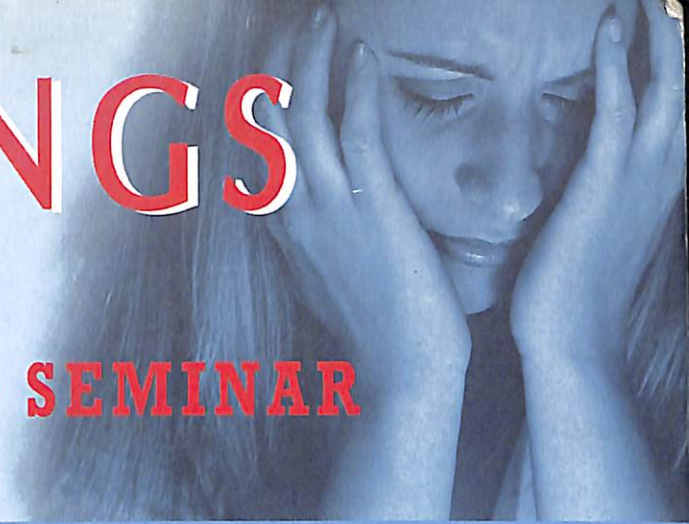


# PROCEEDINGS

of the

UGC SPONSORED NATIONAL SEMINAR



Resolving Stress to Optimize  
Academic Achievement - the Innovative  
Role of Teachers

12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> November 2008



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**Session – VI**

**10 a.m. – 11.15 a.m.**

## **Technology: Stress Creator or Stress Reliever?**

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There has been tremendous growth in information technology during the recent years. Technology has infiltrated almost every field. As we go through the pages of history, we pass through the various ages of technological progress. The past century has seen so many changes from the industrial revolution passing on to the electronics revolution and now it is the cyber revolution. We even come across engineering marvels like the Vertical City being planned in Dubai, having unimaginable options. And these changes are at a pace which surpasses all previous developments in the entire history of mankind. Where there is change there will always be resistance. As educators, it is important to address those areas of resistance (internally felt by us) to these technological advancements. And we are teaching in today's "knowledge society". The question "Are we equipped to meet the demands of the student community?" constantly plagues us. The relevant thought here is also how we keep ourselves updated besides how do we catch up? Teachers and students are exposed to technological changes, hence stress is induced. This paper analyses some of the causes of such stress and discusses ways to make use of technology – the cause of this stress, to overcome it.

Technology has made life in the modern days a comfortable one. As life is made more gadget oriented, today's children are getting adapted to the changes much faster than adults. Provisions for entertainment and communication has



become more and more complex, quite often making youngsters addicted to it. To the extent, technological advancement support daily chores of life, youngsters' (in particular) plane of thinking gets shifted to a different level. They are not able to concentrate or spend more time on conventional fundamentals like class room learning, reading etc.

Technology creates its own stress. As new methods come into every walk of life it is not quite possible for everyone to adapt to it quickly. In fact, some find it very difficult to acquire the knowledge of using technology. As we have seen in the recent past, many of the new generation banks are now without access to humans. There are machines which take care of most work. Even though, it reduces tedious manual work, many find it difficult to cope with such a situation. Similar situations are there in every profession. Verbal communication is decreasing day by day and its place is getting occupied by text or such other media. At times, the gadgets and systems could even malfunction making things worse.

Like in other fields stress finds inroads even in the field of education. There are differences in the teaching-learning process of yesterday and today. While the role of the text book and teacher was very important in the past, things are different now. There are diverse choices to get the study material today and technology has become an integral part of the learning process. Quite often the role of the teacher is as a facilitator to guide the students. Faculty are already feeling the pressure to lecture less, to make learning environments more interactive, to integrate technology into the learning experience, and to use collaborative learning strategies wherever appropriate. Media and technology competence of the teacher becomes important here. Students are more motivated and informed than in the past. They do not have the patience to listen to lengthy lectures and are more interested to view engaging presentations. Students respond to information differently. There are several causes to teacher and

student stress. In the case of teachers, pressure from the department to keep up to benchmarked standards and domestic reasons contribute to stress. Students too are often irregular and distracted and they do not achieve the expected levels in the learning front, causing stress to the teacher. In addition to this there are other factors like technology gap (on the part of teachers) being unable to make classes interesting. For students, domestic issues and peer pressure are contributory factors to stress. In addition to personal reasons related to education, technology related issues like security breaches, loss of data etc. also add to today's student/teacher stress. Due to peer pressure the focus of students gets shifted to matters other than academics. They need to improve their skills in various other areas. The result is lack of time to take all these aspects together.

It is here that technology acts as a support to cope with the requirements of the time. Re-form one's teaching by innovative teaching methods. Innovation is a dimension of how professional one is as a teacher. While technology tools are being used in education, all senses are open to information. It is often advantageous for teachers to use many different formats and modes to teach the subject matter of a lesson. This is why teachers normally use some combination of lecture, text and hands-on laboratory for conveying information. With the advent of the Internet and the multiple formats that can be communicated over the World Wide Web, now there are several new and exciting ways to present information. The Web allows the incorporation of animation, moving pictures, and sound into lessons, which extends the abilities to present materials that encourage student interaction with the subject matter. Pictures and animations help to bring to life scientific principles, and multimedia allows students to take a more active role in learning: they can watch experiments in action, see microorganisms up close, and use a mouse or keyboard to navigate images, simulations and interactive material. One of the advantages of using multimedia

is to convey information quickly and effectively to all students and to keep them interested in learning.

In Edgar Dale's Cone experience, it is seen that involvement of students in the learning process encourages active learning. The degree of retention of what is read and heard is quite low when compared to what is seen. Also when participation in addition to seeing is there, retention increases multifold. It means that using technology tools to improve the visual presentation of topics to be learnt and increasing participation will reduce learning induced stress to a considerable amount.

As positive measures, teachers can encourage the use of ICT (information, communication, technology) tools. Providing an opportunity for students to apply what they learn in the classroom to real-life experiences has proven to be an effective way of both disseminating and integrating knowledge. The case method is an instructional strategy that engages students in active discussions about issues and problems inherent in practical application. It can highlight fundamental dilemmas or critical issues and provide a format for role playing ambiguous or controversial scenarios. It is important for teachers to reform the learning process with innovative methods in order to keep the students alert and focused. Educational multimedia will hold the interest of students in the subject. It is also useful while addressing slow learners and dyslexics. Computer-based multimedia also helps students to develop technical and research skills that they cannot get from reading a textbook. Original photographs, scientific illustrations, Flash animations, educational videos, audio recordings, external hyperlinks etc. included in educational modules available commercially will help in organizing the learning material.

The challenges for adoption of multimedia and web based learning process are many. These can be limited by school budgets. Another drawback of these tools is that given the hectic schedule teachers are often forced to keep, it

can be a significant strain on the time to review multimedia materials and seamlessly incorporate them into lesson plans. Finally, juggling a VCR and TV for video, a CD-ROM player, computer, projector, and textbook can be technically, as well as financially, challenging. Ideally, what teachers need is a single system that blends text, images, simulations, video, audio and other multimedia material into a single, coherent environment that is available from school or home.

Many research findings suggest that presentations such as these that incorporate sound and graphics allow all students, especially those with learning difficulties, to understand concepts better even before reading the text of a lesson. Since it is difficult to create an entire separate curriculum that incorporates images and sounds in addition to texts as is often recommended for learning disabled students. It helps teachers to incorporate sounds, graphics and videos into an existing presentation without a large time investment. Students can repeatedly view the modules at home which reinforce the information presented in class. Researchers working with dyslexic students recommend paraphrasing information, substituting oral and visual presentations for written assignments, and advance access to reading assignments as strategies to compensate for this disability.

Today, educators realize that computer literacy is an important part of a student's education. Integrating technology into a course curriculum is proving to be valuable for enhancing and extending the learning experience for faculty and students. Many faculty members have found electronic mail to be a useful way to promote student-faculty communication between class meetings. Others use on-line notes to extend topic discussions and explore critical issues with students and colleagues, or discipline-specific software to increase student understanding of difficult concepts.

The teacher does not have to be more informed because in that case she will be teaching only what she knows. You must teach the child to ask for more from the teacher and the teacher should accept more from herself. Encourage children to push their own boundaries and find their own limits.

What is taught to the student is not what industry needs. There is a mismatch in graduate acquired skills in higher education and the need in industry. They need graduates who can think critically, analytically and creatively and develop problem solving skills. Use of multimedia helps to enhance students learning experience and diversify skills.

Distance learning is another new concept that has gained popularity. It is learning outside a structured classroom like TV programmes, correspondence courses, e mailing, virtual classrooms and interactive software.

Who is responsible for the quality of education? It is a difficult question to answer. But certainly a teacher is accountable for her class room teaching. Are you an ordinary teacher doing extra ordinary things in a creative way? Innovation should be the defining feature of the educational landscape. When there is innovation there should be vision. Let us try to increase the number of innovative teachers. Good teachers are rare and they do make a difference. They make their innovativeness look easy. Everyone cannot teach. Yet having entered the profession of teaching teachers need to understand a lot about change and opt for new teaching tools to resolve stress and achieve goals. Teachers must make pupils learn to ask and not accept. Define yourself in terms of your own classroom, school and sense of education. There is a need to rethink and re-conceptualise one's ideas.

Technology is not the be all and end all of education but it makes life more stress free if used judiciously. Technology is not the only answer to the problem of

improving the standards of education but certainly helps in making students more motivated and learning more comprehensive.

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