

ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

COUNTRY REPORT

By: Sylvia Y. Jack

Senior Education Officer (Curriculum)

**PREPARED FOR IBE/UNESCO CARNEID SUB-REGIONAL
SEMINAR**

**CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT FOR LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER
MAY 14 -18, 2001**

HAVANA, CUBA

THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND REFORM PROCESS

1. Background

St. Vincent and the Grenadines is an independent plural Caribbean state with a population of about 107,000 and a land area of 150 square miles. It lies at 60° 56' West Longitude and 13 ° 15' North Latitude, approximately 1,600 miles (100 km) south - east of Miami, USA. St. Vincent is the largest of the more than 30 islands that comprise the nation.

There are twenty-one (21) secondary schools in the island state: eighteen (18) on mainland St. Vincent and three (3) in the Grenadines (two (2) in Bequia and one (1) on Union Island). Of the sixty-six (66) primary schools and all-age schools, there are three (3) on Bequia, one (1) on Mustique, one (1) on Mayreau, one (1) on Canouan, two (2) on Union Island and fifty-eight (58) on mainland St. Vincent.

2. Main organizations and mechanisms involved in the process of curriculum development and reform

The Department of Education in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is the executive body with responsibility for planning, executing and evaluating the educational policy of the state.

The formal system of education is stipulated under the Education Act of 1992. This Act is the main instrument that governs, organizes, administers and regulates education in the state. Under this new act, provision for compulsory education and education for children with special needs was made for the first time.

The Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) is a subsystem of the Department of Education in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The staff of the Unit comprises:

A senior education officer (curriculum) formerly Curriculum Development Officer;

Eleven Education Officers/Curriculum Specialists in the following areas: Early Childhood Education (2); Education Media Unit (1); Health and Family Life (1); Home Economics (1); Industrial Arts (1); Language Arts (1); Mathematics (1); Music (2); Science (2); Social Science (1); Guidance Counsellor (1).

The aim of the CDU is: *to work in collaboration with stakeholders, and in keeping with the national goals, promote effective teaching and learning in the education system, by designing, developing and monitoring programmes that will facilitate quality education for all.*

Based on the foregoing, the aforementioned curriculum specialists, together with the education planner, assessment and evaluation specialists, classroom teachers, other subject specialists and to a limited extent, members of the private and public sectors and non-governmental organizations (NGO's) are involved in the process of curriculum development and reform.

3. Philosophy or principles of education/curriculum development which inform curriculum design and reform

The stated Mission of the Department of Education in St. Vincent and the Grenadines is:

To provide all the persons of the state, singularly or co-operatively, with learning opportunities appropriate to their learning needs and to ensure a quality of education that will equip them with the required values, skills, attitudes and knowledge necessary for creating and monitoring a productive, innovative and harmonious society.

An examination of the mission statement suggests that no single philosophy could serve as an exclusive guide for decision-making with respect to the curriculum. In practice, the curriculum is guided by a combination of traditional and contemporary philosophies.

It is imperative that the best practice of the traditional classroom be combined with the contemporary philosophies of Progressivism and Reconstructivism. These philosophies propose an education for change, democratic social living and democratic reform. In addition, Progressivism and Reconstructivism focus on the whole notion of students being in control of their own learning.

In sum, instruction is skewed towards a more outcome-based, learner-centred, activity-based curriculum. This is in tandem with the principles and values outlined in the Education Sector Strategic Plan. (*appendix 2*)

4. Principal New Content Areas

Early childhood education

The current system of delivery of early childhood education does not ensure the equitable distribution of good quality education across the system. Notwithstanding, in an attempt to provide quality early childhood education, new initiatives at the Early Childhood level have been implemented to reduce and remove the present inequities/incongruities which now exist. Certain strategies have been employed to improve the delivery of Early Childhood Education. These initiatives include:

- Devising national standards for Early Childhood Education.
- Developing a national curriculum resource guide
- Widening of the age range of Early Childhood Education (0 - 8 years).
- This range now includes Kindergarten to Grade 2 and as such should facilitate cumulative growth and help to eliminate disability problems in literacy and numeracy.

- Improving teaching/learning mechanisms and environment through the training of teachers, upgrading of classrooms and monitoring of the curriculum.
- Establishing a National Council of Early Childhood Education.

Primary level

Language Arts and Mathematics

From the beginning of the OECS Reform Strategy, sub-regional cooperation in the development and harmonization of curriculum was cited as a priority area for activity. As a result, curriculum materials have been developed for Kindergarten - Grade 6 in the core areas of Language Arts (literacy) and Mathematics (numeracy).

At present, the learning outcomes in Language Arts and Mathematics have been introduced into the curriculum. Teachers are expected to integrate the language skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing and transfer to all subject areas. The Language Arts Curriculum is predicated on the assumption that teachers will implement a balanced and integrated programme. It is a learner-centred curriculum in which the suggested activities are designed for full active learner participation, discovery, problem-solving and the fostering of ownership of the concepts to be learned.

The new Mathematics curriculum covers a broad scope of Statistics, Geometry and Measurement. The rationale for mathematics is as follows -

Students should develop and be able to use:

- 1) Knowledge of mathematical concepts and procedures
- 2) Knowledge of mathematical relationships
- 3) Reasoning skills
- 4) Language and communication skills
- 5) Problem-solving

Health and Family Life Education

The Health and Family Life Education Curriculum is now a combination of traditional Health Science and Life Skills (*appendix 2*). The current format now emphasizes:

- 1) The development and functioning of mind and body.
- 2) Resisting harmful and dangerous substances such as drugs, chemicals and environmental hazards.
- 3) The individual's role in the society, ranging from the family to the wider society.
- 4) Positive attitudes towards work and leisure.
- 5) Interpersonal relationship skills.
- 6) Coping strategies and mechanisms.

Health and Family Life Education has been re-introduced in the curriculum of the Teachers' Training College for primary teachers in training and some classroom teachers have been involved in regional Health and Family Life Education thrusts.

Foreign Language Teaching

Given the relatively new thrust towards the development of the tourist industry, a foreign language - French or Spanish will be introduced in 10 primary schools as a pilot phase.

Physical Education

The Curriculum Development Unit is working closely with the Department of Sports in the installation of the physical education programme in schools. The curriculum has been developed for some time but implementation has been somewhat problematic because the majority of stakeholders concentrate on the product (sports/competitions) rather than the process (physical education).

The Physical Education programme emphasizes holistic development, that is, the holistic physical and psychomotor development, cognitive development and affective development.

Secondary level

Traditionally, secondary schools based their curriculum on the syllabi provided by the external examination bodies such as Cambridge and CXC and there were no structured guides at the lower grades. The Curriculum Development Unit with the assistance of classroom teachers, developed curriculum guides in the core areas of English, Mathematics and Science for lower secondary (Grades 7, 8 & 9).

To date, plans have been formulated for the development of guides in French, Spanish, Geography, History, Social Studies and Health and Family Life Education.

Most secondary schools offer Spanish but currently, only three (3) secondary schools offer courses in both French and Spanish. As of September 2001, all secondary schools will be offering both languages.

Information Technology in Primary and Secondary Schools

Another innovation is the introduction of Information Technology in the school system in St. Vincent. The CARICOM policy states that:

If children are to explore and experiment with ideas, they need to have access to learning resources such as high quality textbooks, good library facilities, computer-assisted instruction, education television and radio. Self instructional and activity-oriented materials also need to be used on a wider scale to teach children how to learn on their own and to make it possible for them to learn at their own pace, wherever they can and whenever it is possible. (Pg. 12)

To this end, the Department of Education in St. Vincent and the Grenadines now employs this strategy through strengthening the delivery of the curriculum. In this context, Library Information Centres are to be established in all schools to strengthen the information base in support of the curriculum and also to facilitate the teaching of basic computer skills to students. Under the Basic Education Project, a central computer database is also being developed. This will enable all schools to be electronically linked so that they will access curriculum guides and other resources easily.

One of the major goals of this computerization of schools is to improve the preparation, production, distribution and delivery of the curriculum. (This is an attempt to address teachers' complaints that they did not have curriculum guides or other necessary resource material.) As such, with the added assistance of the Organisation for Cooperation in Overseas Development (OCOD), steps were taken to engage the services of a consultant responsible for the computerization of the curriculum. Surveys have been carried out to identify competencies of teachers and their training needs.

Additionally, it was felt that there should be corresponding training of teachers in use of the new technology. It is necessary that teachers be trained to operate a computerized system to access the information provided so that they would provide the necessary assistance to students who need to master the basics. A course in the use of technology has been introduced at the Teachers' Training College for both secondary and primary teachers in training.

Early in 1999, ten (10) schools and three (3) multi-purpose centres were chosen by the Ministry of Education to be part of a pilot project. These schools were sampled from all geographic regions of the country. Targeting of the multi-purpose centres was in an effort to provide the necessary skills for out of school youth and adults in the communities surrounding the centres. In that project, the emphasis is to be on the:

- Training of trainers
- Refurbishment and preparation of the physical environment
- Purchase of computers

The training focus is to be on

- Mastery of computers using a methodology requiring a definition and analysis of computer skills
- Establishment of computer competence relative to age levels of the children
- Creation of a curriculum that will cover requisite skills sets at all levels

Later in 1999, new schools were added to those in the initial pilot project bringing the total to twelve (12). However, primary and secondary schools within the State, being aware of the importance of computers to educational development have embarked on other schemes, using other funding, to bring information technology to the classroom.

- Contracts have already been awarded to local business places for computerization of these centres.
- A contract has been awarded to a firm to provide consultancy services
- An order has gone off for the purchase of two hundred (200) computers

The schools outside of the project, which commenced on the programme, did this bearing in mind a statement made in the Education Policy Document:

Cognisant of the importance of the curriculum, Government will make a concerted effort to ensure that personnel with necessary expertise are attached to the Curriculum Unit. And the requisite training done, to enhance their skills and professional development to keep abreast with modern technology, and that the Unit is adequately equipped for material production.

A programme is also proposed for thirty (30) pilot schools with a view to introducing software which will help students to improve in core areas such as Language Arts and Mathematics.

In sum, the objective of the programme is to support the broader goals of lifelong learning and skills development for the citizens of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Restructuring Technical Vocational Education

The proposed new Technical Vocational Education (TVET) Curriculum would be an integration of the following curriculum models:

- Conservative liberal arts design
- Educational technology design
- Vocational design
- Social reconstruction design
- De-schooling design

Prior to 2001, Technical Vocational Education was offered to students at grades 7 and 8 in all age schools, as well as those at grades 10–11 (Forms 4 and 5) at traditional five year secondary schools. The new thrust is to introduce the programme at the primary level (grades 1-6). It is hoped that this programme would enable students at this level to experience learning reinforcements that contribute to personal development and technological awareness.

Technical Vocational Education is another option which has been reintroduced on the curriculum at the Teachers' Training College for primary school teachers.

Parenting Education

Reading disability continues to plague the nation. In order to improve the situation, the Curriculum Development Unit has undertaken to educate parents so that they can make a difference in their children's learning. To this end, a parenting brochure (designed by the Organisation of Eastern

Caribbean States Education Reform Unit (OERU) and teachers in the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) is being used to conduct workshops for parents and teachers throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Parent support groups have already been formed in those areas where workshops have been conducted.

5. Recent reforms/innovations which focus on the theme of citizenship

There is growing concern that students go through school without learning the knowledge, skills and values that are essential to becoming responsible citizens. In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, we are daily confronted with many negative influences of modern society, including a rising crime rate, the inability to work together as a team to achieve national development, lack of brotherly/sisterly love, environmental degradation and disrespect for women, children and the elderly.

It is recognized that a structured programme, which would help to solve the real problems in the state, is urgently needed. These programmes can be subsumed under the three sub-themes of the IBE/CARNEID seminar: 1) Citizenship education: learning at school and in society 2) Social exclusion and violence: education for social cohesion and 3) Shared values, cultural diversity and education: what learn and how?

The existing school curriculum does not address the issues in any single subject area. At the Primary level, the Health and Family Life Education, and Physical Education Curricula contain some content, which deals with the social issues. There is some focus on:

- Building self-esteem and developing self-discipline
- Nurturing relationships with others
- Developing interpersonal relationships and fostering emotional help
- Human sexuality
- Social skills
- Conflict resolution
- Social development
- Emotional development
- Moral development
- HIV/AIDS education
- Substance abuse
- Human rights

In the secondary schools, similar topics are covered in Social Studies and Management in Forms 4 and 5 (grades 10 and 11) and in Health and Family Life Education and Counselling in Forms 1-3 (grades 7-9).

Cooperative learning strategy

In the area of delivery strategies, the Cooperative Learning Strategy has been given much emphasis since 1995. This strategy covers the whole gamut of social issues when compared to traditional learning groups. Primary and secondary school teachers participated in a two week workshop session on cooperative learning. Each teacher was given a manual dealing with the strategy.

Co-operative learning groups

vs

Traditional learning groups

Positive interdependence
Individual accountability
Heterogeneous membership
Shared leadership
Responsible for each other
Task and maintenance emphasized
Social skills directly taught
Teacher observes and intervenes
Group processing occurs

No interdependence
No individual accountability
Homogenous membership
Appointed leader
Responsible only for self
Only tasks emphasized
Social skills assumed and ignored
Teacher ignores groups
No group processing

The Drug Abuse Resistance Education Programme (DARE)

The Drug Abuse Resistance Education Programme (DARE) is another initiative which supports the concept of “learning to live together”. DARE is a strategy used among the 10 - 12 age group to resist drugs and violence. It is a collaborative effort among the school, parents and the police. The programme is delivered primarily by the police, while the follow-up work such as workbook activities, is done by the classroom teacher.

The topics covered in the curriculum are:

- (1) Introducing DARE
- (2) Understanding the effects of mind-altering drugs
- (3) Considering consequences
- (4) Changing beliefs about drug use
- (5) Ways to say no
- (6) Building self-esteem
- (7) Learning assertiveness - a response style
- (8) Managing stress without taking drugs
- (9) Reducing violence
- (10) Combating media influences on drug use and violence
- (11) Making decisions about risky behaviours
- (12) Saying yes to positive alternative activities
- (13) Having positive role models
- (14) Resisting gang and group violence
- (15) Essay to see how much students have learnt - commitment to stay drug free

Guidance Counselling

Guidance counselling now plays a more prominent role in the school system. There are guidance counsellors in some primary and secondary schools. Additionally, Peace Corps Volunteers augment the school system in this area. Approximately thirty (30) teachers were also trained in counselling through a programme sponsored and organized by the Methodist Church.

It is quite evident that despite the effort to focus on social issues, there is need for a functional and effective programme in citizenship education. Many stakeholders have been clamouring for the introduction of civic education in the school's curriculum. This calls for reform at both the primary and secondary levels.

Suggestions for curriculum reform

Primary: Redesigning the Social Studies Curriculum to include a substantial amount on citizenship education.

Secondary: Introduction of modules from Forms 1-5 (Grades 7-9) to deal with citizenship education.

An aggressive planned counselling programme should be introduced at all levels to support and reinforce what is taught in the subject areas. The peer counselling strategy which is used by a few schools, can be extended to other institutions.

At both the primary and secondary levels, teachers will have to be trained to teach all students these social values as a way of life and not as a subject to be examined in a traditional manner. There is also a need for all types of curriculum materials/resources to support the implementation of the curriculum.

Deliberately widening the scope of the assessment content (which has traditionally been restricted to assessment of mastery in cognitive domains using pencil and paper) to emphasize a holistic approach including social/behavioural and the desired properties of all assessment instruments and criteria for use.

6. The main problems faced by curriculum specialists in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Design

- There is a lack of personnel to carry out the functions of the present curriculum system: The National Curriculum Council that should represent the interests of all stakeholders has never been formed. This body should provide a philosophy and statement of general aims. There is an absence of active subject associations in some critical areas. However, with the recent appointment of curriculum specialists, the Mathematics and Science associations have been revived.
- Needs and priorities are not always addressed in relation to students and society.
- Specific information about the labour market is not readily available.

Implementation

- The dominance of standardized examinations in the society in order to facilitate selection for scarce secondary places) affects learning/teaching methodologies and learning as a whole. Aspects of curricula (especially in the affective domain) which cannot be easily tested by standardized written tests are often omitted. As a result, many primary school graduates are ill-equipped with the knowledge/ skills that they need to comfortably survive post-primary education and life. Many secondary pupils also lack the requisite knowledge and skills for post secondary education and the world of work.

- Another impediment to successful curriculum implementation in St. Vincent and the Grenadines is the failure of teachers to tie instruction to the assessment procedures. To counteract this deficiency, diagnostic tests have been introduced at Grades 2 and 4. The need for same at the secondary level is also indicated. The diagnostic tests, serve as very useful tools for identification, intervention and preventive programmes. If the programmes are used effectively, problems in literacy and numeracy would be alleviated.
- There is an over reliance on the text. Many classroom teachers still teach from the text and not from the curriculum guide.
- The curriculum materials/resources that are available are inadequate to support the implementation of the curriculum.
- Some teachers lack the confidence and competence to make full use of delivery strategies that are best suited to achieve the desired outcomes.

111) Follow-up Process

- Principals are unable to efficiently and effectively perform their role as instructional leaders because much time is spent on pastoral care and performing mundane tasks which should be dealt with by office or ancillary staff. To alleviate this situation, Senior teachers have recently been appointed in all primary schools and heads of departments in all secondary schools. Curriculum implementation and reform constitute an integral part of their duties. It is hoped that there will be some improvement.
- In St. Vincent and the Grenadines there are 66 primary schools and 21 secondary schools with only one curriculum Specialist in the majority of subject areas. They are unable to cope with the volume of work which curriculum development, implementation, dissemination and evaluation entails. It is evident that there is a need for additional curriculum specialists if follow-up is to be effective. To minimize the problem, some in-service training is being conducted by the curriculum specialists at the district and school levels. Follow-up is done by classroom teachers who possess the skills/competencies in the core areas. In short, these teachers act as curriculum leaders in their schools/districts when the curriculum specialist is not on site.

In order to have effective follow-up, parents must be made aware of the programmes so that they can lend their support. This has started in the areas of reading and Health and Family Life where parents are invited to workshops/meetings which help to educate them on the critical roles they play in making a difference in the lives of their children.

Further Suggestions

- Greater monitoring of curriculum delivery required as well as support for teachers.
- The initiative to promote teachers' use of classroom and standardized formative/diagnostic tests should be strengthened. Currently, assessment is seen as an add-on activity and summative testing with a purely normative function is prevalent.
- There is a need for assessment/measurement and evaluation to be made an integral component of the teacher- training programme at the Teachers' Training College.
- Further training will be required if teachers are to utilize authentic tasks and student -parent friendly reporting mechanisms.

- In conclusion, authentic assessment and alternative assessment procedures such as journals, portfolios and checklists must become an integral part of the assessment policy so that effective follow-up can take place by students, teachers and parents alike.

APPENDIX 2

Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Ministry of Education

EDUCATION SECTOR STRATEGIC PLAN 1999 - 2010 Education for the Twenty First Century: *Life Long Learning For All*

First draft, February 1999

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Education Sector Strategic Plan sets out the mission, direction and priorities to continue and sustain educational development in St. Vincent and the Grenadines until 2010. The primary purpose is to raise levels of achievement for all learners to enable them to benefit as individuals, and also contribute to national and regional socio-economic development. The plan covers the whole of the education sector from pre-school through to tertiary. It also focuses on technical and vocational education and training, including information technology, and adult literacy as one aspect of adult and continuing education. It takes account of regional and national policy objectives and the management capacity to achieve them.

The mission of the Ministry of Education is included along with their vision of "Lifelong Education for All". This recognises the right of all learners to gain access to an education system which has equity, with high quality teaching within well resourced and managed institutions.

The intended outcomes of the plan will be learners who are functionally literate, numerate and computer competent; skilled in science, technology and its application; self confident and emotionally secure with well developed interpersonal skills; appreciative and protective of their environment and natural heritage; and who will contribute to the advancement of their community, country and region.

A series of priorities have been established for the Ministry of Education and for each component of the education sector. An action plan has been drafted for each priority with clear targets to be achieved within a set time scale and financial framework.

Major priorities include:

- Strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Education to deliver the plan by increasing and training staff, and improving the efficiency of systems and structure.
- Increasing access and quality of pre-school provision through the establishment of a National Council which will work in partnership with the community and private sector
- Increasing levels of literacy, numeracy, and skills of information technology of all learners.
- Restructuring the primary and secondary system to increase access to an equitable five year secondary education.
- Professionalising the teaching force
- Establishing school boards empowered to draft school improvement plans, and with delegated programme budgets
- Ensuring appropriate access to special education across the state.

- Increasing access, relevant programmes and upgrading facilities in the tertiary sector through an Integrated Community College .
- Provision of a comprehensive and relevant programme of adult education.

The plan has been costed. Implementation of the plan will require a phased increase in both capital and revenue expenditure in the education budget to secure improvements in the primary and secondary sectors, as well as a major contribution from the STABEX funds.

INTRODUCTION

This Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) has been drafted after extensive discussions and consultations with a wide range of stakeholders in St. Vincent and the Grenadines to envision the outcomes and direction for the education sector for the next ten years

Appraisals have been made of the MOE and each sub-sector of the system from educational, social and financial perspectives as a starting point from which to give consideration to

- continue ways of increasing access by students to pre-primary, secondary, special, tertiary and adult education, while maintaining access in the primary sector
- ensure equity of opportunity for life long learning
- improve achievement levels, particularly in literacy and numeracy
- continue to upgrade the expertise and qualifications of teachers
- improve the quality of provision of learning materials in all sectors, including ICT
- continue to review and increase the relevance of the curriculum offered
- improve plant and facilities
- increase efficiency of institutions, and the MOE to support them in delivering the plan.

The appraisals are included as annexes to the plan.

A primary purpose of the plan is to raise levels of achievement. Schools/institutions and teachers will be at the centre of change with increased training being provided, along with greater provision of learning resources within classrooms. There is an expectation that there will be a change in the 'culture' in schools with teaching and learning becoming more learner centred.

Priorities have been identified for the MOE and each sub-sector. Action plans have been prepared with clear objectives, results indicators, activities, time scales and costs. These action plans will be implemented and monitored by the MOE in partnership with schools and the community.

The plan has been costed. Some priorities will be funded by the GSVG while finances will also be sought from grants and loans from the European Union, DFID, and others. Details of costings can be found on each action plan and in the Financial Annex.

This draft of the ESSP was prepared with officers of the MOE and a team of five DFID consultants. The priorities in the draft have been discussed at a stakeholder panel. policy issues raised with the Honorable Minister of Education, and the plan will continue to be refined before it is presented to a Cabinet meeting. It will be continuously monitored as per the protocol, and reviewed and renewed on an annual basis.

LIFE LONG LEARNING FOR ALL

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission statement of the Ministry of Education is to provide, singularly or cooperatively, all the persons of the State with learning opportunities appropriate to their learning needs and to ensure a quality of education that will equip them with the required values, skills, attitudes and knowledge necessary for creating and maintaining a productive, innovative and harmonious society.

PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

This Education Development Plan is focused on accomplishment of the mission and contains priorities and actions which are underpinned by the following values and principles.

Achievement - the prime function of the plan is to raise the standard of achievement in all aspects of education, but in particular in literacy and numeracy to support life long education.

Equity will continue to be addressed through modifications to the structure of the education system, through the deployment of trained staff, and through the promotion of equality of opportunity and treatment for all learners.

Access will continue to be increased to pre-primary, secondary, special, tertiary and adult education while universal access to primary education will be maintained.

Quality will continue to be improved through the extension of teacher training, constant upgrading of the curriculum and related materials, leading to more stimulating and challenging learning environments.

Efficiency will be improved through restructuring the MOE to focus on delivery and monitoring of the progress of this plan, and in effecting changes within each teaching institution to optimise allocation and use of resources .

Effectiveness will be increased through measures to motivate teachers, provision of incentives, training of principals and closer supervision by education officers of learning institutions.

Relevance will be assured by reviewing and revising the curriculum offered to learners of all ages so that it closely matches the development needs of individuals and the State, in keeping with the principles of life long learning.

APPENDIX 3

Skills in Life Skills Based HFLE

Life Skills	Definitions	Significance
Decision-making	The ability to choose a course of action from a number of options which may result in a specific outcome or involve only the resolve to behave in a certain way in the future.	Helps us deal constructively with health and other decisions about our lives by enabling us to assess the different options and what effects different decisions may have.
Problem-solving	The process through which a situation/problem is resolved (i.e. diagnosing the problem, taking action to close the gap between present situation and desired outcome, and generalising the principles to other situations).	Allows us to deal constructively with problems in our lives, that left unattended, could cause new problems, including mental and physical stress.
Creative thinking	The ability to depart from traditional ways of thinking, resulting in the generation of original and innovative ideas that enable us to respond adaptively to life situations.	Contributes to both decision making and problem solving by enabling us to explore the available alternatives and various consequences of our actions or non-actions.
Critical thinking	The ability to analyze information and experience, formulate ideas, derive conclusions, ask pertinent questions and present logical arguments.	Contributes to health by helping us to recognise and assess the factors that influence attitudes and behaviour, such as media and peer pressure influences.
Effective communication	The ability to express ourselves, both verbally and non-verbally, 'in ways that are appropriate to our cultures and situations.	Allows the transfer of information, understanding, and emotion from one person to another to make one's intent clear.
Interpersonal relationship skills	The ability to relate positively with people, creating an environment in which people feel secure and free to interact and express their opinions.	Allows us to keep friendly relationships, which can be of great importance to our mental and social well-being, and impacts the way we communicate with, motivate and influence each other.
Self-awareness	Having a sense of identity and an understanding of our own feelings, beliefs, attitudes, values, goals, motivations, and behaviours.	Helps us to recognise our feelings and values and is a prerequisite for effective communication, interpersonal relationships, and developing

		empathy for others.
Empathy	The ability to imagine what life is like for another person, even in a situation that we are unfamiliar with.	Can help us accept others who may be very different from ourselves, respond to people in need, and promote other positive social interactions.
Coping with emotions	The ability to recognise a range of feelings in ourselves and others, the awareness of how emotions influence behavior, and the ability to respond to emotions appropriately.	Enables us to respond appropriately to negative effects that prolonged, pent up emotions may have on our physical and mental health.
Coping with stress	The ability to recognise the sources of stress in our lives and the affects that stress produces, and the ability to act in ways that help us cope or reduce our levels of stress.	Enables us to adjust our levels of stress and avoid the negative consequences of stress, including boredom, burnout, susceptibility to disease and behavioural changes.

A Few Additional Life Skills

Negotiation skills	The ability to communicate with other people for the purpose of settling a matter, coming to terms, or reaching an agreement. This may involve the ability to compromise or to give and take.	Helps unto meet and address individual needs and concerns in ways that are mutually beneficial. This is a key factor in working and playing cooperatively with others.
Refusal skills	The ability to communicate the decision to say "nor" effectively (so that it is understood).	Enables us to carry out health-enhancing behaviors that are consistent with our values and decisions.
Assertiveness skills	The ability to state one's point of view or personal rights clearly and confidently, without denying the personal rights of others.	Assertiveness skills enable people to take actions that are in their own best interests. Such actions include the ability to stand up for oneself or someone else without feeling intimidated or anxious and to express feelings and points of view honestly and openly.
Healthy self-management/ monitoring skills	The ability to make situational and lifestyle behavior choices that result in attaining and/or maintaining one's physical, social, emotional, spiritual, and environmental health.	Enables us to maintain health-enhancing decisions from day to day as well as to reach longer-term health and wellness goals.