

Embedding Life Skills and Moral Values in English Curriculum: An NEP 2020 Perspective

A Qualitative Action Research Study at the Primary School Level

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary educational discourse increasingly emphasizes that schooling must foster learners' social, emotional, and ethical development alongside academic achievement. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 advocates a holistic, competency-based approach, highlighting the integration of life skills and moral values from the foundational stages of learning. English language education offers significant potential for embedding ethical understanding and life skills through interactive and experiential learning.

This qualitative action research study examines the effectiveness of integrating life skills and moral values in primary-level English teaching. Classroom interventions including storytelling, role play, group discussions, and reflective activities were implemented over 6–8 weeks. Data were collected using classroom observation schedules, teacher journals, behaviour rating scales, life skills checklists, and student portfolios. Qualitative data were analysed thematically, and quantitative data using descriptive statistics. Findings indicate improvements in students' communicative competence, empathy, cooperation, responsibility, and moral awareness. Action research emerged as an effective reflective framework supporting NEP 2020's vision of holistic, value-based education.

Keywords: Life Skills, Moral Values, English Language Teaching, NEP 2020, Action Research, Primary Education

1. Introduction

Primary education is critical for holistic child development, laying foundations for cognitive, social, emotional, and ethical growth. NEP 2020 emphasizes learner-centered, value-based education, advocating integration of life skills such as communication, empathy, cooperation, critical thinking, honesty, and responsible decision-making from early stages. English classrooms, through storytelling, role play, dialogues, and collaborative tasks, provide authentic contexts for developing ethical understanding while practicing language.

Despite this potential, primary English instruction is often textbook-driven and exam-focused, limiting its contribution to holistic development.

2. Problem Statement

To study the effectiveness of integrating life skills and moral values through English teaching among primary students (Grades I–V) under NEP 2020.

Although NEP 2020 emphasizes holistic education, moral learning is often treated as separate or occasional. This creates a gap between policy and classroom practice, necessitating research-informed models for integration of values within language instruction.

3. Need and Significance

- Moral education is often isolated rather than integrated into everyday lessons.
- English classrooms provide authentic opportunities for communication-based moral learning.
- Teachers require practical strategies that integrate values without overloading the curriculum.
- Action research enables reflective alignment with NEP 2020.

Significant for teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers, the study demonstrates how English classrooms can promote holistic development.

4. Review of Related Literature

- UNESCO (2017) identifies life skills such as communication, empathy, cooperation, and responsible decision-making as crucial for child development.
- Lickona (1991) emphasizes embedding moral education in classroom interactions rather than isolated instruction.
- Nunan (2004) and Cameron (2001) highlight the effectiveness of task-based, interactive learning for language and social skills development.
- Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984) underscores the value of active participation, reflection, and practical application for young learners.

NEP 2020 explicitly advocates integration of moral values and life skills across subjects, positioning English as a key site for fostering communication, ethical reasoning, and social responsibility.

5. Research Gap

- Limited studies on subject-specific integration of moral values in English.
- Scarcity of teacher-led qualitative action research aligned with NEP 2020.
- Lack of empirical evidence at the primary level demonstrating classroom-based interventions.

6. Objectives

1. Identify life skills and moral values appropriate for primary students.
2. Integrate moral values into English teaching activities.
3. Observe changes in communication, social behaviour, and ethical awareness.
4. Evaluate the effectiveness of activity-based English pedagogy in promoting life skills.

7. Research Questions

1. How can English lessons integrate life skills and moral values effectively?

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2. What behavioural and communicative changes occur post-intervention?
3. Which strategies are most effective for value integration?

8. Theoretical Framework

Constructivist Learning Theory: Knowledge is constructed through interaction, reflection, and dialogue. Values are internalized via classroom activities such as storytelling, role play, and discussions.

Experiential Learning Theory: Learning occurs through active experience, reflection, and application. Activity-based tasks foster moral and linguistic development.

Action Research Integration: Iterative cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection enable teachers to align practice with NEP 2020's learner-centred vision.

9. Methodology

Research Design: Qualitative action research using the Plan–Act–Observe–Reflect (PAOR) cycle.

Sample: Primary students from Grades I–V (N = 150), purposively sampled.

Data Collection Tools:

Type	Tools
Qualitative	Classroom observation schedule, reflective journals, anecdotal records, students' portfolios, informal responses
Quantitative	Behaviour rating scale, life skills checklist, participation frequency record

Duration: 6–8 weeks.

Intervention Strategies:

Strategy	Purpose
Moral stories and fables	Introduce ethical dilemmas, reflection
Role plays/dramatization	Foster empathy, cooperation, responsibility
Group storytelling	Enhance communication, teamwork
Picture-based discussions	Promote dialogue and perspective-taking
Dialogue completion/polite expressions	Reinforce respectful communication
Reflective sentence writing	Encourage self-expression and ethical reasoning

Focus Values: Honesty, empathy, responsibility, respect, cooperation
Life Skills: Communication, teamwork, decision-making, problem-solving

10. Data Analysis

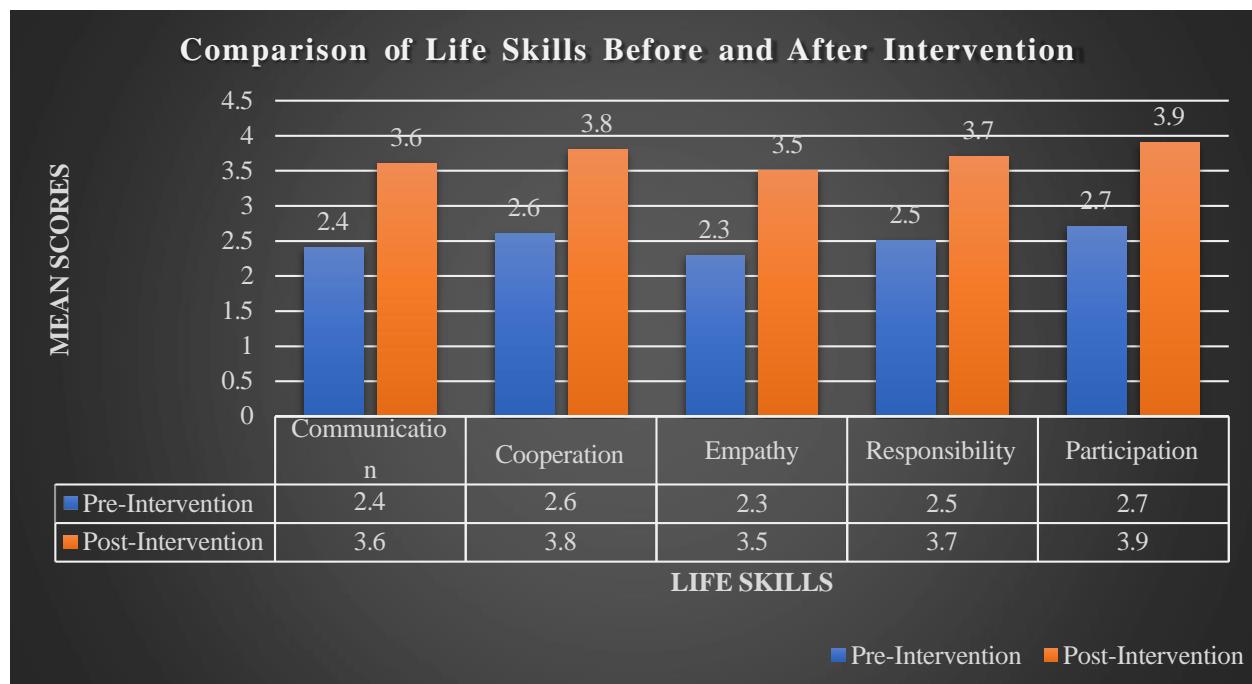
- **Qualitative:** Thematic analysis of observation schedules, journals, and student work to identify patterns in communication, cooperation, empathy, and moral awareness.
- **Quantitative:** Descriptive statistics (mean scores, frequencies, percentages) for behaviour rating, life skills, and participation.
- **Triangulation:** Integration of qualitative and quantitative findings enhances validity.

Figures 1–3 are based on primary data generated by the researcher through classroom observations, behaviour rating scales, and life skills checklists administered to the sample (N = 150).

11. Findings

- Integration of values enhanced both linguistic and moral development.
- Students' communication, cooperation, empathy, responsibility, and participation improved significantly.

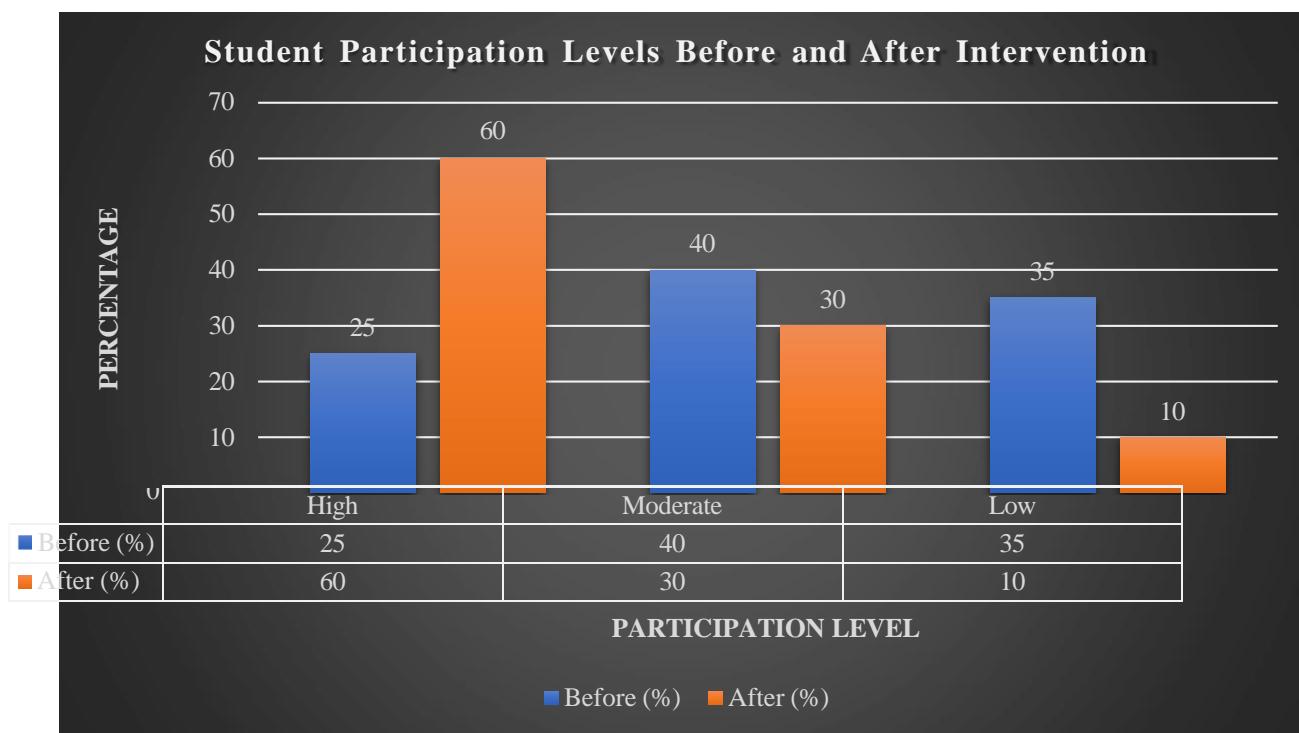
Figure 1. Comparison of life skills mean scores before and after intervention (N = 150)



- Activity-based interventions fostered a joyful, inclusive classroom.

Source: Author's field data generated through classroom-based action research (2024).

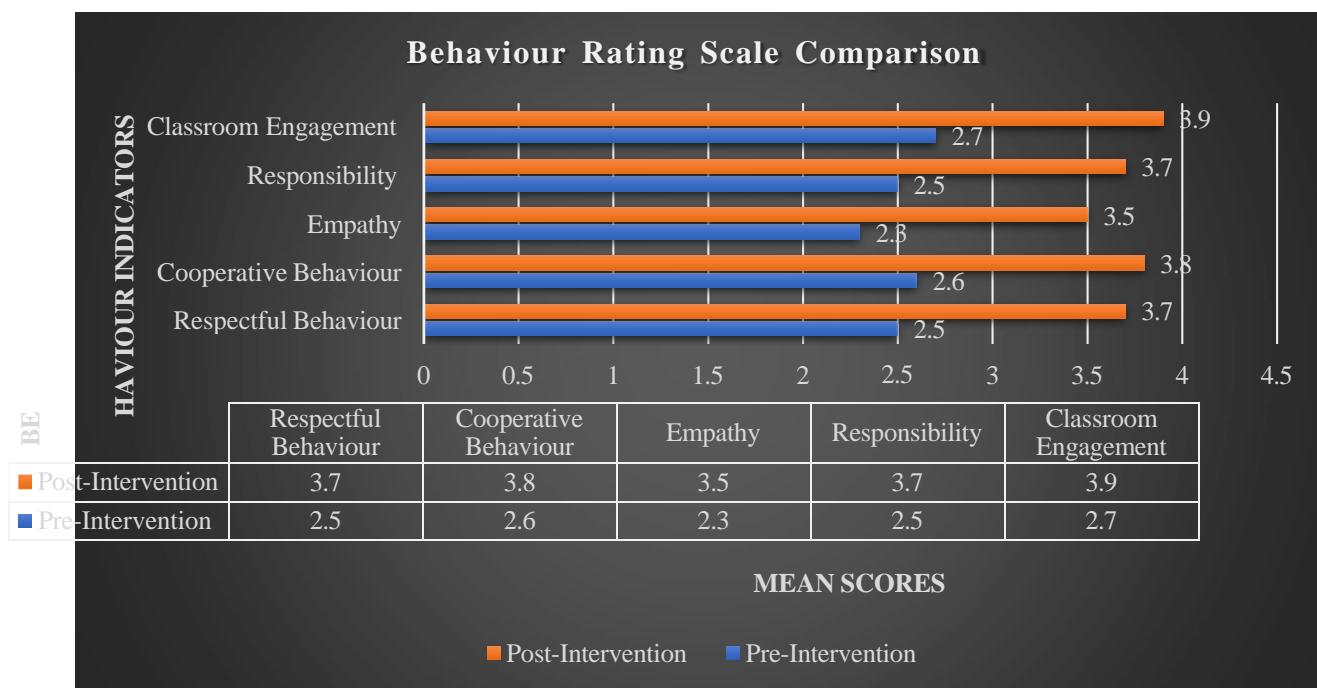
Figure 2. Student participation levels in value-based English activities (N = 150)



English lessons became meaningful and context-driven.

Source: Author's field data generated through classroom-based action research (2024).

Figure 3. Behaviour rating scale comparison pre- and post-intervention (N = 150)



Source: Author's field data generated through classroom-based action research (2024).

12. Conclusion

Primary English classrooms can effectively teach life skills and moral values. Storytelling, role play, discussions, and reflective activities align with NEP 2020, promoting holistic learner development. Action research is a valuable framework for reflective and context-responsive teaching. Although limited to one school and a short intervention, the study offers pedagogical insights for teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers. Future research could examine longitudinal impacts and extend to diverse educational settings.

13. Educational Implications

- Explicitly integrate moral objectives in lesson planning.
- Include value-based activities and themes in textbooks and materials.
- Consider social, ethical, and behavioural outcomes in assessments.
- Encourage cross-curricular integration of life skills and values.

For instance: **Mission Life Skill Programme** at ABC School.

Implemented at ABC School, this program nurtures moral values and life skills through experiential learning. Activities include storytelling, role play, art integration, discussions, and projects. Narratives of Indian icons (Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Swami Vivekananda, Rani Lakshmibai, A. P. J. Abdul Kalam) reinforce courage, integrity, perseverance, and respect for diversity.

Integration with English strengthens both language skills and moral development.

15. Limitations & Ethical Considerations

Limitations: Study limited to a single school and a short intervention. Subjectivity in observation and absence of standardized moral assessment tools may limit generalizability.

Ethical Considerations: Student anonymity and confidentiality were maintained. Activities formed part of regular instruction, ensuring no disadvantage. Participation was voluntary; all activities age-appropriate and safe.

16. Suggestions for Further Research

- Comparative studies at upper primary and secondary levels.
- Longitudinal tracking of moral and life skills development.
- Quantitative studies using standardized assessment tools for ethical reasoning, communication, and social skills.

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