinking abilities;
- Improving physical and intellectual capabilities in children.

• *The steps to teach life skills to preschool children*

Teaching life skills to preschool children is a time and effort-intensive task. Therefore, parents who haven't found a suitable method can refer to the following teaching approach. The teaching process is as follows:

- Present a specific action to the child.
- Provide relevant knowledge about the action, including the object, purpose, and method.
- Guide the child on how to learn, observe, and try it out.
- Create situations for the child to apply the learned knowledge.
- Regularly create an environment for the child to practice and develop good habits by applying life skills.

1.4. Methods to teach life skills to preschool children

In the present era, the world is constantly evolving every minute. Therefore, simply acquiring knowledge from books is not enough. Recognizing this, many parents have incorporated life skills into their child-rearing practices. However, a few parents may lack appropriate methods, resulting in lower effectiveness in their parenting efforts. In the Tri Ton district nursery schools, preschool-age children are taught according to the guidance of the Department of Education and Circular No. 04/2014/TT-BGDĐT dated 28/02/2014 by the Minister of Education and Training. In this approach, the child is at the center of education, and teachers and parents are merely companions and guides for the child. Children have the opportunity to express themselves through their own capabilities and inherent creativity, which helps them develop critical thinking skills throughout the learning and experiential process.

Some effective methods for teaching life skills to preschool children, based on the educational philosophy of Reggio Emilia that the school is implementing, include:

- Student-centered learning: Allowing children to learn in their own unique ways and taking ownership of their learning process is considered one of the highly effective methods for teaching life skills to preschool children. When given the freedom to

express their opinions and perspectives, children learn skills such as self-management, organization, and appropriate presentation for each assigned topic. Additionally, children gradually develop a sense of responsibility for their actions.

- Through games: Everyday fun activities not only bring joy to children but also help them apply various life skills during participation. Children experience different roles, unleash their imagination and creativity, and learn many valuable lessons with their friends through engaging games. For example, when participating in a tug-of-war game, children learn how to hold the rope effectively to achieve the best outcome. At the same time, they also learn about teamwork, cooperation, and understanding the intentions of team members to ensure a smooth and consistent pulling process, resulting in the best possible outcome for the entire team.

- Through daily activities: Repetitive daily routines help children develop habits of self-care and follow the proper procedures for tasks such as washing hands before meals, brushing teeth before bedtime, and making their bed when they wake up. These habits also foster a sense of self-discipline in children. It is possible that children will encounter new difficulties and challenges during their daily activities, which provide excellent opportunities for them to learn new life skills.

- Through movies and storytelling: Parents should also utilize movies and storytelling as a means to teach life skills to preschool children. The content of movies and stories can provide children with fresh perspectives and teach them valuable lessons, as well as effective ways to behave and problem-solving techniques. Additionally, movies and storytelling can make children more interested and enthusiastic, making it easier for them to absorb the life skills conveyed through the content of movies or stories.

- Teaching life skills to children through real-life situations is an effective approach.

Life skills play a crucial role in the holistic development of preschool children. Therefore, parents should expose their children to these skills from an early age to cultivate positive habits for the future. Parents, please refer to methods for teaching life skills to preschool children.

Teaching life skills to preschool children involves nurturing essential skills that help children adapt better to their environment, be more social, and gain confidence before entering primary school. Additionally, these life skills contribute to the holistic development of preschool children, encompassing both physical and mental aspects:

- Developing better physical health for children

The program for teaching life skills to preschool children includes a variety of activities that help them develop physical fitness and overall well-being. Through a suitable program tailored to their physical abilities, children will learn perseverance, resilience,

agility, and adaptability to overcome challenges and thrive in a challenging environment.

When children have a strong physical foundation, they tend to actively participate in various activities and confidently embrace new opportunities. This increased confidence enables them to overcome obstacles in life with greater resilience.

- Assisting children in developing holistic awareness

Teaching life skills to preschool children is a way to enhance their self-awareness. Through lessons, children will learn how to distinguish right from wrong, approach issues objectively, and express their personal opinions.

With the knowledge acquired from the program, children will be inspired and driven to explore and discover the world around them. They will also learn to cultivate love and appreciation for their family, friends, teachers, and nature.

- Assisting children in developing their mental health

The program for teaching life skills to preschool children also helps them recognize the love between individuals, develop a sense of responsibility for their actions, and cultivate gratitude towards their parents, teachers, and those around them.

Furthermore, these valuable lessons promote tolerance towards others, gentle communication, manners, and proper conduct. With a comprehensive foundation in physical, cognitive, and emotional aspects, preschool children will establish a solid groundwork that enables them to grow into valuable members of society in the future

2. Factors influencing the management of life skills education activities for preschool children in Tri Ton district

2.1. Subjective factors

2.1.1 The quantity and quality of teachers and school management staff

Preschool children are in a stage where they have limited deep understanding of their surroundings. They tend to imitate and learn from others, including both positive and negative behaviors. To encourage children to actively learn and imitate appropriate behaviors, teachers need to provide guidance on communication and social skills during lessons. This can start with basic actions such as polite greetings and sharing. Educating children on how to behave at this age helps them develop and cultivate early communication skills, including knowing how to communicate, listen, and convey messages to others appropriately.

Teachers in preschools in Tri Ton district need to consider life skills education as an essential part of their teaching responsibilities. It requires them to develop specific and detailed lesson plans, providing

thorough guidance for children to practice and master various skills. They should proactively implement activities that engage children's attention and create the necessary appeal for effective teaching. Many teachers have demonstrated excellent competence and high creativity in designing their own lesson content, assessing children's knowledge related to the lessons, and organizing numerous positive activities to supplement life skills education. With just a few instructions, they can capture the children's interest. Additionally, teachers need to possess professional qualifications and essential skills, including understanding children's psychology, handling different situations, and selecting appropriate content that matches the children's abilities.

The educational management authorities in Tri Ton district need to understand that the effectiveness of managing life skills education activities depends on the quality of the education itself. The management department is responsible for controlling the management system, organizing assignments, and promoting social labor collaboration. They serve as the managing entity, which can be individuals or organizations. In the context of preschool life skills education, the principal of the school plays a key role as a leader who influences the teachers, the subjects of management, through appropriate management tools and methods. The principal is responsible for allocating teachers and other resources within the school, guiding the operation of a department or the entire organization of the school to effectively implement life skills education for preschool children and develop their comprehensive life skills.

2.1.2. The awareness of the staff, teachers, parents, students, and other stakeholders regarding to life skills education for preschool children.

The awareness of the staff, teachers, parents, students, and educational forces plays a crucial role in determining the success or failure of organizing life skills education. Only when the school's leadership and educational forces have a full and accurate understanding of the necessity of providing life skills education for preschool children, identify the position of life skills education activities for preschool children, and recognize the role of life skills education in the development of children's personalities, can the plan for life skills education by the school administration be highly feasible.

The sense of responsibility and training level of the teaching staff are also important factors. In today's society, teachers are required to have a strong foundation in subject knowledge, practical experience, adept interpersonal skills, and the ability to care for and connect with children. Therefore, the school management needs to effectively manage the teaching staff in terms of selection, utilization, and professional development, following proper procedures and ensuring fairness. This contributes to

improving the quality of education within the school and the quality of life skills education for preschool children in early childhood education institutions.

2.1.3. The psychological characteristics of the preschool age

The psychological characteristics of preschool children vary across different stages of development. Understanding the psychophysiological traits of children at each stage can help parents in nurturing and educating their child effectively, fostering harmony with the child. It also enables teachers to select appropriate teaching methods and guide the child's development.

Children at the preschool age tend to exhibit a desire for independence and maturity. They begin to explore and display a strong sense of curiosity. The psychological development during this stage undergoes significant changes, as there are various transitions and strong psychological growth. Children start to integrate into a social environment, typically the classroom setting. Through interactions, communication, and engagement with teachers and peers, they have favorable conditions to enhance their motor skills and develop distinct psychological traits. At this age, children can engage in shared activities initiated by teachers, but they may lack the skills and experience to allocate tasks, listen to their peers, provide feedback, and resolve conflicts. Understanding the psychological characteristics of preschool children, including the profound changes in physical, cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social, and aesthetic aspects of their development, allows for the formulation of specific plans to enhance the quality of life skills education for preschoolers.

2.1.4 The coordination of various forces within and outside of society in organizing life skills education activities for preschool children

The policy direction and management mechanisms of the state regarding early childhood education are regulated by legal documents and decrees. These legal documents issued by the Ministry of Education and Training have an impact on the implementation of life skills education activities for 5-6-year-old children. The system of legal documents must be clear and free from inconsistencies, aligning with practical considerations. This will facilitate the management of moral education activities for students in preschools and help achieve the objectives.

2.1.5 The effectiveness in inspection and assessment the activities of life skills education for preschool children

Inspection and assessment work, when carried out in coordination, allows managers to accurately grasp the progress of life skills education activities. When implemented, it will have the following effects: Urging subjects to bear

management, better performing the tasks assigned by the management subject. Correctly evaluate the level of work completion of each individual, unit, or social organization participating in the life skills education process for preschool children.

2.2. Objective factors

2.2.1 Direction of management levels on life skills education activities

The development of a school's life skills education activity plan still relies entirely on the guiding documents of the education department, the department of education and the ministry of education and training. All regulatory documents and circulars are legal for preschools to organize and implement. Legal documents of the state, the Ministry of Education and Training, and directions of management levels on life skills education activities for preschool children have an impact and influence on the implementation of life skills education activities for children and are shown achieved through guiding documents, based on the content and objectives of the life skills education program. From there, managers and teachers concretize appropriate implementation plans. Therefore, the system of documents must be clear, not overlapped, and consistent with practice, which will create convenience in the process of managing moral education activities for students at preschools and achieve the target goal.

In addition to legal documents, there also needs to be close direction from the Department of Education and Training, which can motivate schools to organize effective life skills education activities.

2.2.2 Infrastructure and financial conditions serving life skills education activities for preschool children

Currently, life skills education is very much directed by the education sector, in Circular No. 04/2014/TT-BGDĐT of the Ministry of Education and Training, dated February 28, 2014, issued Regulations on management of life skills education activities and extracurricular educational activities. The Circular states the conditions for physical facilities of life skills education activities specified in Article 4 of the Regulations on management of life skills education activities and extra-curricular educational activities issued together with the Circular No. 04/2014/TT-BGDĐT, specifically:

1. There are classrooms and function rooms with enough light, ensuring school hygiene requirements according to regulations.

2. Teaching equipment must ensure safety and be suitable for teaching content, activities and the psychology of learners' ages.

The infrastructure and financial conditions for life skills education activities are one of the

important factors that determine the quality of life skills teaching for children. The management of life skills education will be highly effective if the school is built spaciouly, in accordance with regulations and conditions, and has modern facilities fully and synchronously equipped to help teachers use teaching-studying facilities and equipment in life skills education activities.

The school's facilities are the infrastructure that affects the quality of kindergarten education, which also affects the number of children/class. If the school makes good use of building good physical facilities, with the correct functions of each department, with good inspection, evaluation, and preservation, it will promote the quality of education of the school and develop the quality of life skills education for young people at school.

The infrastructure conditions: Facilities and teaching equipment not only create favorable conditions for teachers' teaching work but are also a means to help children equip themselves with practical, relevant knowledge between theory and practice. Therefore, the school's facilities and equipment are always maintained and taken care of regularly by the school's management staff.

2.2.3 Local economic, cultural and social conditions

In the current cultural and social-economic context, as well as the increasing level of public awareness, there exists a close relationship between schools and relevant agencies in preschool education, which can have both positive and negative impacts on educational activities. Additionally, certain regions face economic challenges, while language barriers may hinder communication and learning for children from ethnic minorities. Therefore, the socio-economic conditions of a locality have a significant impact on life skills education activities for children.

The socio-economic and cultural factors also influence the parent-child relationship. In developed societies, parents may focus primarily on earning a living, paying little attention to the psychological and behavioral development of their children. In some financially privileged families, parents tend to spoil their children by fulfilling their every desire and acting as substitutes for them. Additionally, the proliferation of smart devices has exposed children to modern technology from an early age, but they may lack proper adult supervision and control over the diverse information they encounter on these devices. This can lead to a situation where children become dependent and exhibit inappropriate behaviors. Many children are not equipped with essential skills such as sharing and cooperating while playing with others. They may lack the understanding of compromise and fail to establish connections with their peers, focusing solely on their own interests.

The education managers in Tri Ton district should seek consultation and collaboration with local authorities and social forces in the community to contribute to the education and training sector, particularly in the field of life skills education for children, ensuring that it is directed towards the right direction and objectives. However, with the development of modern life, negative influences from families, such as parents' indulgent actions or habits, can lead to children feeling insecure, having a sense of superiority, and lacking the ability to listen, share, and collaborate towards common goals.

3. Conclusions

Life skills are essential abilities that help individuals effectively address the challenges that arise in life. Therefore, providing life skills education for children is a crucial task that educators need to focus on in order to prepare them for a more confident and successful integration into society.

Life skills education is a purposeful and planned pedagogical process that aims to develop positive action competencies related to knowledge and attitudes. It helps individuals develop self-awareness, communication skills, social relationships, task performance, and effective coping mechanisms to meet the demands and challenges of everyday life.

Managing life skills education activities for preschool children in Tri Ton district is a purposeful process in which the management entity influences the implementation of life skills education activities to achieve the objectives of such activities for preschool children. Life skills education for preschool children involves the actions, cognition, and emotions that children use in their daily interactions to meet their own needs and handle situations that arise in life. For preschool children, the manifestations of life skills can be as simple as enjoying playing with friends, sharing ideas, coordinating actions while playing, listening to others, assigning tasks reasonably, and resolving conflicts. Therefore, life skills are essential for preschool children and are one of the criteria for assessing the holistic development of an individual's personality.

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