

Social Competence for Next Generation Secondary School Students

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Abstract: *The purpose of this paper is to have a look into the social competencies for next generation secondary school students. A brief overview of social competence is provided first, followed by a description of various social competencies that has to be mastered by secondary school students and mastering these competencies will enable the secondary school students to be more successful and adaptive in their social life situations. This paper is prepared based on few research reviews and further the tips to foster social competencies are clearly mentioned in this paper.*

Keywords: *Social competence, Secondary school students*

I. Need

In order to successfully interact with others and cope with the complexities, stress, and expectations of modern life, it is vital that all students should acquire social competence. Katz & (McClellan, 1997) in their research studies have mentioned certain facts that if the children do not achieve minimal social competence by the age of six years then there will be higher chances of risk throughout their life. Students come in school with varying levels of social competence where some students are confident in their social competencies and are therefore capable of interacting appropriately with friends and teachers. Students if they do not possess socially accepted behaviours then they will be facing poor academic performance and other behavioural issues.

II. Review of related Literature

Syiem, I., & Nongrum, L. (2014) has conducted a study on "Social Competence of Secondary School Students in Shillong Town" The aim of the study was to find out the Social Competence of Secondary School students of Shillong Town. The differences between sex, community, age and type of management in Social competence and the relationship between social competence and academic achievement has also be examined in this study. The tool used for this study was Social competence tool developed by V.P.Sharma, Prabha Shukla & Kiran Shukla. The sample of the study comprises of 83 students who were randomly selected from five schools of Shillong Town. The result of this study revealed that there was no significant difference found between sex, community and age group but the differences were found between students of deficit private schools, government and private schools and also no significant relationship was found between social competence and academic achievement.

Sanwal (2013) conducted a study on 'Social Competence in Adolescents' The study was undertaken to the access the Social Competence of adolescents of age group 13 to 15 years. The sample for the study comprises of 60 girls (30 from IX standard and 30 X standard) and 60 boys (30 from IX standard and 30 X standard) were selected randomly from Sadhu Vaswani Public School, Jaipur city (Rajasthan). The tool used for the study was Social Competence Scale prepared by Prof. V.P. Sharma, Dr. Kiran Shukla and Dr. Prabha Shukla . The data collected for the present study were coded, qualitative and quantitative assessment was attempted. For quantitative analysis frequencies and percentage values and t- test were computed. The result of the study reveals that there is significant change in the social competence level with regard to their gender.

Meadan, H., & Amaya, M. (n.d.) has written an article on "Collaboration to Promote Social Competence for Students With Mild Disabilities in the General Classroom: A Structure for Providing Social Support" This article describes about students social competencies, specific strategies for promoting social competencies, structuring the classroom community, social support structure, inclusion of students with mild disabilities and providing a creative environment in the classrooms.

Welsh, J., & Bierman, K. (n.d.) has written an article on "Social Competence - Importance of social competence, Social competence deficits and peer rejection, Developmental changes and social competence" "This article describes about the importance of social competence, Social competence deficit and peer rejection, developmental changes in students , role of family and peers in the development of social competence among students.

III. Introduction

According to (Adams, 2010) “Social competence is the ability to recognize, interpret, and respond appropriately in social situations”. The success of an individual depends on the richness of social competencies which he or she possesses from his/her interactions with the environment. Social competencies are nothing but social, cognitive, emotional skills and behaviours that are required for the successful social adaptation of the students. As the transition happens from childhood to adolescence the students behave in a different manner, that they no more behave like preschool children. Across disciplines social competence is viewed in different ways. In psychology it is viewed as different persona traits (Sarason 1981) which can manifest in different capabilities such as empathy, tolerance, conscientiousness; ability to cooperate; dynamic construct, ability to adjust and interact in given social situations (Argyle 1994; Tajfel 1981); it is the belief about their efficacy (Bandura 1997), as social (Gardner 1999) or even emotional intelligence (Goleman 1995). Within the pedagogy it refers to lifelong, intercultural and social learning. In economics social competencies are used to refer to ‘soft skills’ which consists of factors like flexibility, team work and motivating colleagues.

White (1963) developed the concept of social competence to depict a person’s transaction with the social environment, and enable him to acquire successful experiences of others that may produce desirable effects. The nature of social competence can be described as the development of competencies according to the changes in life Schoon (2009), biological aspects which shows link between social competencies and genetic factors Schoon (2009), social change and globalization Putnam (2000), contextual dependency of individuals to acquire and express social competencies Schoon (2009) and measurement of social competencies through various methods Schoon (2009). Ramsey (1986) has suggested various ways to foster social competence among adolescents. Those are establishing reward system, assigning group activities, giving opportunity to teach, focusing on one behavior at a time, encouragement for the adolescents from the family, assisting students to express their feelings, providing adolescents with choice, provide an appropriate skills, encouraging relieving stress, providing choices for adolescents when it is required.

There are quite a lot of social competencies that should be mastered by next generation secondary school students to be successful and adaptive. These competencies includes initiating conversation , active listening , Checking one’s own understanding of others, get along with different cultures and groups, reading social cues , Understanding the Listener, Empathy, Previewing, greetings, controlling emotions, following the rules, respecting views of others, Self monitoring, Educational persistence, Self-esteem, Caring , Self determination, Creative thinking, Communication, Interpersonal competence, Self-awareness and Coping with emotions. All these are explained briefly in following heads.

Active listening

It is very important for the students to improve on their listening skills and it helps in building their cognitive and non-cognitive abilities. Listening skills helps the students to give appropriate responses, increase their understanding capacity and even improves their concentration.

Get along with different cultures and groups

This develops a sense of co-operation and sharing among students, gives them a better idea about different cultures in which other students belong to and even gets a clear picture of the problems faced in school community and the society.

Checking one’s own understanding of others

A better understanding of other individual will help the students to change and modify their activities by giving a space for others, to give suitable responses, solving problems to a certain extend and to perform their task effectively.

Controlling emotions

There are positive and negative emotions, both of these emotions should be controlled and balanced among students or else it leads to behavioral problems among them. Students should be more conscious in expressing their emotions, a less sociable or problematic students may find it difficult to control or channelize his or her emotions and these kinds of problems can be solved by individual counseling and guidance.

Respecting views of others

Respecting elders, respecting others views of all are in the part of our culture and it is important to develop a respect towards the views of others which comes out of experience and traditions, some students finds it difficult to consider views of others but some students do not and they find it benefitting them after a longer duration of time.

Following the rules

Following the rules makes the students more disciplined, systematic and in turn it brings progress and success in their area of work. Students have to follow a set of rules that should be followed in and outside the school. Rules not only makes children disciplined but also helps to develop a culture among them and it will be reflected in their social life and school life

Greetings

Greetings are the first step in social communication and through which the students start associating with their peers, while greeting others the tone of voice, gestures, facial expression plays an important roles, sometimes the non verbal actions will be more important than the verbal ones. For example how you say will be more important than what you say.

Initiating Conversation

In order to start a conversation, a child must be able to initiate the conversation, balance it and end it suitable to the situation and for this it requires good span of attention, concentration skills, as well as the students ability for turn taking, eliciting responses, ability to emitt in formation and reciprocity. Conversation includes both listening and talking , if a person wants to talk and the other person is not listening then the first person will lose the interest in talking and some children often have trouble when to talk and when to listen (Lawson.C).

Understanding the Listener

When a discussion is initiated it is important to understand the other person. Sometimes the children who are not sociable may find difficulty in giving responses in relation to the discussion, but in this situation a sociable child will swiftly and automatically listen carefully and give desired responses. Moreover a sociable child will have the ability to make modifications in his or her responses suitable to the discussions held, where socially incompetent child may not be able modify the tone of voice to match the audiences, For example, saying goodbye to a teacher with "Catch you later, dude!" would be unsuitable and could result in a detention. (Lawson.C)

Empathy

Empathy is one's ability to listen and understand the others needs, emotions, thoughts and circumstances. Empathy helps an individual to attach with other people. For example, if a student got A grade for Math test and another student got D grade, the student would not boast about the A to the other student who has got a D grade because she knows it will make the other student feel bad .The student who got A grade can empathize with the other student by saying something like "That's a disappointment but students often thinks that students who don't have empathy as mean, heartless and self-interested.

Reading Social Cues

It is very significant to read social cues in a talk. Cues are the hints and signals that guide us to the next thing to say or to do. Social cues can be verbal or nonverbal. Verbal cues are the words that the other person is saying. Tone of voice is a significant part of verbal cues. For example, "Oh, great!" can mean that something is really terrific, or if said sarcastically, can mean that something is awful. Nonverbal cues are things that we see rather than hear in a conversation, such as body language and facial expressions.

Previewing

Every individual should have a thought about what will be the effect of their actions and words on others and if the person knows that the impact of his or her actions are negative then he or she can modify it. Previewing helps to view the concept or the action in broader angle.

Problem -solving

Issues and disparity are the part of all social interactions. While having a discussion some may agree, some disagree with the ideas, some may get offended, some may get angry, How one tackles all these problems depends upon one's own problem solving ability and his or her exposure to similar situations. In problem solving it is better to bring a win-win situation than a win-lose situation and it requires more of patience and listening.

Apologizing

Everyone makes mistakes but a person with better social competence will have attitude to make an apology for his mistakes and this is the correct way, but children with lower abilities and negative outlook may find it difficult to make an apology. Some students may feel afraid and self-centered to make an apology.

Decision making

The ability of a student to select the best alternative to solve his/her problem is called decision making. This social competence helps to develop self-responsibility by showing students how to deal with decisions and problems.

Self monitoring

Developing self monitoring secondary school students can improve their classroom conduct especially replacement of behavior, getting prompt, evaluating his /her behavior. And even this social competence can improve students' participation and responsibility.

Educational persistence

Various factors like lack of emotional support, lack of parental involvement, improper placing of education, negative perception about their work can affect negatively the educational persistence of the students.

Self-esteem

Self esteem helps the students to be aware about the value one places on oneself in different areas. This social competence includes awareness about his/her strengths, personal boundaries, awareness about his/her difficulties. Self –esteem can be raised among students through healthy interactions with family, community and peers.

Multicultural awareness

This is one of the most important social competence that the secondary school students should possess. This is nothing but understanding about racial and cultural groups, appreciating different culture and understanding the historical contributions of each culture etc, these elements can be fostered among students through multicultural learning activities and also participating in the affairs of community.

Caring

Caring is nothing but the verbal or non-verbal part of all interactions which takes place in playgrounds, staffrooms, corridors .The students if they lacks these they seek out the places where it is present. Caring helps to overcome selfishness, narrowness and mean spiritedness that many of the students can't avoid.

Self determination

Self determination is nothing but valuing yourself, accepting yourself , taking care of yourself ,realizing success and making adjustments.

Creative thinking

Creative thinking is nothing but viewing the problem from a fresh perspective that suggests unorthodox solutions (Kumar & Bharath, 2005)

Communication

Communication is a process of conveying information. Communication requires a sender, message, receiver etc. It is said that 85% of the student's success depends upon the ability to communicate their ideas.

Interpersonal competence

Interpersonal competencies helps the students to interact and work in groups. Interpersonal competences helps the students to understand the relationships, maintain the relationships with friends, teachers and family members.

Self-awareness

Self-awareness includes recognition of students' personality, his/her strengths and weakness, likes and dislikes. Developing self-awareness can help students to recognize when they are stressed or under pressure.

Coping with emotions

This involves recognizing one's own emotions and understanding how their emotions influence their behavior. Intense negative emotions can cause adjustment problems among students and if the student with acceptable social competences will be able to magnify his or her negative emotions.

9 Tips to foster social competence among secondary school students.

- Giving informal and formal instructions for students by teachers.
- Providing the students with better school and home environment.
- Providing a supportive school climate.
- Developing a sense of value and making feel them they are important members of the community.
- Considering and addressing various environmental barriers affecting students' progress.
- Carefully assessing the students social competence prior to the instructions.
- Encouraging students to interact with their classmates (Meadan, H., & Amaya, M.)
- Allowing the students to share their goals (Meadan, H., & Amaya, M.)
- Acknowledging students for their contributions (Meadan, H., & Amaya, M.)

IV. Conclusion

Finally it can be concluded that developing social competencies bring success to the student's life and also enable the students to come up with creative solutions for their problems. Overall an open mind to acquire social competencies will help the next generation students to enhance and improve their social potency and learning experiences. It also enable them to emerge as a productively contributing next generation students and also this emergence can be possible through the healthy relationship of students with family, school and community.

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