From the Chairman's Desk
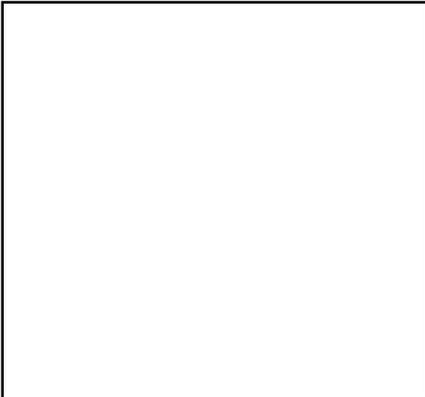
The unprecedent economic development coupled with the growth of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has placed the human resource development programmes of the developing countries at the centre stage of their developmental agenda. No country in the world can survive with dignity unless its population at large possesses certain essential survival skills and a minimum level of knowledge in various fields. In the context of Human Resource Development through Education, the developing countries of the world have been endeavouring to meet (i) the challenge of numbers, (ii) the challenge of credibility, and (iii) the challenge of quality. The World Education Forums have laid emphasis on Education For All (EFA). At the dawn of twenty first-century the developmental agenda encompasses not only "Education for All" (EFA) at Elementary stage but also the Universalisation of Secondary Education (USE).

The challenge of "reaching the unreached" can be met if the national governments provide for flexible and viable system of open learning along with the formal schooling programme. The increasing use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) will enable the developing countries to meet the challenge of educating the increasing number of prospective learners. The 21st Century has started posing new challenges, the responses to which need to be provided through multi-model schooling system, adopting multi-media approach including open learning, distance education, ICT based learning programmes, contact classes, peer learning and self study and, more importantly, learning of requisite skills.

In recent times some significant initiatives have been taken by India to widen access to School Education and enhance participation of learners in the educational process adopting Open and Distance Learning ODL modes of delivery.

The National Open School (NOS) was set up by the Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) in 1989 with a view to provide education through ODL mode to those who cannot attend regular schools. Since its inception, the NOS discharged the responsibility to promote the entire range of school education through open learning system in the country. It performed a significant role for defining standards in open schooling, experimenting with innovations, assisting State level organisations with professional resource support and expertise, and dissemination of tested innovations, curriculum and materials. In July 2002, the National Open School (NOS) was re-christened as the **National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS).**

For programme delivery, NIOS had adopted multi-media approach. The Self Learning Materials are provided to all enrolled students in printed form. The NIOS books of Secondary stage have been put on the Internet. CDs of NIOS books are available at a price. The Audio Cassettes of NIOS are particularly useful for blind students. The Media programmes of NIOS are telecast and broadcast regularly every month. The audio and video cassettes are made available to the Study Centres of NIOS. These can be accessed through TV, VCR and Audio Cassette Recorder. NIOS learners are allowed to take these cassettes on loan for a week from their Study Centres. Thus, it may be stated that **a comprehensive learner friendly programme delivery approach has been adopted by NIOS.**

NIOS continued provided educational opportunities to interested learners through Open Basic Education, Secondary, Senior Secondary and Vocational Education Courses/Programmes. With about 14 Lakh students are on roll, NIOS has emerged as the largest open schooling system in the world. The new enrolment during 2005-06 was 2,89,905.

In NIOS, **two examinations** are held **every year. Credits** secured by the student in examination are **accumulated.** These flexibilities provided by NIOS in its scheme of examinations remove the stress and strain of examinations that are faced by the students of formal system of schooling. During the period from 1991 to 2004, NIOS certified 5,70,337 students at Secondary stage and 3,34, 781 students at Senior Secondary stage. During the period from 1993 to 2004, NIOS certified 52761 students in different Vocational Education Courses. The total number of learners certified under Open Basic Education programme is 63,818.

A significant initiative of NIOS is the **ICT based On-Demand Examination System (ODES)** where assessment takes place when learner feels ready. Respecting the individuality and sovereignty of the learner, this scheme attempts to reduce the stress of appearing in all subjects at a fixed time under a fixed schedule.

The NIOS alone with its limited infrastructure cannot provide adequate responses to the educational challenges that could be met through the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode in the area of open schooling/continuing education. There is a **need to create a network of apex organizations for open schooling at national and state level.** Since its inception, NIOS has been endeavouring to persuade the states to set up State Open Schools (SOSs). Ten states (West Bangal, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Kerela, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir) have already set up SOSs.

To facilitate cooperation and interaction among **NIOS** and **State Open Schools** and other concerned agencies for expansion of activities pertaining to Open Learning system, a **National Consortium for Open Schooling (NCOS)** has already been established the **Secretariat** of NCOS is located in NIOS. It provides a forum for discussion on matters related to promotion of Open Schooling in India.

NIOS has been interacting with several developing countries in their endeavours for promotion of open schooling and capacity building. In this context, NIOS organizes for them advocacy programmes. An **International Centre for Training in Open Schooling (ICTOS)** has also been set up. The ICTOS offers Certificate, Advanced Certificate, and Diploma courses in Open Schooling. In collaboration with COL and UNESCO, the National Institute of Open Schooling (India) has organized several advocacy and consultancy programmes related to open schooling for African and Asian countries. It has also organized several international conferences for discussion on various issues pertaining to promotion of open schooling.

The Open Schooling system in India, which is at a take-off stage, has to have a great leap forward to meet the challenge of making the nation a learning society in a reasonable period of time. Keeping this in view, the **NIOS has prepared a Vision Document**. It provides a framework giving direction in which research, development, training, programme delivery, networking, extension and other programmes of NIOS should be conducted in order to best serve the object of implementing and promoting the open schooling programme in the country. According to the Vision Document:

◆ The NIOS will work **mainly as a Resource Organisation** in open schooling at national and international level with its usual programme delivery role.

◆ It is being envisaged that the **State Open Schools (SOSs) may assume major responsibility for expansion** of open schooling in India particularly due to the fact that the clientele (students) would generally opt for open schooling through Regional Mediums.

The State Open Schools are required to come forward to meet the challenges of education. In order to provide appropriate responses to the educational challenges, the State Open Schools (SOSs) may proceed further at an accelerated pace with well thought Vision and Mission. Among other things, the Vision Document prepared by NIOS may be suitably adapted by SOSs.

A sound base for open schooling has been created in India through a network of organizations and institutions that are partnering in the noble venture of reaching the unreached. However, there is a need to give impetus to this

system of open schooling through financial and other infrastructural facilities and sharing of more manpower and other resources of the formal education system. Among other things, the formal education system can help the open schooling system in various ways such as sharing of premises, utilization of the services of its staff, utilization of laboratories and other equipments.

We acknowledge with thanks the assistance and cooperation extended to NIOS by various national and international organization and educationists in planning and operationalisation of its various programmes and activities.

Based on the informational inputs provided by the constituents of NIOS, the Annual Report has been drafted by Prof. K.R. Chandrasekaran, Director (Academic), Mrs Gopa Biswas, Deputy Director (Academic), Dr. J.D. Sharma, and Shri D.N. Upreti, Section Officer, Administration Department. I thank them for their contribution.

(M.C. Pant)
Chairman, NIOS

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