CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

ADOLESCENCE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

2010
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction to the Revised Adolescence Education Program</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Understanding Adolescence</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Addressing Adolescent Concerns Through Educational Interventions</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Adolescence Education Program - Past Experiences and the Way Forward</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Perspectives on Quality, Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Youth Friendly Services</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Revised Adolescence Education Program

Adolescents are a positive resource for the country, and need to be respected, appreciated and accepted as such. They have unlimited energy, vitality and idealism, as well as a strong urge to experiment and create a better world.

Adolescence is, at the same time, a critical period for the development of self-identity. The process of acquiring a sense of self is linked to physiological changes, and learning to negotiate the social and psychological demands of being young adults. Responsible handling of issues like independence, intimacy and peer group dependence are concerns that need to be recognized and appropriate support provided in a positive environment. Access to the physical space of the outside world, opportunities for growth, free movement and adult trust are some of the factors that significantly influence young people’s construction of the self.

Although the process of socialisation takes care of these needs and concerns, the formal education system also plays a decisive role. Society particularly the education system has a responsibility to support youth in navigating this transition phase in a positive manner, so as to enable them to realize their potential. There is a need to create an environment in which society understands and acknowledges diverse expressions of adolescents regarding their physical, emotional, social and intellectual needs and concerns. Understanding of sexuality that develops at this stage is significant to a person’s sense of identity, self-esteem and confidence. There has been a long-pressing demand to introduce elements related to these concerns in the school curriculum. Adolescence Education (AE), as a response to these demands, is a relatively new entry to the list of critical concerns of school education.

The first-ever National Seminar on Adolescence Education was organised by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in April 1993, with a view to evolving national consensus on the salient issues. As a follow-up of the recommendations of the Seminar, adolescence education was conceptualised as an educational intervention focusing on
critical elements of adolescent reproductive and sexual health (ARSH) including HIV/AIDS and substance (drug) abuse. Adolescence Education was envisaged as focused on awareness, attitude and behaviour related objectives. Rather than the more limited term `sex education’, ‘adolescence education’ was considered more comprehensive, and unanimously accepted and adopted.

Nation-wide consultations were held, through a series of Regional Seminars in different parts of the country during 1994-96, in order to validate the adolescence education framework and facilitate the process of integration of Adolescence Education into school curriculum. On the basis of these consultations, NCERT developed a General Framework of Adolescence Education and a set of materials. The Framework defined Adolescence Education as “an educational intervention to help learners acquire accurate and adequate knowledge about reproductive and sexual health with a focus on the process of growing up during adolescence, in its biological, psychological, socio-cultural and moral dimensions”.

The greatest challenge felt was to develop a framework that would be in consonance with Indian cultural settings as well as in tune with the school education system. The framework, evolved through nation-wide consultations, encapsulated adolescent reproductive and sexual health concerns including HIV/AIDS and substance abuse concerns as its main elements; these were earlier missing from school curricula. Subsequently, various activities were initiated under the National Population Education Project (NPEP) for integration of AE elements in the content and process of school education, teacher education and also adult education. Curricular and non-curricular approaches were attempted, teachers were trained to transact AE, and various experiences and achievements ensued.

During the operationalisation of the program, it was realized that life skills development should be emphasized in order to empower adolescents to adequately meet the challenges confronting them. It was felt that knowledge would remain inadequate unless skills to transact different modes of behavior are also built up simultaneously. A revised Framework for
Adolescence Education was developed in 2003-04 to address this gap. This framework focused on selected life skills that were seen as having the potential to empower adolescents to cope with and manage ARSH concerns.

- **A Scheme of Contents**, relevant to various stages of education, was developed based on the broad objectives of enhancing knowledge, inculcating healthy attitudes and responsible behaviors to manage ARSH issues including HIV/AIDS and substance abuse. Alongside, a set of specific Life Skills was drawn up, so that students could be empowered with skills to practice and implement their learning. These revisions were adopted in the Adolescence Education Programme (AEP) which was launched by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India in all the secondary and senior secondary schools of the country in 2005.

- Some limitations emerged during this phase of implementation as well. One significant lack in Life Skills Education has been that often these skills were not applicable in real life contexts. This renders the learning virtually ineffective. Other major limitations were: a tendency to view adolescence as a problem rather than appreciating adolescents as a valuable resource; and an emphasis on education for coping and managing rather than on the transformational potential of education. Moreover, it was felt that being a program for youth, Adolescence Education needs to be dynamic and responsive to the changing contexts and concerns of young people. Thus it was considered advisable to engage in a process of review and preparation of a `New Revised Conceptual Framework for AEP’.

**Process of Preparing a New Revised Conceptual Framework for AEP—2009-2010**

To develop the new revised conceptual framework, NCERT took the lead, in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in holding a series of national-level consultations. The first of these was a three-day consultation, held during October 2009, while the final National Seminar was held on 7-8 December 2009 to take forward the process, initiated in October 2009, to review and revise the existing framework to provide young people with accurate, age-appropriate and culturally sensitive information; promote healthy attitudes and enable them to handle real-life situations effectively.
These consultations aimed to:

- Revisit the earlier conceptual framework, including strategy, approach and methods.
- Comprehensive re-conceptualization of Life Skills and life skills development
- Share learning from different experiences of working with young people in educational settings and identify best approaches to tackle common challenges
- Recommend quality assurance mechanisms that can be implemented through the partnering school systems
- Recommend advocacy strategies with different stakeholders to further the cause of adolescence education and the health and well being of young people
- Generate concrete suggestions for provision of youth friendly health services in school settings.

During these national consultations, the following Guiding Principles for Adolescence Education were articulated. They reflect the thinking of a wide range of engaged stakeholders including the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), NCERT, UNFPA, leading educationists, social scientists, school principals and teachers, health professionals and – perhaps the most important! – adolescents/youth and youth groups.

**Guiding Principles for Adolescence Education**

Adolescence Education needs to be located in consonance with core principles of education. For this, the NCERT National Curriculum Framework-2005 forms a basic reference and resource.

1. AE should recognize and respond to the reality that adolescents are heterogenous: there is diversity in terms of urban, rural, caste, class, religion, region, cultural beliefs, dis/ability, sexual orientation and so on.
2. The educational programme should be participatory, process-oriented and non-judgmental, not prescriptive, stigmatizing or fear inducing
3. Adolescence is conceptualized as a positive stage of life: a phase full of possibilities and potential. It should not be labeled as problematic and traumatic, and adolescents (and the ‘peer group’) should not be stereotyped in negative ways.

4. AE should enable adolescents to understand and negotiate existing and constantly changing lived realities.

5. Teachers need to unlearn and learn in order to facilitate this programme. This is relevant in respect of content, attitudes and pedagogical modes.

6. The program should enable adolescents to articulate their issues and know their rights, counter shame and fear, build up self-esteem and self-confidence, and develop ability to take on responsibility for self, relationships and (to an extent) society around them.

7. Adolescence education principles should influence the entire school curriculum and ethos, rather than being an isolated, stand-alone programme.

8. The Adolescence Education Programme should have inbuilt flexibility – in terms of content and process.

9. It should enable and actively help learners to develop critical thinking, attitudes and knowledge, along with life skills.

10. It should be strongly oriented towards the transformational potential of education, based on principles of equity and social justice, rather than having a status-quo orientation.
Chapter 2: Understanding Adolescence

The term adolescence originates from the Latin word 'adolescere' which means 'to grow' or 'to mature.' The term taken in its purest sense could mean 'to emerge' or 'to achieve identity' which is indicative of the broader context of human development in which it is commonly used.

Adolescence is popularly understood as a phase in the teenage years of the life of a human being. It is a period of transition between childhood and adulthood: its distinctiveness is reflected in rapid biological, cognitive and socio-emotional changes.

Defining Adolescence

WHO defines adolescence as the progression from appearance of secondary sex characteristics (puberty) to reproductive maturity, development of adult mental processes and adult identity, and transition from total socio-economic dependence to relative independence. The pace of change may vary within adolescence and chronological age is not necessarily a reliable index of development towards maturity.

The definition given by WHO defines adolescence both in terms of age (10-19 years) and in terms of a phase of life marked by special attributes. For most intents and purposes, the terms ‘adolescents’, ‘young people’ and ‘youth’ and used interchangeably (with young people defined as 10-24 years old, and youth as 15-24 years old).

<table>
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<th>The special attributes that mark adolescence include:</th>
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<td>• Rapid physical growth and development</td>
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<td>• Physical, social and psychological maturity, not necessarily at the same time</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sexual maturity and onset of sexual activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Experimentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Development of adult mental processes and adult identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Transition from total socio-economic dependence to relative independence</td>
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</table>
Some definitions consider the onset of puberty as the beginning of adolescence and complete social and financial independence as the end of adolescence and beginning of adult life. In spite of the common understanding that adolescence has more to do with attributes than with age, the multiplicity of definitions has lead to the lack of a common and concrete evidence-based understanding of adolescent issues.

It has been observed that the pace of change may vary with individual physiology, nutrition status, environment and experiences. As a result, there is a growing consensus on disassociating adolescence from a precise number of years. Moreover, research indicates that globally, the interval between childhood and assumption of adult roles has been lengthened. Compared to 20 years ago most young people enter adolescence earlier and healthier, are more likely to spend their adolescence in school, consequentially prolonging their entry into the labor force and delaying marriage and childbearing.

Adolescence is an important formative phase of an individual’s life, which to a large extent shapes the future course of young people’s lives. During adolescence the physical, intellectual, and emotional characteristics and patterns of childhood are gradually replaced by adult ones, and girls and boys progressively evolve into a state of relative socio-economic independence. (UNICEF, 1999)

More often then not, when studied, adolescents are considered and treated as a homogenous group. However, the fact is that adolescents are a heterogeneous group, with varying characteristics and needs. There is a great threat of programs being meaningless for these young people if the need to understand their context, characteristics and profiling their diversity is ignored. At the same time, despite the wide variety in contexts, there are some
broad areas of concern which cut across many of the differences. While cultural, community and individual differences abound, there is a commonality in the demands of young people.

Adolescents are an important resource for their families, communities and the nation. However, families, societies and nations at large need to make conscious and consistent efforts and investments to enable young people to realize their potential. As junior members of the household, they often make a valuable contribution to the family's economic well-being through paid work or household activities, including the tasks of taking care of siblings, which free other adults to earn. Those adolescents who have already become parents carry the huge responsibility of shaping the lives of the next generation. All adolescents significantly represent hope for the future development of a nation. With proper support, guidance and nurturing, their participation can be greatly enhanced. One must also consider the special needs and consequences when there is absence of adequate care for adolescents, especially adolescent girls in the context of their reproductive role and low social valuation/ worth.

**The Realities of Young People in India**

The 2001 census tells us that 30 percent of the billion-strong population of the country is young people while 20 percent would qualify as adolescents. India is proud to be home to 327 million young people in the age group of 10-24 (WHO, 2007), and is also responsible for developing this vast human resource in the best possible ways. As discussed earlier, there is dearth of age-specific reliable data arising due to the multiplicity of definitions.
Table 2.1: Population Distribution of Young People, India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Age groups</th>
<th>Persons</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>All ages</td>
<td>1,028,610,328</td>
<td>532,156,772</td>
<td>496,453,556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>124,846,858</td>
<td>65,632,877</td>
<td>59,213,981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>100,215,890</td>
<td>53,939,991</td>
<td>46,275,899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>89,764,132</td>
<td>46,321,150</td>
<td>43,442,982</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adolescence is an overlapping age group and often tends to be subsumed under categories of either children or youth. Most data available, most targeted program and national policies ignore the special needs of adolescents as a distinct category of people. This might be a hefty risk considering that every fifth person in this country is an adolescent.

A prime factor that defines the context of adolescents is their geography and area of residence, which of course becomes extremely complex owing to the cross-cutting gender, class and caste
realities. The rural context is very different from the urban one and brings with it, its advantages and concerns. Rural societies are relatively more close-knit, but they are also relatively hierarchical, infrastructurally challenged, conservative and traditional. Urban societies are much more amorphous, open to change and diversity, information-driven, infrastructurally better developed, and tend to offer more opportunities. Mobility which is determined by gender, caste and class is significantly higher in urban areas, primarily due to information, infrastructure and access. Poverty assumes varying dimensions with resource-poverty becoming an overarching factor in urban areas while social poverty is the basis of economic poverty in rural areas. For example, though a village as well as a city may have a middle school, access to it may be denied to a rural boy on grounds of his being from a lower caste while the same boy in the city may be denied access because he has to work due to his parent being poor.

The per-capita food grain consumption in India is low, even lower than in sub-Saharan Africa. This is a matter of grave concern for the nation, and more so with regard to the 30% who are its young and productive generation. Findings from National Family Health Survey 3 (NFHS 3) indicates high percentage of anemia (56% of females and 25% of males in the 15-24 age group were anemic), which affects their physical growth, cognitive development, performance in school and at work as well as reproduction. Low age and anemic mothers are more prone to give birth to malnourished children, with significant morbidity and mortality associated for both mother and child.

There has been concerted effort to bring all children aged 6-14 years within the ambit of schooling (Classes 1 to 8), and significant achievements have been registered.
Table 2.2: Reduction in Out of School Children (6-14 years)

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<tr>
<td>Out-of-school</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children (millions)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Annual Report 2006-2007, Department of School Education and Literacy & Department of Higher Education, MHRD, GoI, 2007, p 34; citing State Reports

However, in spite of the increasing enrolment rates and declining number in out-of-school children at elementary level (aged 6-14), children’s minimum levels of learning are abysmally low and drop out rates high. Among other factors, poor school teaching and infrastructure, as well as bad performance at school, play a significant role in children dropping out of school. By the secondary school level (Classes 9 to 12), the enrollment levels remain low, while dropout rates continue to be high.

Table 2.3: Status of Enrolment and Dropout Rates in Classes IX-XII, as on 30.9.2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>GER (IX-X)</td>
<td>57.39%</td>
<td>45.28%</td>
<td>51.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER (XI-XII)</td>
<td>30.82%</td>
<td>24.46%</td>
<td>27.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER (IX-XII)</td>
<td>44.26%</td>
<td>35.05%</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropout Rate (Classes I-X)</td>
<td>60.41%</td>
<td>63.88%</td>
<td>61.92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Annual Report, DEEL & DHE, MHRD, 2006-07, citing Selected Educational Statistics (2004-05) Provisional Data, p 60. Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is the percentage of children of the relevant age group who are enrolled in school as a ratio of the total number of children in that age group.

**Vocational Education** is being provided at the senior secondary stage, to approximately 5% of those in the age group 16-18 under the centrally sponsored scheme for ‘Vocationalisation of Secondary Education at the +2 level.’ This scheme needs to be reoriented with a view to employment potential.

Sexuality is an area of curiosity and priority for young people. Curiosity about their body, their feelings, sex-related social roles and other’s sexuality is natural, and informed by their life experiences as well as information from other sources and the wider social ethos. There is
diversity in sexual preferences of young people, just as in adults, though young people are known to be more open to exploration and experimentation. It is realistic to recognize this diversity, more so after it has been recognized by the Supreme Court of India’s judgment on Article 377.

Findings from the study, ‘Youth in India: Situation and Needs 2006-07’ conducted by the International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai, and Population Council, New Delhi provide valuable and reliable information about young people in India. The study, carried out in six states from north, south, east and west India, conducted face-to-face interviews with 50,848 married and unmarried women and unmarried young men (aged 15-24) and married men aged 15-29 residing in rural and urban areas from over 1,50,000 households.

Findings underscore young people’s limited awareness of majority of sexual and reproductive health matters. For example, only 45% of young women and 37% of young men were aware of the possibility of pregnancy resulting from first intercourse. Ignorance of sexual and reproductive health issues continues even after marriage. Seventy eight percent young women and 70% of young men reported that they did not know what to expect of married life.

As regards discussion on sexuality issues with parents, low figures of 0-2% of young men and 1-6% of young women had discussed romantic relationships and reproductive processes with either parent. An extremely significant 47% of women and 16% men reported having never received any information on sexual matters from anybody.

A large proportion of young people (78% young women and 83% young men) were in favor of imparting sex education or family life education to youth. Young women and men revealed fairly different choices in terms of their preferences about the best person to provide this information. Among young women, the most commonly cited preferred sources were parents (34%) followed by teachers (27%), health care providers and other professionals (15%) and friends (11%). Forty five percent of young men preferred teachers as the key source for such information followed by health care providers and other professionals (23%) and friends (21%).
Only 15% youth reported that they had received family life or sex education in school or through special programmes sponsored by the government or NGOs. More than two-fifths of the youth who perceived family life or sex education to be important for young people reported that such education should be provided between 15 and 17 years of age. Young women were more likely than young men (26% vs. 15%) to believe that information on sexual matters should be provided before age 15. Findings also suggest that young people who had undergone family life education or sex education had better knowledge on sexual and reproductive health matters.

Traditionally, the mainstream culture in most parts of India considers marriage and sexual activity as concurrent and a subset of the other. However, the findings from this study suggest that 4% of young women and 15% of young men had premarital sexual experiences. Only 3% women and 13% men reported consistent use of condoms during pre-marital sexual intercourse. Forced sex was experienced by 18% of the women and 3% of the men.

Findings also indicate that although most youth preferred to marry after age 18, as many as 19% of young women aged 20-24 were married before age 15, 49% before age 18 and 67% before age 20. In contrast, just 7% of young men aged 20-24 were married before age 18 and 16% before age 20.

Furthermore, within marriage only a quarter of young men and women reported ever use of contraceptive methods. At the time of the interview, only 18% young men and women were practicing contraception. Among those who reported at least one pregnancy, the first pregnancy had occurred within a year of marriage for three-fifths of young men (62%) and women (58%).

Eighty two percent of married young women aged 15-24 reported that they had experienced at least one pregnancy.
Experiences of violence affect the health of victims directly, through injuries they sustain and through life-long detrimental effects on mental and physical health. Findings from the study suggest that domestic violence within marriage with almost a quarter young women reporting that they had been victims of one or other form of physical violence at some point of time within their marriage.

Sexual Harassment in public spaces, institutions of education, in and around home and at the workplace is a well established fact. Child abuse, bullying and ragging are also common and more so among boys. This is reinforced by the gender stereotype that men/boys are naturally or hormonally violent and hence justified in exerting force over women/girls.

One of the major risks of irresponsible sexual relations is the spread of HIV/AIDS among adolescents and young people. Over 35% of all reported AIDS cases in India occur among young people in the age group of 15-24 years and more than 50% of the new HIV infections occur also among young people (NACO, 2005). Findings from the recent youth study show that 72% of young women and 91% of young men aged 15-24 had heard of HIV/AIDS. However, only 28% of young women and 54% of young men had comprehensive knowledge about HIV/AIDS. The indicator for measuring comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS included (i) identifying 2 major ways of preventing HIV (ii) rejecting three common misconceptions about HIV transmission (that HIV can be transmitted through mosquito bites, sharing food with a person who has HIV and hugging someone who has HIV, (iii) knowing that a healthy looking person can be HIV positive.

Tobacco and alcohol use among young people is a matter of concern. The projected number of drug abusers in India is about 3 million, and most are in the age group 16-35 (UNODC, 2003). Nearly 11% were introduced to cannabis before the age of 15 years and about 26% between the age of 16-20 years (UNODC & Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2004). Findings from NFHS-3 show that in the age group of 15-24; 40% young men and 5% young women had
ever used tobacco, while 20% of young men and 1% of young women had ever consumed alcohol.

Diversity in adolescents begins with gender. Gender roles in Indian society, rather in most societies the world over are very distinctly defined. The process of gendering begins probably from around the time a child is born but it is during adolescence that these young people are expected to start assuming their social roles and abide by social norms. These gender roles intensify their already existing anxiety about their and their peer's identities, futures as well as sexualities. These pre-defined spaces that young persons suddenly find themselves in are often so stifling that they cease to hear their own voice amidst the noise. Contrary to popular belief these spaces may be just as suffocating and non-conducive for growth of people of all genders. Their self-awareness, their communication, their thinking and coping abilities may not develop sufficiently rendering them vulnerable in challenging situations in life.

Adolescent girls in particular continue to face gender based discrimination. The declining sex ratio, malnutrition, lower school-enrolment ratios, drop-out rate, early marriage, incidence of domestic violence, under-age pregnancy, unsafe motherhood and increasing incidence of sexual abuse (UNFPA, 2006). Boys as well as girls are victims of crimes such as rape, kidnapping, abduction, trafficking and domestic violence. In most case the abuser is a family member or a known person: in 8% of rape cases, the offenders were known to the victims and 32% were found to be neighbors (NCRB, 2001). Furthermore, it is disheartening to note that the findings from NFHS-3 do not indicate progressive gender role attitudes; 53% women and 56% men in the 15-24 age group reported that wife beating is justified under specific circumstances.

The overall sex ratio (females per 1000 males) in the age group of 0-6 years in the country has declined from 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001. There are significant state-wise variations with the worst sex ratio disfavoring the girl child being reported from Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi (Annual Report 2002-03, Dpt. Of Women and Child Development, Min. of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India). In the age group 10-19, the sex ratio shows a further decline to 882 females per 1000 males. There are a variety of reasons for declining child sex ratio, such as preference for
male child which leads to pre-natal sex selection, female foeticide and infanticide, malnutrition and discrimination against the girl child.

Both the Youth Study (2006-07) and NHFS-3 (2005-06) provide clear evidence that youth need reliable information on sexuality, and are keen to get sexuality education. There is thus a strong case for sexuality education, based on the felt needs of adolescents and youth in India. There is an acute absence of reliable information on themes of sexuality and related concerns. Evidence also suggests that educational institutions are important avenues for enhancing knowledge, developing skills and providing first level of services.

From the discussion above, it is clear that among the pressing realities of adolescents in India today are included issues like poverty and malnutrition, gender discrimination, sexual abuse and substance abuse, as well as vulnerability to HIV-AIDS, RTIs and STIs. There is limited access to accurate information, restrictions upon interacting with peers--particularly mixing of adolescent girls and boys, restrictions on mobility--especially for girls, high level of socio-economic disparities and differential access to education as well as opportunities for self-development.

At the same time, there are many positive trends affecting youth in the country, such as increased age at marriage, urge towards gender parity and questioning and articulation of concerns by different sections of youth. Family transitions, urbanization and migration and media influences have a destabilizing effect, but at the same time they help create space and conditions for transformative positive changes.

Considering the overall situation, it is of the first importance that adolescents be provided with quality education that can meet their concerns and address their multiple realities. Adolescents are the future of the country. They have a right to education that addresses not only scholastic, but also social and psycho-physical concerns. For the young people, the rights to information and health are inextricably linked with the right to good, meaningful education.
Adolescent Perspectives

Adolescents and young people, as well as various youth groups, are today themselves articulating some of the significant concerns of adolescents. A range of issues emerges, indicating a strong need to accord due respect to the agency, thoughts and emotions of adolescents and youth.

Adolescence is marked by an overwhelming concern with Identity Formation: ‘Who am I?’ is an important question for young people, which they seek to understand and answer in many ways. Processes of reflection and sharing can be very helpful for this. At the same time, young persons want to relate to others, particularly to other young persons. Educational processes should help build knowledge, values, attitudes and skills required to move from ‘me’ to ‘we’. Through engagements with society and major issues of the time, youth can be helped to hone leadership skills and show their worth as co-creators of a new society. Leadership can be nurtured, and conflicts used as opportunities to develop positive traits, such as value clarification, discovering responsibility and collaboration, developing win-win solutions, and building agreement. Self constructed experiments and projects work best, since the process is as important as the solution.

Young people need their own space to experiment, which should not be unduly encroached upon. They must have freedom of expression, and freedom to think and take decisions. Parents, teachers and other adults should act as their support systems, and not as authority figures. Adults need to respect the decisions, feelings and thoughts of young people. A youth facilitator (working in the group Pravah) notes the need to create special learning zones of youth-hood, by providing meaningful experiences which are joyful, fun AND transformational. Adults must learn to trust adolescents, letting them ‘hang out’ and nurture their own friendships rather than look upon the peer group as a stereotypical ‘bad influence’. Young
people often confide, ‘I learnt most from my friends’. Facilitators should be trained, unbiased and strongly supportive of young people, and their ability to think and act.

Teachers and other adults would do well to encourage adolescents to take action on issues they feel passionate about. At the same time, it is the adults’ responsibility to ensure that information is provided, along with services: such information and services can at times be critical, even life-saving. Within education, issues of violence, abuse, harm reduction, poverty, sexuality, climate, equity, culture and norms impact different young people differently. The cross-cutting impact of a range of issues needs to be effectively considered through Education focused on life skills, affirming the rights of all young people. Acceptance and inclusion is the goal, preventing isolation of communities of youth, based on behaviour identification patterns or at-risk labels. We need to acknowledge sexuality as being normal and affirming, and see to it that it is not accompanied by shame. Young people today are articulating that they want older persons, be it teachers or facilitators, to work with them, rather than merely for them. As an 18-year old adolescent boy says, “How do you identify the difference between healthy and unhealthy sexual activity if you don’t know what it is? If I don’t know how to recognize what is acceptable and normal within me, if I can’t accept and celebrate the differences in myself, how do I know how to reach out for help, when I do need it and whom to go to?”

Although the urgency of response might differ, they are fairly clear on what Education focused on life skills should encompass, what is currently missing and what is urgently desired.

While cultural, community and individual differences abound, there is a commonality in the demands of young people. Finally, involvement of young people should be ensured in programmatic, policy and decision-making forums, at local, regional as well as national and international levels.
Chapter 3: Addressing Adolescent Concerns Through Educational Interventions

Adolescence involves a process of socialization and learning, occurring in the family, school and community. Adolescence offers many opportunities and challenges, perhaps more so than any other phase of life, due to physical and psychological changes and many social expectations. Young people are important not only because of their large numbers, but also because they are the future citizens, leaders, parents and labour force. They are the future of the country, and their experiences are important for their present as well as future well-being. Hence, every society recognizes the importance of investing in young people and every culture has evolved various ways of identifying what is important for the young to learn, internalize and practice. For example, the Panchatantra stories from India have practical and wise lessons for a rewarding life. Given the dynamic nature of society, it is facing different set of opportunities and challenges today than in the past. However, it is evident that based on the realities of its context, every society needs to empower its young people so that they can face life with confidence and steer through life effectively. For this, it is required that education is focused on life skills development.

Need for Life Skills

While life skills are relevant for everyone, they are especially relevant to adolescents as they are developing a sense of identity in an environment that bombards them with numerous and often contradictory stimuli with very few reliable resources that they could seek clarifications from.

Rapid urbanization, globalization, economic growth and the extensive reach of media have created tensions in the process of social change and vastly changed the realities of young people from just a generation ago. Specifically in the Indian settings, social norms have not kept pace with the changing times and circumstances. As a result, youth are often poorly informed on several issues related to their health and well being, and lack appropriate context-based knowledge and skills.
Life skills are a generic framework for learning: they encompass the ability to respond to situations in logical, sensitive and positive ways without harming either self or society. Hence, every society should develop a set of life skills relevant to its realities and then empower and encourage its youth to internalize and practice these skills. Life skills are abilities that each one of us possesses, and yet conscious efforts need to be made to enhance these abilities within oneself and others.

Education, and particularly school education, can play a vital role in life skills development among individuals, as it exposes them to varied experiences in their formative years and has abundant potential to provide them with relevant simulated situations to learn and practice. National Curriculum Framework (NCF) – 2005, developed by NCERT, outlines that education should instill “independence of thought and action, sensitivity to others’ well-being and feelings, learning to respond to new situations in a flexible and creative manner, predisposition towards participation in democratic processes, and the ability to work towards and contribute to economic processes and social change.” To achieve this goal, educational processes should engage learners in creating knowledge that is relevant to their experiences, promoting healthy attitudes and enabling them to think critically and respond to real-life situations in positive and responsible ways.

Hence, the purpose of life skills development is in alignment with the larger goals of education. Life skills development is a life-long process that helps individuals grow and mature; build confidence in one’s decisions taken on the basis of adequate information and thought and discover sources of strength within and outside. These are psycho-social abilities that empower individuals to connect with self as well as others and develop healthy lifestyle and positive behavior. Life skills enable individuals to deal with stresses and pressures in life and equip them with competence to manage challenging situations. These skills enhance coping resources and personal and social competencies of individuals. These skills also enable individuals to utilize opportunities optimally, and increase their abilities to analyse issues and act in effective ways.
This is an approach advocated for general education in many countries, to connect education to the outside world.

Education focused on life skills ought to be approached from the broader perspective of rights, with Life Skills understood as one component of the imperative to promote rights.

A wholesome Education strategy should trust young people to think for themselves and exercise agency. According to young people who are part of the group Youth Parliament, “The only effective long term life skills strategy to enable young people is to empower them.” They note that often, the way education has been imparted indicates that adults are afraid of trusting youth. For young people, the biggest concerns are issues of self-esteem and self-respect. They want education of life skills to be transacted in a way that is enabling, rather than the typical didactic mode which has been in vogue. They also point out that there is a need for sexual and reproductive health services, including counselling, to be youth-friendly and confidential.

Life skills can be developed through curricular or co-curricular activities. Life skills can well be incorporated in the formal curriculum. Formal subjects should be based not merely on memory and recall, but rather should be focused on real-life situations that young people can learn to confront, critically analyze and work out. There is a great deal of scope to modify the formal curriculum and incorporate life skills within it.

For a positive socialization process for young people, school education must commit itself to improved life skills education. Moreover, life skills should be incorporated into education in schools and out of schools. Adolescence education is much broader than only sex education. It is about life skills education, and about empowerment of young people to enable them to make optimal use of the opportunities that come their way as also to deal effectively with whatever challenges they encounter.
It is not just schools but also families that need to be incorporated within the broad life skills learning strategies. There is a need to evolve better strategies which include the domain of families and society as a whole.

**What Life Skills are to Be Taught?**

Life Skills development is both an approach as well as an integral outcome of the relevant teaching-learning processes.

Life skills is today viewed as an important component of interventions in respect of health, reproductive health and certain critical societal concerns such as environmental and peace. However, the term life skills is being used in many different ways and has taken on many diverse meanings. Often the zeal to launch life skills based programmes has raced ahead of conceptual clarity. The basis of life skills development adopted in various programmes tends to be programme-driven, rather than conceptually sound.

Although NCF-2005 does not define life skills as such, it delineates life skills while discussing curricular areas as follows:

“Development of life skills such as critical thinking skills, interpersonal communication skills, negotiation/refusal skills, decision making/ problem solving skills and coping and self management skills, is also very critical for dealing with the demands and challenges of everyday life” (p 40).

However, these are only partial definitions. Life skills as such include an extremely wide range of concerns. The concept cannot be limited to any particular set of concerns; rather certain core concerns may be delineated, while the total set expands with reference to varied contexts.

Education in life skills is necessary, because skills in relation to everyday life form the foundation for promoting physical, social and mental well-being. They are also essential for
healthy interaction and positive behaviour among individuals and groups. Life skills enable individuals to translate knowledge, attitude and values into actual abilities, that is *what* to do and *how* to do.

Life skills can influence the way individuals feel about themselves and others and also the way they think they are being perceived by others. This learning may contribute to developing among them strong perceptions of self-identity and self-esteem. Life skills education should therefore work to develop the following abilities:

- to identify and recognise critical issues and concerns
- to gather, analyse, interpret, assess and use the information effectively
- to determine the authenticity, accuracy and value of information and perceive the situation in totality
- to examine alternatives, seek reasons and change views based on evidence
- to look at pros and cons of a particular decision and refrain from making hasty, unplanned decisions.

As adolescents learn to navigate on their own, it is particularly valuable for them to know that they can sustain independence and simultaneously maintain relationships. In order to build and maintain positive relationships, each person has to learn to take responsibility for one’s actions, make informed and rational decisions, and communicate effectively.

**Pedagogical Concerns with Regard to Life Skills Education**

Transaction approaches primarily focused on experimental and experiential modes of learning are considered effective for life skills development. Hence, we need to make a clear departure from didactic top-down, non-interactive and assignment driven methodologies that focus mainly on transmission of information and imparting knowledge to learners. As NCF 2005 recommends, “*Participatory learning and teaching, emotion and experience need to have a definite and valued place in the classroom. True participation starts from the experiences of*"
both students and teachers.” Life skills are generic by nature. Hence, educational interventions should develop abilities to apply these skills across a range of different contexts.

The transaction process of school curriculum has not been able to lay the desired emphasis on skill development and more so on life skill development. The existing teaching-learning methods focus mainly on transmission of information, imparting knowledge to learners. Teaching in schools all over the world tends to be didactic, by and large non-interactive and assessment-driven.

There are concerns about children’s education having become far too fragmented. Schools are subject-centred, with water-tight compartments between subjects. They have not succeeded in overcoming the alienation of knowledge and knowledge-seeking from children’s everyday experiences. In fact, children’s life outside school should be used as a resource and base for constructing classroom knowledge. This means that educators must know their learners and they must make sense of every learner. Systemic factors must be analytically looked at, such as pupil teacher ratio, physical condition of schools, availability of infrastructure and apparatus and most importantly, the school ethos.

Conventional subjects have become increasingly isolated from life, and are fact-centred and exam-centred. Meanwhile new subjects are being introduced from the margins, instead of being integrated into existing subjects. Different areas impinge on school life while the main area remains water-tight and unchanged.

There is a need to reconceptualise learning from the point of view of learners. We need to accept where our young people are, and we need to have a child/adolescent-centered perspective, taking the system to where these young people are. If children fail to learn, adults need to enquire and learn from that failure. Failure does not only imply not being able to score well in an exam; but a failure to make sense of the world, a failure to cope with life. We need to look not just at the failure of the child, look at the failure of the system, and how to improve
the system. When a child fails to live a healthy life, that child is succumbing to larger systemic weaknesses, not personal failures.

Education must attend to the needs and strengths of diverse children, as opposed to the essentialised child, and enable each child to succeed to the height of her capacities. The education system needs to create diversified forms of success, and reconceptualise and reintegrate forms of knowledge.

‘Behaviour’ is often a symptom of or a reflection of the larger situation within which young people grow up. Our social life and our school ethos are characterized by inequalities, disease and insanitary conditions. What adolescents show in behaviour is something they absorb early in life. Positive attitudes and a sense of confidence are ultimately the products of a child’s experience in early formative years.

Many adolescent issues are linked to a feeling that the world cannot be improved, a sense of despair, stress and depression. There is a need to look at school ethos from the point of view of creating spaces where students can make an impact on their own school, so as to impart agency. Corporal punishment need to be minimized; as NCF 2005 notes, “A strong stand must be taken against all forms of corporal punishment” (p 14). A great change in the examination system is required, since this is a prime source of stress.

Education is not simply a means of addressing challenges, but also recognizing opportunities and utilizing them optimally. One of the most significant roles of education is its potential to transform society, culture and the political economy. New textbooks within NCF-2005 have provided for more space to ask questions, and develop critical thinking. An attempt has been made to build bridges between subjects and to create a problem solving environment. Development of life skills is to be seen within this framework. Life skills should not be decontextualised, rather they need to be part of every subject, be it history or geography, math, science or languages.
Based on its experiences of working with young people and several formal/ non-formal curricula that aim to address youth needs; Nirantar, a non-governmental organization, has found three approaches with respect to pedagogy: first is teaching how things ought to be, second is teaching things as they are, while the third teaches how things could be. It is the third type that has transformative potential and can challenge oppressive structures, by pointing out the tremendous possibilities that can be imagined or lived out, and opening new windows to understand and experience the world. Of course, the transformative potential of education needs to be viewed in a much larger, wholistic context, not only with relation to curriculum and content.

For Adolescence education laying emphasis on life skills development, interactive pedagogies are recommended. These should be really participatory, not just appear to be so, while being prescriptive and didactic in spirit as is often the case. For example, in some materials, ‘expected responses’ are clearly marked out, thus creating the potential of children being ostracized or ignored if their responses are not what is expected of them.

Issues such as gender discrimination, child sexual abuse and disability should be included, comprehensively and sensitively, not in a merely tokenistic fashion. The fact that many of these issues are sensitive, and can be traumatic to children who have experienced such issues themselves, needs to be factored in. This reality has to be catered to by the school system. Hence, effective linkages with youth friendly services are an important component of Adolescence Education.

The purpose of Education in life skills development should be clear: its aim is not disciplining and controlling young people’s behavior, rather it should aim at providing spaces for them to develop. AEP, including Life Skills development, should focus on the need to release the imagination of the young, and remove barriers that stifle their vision. Sexuality education cannot be separated from children’s emotional lives, their understanding of others and
understanding of the world. It cannot be separated as a ‘human engineering’ type of knowledge. There is a need to return to the larger picture, how young people are frustrated and misguided, for example by the media.

The existing material often talks of adolescence as a traumatic period that needs to be treated as a problem, or even a medical condition; and it indicate that young people have no agency. Such stereotypical and dangerous notions need to be actively avoided.

Another assumption is that young people are not sexually active. We need, however, to work with the reality that many young people are sexually active, and integrate this reality into the different approaches for reaching young people effectively. There is no point in having a curriculum that ignores the realities of young people’s lives, while claiming to express and speak to their real needs. In some of the existing material, abstinence based messages abound, for example “firmly say no”. While abstinence should be presented as a valid choice, other choices should not be ignored or judged in a rigid and fixed manner. Within the complex cultural realities of India, there are many different social mores and customs followed in the realm of sexuality and family life. No one rigid morality should be purveyed by the AEP. If this is done, it will be self-contradictory and will defeat the very purpose of Life Skills education. AE should be able to address multiple realities without condemning or endorsing a specific reality as it isolates and marginalizes the segment whose reality is being condemned. Sexuality needs to be presented not just as limited to acts of sex, but as incorporating much wider social, cultural and economic dimensions.

The concept of sexuality needs to be developed in Life Skills material, but how to do so is not an easy task. Sexuality needs to be presented as incorporating or relating to wider social, cultural and economic dimensions.

Adolescence Education should enable adolescents to:
• Understand changes they are undergoing, and address any fears and anxieties related to these changes
• Become aware of rights and how these can be protected
• Take decisions and negotiate with others, based on own interests and rights of others
• Recognize sexual abuse, violence and discrimination and break the silence related to these
• Be healthy and to protect themselves from diseases and infections
• Counter shame about their bodies and sexuality, feel confident and positive about themselves, experience greater well being

The approach and pedagogy should include the following factors:
• Ease in relationship between learners and facilitators
• Building perspectives and abilities of teachers through inputs and demonstration
• Dealing with our own fears and pushing the boundaries gently
• Creating a safe space

It should be:

• Age appropriate
• Enable young people’s Right to Information
• Affirm a Positive sense of self and a Positive approach to sexuality
• Affirm diversity, including gender and sexuality, that exists among adolescents
• Non-judgmental, participatory pedagogies should be used
• Within a framework of social analysis, based on principles of equity and justice
• Integrate adolescence education and life skills with other subjects.
• Not be Instrumentally driven by agenda of disease prevention
• Must not be fear-based or prescriptive
• Must not reinforce notions of ‘normal’ and ‘natural’
Pedagogy should begin with understanding the nature of adolescence, and adolescents, with all their heterogeneity. Adolescence is not a universal category. If we were to look at caste, class, religion and gender, we would be able to come up with several adolescences. There is a whole range of adolescents, from out of school adolescents to those in private elite schools. We need to understand the need base of each group which emanates from their direct psychological and physical experiences.

Adolescence as a period is elongating due to a number of factors, including the fact that there is a trend of children reaching puberty earlier. Schools keep adolescents till they are 18 year olds, or even more. Also, the needs, challenges and developmental needs of adolescents vary at different ages: early, mid and late adolescence. Life Skills Education in schools need to be informed by this continuum, particularly with respect to sexuality.

The modular approach to LSE as it presently exists needs to be rethought, since it is a water-tight transmission model. This is very restrictive and fragmented, making each Life Skill disjunctive and additive, while in fact life skills are basically collaborative in nature and not additive.

LSE is experimental and experiential – this should not remain jargon: it needs to be translated into practice. Other jargon such as ‘imparting life skills’, and ‘transaction’ also needs to be reconsidered. Dejargonisation is important in that it helps to expand the pedagogic approach to life skills education. For example, development of life skills requires putting learners through simulated experiences that provide opportunities for application of life skills.

Every school already has some structures, institutions and processes in place – such as the assembly, class teacher system and so on. There is potential to utilize these to enhance students’ life skills. Methods used should be relevant to the cultural contexts. For instance self-expressive writing methods may not work in a culture where students are not used to a culture of articulating experiences in writing and then engaging in collective reading and discussion. In
a modular approach where this is specified, it just gets mechanically done. Mechanical transactions which are pre decided can lead to trivialization of the programme thereby reducing its impact and efficacy. Thus appropriateness of methods and content to the contextual needs is very important with inter and intra regional flexibility woven in.

Links between parents and schools, like the PTA, should be utilized to take life skills education forward. The peer group is a powerful resource – we need to make use of it. Reciprocal learning should be encouraged. It is possible to facilitate systemic change, and there is no need to compromise on basic issues just so as to expand outreach. LSE is a very new area, so we need to have models tested out in different states, and need more Indian research.
Chapter 4: Adolescence Education Program - Past Experiences and the Way Forward

Objectives and Approach

The National Curriculum Framework 2005 developed by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), approved by the Central Advisory Board on Education (CABE), is a policy document that influences all aspects of school education in all States of the country. Hence, the institutionalization of any educational innovation is facilitated if it is reflected in the national curriculum framework. While elements of adolescence education were reflected in the earlier National Curriculum Frameworks (1988 and 2000), the present Framework-2005 provides much more comprehensive coverage to various elements of adolescence education in its different sections.

NCF-2005 registers a paradigm shift in school curriculum that facilitates the integration of adolescence education elements in the content and process of school education. The main objective of adolescence education is emphasized as empowerment of adolescents, through development of their life skills. This is applicable to many spheres of life, including with respect to their reproductive and sexual health concerns. Life skills development would enhance adolescents’ abilities to apply life skills to manage these concerns, as well as have an impact in other spheres of their lives. The empowerment objective can be realized effectively by adopting the approach advocated in NCF 2005, rather than making separate modular interventions.

As NCF-2005 notes vis-à-vis adolescence: “It is a time when the given and internalised norms and ideas are questioned, while at the same time the opinions of the peer group become very important. It is important to recognize that adolescents need social and emotional support that may require reinforcement of norms of positive behavior, acquisition of skills essential to cope with the risky situations that they encounter in their lives, manage peer pressure and deal with gender stereotypes. The absence of such support can lead to confusion and misunderstanding about these changes, and affect their academic and extracurricular activities.” (p.16)

The document delineates life skills while discussing curricular areas as follows:
“Development of life skills such as critical thinking skills, interpersonal communication skills, negotiation/refusal skills, decision making/problem solving skills and coping and self management skills, are also very critical for dealing with the demands and challenges of everyday life.” (p.40). While discussing the curriculum at different school stages, it has been categorically stated that the learners should be engaged in learning *inter alia* about “health including reproductive and sexual health” (pp. 48-49). Further, concerns “related to social aspects of changes and developments occurring in them during adolescence like changing relationships with parents, peer group, the opposite sex and the adult world in general, need to be addressed appropriately. The responses to the health needs of children and adolescents/youth through policies and programmes at different levels are closely related elements of these concerns.” (p 51)

ARSH and related needs are placed within a broader social context, as follows: “There is a growing realisation that the health needs of adolescents, particularly their reproductive and sexual health needs, require to be addressed. Since these needs predominantly relate to sex and sexuality, which is culturally a very sensitive area, they are deprived of opportunities to get the appropriate information. As such, their understanding of reproductive and sexual health and their behaviour in this regard are guided predominantly by myths and misconceptions, making them vulnerable to risky situations, such as drug/substance abuse and HIV/AIDS transmission. Age-appropriate context-specific interventions focused on adolescent reproductive and sexual health concerns, including HIV/AIDS and drug/substance abuse, therefore, are needed to provide children opportunities to construct knowledge and acquire life skills, so that they cope with concerns related to the process of growing up.” (p. 57)

A ‘needs-based approach’ is recommended in order to guide the dimensions of physical, psychological and mental aspects that need to be included at different levels of schooling. While a basic understanding is considered necessary, “the more important dimension is that of experience and development of skills and physical well being through practical engagement with play, exercise, sports and practices of personal and community hygiene. Collective and
individual responsibilities for health and community living need to be emphasized....These demands on children need to be integrated into existing curricular activities rather than adding these on.” (p. 58)

The Position Paper prepared by the National Focus Group on Health and Physical Education reinforces the approach adopted in the NCF 2005. The following statements contained in the Position Paper may guide the future course of the school curriculum with regard to AEP: “There are additional areas like ... ‘Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health” that are being implemented in schools but being dealt with separately from subject curricula.... The issue that needs to be addressed here is how these areas have to be integrated into the school curriculum effectively.... Across these areas it would be inadequate if only theoretical inputs or awareness is generated. In fact many of these concerns require the imparting of skills to children, parents and teachers to deal with issues arising out of their daily lives in the family, school and community.” (p.238)

Hence, the NCF 2005 document clearly establishes the Adolescence Education Program (AEP) as an educational initiative that builds on experiences of young people to enable them to respond to real-life situations effectively.

AEP needs to be culture specific and contextual. Each part of India is virtually like a separate country of Europe in terms of size, diversity and distinct culture. The differences in cultural practices need to be taken into account. Models need to be adapted to local situations. Therefore, there is a need to develop a framework that it is accessible to all.

**AEP Implementation: Experiences and Challenges**

Government of India and various non-governmental agencies have been attempting, over the past few years, to address adolescent concerns through designing and implementing a comprehensive Adolescence Education Programme.
For the Ministry of Human Resource Development, it is important to keep ensuring increased contextual relevance of AEP. As Mr Khuntia, Joint Secretary, MHRD, puts it, “investing in GenNext” is really significant for the future of the country. Government has been grappling with the national policy for AEP, especially since 2006. In the first few years of the programme there was much enthusiasm, and a large numbers of schools were covered, as well as more numbers reached through distance education. However, the interventions need to be made sharper and more focused.

AEP has been implemented by a number of concerned agencies in partnership with the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), and coordinated by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). The program has focused on co-curricular as well as curricular approaches.

UNFPA and a number of other non-governmental agencies are committed to working with government and with young people, to bring forward new dimensions in AEP, especially in relation to life skills education. Appropriate services also must be offered to young people, for instance related to sexual health and counseling. Existing structures, as well as new systems, structures and strategies, need to be strengthened, so that service provision can be incorporated into the larger life skills education within AEP.

The curricular interventions include activities related to development of curricular, instructional, training and other materials, training of curriculum and material developers, teacher trainers, teachers, and other educational functionaries for ensuring effective integration of AE elements. UNFPA’s activities have also been conducted for integration of life skills in the secondary curriculum of National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). Support has been extended to the Council of Boards for School Education (COBSE), for advocacy with relevant stakeholders, including policy makers, curriculum developers and textbook writers. Efforts have been made to integrate these elements in the evaluation process of CBSE and State Boards.
The co-curricular interventions have been made through the three national school systems - Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS) and Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS). The program has worked on a cascade training approach that has created a pool of master trainers who orient nodal teachers who are entrusted with the responsibility of transacting life skills based education to secondary school students through interactive methodologies. Master trainers are nominated from within the three school systems in order to create and nurture local resources and as a sustainability effort to enhance the capacity of the participating schooling systems to carry the program forward on their own. Nodal teachers are provided guidelines and materials to facilitate the transaction process. Advocacy sessions are organized with principals of participating schools and sensitization sessions are held with parents. By end 2009, at least two nodal teachers from 3900 CBSE schools, all the 919 KV schools, and all the 583 NVS schools have received orientation on adolescence education issues.

There are some valuable learnings from the innovation on integration of life skills in the secondary curriculum of the National Institute of Open Schooling. Life skills integration of a generic nature was visualized as a backdrop to providing sound AEP. NIOS was guided by the philosophy that what is outside the classroom needs to be integrated into the educational package. Although NIOS has a system of contact program where the learners can seek clarifications on items that they do not understand; open learners are essentially self-learners with no teachers to guide them. Hence, the learning materials in NIOS assume further importance and are popularly known as ‘teachers in print.’ If life skills as a curricular area is added on as a subject, there is no guarantee that learners would opt for it. Hence, to ensure development of life skills, the most effective way for NIOS was to integrate these within existing subjects.
The ways in which such integration was made possible include:

- Choosing subjects which are taken up by maximum number of learners. Based on this factor, subjects such as Home Science, Social Science and Science subjects were chosen.
- Issues of empathy, and communication skills were built into languages; Social science chapter on population enabled the learner to recognize how a large population could also be viewed as India’s most important asset rather than being perceived only as a liability; issues of consumer rights were included in home science and similarly several life skills were woven into all the 15 model lessons seamlessly without compromising the subject content. These lessons provided several opportunities for developing abilities of critical thinking and team work.
- Each of the 15 integrated lessons has a detailed proforma for the learners and tutors to provide feedback. A lot of advocacy with curriculum committees, subject co-ordinators and finally lesson writers was required to emphasize the fact that integration of life skills will not dilute the curriculum of subject-specific content but only enrich it further to make it more relevant to the realities of learners. Although, there was initial resistance to the idea, development of sample integrated lessons in different subjects and persistent advocacy efforts focused on relevance of life skills development for the learners were helpful in bringing the different stakeholders on board. Consistent efforts were made to enhance capacities of subject co-ordinators and lesson writers
- As assessment of life skills is considered a difficult task, special efforts were made to develop innovative assessment tools within the integrated lessons that go beyond recall mechanisms.
- Sensitization of tutors was seen as an important component to ensure that the integrated lessons are transacted in their true spirit. Three rounds of sensitization workshops were organized and this initiative will be further strengthened in the coming years
- Feedback from the learners on integrated materials is an important area on which work will be pursued further. Encouraged by the success of this innovation, NIOS plans to integrate life skills in all the five subjects (mentioned above) in its secondary curriculum.
Further work with the senior secondary curriculum will be guided from the learning of the current initiative.

COBSE, which is a coordinating body or federation of all state school Boards in India, carried out advocacy for integration of AEP in textbooks and processes. It focuses on building awareness and understanding about AEP. COBSE encourages each Board to choose subjects and classes for AEP.

**Existing Challenges in AEP Implementation and Way Forward**

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<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Proposed Way Forward</th>
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<tr>
<td>Related to Program Implementation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of understanding of adolescent education (principle, objectives, roles) among educationists and administrators.</td>
<td>Regular advocacy (seminar/meetings) at all levels to build understanding on AEP</td>
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<td>Dilution in content development at the state level – national vs. state guidelines (state priority, cultural sensitivity)</td>
<td>Active national representation (both in terms of government and NGO representation) in state level curriculum development.</td>
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<td>Limitations in integration of AE issues in curriculum – individual subjects not able to accommodate all topics.</td>
<td>Different aspects of life skills development should be integrated in different subjects. National organizations like the NCERT should spearhead development of prototype materials in different subjects.</td>
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<td>Young people not actively engaged in program design, implementation and assessment Young people and their needs addressed in the program from adult perspective</td>
<td>Build peer facilitated models that actively involve young people in all stages of the program Initiate youth clubs Facilitate regular youth interactions</td>
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<td>Issue</td>
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<td>Selection criteria for nodal teachers not followed</td>
<td>Develop selection criteria and ensure that these are enforced. Give preference to those teachers who are interested.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insufficient number of trained teachers</td>
<td>Initially, 2 teachers were trained in each school. Now, the norm has been revised to train at least 1 teacher for 150 secondary school students</td>
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| Inadequate follow-up of teachers training                           | • Systematic protocols with clear responsibility and resources for data collection and management will be developed in the academic year 2010-11  
• Professionals will be placed in each school system to closely interface with schools  
• Performance based recognition at the school level will be institutionalized |
| In sufficient local resources to support and sustain the program     | • Continue to build capacity at local level, including master trainers at the state level  
• Set up an electronic discussion forum at NCERT for teachers to share their learnings from AEP implementation |
<p>| AE monitoring not integrated into mainstream school monitoring (secondary school data, monitoring formats, reporting) | AE must be integrated in school MIS |
| Overall, shortage of teachers                                        | This is a larger systemic problem and government is working towards filling |</p>
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<th>Lack of advocacy strategies for involving community/stakeholders</th>
<th>AEP materials for parents, forums for engaging media, innovative strategies of involving parents</th>
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<td>Lack of commitment of officers/leadership of principal – individual lead</td>
<td>Advocacy with principals, make the monthly meeting of principals with District Education Officers (DEOs) functional (not tokenistic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No clear linkages with youth friendly services in school settings</td>
<td>In the academic year 2010-11, assessment will be undertaken to assess some of the existing pilots on providing youth friendly services and lessons learned will be ploughed forward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient evidence base to inform programming</td>
<td>More operations research to inform programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AE not integrated in pre service training e.g. B.Ed</td>
<td>Proactive effort to integrate AE in B.Ed curriculum, M.Ed and D. Ed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under utilization of funds</td>
<td>Need for dedicated AE person(s).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Related to the Content and Approach of the Program**

| The term ‘sex education’ is often exploited with negative impact on the program | • Position adolescence education in the wider context of an educational intervention focused on life skills development to empower young people  

• As mentioned in the content guidelines, concerns related to the health and well-being of school students should be woven into the entire curriculum starting from primary to senior secondary school |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curricular vs. Co-curricular</th>
<th>In order to retain the real purpose of the program in terms of being able to respond to the realities of young people and empower them, the following processes are suggested so that the principles of the program influence the entire school curriculum and ethos rather than being an isolated, stand-alone program:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In tandem with the principles of NCF, 2005, there are <strong>certain advantages in the curricular integration</strong> of issues that are covered under the AEP:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No additional subject or program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No additional program-specific resources needed for implementation or monitoring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- AE mainstreamed within the larger context of education throughout the school curriculum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disadvantages</strong></td>
<td>- Gradually (over a period of 5-7 years), life skills should be well integrated in all stages of the school curriculum in different scholastic areas. Efforts in curricular integration in open schooling that have been initiated in 2008-09 may provide valuable insights in this regard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The school system throughout the country is not ready to absorb all the components of the currently conceptualized adolescent concerns in their true spirit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Specific pedagogical methods to actualize life skills development among learners are yet to assume a rightful place in the school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Focus on age/experience appropriate and culturally sensitive information
- Regular interaction with media and other civil society organizations to share the program objectives and content
curriculum

- Insufficient human resource, in terms of trained teachers, sensitized officials in the department of education and overall, shortage of teachers
- Overall, the youth concerns may not get addressed at all

| Reinforce learning through better use of existing institutional spaces like the school assembly, Socially Useful Productive Work (SUPW) sessions, Annual Functions |
| Active engagement of young people, for example, through peer facilitated models |
| Meaningful involvement of parents through forums like the Parent Teacher Associations |
| Nurture shared forums of learning, for example, youth festivals, seminars, electronic discussion forums etc |
Chapter 5: Perspectives on Quality, Monitoring and Evaluation Perspectives on Quality

There are widely varying views and perspectives on quality of education, teaching and learning processes. For AEP and its core component, life skills education, quality is basically being viewed in terms of the paradigm shift envisaged in NCF-2005, with emphasis on the transformational aspects of education. Teaching is to be participatory, and learners are to be encouraged to exercise agency and become active constructers of knowledge.

Schools should be seen as quintessential spaces for integration and inclusiveness. They should pro-actively prevent ghettoization, stereotyping and ‘othering’ based on gender, caste, religion or any other markers. They should recognize the needs of children and young people, their perspectives and their lived histories. School spaces offer various opportunities to dispel myths, encourage identity building, sharing and collective work among children from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. School activities can be exciting, challenging and intensive and provide opportunities for engaging students in innovative ways, giving space to adolescent voices and agency to young people.

Learning to live together is a very significant goal of education, and of life skills based AE. It includes learning so that young people have support to negotiate their identities as part of historical learning. AEP and life skills must consciously teach children how to go beyond these status quo prejudices and inequalities. The physical, social and cultural space of the school should be prevented from promoting stereotypes and alienating children. Rather, it should emphasize inclusion in creative and authentic ways. This can be done simply within the daily school activities such as the way the assembly is organised, or how festivals are organized. Implicit messages are absorbed by children – for example that their group is not dominant. Attempts have been made to break stereotypes through the curriculum, but a lot more needs to be done.
Young people need to be encouraged to be more active in their learning. There should be spaces for students to talk, learn and work collectively with each other. School spaces need re-visioning, be it the assembly, SUPW or clubs (including sports clubs), or the summer camp. Teachers need to come together to envisage the redefining of the school space with more opportunity for dialogue between students and teachers. Schools should promote respect for each other and for democratic processes, by discussing issues and arriving at consensus decisions.

If schools are to become spaces for understanding and growth, AEP could be central to the process of transformation. More time and capacity has to be generated for dialogue instead of mechanical activity and rote learning.

Schools should help build social opinion and consensus on the need to respect and give voices to our children and young people. There is need to appreciate volunteerism and encourage cross-learning in schools. Schools should become laboratories of social justice. There is an urgent need to make children more humane—which is only possible if the teachers also see the light, and allow freed thought, questioning and independent action.

Schools should move from partnership to alliance, from confrontation to interaction, from alienation to cooperation, from self-centered existence to co-existence. It is as part of this wider process that AEP becomes a crucial and critical element. Life skills provide skills to children with the skills to survive and cope, but simultaneously the skills to question, create and transform.

In order to achieve the above mentioned quality standards within the AEP, a quality assurance framework should be established. Such a framework could help in ensuring actualization of life skills focused qualitative teaching-learning methods.
A quality assurance framework needs to be evolved to ensure adequate teacher preparation and life skills focused transactions. It would focus on the triangulation between (i) life skills (ii) context of the application of life skills and (iii) experiential pedagogies. The framework would involve materials development, training, actual transaction and evaluation of educational interventions. The process should include:

- Review of manuals and methods being currently employed
- Experiential methodologies and methods of facilitation, including theatre in education, films, art and use of narratives
- Presentation and discussion on pilot experiences of the participants and further exploration of methodology
- Protocols for programme development, implementation and assessment
- Capacity building of teachers (both pre-service and in-service) and officials within the education department
- Creation of forums to share information on trends, experiences in programme implementation on a regular basis
- Methods of process evaluation and impact assessment.

Training sessions and workshops should be held focusing on building micro and macro skills, taking into account the general and personal location of the teacher on these issues, emotions raised and actions taken. For all the relevant domains, such as gender, sexuality, conflict resolution and so on, the training would include concept clarification. Comfort levels should be built up in less discoursed areas.

**Capacity Building**

The emergent need is to build capacity of all teachers, so that life skills education gets incorporated into their role profile as naturally as do other facets of being teachers. Pre-service and in-service teacher education should incorporate life skills. The issue of teacher training is the key to success of AEP. A lot has to be done, since today many teachers are judgmental, and not so open to different ways of being.
The AEP faces the challenge of infrequent training programs for teachers. At the beginning, two teachers were trained in each school, but it is envisaged that over a period of time there will be at least one trained teacher for every 150 secondary school students --not only to enable them to impart AEP, but so that they can become like part-time counselors. There is certainly an unmet need for counselors in schools. The training should also improve teachers’ capacity to teach other subjects, with improved pedagogies, so that learning becomes joyful.

There is a great need to hold more state-of-the-art training programmes, where experts from various disciplines provide inputs. The experts should include not only educationists but also gender activists, sexuality experts, sociologists and psychologists. Teachers’ knowledge and skills on terminology and changing methodologies need to be regularly updated.

Teachers need help in making sense of children’s perceptions and ideas. Teachers must be enabled to build up an understanding of soft skills, for the child and for oneself. Teachers have to learn how to support learners in respectful and enabling ways. They have to help the students also by garnering support from other adult stakeholders. It is important to involve and ensure participation of multiple stakeholders. Conflicts between teachers and other adult stakeholders might arise because of different notions and perceptions held about children and adolescents. Teachers have to be taught how to deal with these conflicts in creative ways. Teachers should be able to engage parents in meaningful ways in order to reinforce the positive learning within school in the learners’ homes.

Universities and schools need to be encouraged to cooperate and collaborate in the interests of building better practices, data base and alternative knowledge systems and pedagogical perspectives. Teachers need to be empowered in such a way that they help empower students, and school becomes place for generation of ideas.
Assessment indicators will have to be developed by teachers to evaluate spaces and practices and to determine students’ attitudes and capture changing beliefs and practices.

There is a need to stress the importance of health and sports-related knowledge for teachers. Emotional and cognitive perspectives must be incorporated – health is not just physical. The instructors of health have a tremendous role to perform. There is also an enormous and urgent need for counselors. All teachers should be trained so that they can provide counseling and guidance to the students in their class.

There is a need to incorporate need based life skills education within the school framework, keeping in mind wider socio-economic contexts and backgrounds of the children. Life skills is relevant both in school and out of school settings, in rural and in urban areas. In-school programmes also need to connect with the outer world, and to out-of-school adolescent education programs. There is a need to build greater dialogue with schools and adolescents across various parts of the country, particularly in remote areas.

**Monitoring and Evaluation: At School Level**

Life skills development is not a module or a course but an integrated process experienced throughout life. Life skills provided in schools is one aspect of providing necessary skills to children. These are a special subset of the many skills learned by children through lived experience. Life skills in schools is a supplementary initiative to the whole process of learning, and not an isolated institutional input.

It is not easy to devise monitoring and evaluation tools for such a multifaceted educational phenomenon.

In some schools, life skills is being imparted throughout the school years, in the very spirit of considering students as agents of change, right from their nursery years. Parents and
grandparents may be incorporated in the processes. In such a school setting, formative assessments are used over the years. Through school health and wellness program, health education too should be incorporated. The challenge is to integrate all aspects within the school time of 6 hours or so. Curricular, extra-curricular and co-curricular activities are included, creating peer educators in class and assemblies, and using empowerment modules and summer training workshops as mediums of reaching out to students.

In this context, monitoring needs to check whether students apply the life skills which they imbibe in themselves, in actual life situations. It is notoriously difficult to assess these soft skills. Instead of monitoring the program, the process needs to be monitored, for example the actual use of critical thinking or communication skills, not merely the ability to provide answers about them.

The desired outcome is the student’s ability to apply life skills in real contexts. This requires a comprehensive 360 degrees evaluation. The student’s progress needs to be closely observed, and changes recorded. Activities can be created to understand the challenge at every step – for instance students may create brochures, newsletters, undertake green initiatives, community outreach initiatives, data collection on various issues, discuss human rights issues, participate in various issue-based drives, create handbooks, use the assembly innovatively, create street plays, go for rallies, make blogs, participate in health and wellness clubs or in investigative projects which provide opportunities for integrating life skills with scholastic learning.

Measurable indicators can also be developed, for select activities, assessing children on particular life skills that are to be used in the activity. A method of documentation should be set up for each class teacher for each child. This is a form of Comprehensive and Continuous Evaluation (CCE) and makes use of grading.
AEP fundamentally focuses on awareness and empowerment. Quality monitoring programmes need to be developed which can capture different dimensions of the changing realities. Agencies from outside school may also be involved in the monitoring and evaluation.

Experiences with monitoring and evaluation of life skills education have led to articulation of a few issues, which are yet to be satisfactorily resolved:

- Evaluation methods for life skills are difficult to devise: for example, how to check for empathy and team work?
- If life skills are imparted, lessons may include questions, but it is not possible to monitor actual use of the life skills in the majority of real contexts. Thus results and certification are based on incomplete and partial parameters.
- Applicability of the tool being used to evaluate is critical. The importance of project based evaluations should be explored further.
- Many teacher and parents are anxious about CCE, suspicious that it is throwing out content. Anxiety among teachers is due to the still-ongoing disconnect between life skills and scholastic knowledge. In fact, it needs to be appreciated that these two together are integral to learning. There is scope and need to create common ground in evaluation and monitoring.
- Everything in the school system should be assessed – scholastic and co scholastic. Evaluation has to be periodic, continuous.
- Assessment indicators should be evolved to assess how children are negotiating differences and socialization processes.
- Program evaluation should assess not only individual learning, but learning within a collective. Not just individual change, but collective change needs to be monitored and documented.
Monitoring and Evaluation: At Program Level

The following are some of the possible set of monitoring Indicators for AEP at the programme level:

1. Monitoring of
   a. Input indicators
   b. Process indicators
   c. Outcome indicators

Depends on the level for which indicators are being developed – school, district, state or national. For example if it is at district or state level, one indicator will be the percentage of schools that have incorporated the programme.

Some indicators for a monitoring framework are identified as follows:

**Input indicators:**
- Infrastructure: eg. Human resources, Physical infrastructure
- Funds
- Resource material/ modes of teaching
- Capacity building

Under human resources, criteria for peer educators, length of training of peer educators, number of teachers trained would be considered.

For resources, how much of resources prepared, their quality would need to be assessed.

For capacity building, number of teachers trained, number of training sessions will be relevant.

**Process Indicators**
- Prescribed time utilization, Strength- regularity, frequency of discussions, student feedback
- How much of the prescribed time is utilized
- Attendance of students
- Regularity and frequency of sessions
- Amount of resources distributed
o Student feedback – on content and mode of delivery

**Outcome Indicators**

Outcome or output would be in terms of how much of the syllabus has been completed.

Outcomes can be measured through:

- Pre and post questions with simulated situations to look at changes in behavior and attitudes
- Specific behavior outcomes could be measured by looking at, for example, change in the number of injuries due to bullying and aggression. Other behavior outcomes can be devised as per the context
- Distribution of Resources, completion of the curriculum, uniform online MIS, Immediate feedback
- Data on important issues not addressed by the modules has also to be gathered.
Chapter 6: Youth Friendly Services

Youth friendly services are required within or closely related to the school system. These services should be accessible, conveniently located and ensure confidentiality. At present, such services are virtually non-existent. Scattered services are present, those too concentrated in the elite segment of schools. Services are almost completely missing where they are most required. At present youth friendly services are placed totally in the health domain, but this approach ignores many needs. For example, counseling services are widely required. The young people’s need for counseling is not limited to their health requirements. It is equally important to have counseling available for various social, relational and also career issues. Counselors or ‘teachers-as-counselors’ must be considered integral to the education system per se. The service providers must be trained to be in consonance with the wider perspectives of youth-friendly, respectful and transformational paradigm of education.

Some interesting initiatives show the way forward. Sangath, a Goa-based NGO, has trained nurses as counselors, under the pilot project, Prayatna. Initiated in July, 2009 as a pilot, Prayatna is a part of the school program supported by UNFPA which focuses on feasibility, acceptability and impact of providing youth friendly counselling services for staff nurses in Navodaya Vidyalayas. This was a deliberate step towards developing youth friendly counselling services for adolescents. It was conceived of as part of the overall school health program, with the aim of addressing diverse health needs of adolescents within a holistic approach, part of which is promoting life skills. Approximately 80 staff nurses in the Chandigarh and Pune regions of Navodaya Vidyalayas were trained and in a short time have provided tangible support to substantial number of adolescents. The intention is to integrate counselling within the NVS system by expanding the training to other staff nurses as well as the students. Given the initial enthusiastic response by adolescents, the acceptability of this initiative among students should increase rapidly. However, the program needs more support from school principals and teachers.
MAMTA, a Delhi-based NGO, set up a youth friendly counseling centre in Rewari, Haryana. It was part of their programme for School Based Sexuality Education in the Public System, 2004-08. The entire educational programme, including the counseling centre, proved successful. Follow up was carried out for the same students from classes VII to X. The curriculum was based on incremental knowledge, so that students were able to gradually pick up improved knowledge and life skills. Evaluation shows statistically significant increased knowledge, on areas of gender and sexuality, dealing with sexual abuse and attitudes to contraception.

Experience of running an anonymous helpline by TARSHI (Talking About Reproductive and Sexual Health in India) in Delhi, also shows that this could also be a valuable resource for information on issues related to sexuality for those young people who have easy access to telephones. TARSHI shared that education on sexuality is important, because if information on this issue is not available, then the youth may live their lives in the shadow of myths and fears. A large number of adolescents and youth are among those who call up TARSHI for a range of information on sexuality. More males have been calling than females, which points to female inhibitions due to socialization processes, indicating a still-unmet need which is likely to be very substantial.

Young people have expressed that teachers could be one of the sources of information on issues related to reproductive and sexual health. Based on this information, teachers may also be provided training to provide first level of counseling services to students and refer them as needed. However, teachers are often not very approachable in general, and even less so when it comes to such sensitive themes. If teachers do not raise the subject, it is difficult for their students to do so themselves. The teachers are often worried about their image and have a general discomfort with topics related to sexuality. Various myths and misconceptions around sexuality also cause problems. In dealing with expectations regarding sexual activity, advice often comes across as prescriptions to adolescents, rather than genuine discussion which allow the young person to exercise agency and take informed decisions. For appropriate advice and a professional approach, training of counseling is a must. Counselors are to be seen as an integral
component of the school system, part of whose job is the provision of sexuality education. They could also sensitize significant adults who affect the lives of young people, such as parents and other family members, as well as other teachers. Sexuality education needs to be a collaborative process between parents and schools, and it can start at home much earlier than puberty. Information needs to be given not in isolation, and it is also important to teach adolescents how to process such information. There is a need to develop and provide training resources for teachers as well.

Such initiatives indicate the largely unmet need for services including counselling, health and information on a range of sensitive topics. Provision of youth friendly services, in conjunction with AEP and life skills teaching, is the need of the hour.

There are many issues and unanswered questions regarding the precise nature and functioning of such youth friendly services. For instance, Sangath’s experience indicates that schools will benefit if they can invest in a separate cadre of health professional and not look towards teachers as counsellors. However, many educationists are of the view that all teachers should train as counsellors too: it should become an essential part of their job profiles.

Consensus is emerging on the urgent need for youth-friendly services, even if there are diverse views about what exactly to provide, who should provide it and so on. The responses to the felt need can be varied, and many different agencies need to involve themselves in the planning, envisioning and promotion of youth friendly services.

School health services are to be bolstered up right from the nursery years. State governments still need to fill the health kitty for school children and adolescents. Primary level school system is devoid of teacher appointments related to health. At the secondary and senior secondary levels, there are some inputs but they are small and insufficient. There is a need to work out how to make the sector more attractive for state funding and the funding of international bodies. Medical professionals also need to come forward and work out modalities to provide
essential services for school health, through professional and institutional collaborations as well as on a voluntary basis.

The range of youth-friendly services required includes catering to regular normal domains such as menstruation, sexuality and so on, as well as the morbidity and extreme issues such as child sexual abuse. Service providers must be carefully trained not only in the subject knowledge areas, but also in terms of their attitudes and approach. It will make a sea change to the lives and feelings of our adolescents, if they have approachable adults, who can inform them, meet their queries and curiosity without inhibitions, with respect and understanding.
Chapter 7: Research

AEP and life skills education needs to be firmly based within a paradigm of continuous learning. It is to be seen as part of lifelong education, within a learning society. Research is an integral component in such a society.

AEP should include and base itself on evidence from research. Research should be continuous and should feed into upgrading the curriculum, approach and teacher training methods. Content and methodology issues require systematic and sustained research inputs. This is a rather neglected area so far within the AEP.

The following Research Areas have been identified, to indicate some of the very important research that needs to be carried out to strengthen AEP and make it more meaningful:
1. Periodic research on issues that are being left out or are major areas of concern
2. Research on parents’, teachers’, principals’ and school’s understanding of the AEP, and their handling of adolescent issues
3. Research for standardization of content
4. Develop evidence based life-skills assessment tools
5. Research on Adolescent Mental Health in AEP and Non-AEP schools
6. Impact and Evaluation studies
7. Documentation of current research on Adolescents in the Indian setting

Some good focused research studies have been conducted and evidence from these needs to be incorporated into the design and approach of AEP and life skills education. Examples are provided below.

Using Evidence from Research
The recent research study entitled ‘Using Evidence from Research for Advocating for Youth: Findings of Youth in India: Situation and Needs Study’, conducted by Population Council, New Delhi and International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai, aimed to:
• Identify key transitions facing youth (age group 15-24), including those pertaining to education, work force participation, sexual activity, marriage, health and civic participation
• Provide evidence on the magnitude and patterns of sexual and reproductive practices in and outside of marriage, and related knowledge, decision-making and attitudes among youth
• Identify key factors underlying their sexual and reproductive health, knowledge, attitudes and life choices.

The research outcomes which are useful for design and approach of AEP can be summarized as follows:

• Evidence shows that sex among youth is prevalent even in a traditional society like ours. Age of initiation of pre-marital sex is between 15 and 18 years.
• Concept of safe sex is not clear. 100% have heard about HIV/AIDS, but in-depth knowledge of risks and ways of transmission and prevention are substantially low. Youth engage in uninformed risk-taking behaviour and often have multiple partners.
• Knowledge of sexually transmitted diseases is very low.
• Most married youth, when they were asked whether they were prepared for marriage when they were married, said that they were not.
• It was found that sexuality issues are not usually discussed by parents, and interactions between parents and children on such issues were negligible.
• Parents want their children to get such education, but consider teachers and health-care providers as the best persons to provide such education. Many said that 13-15 years is the right age.
• Young people were overwhelmingly in favor of family life or sex education.
• Arguments made against provision of Family Life / Sexuality Education in school and non-school settings are not backed by evidence. Young people do not get information on sexual or reproductive matters from parents, and have an unmet need for such information.
• Parents of the youth overwhelmingly favor sexuality education for young people, to be provided by formal sources viz school or health care personnel.
• Exposure to family life / sexuality education increases in-depth awareness of sexual and reproductive health matters among young people. Nor does it indicate that sexuality education leads to an increased motivation among youth to engage in sexual relations.

Research to Evaluate Efficacy of Youth Interventions
Interventions should be evaluated using robust study designs. This would provide useful information on which to base further interventions in the area. For instance, Project MYTRI (Mobilizing Youth for Tobacco Related Initiatives in India) was implemented by HRIDAY-SHAN (Health Related Information Dissemination Amongst Youth- Student Health Action Network) in the years 2002-07. It was a school-based, multi component tobacco use prevention intervention for young people in grades 6-9 (ages 11-14) in the cities of Delhi and Chennai.

A group randomized trial to evaluate efficacy of the project was undertaken. It was found to be successful in demonstrating a significant impact on several psychological risk factors related with tobacco use and reverse the trend of increasing tobacco use among the participating cohorts of urban youth.

Research was also conducted to evaluate efficacy of a Community based Life skills programme with girls, by IHMP. Research findings indicated that the median age of marriage has increased among the participants, from 14.5 to 17 yrs, after 2 years of Life Skills programme.

The Way Forward
In India, research evidence is usually not used in planning and policy-making. When the Adolescence Education Programme is planned, such data should be used for programme planning and design, as well as for advocacy. Also, there is a need to convince people that it is necessary for the entire adolescent age group to receive AEP so that they can face life with confidence.
Chapter 8: Advocacy

The research findings from various studies discussed in the previous chapter clearly indicate that there is a great need for AEP and life skills education in India. However, most people are unaware of such research findings. Popular beliefs and attitudes often encompass many myths and misinformation. Media also gives out a great deal of misinformation.

In fact research findings need to be gathered and database drawn up, on the need for AEP as well as the achievements and experiences of many different youth-based interventions. A climate needs to be created for widespread acceptance and even demand for a programme like AEP. Building of such an ethos requires the intelligent and strategic use of research-based evidence, packaged in different ways so as to become effective advocacy material.

There are a lot of misconceptions rampant about sexuality, and also about AEP itself. Often AEP is being wrongly confused with being focused only on sexuality issues. AEP has been blamed for giving messages about sexuality to youth, ignoring the fact that there is great unmet need for information and that provision of such information from reliable sources makes the youth more confident and healthy.

AEP is all about empowering our youth, within an equity and justice framework. The media too needs to be made aware of these realities. Media should act as an advocate of appropriate programmes and policies, as well as offer constructive criticisms when required.

Today's media is quite focused on youth. However, it is usually focusing on issues that are attractive and flashy. What is wrong with the media is that it has very little idea about “youth”. It caters to only a small segment of youth from elite sections and forgets about the needs of the millions. Media with its narrow focus overlooks many issues such as impact of skewed sex ratio having an impact on adolescents, parental fears and apprehensions regards daughters’ marriageability if they are highly educated and exposed to the outer world, taboos and
restrictive norms surrounding sexuality and female mobility and so on. Media today doesn't portray many of the realities because media is not inclusive. Media needs to partner with various agencies and researchers and should also play a role in educating the people on the standards of education and AEP. It is also important for educationists and social activists to tell their stories to the media in an interesting way. People and agencies must think and work on how best to reach out.

In spite of a lot of available data, these are not being used effectively enough. How we present the data is important for effective communication. If information is clear and communication is interesting, people will read. Adding a human face to news is very important. If people get clear and well written information about AEP and life skills education, with significant initiatives and interesting case studies, perceptions will change and a strong public support will build up.

It is time to make concrete strategies and plans on all these fronts, so as to have a comprehensive programme, well implemented across the country, with a supportive and positive ethos and involvement of diverse social actors.