

## Life Skills Education for Junior High School Pupils in Ho Chi Minh City

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**Abstract:** Life skills education plays an important role in the comprehensive education process for pupils. Facing the social challenges, the Education sector and each school are increasingly paying more attention to life skills education activities for pupils. However, for different causes, the organization of these activities have been facing concerned issues such as determining the list of life skills, organizational measures or team quality, etc. need being noted when you want to improve the quality of these activities. The study addresses issues related to life skills education activities and proposes a number of life skills education measures suitable for current educational practice. The study was conducted to survey 45 people who are life skills teachers, junior high school teachers, and pupils by 2 study methods: qualitative and quantitative methods. Study results show that: life skills education activities are currently very interested in schools and there are many measures to organize these activities well. However, for many different causes, these activities also have certain difficulties and the study proposes 6 groups of measures to organize life skills education activities for pupils of junior high school age to organize these activities better, help pupils have life skills, live better themselves and with those around them.

**Keywords:** education; life skills; junior high school pupils.

### 1. Introduction

Previously, in the context of traditional society, young people learned how to treat others through extended families, villages, folklore, formal and non-formal educational programs, etc. But under rapid socio-economic changes, which somewhat limited the function of family education and traditional institutions. To solve the challenges that teenagers face, they not only prepare skills to acquire knowledge (listening, speaking, reading, writing, ...) but also the ability to cope effectively the life challenges. **When reach adolescence age**, on the one hand, children initially want to be free from parental supervision and gain equal status in the family. On the other hand, they begin to step out of the family framework, step into society with everyone as an independent individual. But there is sometimes no correspondence between personal desires and life's challenges, so children will easily react in the form of stubbornness, coldness, gossip, non-cooperation and even showing a "reckless" attitude.

In fact, in recent years, the situation of youth, especially those of junior high school age, has been increasing and its seriousness has reached an alarming level. Junior high school pupils are prone to fall into social evils and contribute to adversely affecting the school environment. There are many causes leading to this situation, but one of the main reasons is that pupils today are very lacking in the necessary life skills. The Education and Training Sector has also been actively orienting itself to put life skills into teaching at this education level in order to contribute to improving value orientation and creating appropriate behaviors in adolescents.

Life skills education for pupils is important in today's educational practice. However, under the influence of many factors, they have affected the organization of skills education activities for pupils. Therefore, finding out the reality of organizing life skills education for pupils at junior high school level such as: content of life skills education, organizational form or difficulties that reduce quality or affect life skills education is a concerned matter when it comes to life skills education for pupils.

### 2. Study Methods

**2.1. Sampling method:** In this study, we conduct the study by:

- Step 1: Surveying 100 education experts, life skills teachers, and teachers –in –charge of junior high school subjects through open-ended questionnaires on study issues.

- Step 2: Surveying 60 life skills teachers, administrators, teachers of junior high schools, and pupils through questionnaires and interviews.

**2.2. Study method:** The study was carried out by document study method, survey by questionnaire and data processing by SPSS software version 22.0, combined with in-depth interview method.

- The method of document study is done by finding, reading, analyzing and synthesizing documents related to life skills education for pupils. On that basis, determine the characteristics and requirements of organizing life skills education activities for pupils at the junior high school level. From this theoretical basis, the study proposes related study contents.

The content of the questionnaire, in addition to relevant information, includes 3 contents:

- The first content: Study on ongoing measures to organize life skills education for junior high school pupils. This scale consists of 5 items, showing the measures that schools are using to teach life skills to junior high school pupils. Each item has 4 answer options as follows: 1 point: not used – 2 points: rarely used – 3 points: frequently used – 4 points: very often used

Thus, the larger the mean score (M), the more that method is applied and vice versa;

- The second content: Study on the causes of difficulties when organizing life skills education activities for junior high school pupils. This scale consists of 7 items, showing the causes of difficulties when organizing life skills education activities for pupils. Each item has 4 answer options as follows: 1 point: no difficulty – 2 points: little difficulty – 3 points: quite difficult – 4 points: very difficult.

Thus, the larger the mean score (M) means that the cause is very difficult and vice versa;

- The third content: Study on some measures of life skills education for junior high school pupils. This scale includes 6 items, showing effective and appropriate measures to organize life skills education activities for pupils. Each item has 4 answer options as follows: 1 point: Not effective – 2 points: Less effective – 3 points: Effective – 4 points: Very effective.

Thus, the larger the mean score (M), the more important the measure is, and vice versa;

Using the reliability test, the scale of factors affecting pupil's satisfaction who has Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.85.

The in-depth interview method was conducted with a number of subjects such as: school leaders, life skills teachers, teachers, pupils, etc with the aim of ensuring objectivity in the assessment.

### **3. Study results and discussion**

#### **3.1. Theory of the organization of life skills education for junior high school pupils**

##### *3.1.1. Classification of life skills*

Depending on different concepts, the number of life skills and the names of life skills will be different. The following classifications can be made:

Classification according to WHO: Divide life skills into 3 groups: Group 1: cognitive skills: Self-awareness, setting goals to determine values, thinking, creativity, problem solving, ...; Group 2: emotional skills: Take responsibility for emotions, restrain and control emotions, regulate one's own emotions, ...; Group 3: social skills: Communication - behavior, creating sympathy, working in groups, etc. Or according to UNESCO's classification: divide life skills into 2 groups: group 1: includes skills: cognitive skills, emotional skills, communication skills, ... (social skills); Group 2: includes: gender awareness, health awareness, awareness of surrounding relationships, ... (specialized skills) [2].

Author Nguyen Quang Uan: divides life skills into 3 main groups: The first group: skills about personal life; The second group: relationship skills with others, with the community, with society; The third group: practical work skills [4]

Through the division of life skills into three main groups, based on psychological and educational sciences as well as human study sciences, based on real life and adolescent development characteristics, we would like to analyze some valuable and necessary life skills for junior high school pupils: Self-service skills, life goal setting skills, effective time management skills, skills to regulate and manage emotions, skills of self-awareness, skills of communication and dealing with relationships, skills of cooperation and sharing, skills to show confidence in front of a crowd, skills to confront and cope with difficulties in life, skills to self-assess others [3]

### 3.1.2. Essential life skills for junior high school pupils

Through the division of life skills into three main groups, based on psychological science and education as well as human study sciences, based on real life and adolescent development characteristics, the topic would like to analyze some valuable and necessary life skills for junior high school pupils:

- **Self-service skills:** Each individual identifies and equips himself with self-service skills that are valuable for everyone's life. "I am the one who walks in my own footsteps, not someone else's." In order to walk on their own two feet, each individual will be equipped with self-service skills such as independent living skills, self-management skills to avoid some negative behaviors, ... [3] .

- **Life goal setting skills:** Life goal setting skills are skills in which individuals make a plan and timeline to implement the plan they want to implement in the future in a clear, reasonable way. high efficiency. Goals are divided into: short-term goals, medium-term goals and long-term goals [3].

- **Effective time management skills:** skills to identify, estimate and allocate reasonable timeline for each work in order to achieve the highest efficiency and balance one's life.

- **Emotional adjustment and management skills:** Skills to recognize, know, understand and adjust one's own emotions in a reasonable way in order to maintain a balanced state of the body to avoid unnecessary stress in life.

- **Self-awareness skills - self-assessment skills:** Self-assessment skills are skills in which a person's attitude towards the competencies, abilities, and qualities is expressed as well as everything that manifests outside and inside of one's being. In other words, each person can answer the questions themselves: who am I, what am I like, what do I have, ...

- **Communication skills, behavior:** Behavior is a selective response, expressed through words or behavior of people, to the impact of others on them in a specific situation.

- **Cooperation and sharing skills:** Important skills that help people know how to heal relationships, show community spirit, help improve teamwork and the ability to share information with others. .

- **Skills to show confidence in front of the crowd:** Skills for each individual shows his/her strengths in front of the group. Dare to demonstrate one's own ability in a reasonable way and show others his bravery when doing the job.

- **Skills to confront and cope with difficulties in life:** Skills to confront and cope with difficulties in life are skills for each individual knows to identify and distinguish difficulties, hindrance that affects the quality of life of each person. From there, to know how to overcome easily to go to the selected goals.

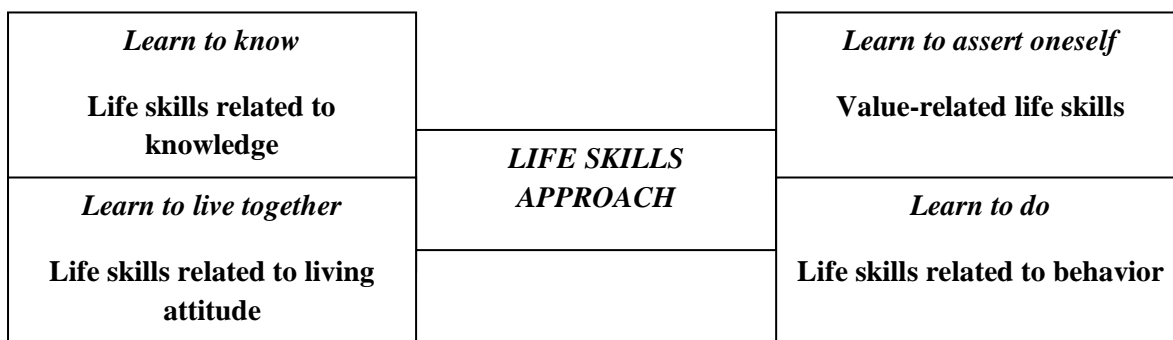
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- **Skills to evaluate others:** Each individual when recognizing and evaluating others is a way to help individuals reflect on themselves. On the other hand, when evaluating others is when individuals know how to distinguish good people - bad people, people who are suitable for them and those who are not, those who are approachable and those who are difficult, ... Recognize the advantages - disadvantages, good and bad, not good from others to find out valuable lessons for oneself is a way to help that individual grow up psychosocially.

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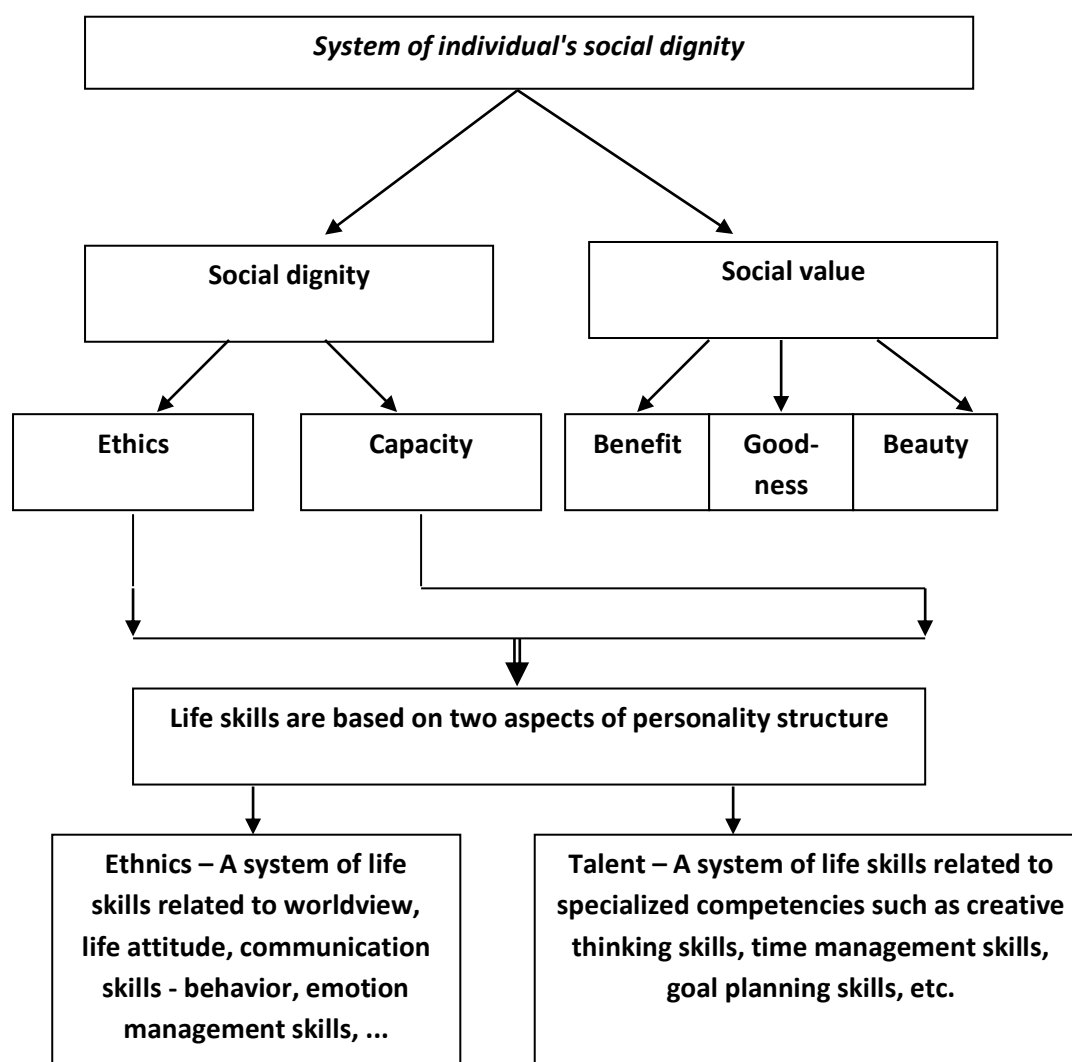
### 3.1.3. Measures to practice life skills for junior high school pupils

The life skills approach model is based on four pillars of education: learning to know, learning to live with people, learning to assert oneself and learning to do [5].



Based on this model, we see that it is necessary to build a psychological impact measure based on the function of the educational process. Education actively and interacts with pupils in a variety of ways and measures. The mode of action must be included in many different sciences. There, it is possible that the content and methods of life skills training can be integrated into the teaching contents or organized into a professional learning process to equip, form and develop life skills in learners. .

The life skills approach model is based on the personality structure model [2].



With the structure of personality, we see that the content and measures to practice life skills for learners will be considered as a parallel field along with educating learners on ethics to create a comprehensive educational content about a person's personality. From here, the study is generalized into 5 groups of practical measures in junior high schools that are used for life skills education activities for pupils.

**a/ Designing as a separate class hour as a subject**

- It is a form of choosing life skills suitable for junior high school pupils and designing as a lesson - like a lesson hour in junior high school.

- Advantages and disadvantages:

+ Advantages: the system of life skills, its meaning and values is fully deployed and formed in a more sustainable way.

+ Disadvantages: it takes a lot of time and requires life skills teachers to be equipped with scientific knowledge, a system of specialized methods and a typical teaching form of life skills.

**b/ Integrating into all activities in the educational process**

- Being a form of life skills that is included in all activities of pupils in the close connection between life skills science and educational science at the junior high school level.

- Advantages and disadvantages:

+ Advantages: life skills are oriented in a clearer and more abundant way. The system of life skills or its values is fully formed and oriented.

+ Disadvantages: requires schools and teachers to have plans built at the beginning of the school year and teachers need to be fully equipped with knowledge related to life skills education, life skills system, knowledge methods and methods of education and teaching in the most optimal way.

**c/ Integrating into extracurricular activities**

- It is a form of bringing life skills into practical sessions, programs and activities of the Union - Team or other organizations in the school, life skills education activities taking place outside the classroom.

- Advantages and disadvantages:

+ Advantages: life skills are put in appropriately and clearly show its practical application.

+ Disadvantages: easily influenced by external factors and life skills will lack the coherence between the established life skills system.

**d/ Teaching life skills anytime, anywhere**

- Being a form of teaching that takes advantage of pupils' own lives, guiding and helping pupils to form life skills through daily activities.

Advantages and disadvantages:

+ Advantages: life skills are formed continuously and do not take much time as well as other problems.

+ Disadvantages: the system of life skills is formed sporadically, lacks the system and is easily misleading in terms of science. Lack of direction or blame responsibility to anyone.

**e/ Integrating life skills education into subjects with relevant content**

- Concept: is the introduction of life skills into the curriculum and teaching plans of with knowledge content that is closely related to the content of life skills.

-Advantages and disadvantages

- + Advantages: it takes less time and expenses and can increase the attractiveness of the subject itself with integrated life skills.
- + Disadvantages: easy to encounter overlapping life skills system between subjects and sometimes only focus on some easy-to-form life skills.

### 3.2. Survey results on the reality of life skills education for junior high school pupils

#### a/ Measures to teach life skills for junior high school pupils

*Table 1: Measures being used to teach life skills*

No.	Form	Mean score	Ranking
1	Designing as a separate class hour as a subject	2.73	5
2	Integrating into all activities in the educational process	2.86	4
3	Integrating into extracurricular activities	3.04	3
4	Teaching life skills anytime, anywhere	3.52	1
5	Integrating life skills education into subjects with relevant content	3.18	2

To find out the measures used to teach life skills to junior high school pupils, we provide 5 different measures, from general to specific ones. The results obtained are shown in Table 2.2. The “Teaching anytime, anywhere” measure had the highest mean score (3.52), the only one that was held on a very regular basis. The remaining forms are assessed by teachers as being organized on a regular basis. The form "Integrating life skills education into subjects with relevant content" ranks second in the forms used by teachers. The “Designing as a separate lesson” form had the lowest mean score. This is also understandable, because the reality shows that educational activities at the lower secondary level now take up a lot of time, the school has to spend time on those activities, so spending time for one lesson or Designing life skills education as a subject is hardly feasible, but can only be integrated or integrated into other activities.

Combined with qualitative study method, through an interview with Ms. H.T.N.P - Vice Principal of 01 Junior high school in the inner area of Ho Chi Minh City. *When being asked: "What are the measures the school uses to organize life skills education for pupils?"*. Ms. H.T.N.P said: *“The school has a contract with a partner providing life skills teaching services outside of the school to organize life skills training at the request of the school. On the other hand, in other educational activities of the school, the content of life skills education has also been integrated. Combining life skills education with extracurricular activities, with other subjects with content related to life skills or combined with homeroom activities, ...”*

Thus, the reality in the junior high schools that have been interested in organizing life skills education activities for students by many different measures. This brings a lot of value because it helps pupils practice necessary life skills while creating an environment for them to have the opportunity to approach, enjoy, and create a comfortable spirit for their study and life better.

#### b/ Causes leading to difficulties when organizing life skills education for pupils in junior high schools.

*Table 2: Causes of difficulties in organizing life skills education activities*

No.	Causes	Mean score	Ranking
1	Spending time on studying	<b>3.45</b>	<b>1</b>
2	More fun than taking care of life skills	3.11	4
3	Not get along within communicating with adults	2.70	6
4	Able to find out information about life skills online	2.97	5
5	There is no life skills education program	2.40	7
6	A lot of study schedule	<b>3.23</b>	<b>2</b>

7	There are no teachers-in-charges	<b>3.15</b>	<b>3</b>
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Among the causes we included in the survey, the cause that spending much time on studying is not the main cause for pupils' lack of life skills, but 3 causes are very interested by 45 subjects: they always spend time on studying, complete tasks assigned by teachers of subjects (3.45), or the lack of teachers specializing in life skills are also the causes of difficulties in organizing life skills education nowadays.

Combined with interview technique in qualitative study, with the question: "What are the causes that make life skills education activities at school difficult?". Teacher T.V.T – 01 Junior high school in the suburbs of Ho Chi Minh City said: "The biggest difficulty at the moment is that the school does not have a full-time teacher to teach life skills. On the other hand, under the new program, life skills have also been included in other activities and subjects. On the other hand, their school schedule is also quite much, so it is quite difficult for them to practice life skills skillfully, ...". The study asked N.T.T.H, "In your opinion, do you like the subject of life skills?", she answered: "The life skills class hour is quite interesting, but because I have to study many other subjects, after I take the life skills class hour, I rarely pay attention to practice it in life because I don't have time, ..."

Therefore, for these causes, the education sector should promote the training of specialized or part-time teachers teaching life skills, school psychology, etc. into the extracurricular curriculum so that pupils have the opportunity to equip with knowledge about life about life in the best way. Besides, the study to find out the age-appropriate list of life skills is also something that needs attention in the future.

### c/ A number of measures to educate life skills for junior high school students

Table 3: System of life skills education measures for pupils

No.	Measure	Mean score	Ranking
1	Weekly/quarterly/monthly thematic reports	<b>3.57</b>	<b>2</b>
2	Integrating life skills education into subjects with relevant content	2.56	6
3	Integrating in extracurricular activities of Youth Union - Team	3.51	4
4	Integrating in the homeroom teacher's class activities	<b>3.53</b>	<b>3</b>
5	Establishing a school psychology consultation room	<b>3.68</b>	<b>1</b>
6	Teaching life skills as a subject	2.65	5

Based on a survey on psychological impact measures to form life skills for pupils from 45 experts, the topic provides 6 impact measures (above table) and the results show that: The most popular choice is to establish a school psychology consultation room in schools. Next are the measures to design life skills education content into topics for reporting in extracurricular activities or integrate in homeroom activities with a fairly high selection rate. This result is completely consistent with the situation of the current educational program at the high schools. In the current curriculum, the system of scientific knowledge and the amount of time spent on the main course is so much that it is not easy to spend time on the subject of life skills, so the integration of life skills education is not easy in class activities or during the homeroom teacher's class activities is the most feasible solution. The establishment of a psychological consultation room is also an effective measure in training life skills for pupils, but this is a long-term solution when and when it is necessary for agencies to issue a policy to open a school counseling room at schools.

### 3. Conclusion

The formation and development of life skills depends not only on the pupils themselves, but also on the help and support from families, schools, mass organizations, media agencies, etc. Those are the best conditions to help children have the conditions to cultivate and train themselves. With them, the formation of life skills for pupils is no longer a difficult problem and difficult to implement.

Based on this model, we see that it is necessary to build a psychological impact measure based on the function of the educational process. Teaching and interacting actively with pupils in a variety of ways and measures. The

mode of action must be included in many different sciences. There, it is possible that the content and methods of life skills training can be integrated into the teaching contents or organized into a professional learning process to equip, form and develop life skills for learners.

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