# Indigenising Life Skills Education: Developing A Conceptual Framework Based on Swami Vivekananda's Philosophy and Bhartiya Gyan Parampara

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## ABSTRACT

Western education system often disregards the cultural and spiritual aspects of life skills in favour of treating them as a collection of quantifiable competencies, such as communication, decision-making, and coping. Despite this impact, the life skills education transactional model has been criticised for prioritising the acquisition of only cognitive skills over holistic development, ethical grounding, and inner growth. These concerns became more pressing in Indian education after colonial-era reforms replaced native pedagogical structures (Kumar & Kumari, 2025). This paper is an attempt to critically analyse the assumptions, strengths, and limitations of Western life-skills pedagogy. The Bharatiya Gyan Parampara is the foundational premise for true knowledge (vidya) for transformative and liberating rather than merely informational, as reflected in the NEP 2020. (Singh & Saxena, 2024). The Bharatiya Gyan Parampara that NEP 2020 seeks to formally institutionalize finds one of its earliest and most foundational expressions in the educational philosophy of Swami Vivekananda. Education is a process of self-realization rooted in India's indigenous epistemic tradition. Using a qualitative, interpretive-analytical method involving textual analysis of Vivekananda's writings and NEP 2020 policy documents, the paper identifies specific convergences between WHO-recommended life-skills domains and Vivekananda's pedagogical principles through the lens of Bhartiya Gyan Parampara, proposing a framework for life skills transaction in Indian classrooms. The paper concludes that reinstating indigenous frameworks like Vivekananda's philosophy is essential for education that is both globally competent and culturally authentic.

**Keywords:** Life Skills, Bharatiya Gyan Parampara, Swami Vivekananda, NEP 2020

## INTRODUCTION

Life skills education, as institutionalized through the World Health Organisation (WHO) 1999 framework, identifies 10 Core psycho social competencies- Self-awareness, empathy, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, coping with stress, and coping with emotions. This framework has instrumentally influenced curricula worldwide, including India. In the Indian context, this reduction is compounded by a colonial legacy that displaced indigenous pedagogical structures and their conception of Vidya (true knowledge) as liberating rather than merely information pouring.

The National Education Policy (NEP 2020) explicitly seeks to correct this imbalance by invoking "the rich heritage of ancient and eternal knowledge and thought" as a foundation for curriculum and pedagogy (NEP, 2020), thereby mandating the integration of Bhartiya Gyan Parampara into formal schooling. Long before this policy articulation, Swami Vivekananda had already offered a systematic, indigenous philosophy of education in which "entire education is a process of Self-realisation" rooted in India's own epistemological traditions. Here is an attempt to undertake a critical, thematic examination of the assumption underlying Western life skills pedagogical practices and integrate them with Swami Vivekananda's Educational Philosophy through the lens of Bhartiya Gyan Parampara and to propose a cultural, authentic and globally competent Framework for life skills transaction in Indian classrooms.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

The World Health Organisation's (WHO) life skills education for children and adolescents in schools (1997) and the subsequent partners in life skills education (1999) established the fundamental 10 core life skills that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. However, the researcher noted that the existing life skills model, being behaviourist and outcome-oriented in origin, thereby produced a fragmented, competency-based approach to human development rather than a holistic one.

In parallel, Bhartiya Gyan Parampara has argued that the colonial-era education reforms systematically displaced native pedagogical structures for centuries. NEP 2020 responds to this rupture by mandating the incorporation of Bhartiya Gyan Parampara across stages of education, positioning Bhartiya thoughts not as ornamental heritage but as substantive Pedagogical resources (Singh & Saxena 2024). Within this indigenous ideology, Swami Vivekananda's writing and lectures on education- collected across the 9 volumes of The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda occupy a foundational position. Vivekananda repeatedly defined education not as the accumulation of external information but as "the manifestation of the perfection already in men" and insisted that character building, Self-Reliance, and service to society were to be inspired by any genuine intellectual training.

Despite the conceptual proximity between Swami Vivekananda's main education and WHO life skills domain, existing literature has largely treated the two as separate discourses: policy and psychology, while Vivekananda studies remain confined to philosophical or geological analysis. A systematic mapping between the two aspects- NEP 2020 and Bhartiya Gyan Parampara is largely absent; this paper finalises that gap.

### Significance of the Study

NEP 2020 mandates the integration of Bhartiya Gyan Parampara into curriculum and pedagogy. This offers limited operational guidance on translating indigenous philosophical resources into classroom-level life skills education. Teachers and curriculum designers are consequently left to implement globally. Conceptual scaffolding reproduces, precisely, the colonial disjunction that NEP 2020 seeks to overcome. Additionally, rising concerns about the value vacuum, stress, and identity confusion among Indian youth suggest a purely competency-based approach to life skills. There is a pressing need to examine whether an early philosophy of education such as that of Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and Swami Vivekananda can consistently supply this missing link with contemporary life skills domains.

### Research Questions

1. What are the key assumptions and limitations of the Western life skills model when applied in the Indian context?

2. How can Swami Vivekananda's Educational Philosophy be analysed through the lens of Bhartiya Gyan Parampara?

### Research Objectives

1. To critically examine the assumptions and limitations of the Western life skills model (WHO).

2. To identify convergence between WHO life skills domains and Swami Vivekananda Educational Philosophy within Bhartiya Gyan Parampara.

3. To propose an integrated, culturally grounded framework for life skills transaction in an Indian classroom setup.

## Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative and interpretive analytical design employing textual and schematic analysis. The primary data were taken from various documents, policies, original works, research articles, etc. Analysis proceeded through close reading and thematic coding, in which each of the ten core life skills domains was used as a deductive coding procedure. The reliability and validity of the data were cross-checked through triangulation techniques across the various data groups.

## Analysis

The thematic mapping in Table No. 01 sets out the convergence between each WHO life-skill domain and its significance within Vivekananda's educational philosophy, through the lens of Bhartiya Gyan Parampara.

| WHO Life-Skill Domain | Vivekananda's Corresponding Principle (Bharatiya Gyan Parampara) | Textual Anchor |
|---|---|---|
| Self-awareness | Atma-jnana (knowledge of the Self); the soul as potentially divine | "Each soul is potentially divine" (Complete Works, Vol. 1) |
| Empathy | Universal love; seeing the Self in all beings (Advaita ethics) | "He alone lives, who lives for others" (Complete Works, Vol. 5) |
| Critical thinking | Rational Vedanta; questioning of blind belief | "Question everything, stand on your own feet" (Complete Works, Vol. 3) |
| Creative thinking | Manifestation of inner perfection through concentrated will | "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man" (Complete Works, Vol. 4) |
| Decision-making | Viveka (discrimination) guided by Shraddha (faith in the Self) | "Strength is life, weakness is death" (Complete Works, Vol. 2) |
| Problem-solving | Karma Yoga; disciplined, detached action | "Take up one idea, make that one idea your life" (Complete Works, Vol. 3) |
| Effective communication | Guru-shishya dialogic pedagogy | Lectures and conversations recorded in Complete Works, Vol. 7 |
| Interpersonal relationship | Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam; service as worship (Daridra Narayana Seva) | "They alone live who live for others, the rest are more dead than alive" (Complete Works, Vol. 5) |
| Coping with stress | Raja Yoga; concentration and control of the mind | "The mind is everything... control the mind" (Complete Works, Vol. 1) |
| Coping with emotion | Bhakti as sublimation; mastery over the senses | "He who has controlled his mind has controlled the universe" (Complete Works, Vol. 1) |

This thematic analysis reveals a substantive for life skills education, where the WHO framework treats self-awareness as an inventory of individual strengths, weaknesses, and preferences. Swami Vivekananda grounds it ontologically in the doctrine of the Atman, making self-awareness a discovery of inherent divinity. Decision-making and problem-solving, framed by the WHO as procedural skills, are anchored by Vivekananda in the moral value of Viveka (discrimination) and the disciplined, detached engagement of Karma Yoga, thereby embedding technique within character.

The most significant divergence lies in orientation, fundamentally adaptive. The skills are means toward effective functioning within existing social and economic demands. Swami Vivekananda's model is transformative and self-realizational. Every skill is simultaneously a step towards moksha (liberation) and is inseparable from the cultivation of shraddha, fearlessness, and moral strength. Life skills are not an end in themselves but instruments of man-making, the cultivation of a strong, self-reliant, and service-oriented character.

The pedagogical implications of this divergence become clearer when the two traditions are set aside in the service of people's welfare. Western life-skills transactions typically rely on techniques such as role-play, brainstorming, structured debate, and cognitive-behavioural relaxation methods, but address the mind primarily at the levels of behaviour and cognition. Bharatiya Gyan Parampara, as articulated by Swami Vivekananda, offers parallel strategies: Seva, Guru-shishya samvad, Dharana, Pranayama, Karma Yoga.

## FINDINGS

The analysis finds thematic alignment between all ten WHO life-skills and identifiable principles in Swami Vivekananda's educational philosophy. Vivekananda articulates that Bhartiya Gyan Parampara is not merely compatible with contemporary life-skills education but historically anticipates it. NEP 2020 provides the policy mandate for integrating Bharatiya Gyan Parampara into curriculum and pedagogy. It does not itself supply an operational pedagogical model but is one attempt to fill that gap in a manner amenable to classroom setup. The exploration between the two frameworks is not oppositional but complementary in terms of a life skills transactional approach.

## CONCLUSION

Life skills education is an essential part of individual life. Here is one attempt is made by the researcher to give a minute difference between the global life skills education curriculum and Bharatiya Gyan Parampara in terms of a transactional approach in the Indian education setup. The philosophy of swami Vivekananda offers precisely this foundation stage, reframing each of the WHO's ten life-skill domains. In this sense, reclaiming Vivekananda's man-making education is not a rejection of global competency frameworks but their necessary completion for the Indian context that NEP 2020 envisions.

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