

## **OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING SYSTEM : A NEW PARADIGM WITH STRESS FREE LEARNING**

**PIYUSH SINHA**

School of Science,  
H.N.B. Garhwal University Campus, Pauri Garhwal -246001

Received: 07-12-2014

Accepted: 28-12-2014

### **ABSTRACT**

The open and distance learning (ODL) system has added a new dimension to the education system. With respect to our mainstream education system it has lead to a new paradigm with some elements of shift as: from classroom to anywhere, from teacher centric to learner centric, from teacher as an instructor to teacher as a facilitator, from fixed time to anytime learning, from “you learn what we offer” to “we offer what you want to learn”, and from education as a onetime activity to education as a lifelong activity. Loaded with such flexibilities and advantages the ODL system can be branded as a stress free learning system (SFLS).

**KEY WORDS:** ODL system, education, Stress free learning system(SFLS)

### **INTRODUCTION**

The open and distance learning (ODL) system because of its inbuilt learner friendly features and flexibilities has potential to enable the learners to deal with the challenging and difficult situations and thus help them in reducing the stress as compared to their counterpart in the conventional system. ODL system has the potential to bring education to anyone anywhere at any time in a stress free learning environment. Because of its learner friendly features and flexibilities, its relevance in the present circumstances has been recognized by a large section of society. Particularly at school level many of those learners who are not able to cope up with the formal system of education, are pursuing their education through ODL system.

National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), an organization under Ministry of HRD, is catering to the educational needs of the deprived sections of Society like out of school children, the marginalized groups of boys, girls, women, adults, working people, handicaps and the disadvantaged social groups who are facing different financial, social, emotional or another types of stress and missed the opportunities for availing school education.



## **STRESS FREE LEARNING SYSTEM**

Let us see how the open and distance learning system is helping students in learning in a fearless and stress free environment, thus leading to its rebranding as stress free learning system.

### **Providing Stress Free Learning Environment**

21<sup>st</sup> century has drastically changed the learning environment and consequentially the educationists of India are trying to transform the existing methodology of teaching-learning accordingly. The main focus is to provide education of that kind which can reduce the prevailing stress among the especially school going learners.

The open Schooling system offer an open entry to all the interested and motivated with out restrictions of upper age limit and entry qualification for admission to various vocational and academic programmes up to secondary level. Besides, availability of variety of subjects and much greater flexibility in the choice of subjects to suit personal needs and requirements provide a stress free learning environment for the learners. Multimode instructional system including the self instructional study material, audio-video programmes and face to face contact programmes at the study centres also help in learning effectiveness. Modular approach to learning and six monthly term end examination and continuous assessment through tutor marked assignment are some of the factors which help in providing better learning environment.

### **Providing life oriented education as per need and choice of the learner**

Education is not merely getting information and acquiring bookish knowledge but it is now a lifelong process for self development and at a large scale development of the country. Unlike conventional system, the NIOS focuses on learner centric education by providing life oriented education as per the need and choice of the learners. The curriculum is designed in such a way that it helps in all-round growth and development of the learners. There is no rigidity of choosing a particular combination of subjects as in case of formal system of education. learners can choose any subject combination for their studies as per their interest and needs. This feature of NIOS not only helps in reducing the stress among the learner but encourages them to complete their studies. Besides it there are several life enrichment courses which are specially meant for individual as well as society progress. For example, courses of Jan Swasthya, yoga, Community health etc. Thus through ODL system, a learner is free to select one or more subjects as per their choice and need.

### **Providing freedom of pace, place and time for learning**

We know that the existing formal system of education has several good features but its rigidity in terms of completing a course in a fixed time frame. bound and confined structure at specific places make it stressful for many of the learners. It is estimated that because of these factors about 30 % children are deprived from the mainstream of education system. But because of inherent flexibilities of the ODL system such as any-time any-where education, no compulsion to attend the PCPs, many attempts to appear in a Examination, Credit transfer, Credit accumulation, On-Demand Examination, this system has emerged as a learner friendly and stress free system of education.

ODL system provided the facility to reach to the door step of the learner through multimedia and other sources and also given enough changes to the learners to appear up to five years to complete a course as per their convenience. That is why there is no question of rigidity of time to study and thus the learners enjoy the freedom to learn at their own pace, place and time.

### **Giving Less Emphasis on Examination**

In the formal system, examination is considered as a phobia. Learners become afraid of examination and instead of learning for life they learner for examination. Majority of the cases of suicide and stress related problems among the learners are reported to be due to the examination. Because of such incidents the government as well as all the educationists are in favour of eliminating the examination completely. But practically it is not possible to do away with examination and evaluation. Therefore, now there is emphasis on examination reforms in the entire education system so that the evaluation becomes a continuous process and the students can appear in the examination as per their preparation.

Fortunately the ODL system has already been providing the facility to appear in the examination as per the preparation and need of the learners. Particularly the NIOS and IGNOU besides six monthly term end examination, offers examination on demand also. Which ensures no stress and pressure on the students. NIOS has designed a flexible scheme of examination where a learner could take the examination at a time in one or more subjects ( up to six). Their credits are accumulated and as soon as a students attains requisite number of credit, he/she becomes eligible for certificate. Not only this the credit of the subjects passed from other recognized boards are also transferred to NIOS and given equal weightage. This also proves to a factor for reducing the chances of stress among the learners.

### **Developing Life Skills Among The Learners**

In the present scenario it is a fact that whatever change we bring in the teaching-learning system and provide any type of flexibility, may not be sufficient unless we develop life skills among the learners. Besides curricular instructions, the life skills need to be integrated in the education system of India. Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges that facilitate the physical, mental and emotional well-being of a child. The government of India has taken a decision to implement the adolescence education programme in all secondary and higher schools. Global and Indian experiences have shown that educational interventions that focus on life skills development have proven very effective in empowering adolescents to manage their AHI and concerns.

It is fact that when student acquires knowledge about life skills his attitude changes positively, he starts thinking critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others and develop ability to cope up with the adverse situations. It helps them to manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner. Such knowledge and skills can lead to positive behavioral changes and enable young people to play leadership roles. Moreover, the knowledge and life skills education imparted to the students are likely to be passed on their own children, thus influencing

future generations. It is therefore necessary that like open and distance education system, our formal education system should also effectively addresses the issues related to growing aged students in an integrated way so that they are able to handle the difficult situations.

NIOS in collaboration with the UNFPA is contributing towards empowering the adolescents enabling them to make informed choices in their personal and public lives. This is achieved by providing learners information, life oriented education and services in a supportive environment, so that they can learn through their experiences and build their skills for facing the challenges of growing up.

In order to enhance the life skills different types of interactive methods are used that make learning a meaningful, relevant and interesting. Some common methods are group discussions, brainstorming sessions and role-playing, quiz and case studies etc.

### CONCLUSION

Conclusively it can be said that any education system that becomes a cause of stress among the students needs to be revamped. Why we should force a learner to study a combination of subjects which is not of her/his interest and use? or why a learner be overburdened by the system to take any drastic step with his/her life? There is a need to bring changes in the existing system where the learning time, learning style, and the pace of learning, and the evaluation system is such that it does not create any pressure and stress on the learners. As the open and distance learning system particularly the NIOS has tried and tested such flexibilities in the teaching-learning and evaluation system and found that hardly any such untoward incident has happened. Therefore it is suggested that the entire education system including the formal system of education may provide flexible and learning friendly education system which causes no stress among the learners. The focus of the education should also be on life skill development rather than making the children bookworms. The learners should be made capable of using their potential and capabilities for an happy and stress free life. For this they should be provided with an open and free environment at home as well as in the schools.

### REFERENCES

1. Stress Management: [http:// www.timethoughts.com/stress/ stress management](http://www.timethoughts.com/stress/stress%20management).
2. Causes of Stress on students by Anna Hart [http://www.stress management blog.com/can/cause of stress](http://www.stress%20management%20blog.com/can/cause%20of%20stress).
3. Stress management, [http://helpguide.org/mental/stress\\_ relief\\_ coping](http://helpguide.org/mental/stress_relief_coping).
4. Quality School Education through Open and Distance Learning (ODL); M.C Pant EX CM ,NIOS, India
5. Quality Assurance in Open and Distance Learning in India, S K. Gandhi , Symbiosis Center for Distance Learning India.
6. Adolescence Education Programme Facilitators hand book AEP package developed by CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education) India.
7. Yuva Material, Developed by Ministry of Education Govt. Of Delhi.