

DAY 2 : Session - V

Chairperson : Dr. D.V. Sharma, General Secretary COBSE
Co-Chair : Dr. Sadaqat Mehdi, Registrar, Virtual University of Pakistan
Rapporteur : Dr. Sandhya Kumar, Assistant Director, NIOS
Mr. Bijay Malik, NCERT, India

The Sri Lanka Experience...

The presentation regarding Open School in Sri Lanka was made by Dr. Shiromali Ferdinandez of Youth Friendly Service Centre (YFS). She



informed that in Sri Lanka, the student dropout rate varied with different age groups and was the highest at the level of secondary education. She said that students dropped out mainly due to economic reasons, because they were uncertain about further education, etc. Armed conflicts, poverty and the tsunami were quoted as other reasons. It was informed that the open schooling system had been adopted as the viable alternative to cater to the needs of the groups mentioned above. It was felt that open schooling would not only provide general education, but also equip the learners with some vocational skills, promote social harmony and build a learning society.

The target group of Open School was cases of dropouts and failures. It also included the pushed-

outs of the formal schools, the differently abled who have been unable to attend formal schools, those, especially females, who had grievances in education due to various socio-economic and cultural factors and people like nomads, e.g. gypsies, veddahs (native Sri Lankans) who could not usually enter formal schools. Children whose education had been affected due to war or natural disasters, victims of prolonged illnesses and those who were employed or unemployed but who seek opportunities for general education could also avail educational opportunities through Open School.

Dr. Ferdinandez spoke at length about implementation of Open Schools in Sri Lanka. She said that a number of different Open Schools had been created across Sri Lanka to meet the needs of different clients. These included the Muslim Schools, School for the differently abled, Literacy Schools amongst others.

Regarding the Youth Friendly Service Centre (YFS), Dr. Ferdinandez that there were many challenges that were faced at YFS. These included limited resources.

Following the presentations, the Chairperson, Dr. D.V. Sharma said that there was a need for emphasizing the life skill development programme for adolescents of Sri Lanka. He suggested that life skills should be included in the school context and an umbrella programme should be initiated through the school curriculum.