



Transcending Barriers: Inclusive Education in the context of Open Schooling

A two day seminar on *Transcending Barriers: Inclusive Education in the context of Open Schooling* was organised by the Academic Department, National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi on



Sh. S.C. Khuntia, Joint Secretary, MHRD, GOI lighting the lamp to mark the inauguration of the seminar.

8 and 9 March 2011. Coinciding with the centenary year of International Women's Day, the seminar focused on women as a marginalized group because – even today there is a need to consciously include them in all streams of life including education. The by-line of the seminar was “**Supporting inclusion, challenging exclusion**”. Dr. S.S Jena was the Seminar Chairperson, Dr. Kuldeep Agarwal was the Seminar Director and Ms. Asheema Singh was the Seminar Coordinator.

The objective of the seminar was to establish that the fundamental principles of open and distance education are based on including diversities such as gender, nationality, race, language, social background, levels of educational achievement, abilities etc. aimed at achieving 'Barrier Free Education' which is unprejudiced and supportive in all forms.

The seminar provided a common platform for distinct groups of stakeholders such as Learners and their family members, Accredited Institutions of NIOS, officials of State Open Schools, School Professionals and Adolescent Mental Health Professionals to come together, learn, build capacity and collaborate. The seminar examined different parameters of inclusion of special groups. Groups of experts from different fields explored critical concerns of – gender based seclusion, school dropouts, socially disadvantaged groups, children with special needs, street children, children with learning disability and autism trafficked children etc. The underlying theme of the seminar was the **role of open distance education in facilitating inclusive education** at school level.

Conducted over two days, the broad themes covered included **Beyond Barriers and Breaking Barriers**. The seminar touched upon many serious issues like **Cultural and Disability Barriers**: Including gender barriers and ability barriers, **Socio-Economic Barriers and Initiatives**: Exploring the Value of Innovative Techniques for inclusive education.

Under **Breaking Barriers**, papers on **Life Skills for Life-Long Learning** were presented. A Session on **Voices from Within** was based on shared learning through discussions on Success stories from learners, Parents & Other Care givers. All the participants actively cooperated to draft 'The Road Map' in the session **Constructing New Possibilities**.

The programme was inaugurated by Sh S.C Khuntia, Joint Secretary, MHRD, Govt of India and **Mr. A. Parsuraman**, Director and representative from UNESCO was the Guest of Honour. The keynote address was delivered by **Dr. Rukmini Banerjee**, Director, PRATHAM. The Guest of Honour of the valedictory session was **Dr. Marc Derveeuw**, Country Representative A.I., UNFPA, India.

Apart from **Dr. S.S Jena**, Chairman, NIOS and **Dr. Kuldeep Agarwal**, Director (Academic), NIOS, **Dr. Shankar Chowdhary**, National Professional Officer, UNESCO, **Ms. Usha Ram**, Principal, Laxman Public School, **Mr. Amod Kanth**, Chairperson, Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights, (DCPCR), **Dr. Sushmita Mitra**, Director, Student Support Services (SSS), NIOS, **Mr. Vinod Raina** from Eklavya, **Dr. Shyama Chona**, President, Tamana, **Mrs. Madhu Ranjan** from USAID, **Ms Geeta Narayan**, Programme Officer from UNFPA, **Mrs. Mridula Seth** from Lady Irwin College, **Prof Frank Banks**, Director IDTE, UK Open University, **Dr. Jitendra Nagpal**, Program Director, Expressions India, **Ms. Gopa Biswas**, Joint Director from NIOS and **Dr. Huma Masood**, National Programme Officer, Gender & Special Needs Education were amongst many luminaries who presided over the sessions.

Welcoming the guests, Conference Chairperson, Dr. SS Jena, Chairman, NIOS said that Education is the key to all development. Keeping the huge number of out of school children in mind, it was felt that conventional schooling may not be adequate to meet the national aspiration of 'Education for All' (EFA). This has necessitated the promotion of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) approach as an alternative system. The cost effectiveness and wide outreach are some of the prime selling points of this system. Since its inception in 1989, the **National Institute of Open Schooling** (NIOS), has enrolled 1.6 million learners, and is the largest Open school in the world. It offers Academic, Vocational and Life Enriching courses at the Senior Secondary, Secondary and the Elementary level through 3700 Accredited Institutions (AIs), AVIs and AAs.

Dr. Kuldeep Agarwal, Director (Academic), NIOS and the Conference Director delivered the vote of thanks in the concluding session. He said that the seminar was organized to strengthen the outreach, inclusion of all and exclusion of none. He said that NIOS has taken a big step forward to partner with and network with like minded individuals and organizations and thanked Expressions India, Prayas and Tamana for the technical support. He congratulated Ms. Asheema Singh, Conference Coordinator for organizing this very important event.



Valedictory Session: Guest of Honour, Dr. Marc Derveeuw, Country Representative, A.I., UNFPA, India in the centre. Also seen in the picture are Dr. S.S. Jena, CM, NIOS and Dr. Kuldeep Agarwal, Director (Acad.), NIOS.

Reaching out to the Muslim Minority Community: Advocacy Programme organised by NIOS in Maharashtra

It is known that Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist and Parsi are identified as Community of Minorities by National Minority Commission. It constitutes 18% of the total population of the country. Amongst them, the Muslim Community has the highest percentage and is the second largest group constituting 13.4% (174 Million) of the population after the Hindu community of India. Also this group is the third largest Muslim population in the world. The percentage of drop-out children from Muslim community is 7.7% as compared to 4.8% of non-Muslim children.

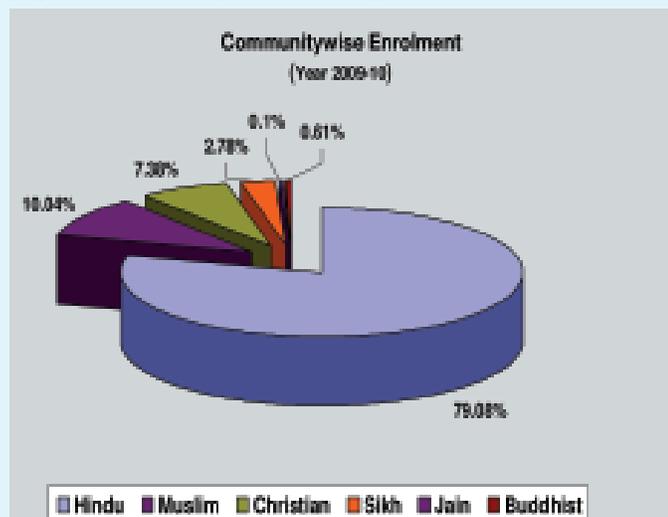
Considering the social, economic and educational problems of the Muslim community, NIOS is making efforts to provide educational opportunities for knowledge and skill development through distance learning mode. The unique features of NIOS promoting openness and flexibility remove barriers of education that exist in the traditional system following the principle of what to learn, when to learn, where to learn and how to learn depending on the convenience of the learners. The features are:

- Openness with respect to age and entry qualifications;
- Open choice of courses / subjects of study from a wide range of academic and vocational courses and combinations;
- Open choice of medium of instruction including several regional languages;
- Flexible scheme of examination;
- Credit Accumulation and Credit Transfer allowing for self-directed pace of learning over a five year period.

Although NIOS is making efforts to bring out of school Muslim children within the fold of education by accrediting Maktabas and Madarsas in the country and also becoming partners in other Policy Interventions of Government of India like Scheme for Providing Quality Education in Madarsas (SPQEM), it is seen that typically, only 10.04% of the total enrolment in NIOS are from the Muslim community. This is dismal.

It is felt that probably, the community is not aware of the unique features of NIOS which takes education to the doorstep of the learners.

With this view, NIOS not only established the Minority cell as a unit in NIOS in order to pay greater attention to the educationally backward minorities in the interest of equity and social justice, but also initiated extensive Advocacy programmes in different parts of the country.



On 30 March 2011, the NIOS organised one such advocacy programme in the State of Maharashtra jointly with Maharashtra Cosmopolitan Education Society (MCES) at Pune.

About 250 participants from all over Maharashtra namely from Jalgaon, Ahmednagar, Nagpur, Nashik, Aurangabad, Pune, Solapur, Beed, Latur, Nanded,



Advocacy Programme in Session

Daund, Thergaon, Kolhapur, Thane, Parbhani, Malegaon and Usmanabad districts participated. The objectives of the programme were to:

- Highlight the unique features/functions and activities of NIOS which makes open schooling accessible.
- State the role of NIOS in promoting the Minority community and hence provide linkages with main stream education through its various courses and programmes.
- Discuss the strategies for linking up with the Madrasas.

Mrs. Abeda Inamdar, the Vice President, MCES welcomed all participants and dignitaries, stated the objectives of the programme, and assured full-fledged support to all Madrasas coming forward for the noble cause of educating the drop-outs, girls and women and others in the community.

Dr.S.S.Jena, Chairman, NIOS, in his address explained the characteristics of Open Education and how NIOS is in the forefront in providing education to millions of all age group learners in the country and abroad as per the vision 'Reaching the Un-reached'. He also detailed the modalities of reaching out to minority organizations and stressed the need for it. He then announced the accreditation of MCES as an accredited institution for the Open Basic Education Programme of NIOS.

Dr. Sushmita Mitra, Director (Student Support Services), NIOS, briefed about various courses and programmes conducted by the NIOS and the inbuilt flexibilities and openness. She enlisted the benefits of these programmes and also gave detailed information on the student support activities of the Institute. She highlighted the network of accredited institutions functioning as study centers all over the country and welcomed all Madrasas to become partners to reach out to the Muslim community.



Advocacy Programme at Pune: Seen in the picture are (From L to R) Dr. S.S. Jena, CM, NIOS, Sh. Sanjay Kumar Sinha, RD, NIOS, RC, Pune and Ms. Abeda Inamdar, Vice-President, MCES.

Highlighting the positive changes happening in the sphere of education in the country, Mr (Prof.) P. A. Inamdar, President, MCES stated that it is important and the right time for the Muslim community to get maximum benefits because of this change. He felt that all opportunities that the Government is providing in education must be taken seriously and in that context he was willing to extend support to all those Madrasas who would come forward for establishing Accredited Institutions of NIOS. Following this, Mr. Abdul Karim Salar from Jalgaon appreciated the efforts of the NIOS.

The presentations led to a number of queries and doubts which were clarified in the discussion session by Dr. S. S. Jena, Chairman, NIOS, and Prof PA Inamdar, President, MCES.

The programme ended with a vote of thanks by Mr. Sanjay Kumar Sinha, Regional Director, NIOS, RC, Pune.

NIOS Organises Annual Meeting of NCOS

A two day Annual meeting of the National Consortium for Open Schooling (NCOS) was organised by the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) on 23 and 24 March 2001 at Hotel Samrat, New Delhi.

Inaugurating the programme, on 23rd March 2011, Sh. S. C. Kuntia, Joint Secretary, MHRD, Govt of India, emphasized on the need for the open schooling programme to cater to the educational requirements of a large number of school dropouts at the lower secondary and higher secondary levels. Appreciating the role of the NIOS in the promotion of Open Schooling in the country, he felt that the National Consortium Open Schooling (NCOS) consisting of the NIOS and the State Open Schools can take this major task forward by improving access, providing equity and cost effective quality study material.



Sh. S.C. Khuntia, Joint Secretary, MHRD, GOI inaugurating the Annual Meeting of NCOS.

Speaking in the context of improving Access and ensuring quality in the Open Schooling System, Sri. Kuntia stated the following :

Access

- In the context of attaining the goal of Universalisation of Secondary Education (USE), it has been envisaged that 15% of the students at Secondary stage may be taken care of by the Open Schooling system. It means that the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and the State Open Schools (SOSs) would be required to enrol about 120 lakh students at Secondary stage by 2016-17. In order to meet this target, the Open schooling programme in the country would need to be upscaled substantially. The State having SOSs or States that are in the process of setting up SOSs can seek financial assistance from MHRD, particularly for Innovative Projects and Programmes.
- In the Right to Education (RTE) document, the role of Open Schooling has not been explicitly mentioned. However, for achieving 100% enrolment at the Elementary stage, the Open Schools are also required to contribute a lot.
 - The Open Schools are required to provide Bridge Courses to those students who have not studied but are required to be admitted in their age specific classes.
 - Till such time, the State Governments are able to make provision of formal schooling in all areas, including those in difficult contexts, as per provisions of RTE Act, the Open Schooling programmes are relevant to fill up such gaps.

Quality

- In order to ensure quality in school education, it is required to ensure availability of qualified and trained teachers. There is a substantial number of less qualified and untrained teachers in several States. NIOS has been entrusted the responsibility of offering the Elementary Teachers Training Programmes for such teachers through Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode of education. NIOS has also set up a Capacity Building Cell (CBC) for Open schooling functionaries.
- A Framework for Examination Reforms in Open Schooling is required to be prepared and operationalised. The credibility of examinations being conducted by Open Schools need to be ensured. For monitoring of examinations, the process of examinations in the Examination Centres may be video taped.
- The On-Demand Examination System (ODES) of NIOS may be replicated by all State Open Schools.
- ICT should be used increasingly in almost all the processes of Open Schooling. NIOS may develop strategies and modus operandi in this regard.
- A dedicated 24x7 channel for telecast of the programmes of NIOS and CIET (NCERT) is in the offing. Its programmes may be gainfully used by the students of formal schools and Open Schools.
- The Open Schools are required to be actively associated in the Skill Development Programmes. This will facilitate intra-country and inter-country mobility of skilled persons.

The Joint Secretary also suggested that the Meeting of the General Body of NCOS may be convened twice a year so that the NIOS and SOSs may exchange ideas and experiences more frequently. He appealed to the state governments to speed up the process of setting up State Open Schools and urged the participants from State Open Schools to use the NCOS forum to deliberate and

develop common strategies to improve the use of ICT in different processes of the open schooling system, establish a credible evaluation system and focus on the vertical and horizontal mobility of academic and vocational education.

Welcoming the participants, Dr. S.S. Jena, Chairman, NIOS spoke on the need for an Action Plan to be developed by NCOS in the context of Right to Education (RTE) and Rashtriya Madhamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA). He also shared information on the setting up of a dedicated 24x7 educational channel soon by the NIOS and CIET. Sh. Kuldeep Agarwal, Director (Academic) explained the objectives of NCOS.

The two day meeting was attended by Education Secretaries of State and UTs, Chairpersons of State Open Schools as well as the Chairpersons of Boards of School Education of States proposing to set up State Open Schools.

Sh. G.G. Saxena, Secretary, NIOS proposed a vote of thanks.

NIOS Cell inaugurated at Port Blair

The NIOS proudly announces the opening of a cell at Port Blair in order to facilitate the people in general and learners in particular of this remote and beautiful island. The cell opened at the Shiksha Sadan, Port Blair was formally inaugurated by the Hon'ble Chairman, NIOS, Dr. Sitansu S. Jena at Shiksha Sadan, Port Blair on 14 March 2011. The inaugural function was also graced by Sri.G.G.Saxena, IAS, Secretary, NIOS, Sri. Sanjay Kumar Saxena, Secretary, Education, A&N Administration, Dr. R. Dev Das, Director of Education, Andaman & Nicobar Administration.

The establishment of this cell at Port Blair will help in effective monitoring and providing support to the existing study centres of NIOS. More than 3000 learners have joined NIOS from about 10 study centres spread all over the Island during 2010-11 in the first block of admission. These learners will now have the opportunity to interact with NIOS directly right in the island itself.

Addressing the gathering, the NIOS Chairman, Dr. Jena explained the special features of NIOS and the various benefits derived by learners from its flexible learner- friendly schemes.

He explained that the main objective of establishing a cell at Port Blair was to effectively monitor and provide support to the existing study centres of NIOS which would be subsequently upgraded to a sub-regional and Regional centre. He also assured that the possibility of having an On -Demand examination centre at Port Blair would be explored.

Expressing his happiness on the occasion, Sri G.G.Saxena, Secretary, NIOS urged the youth to utilize the benefit of the various vocational courses offered by NIOS in the hospitality sector, keeping in view the fast developing tourism activities in these islands.

Sri. Sanjay Kumar Saxena, Secretary, Education, A&N Islands emphasized on the need to increase the number of NIOS study centres in the northern, central and southern part of the Islands as the number of students enrolled increased from 1826 in the year 2006-07 to 3350 in 2010-11, indicating an increase of around 15% to 20% every year.

Appreciating the fact that the NIOS, which made its small presence here decades ago has grown to become a full fledged cell for the benefit of its learners, Dr. R. Dev Das, Director of Education, A&N Islands assured the NIOS of support and cooperation from the Department of Education, Andaman and Nicobar Administration for expansion of its activities in these Islands.

Sri D. Vijay Kumar, Nodal Officer, NIOS said that the setting up of the NIOS cell would help in further expanding the services of the NIOS in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands through its accredited institutions.

Shri Aditi Ranjan Rout, Regional Director, NIOS, Regional Centre, Kolkata explained the various flexibilities offered by NIOS in the choice of subjects, admission, and examination and latest developments such as 100% online admission, revaluation of answer books, inclusion of new subject like Bengali at Sr. Secondary level etc.

The inaugural function ended with a vote of thanks proposed by Shri Aditi Ranjan Rout.

Shoobh Arts Competition

ShOobh Group Welfare Society , a Delhi based not-for-profit organization is organizing the following competitions based on the theme, **People 'n' Animal**.

- Shoobh Photography Contest
- Shoobh Arts Competition

Participants must be between 5-18 years. Interested NIOS learners may send their entries by 15th August, 2010 to Director (Academic), National Institute of Open Schooling, A-24-25, Sector-62, Institutional Area, NOIDA-201309. Entry form and other relevant details can be downloaded from the website www.shoobharts.com

Orientation Programme for Science Tutors

An two day Orientation Programme for Science Tutors of newly Accredited Institutions (AIs) of Delhi and NCR Region was organized by the Delhi Regional Centre of NIOS on 3rd and 4th March, 2011. Twenty eight teachers from 14 different AIs participated in the programme. The objective of the programme was to orient these teachers of the formal school system on the philosophy and methodology of the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) System .

Addressing the participants, Dr.S.S.Jena, Chairman, NIOS pointed out the need for training to enrich the capabilities of tutors. Dr Sushmita Mitra, Director (Student Support Services) NIOS emphasized on the importance of learning Science and effective Science teaching strategies with special emphasis on ODL. Director (Academic) NIOS, Dr. Kuldeep Agarwal described the importance of Self Study Material and the role played by Personal Contact Programmes in the Open Schooling System. Eminent Science expert, Dr. Bharti Sarkar and Project Coordinator, Adolescent Education Programme (AEP), Mrs. Asheema Singh were also present and addressed the participants.

In a group work session, the participants prepared and presented model lessons on topics of their own choice. The purpose of this activity was to include introduction, transaction and evaluation suitable for PCPs which is different from classroom teaching.

On day two, Sh. S.K. Misra, NIOS Regional Director, Delhi discussed the scheme of examination of NIOS and shared with the participants the process of preparing learners for the public examination which is conducted twice a year. Mrs. Manju Gupta, Deputy Director, NIOS gave a presentation on Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs) and Sh. S.K Prasad, SAP, NIOS gave a detailed presentation on the On-Demand Examination System (ODES) of NIOS.

Presiding over the Valedictory Session, Ms. Veera Gupta, Secretary, Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) presented her thought provoking views on inculcating a scientific temper in the learners. The programme ended with a vote of thanks to all the participants.

NIOS- NLMA Basic Literacy Assessment Programme

A collaborative initiative of the National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA) and National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), the Basic Literacy Assessment

Programme is a massive programme with the active involvement of various governmental and non-governmental institutions/departments right from the national level to Panchayati Raj institutions.

Learner assessment is a process of ascertaining the outcomes of the programmes on two aspects; the proficiency level attained by a learner in achieving literacy skills (3Rs) and the empowerment experienced through participation in the programme assessment of literacy skills. This is being done by using the tools constructed as per the norms of National Literacy Mission (NLM). The proficiency levels are to be ascertained through tools constructed to assess the reading, writing and numeracy skills as per the NLM norms.

In the assessment programme which was held on 6 March 2011, an approximate number of 47.72 lakh learners out of a target of 54.15 neo-literates from the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Sikkim, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Chattisgarh participated.

The learners will be awarded a joint certificate of NLM and NIOS as designed and developed by NIOS.

Success Story

Prabhleen Singh



A doctor by profession, Dr. Prabhleen Singh is a successful NIOS learner who is presently preparing for the MD/MS entrance exams. Sharing his experiences at a seminar recently held by the NIOS, he said that he had benefitted immensely from the system of open schooling. A student of Delhi Public School, R.K. Puram, Delhi, Prabhleen chose to enroll for the Senior Secondary course of the NIOS to enable him to pursue education in a flexible manner.

Dr. Singh is also a published author. His first work, "And The Mirror Kissed Back" was published in 2008 by Cinnamon Teal Press, Goa.

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National Institute of Open Schooling

A-24-25, Institutional Area, Sector-62, NOIDA, UP

Website : www.nios.ac.in

Toll Free No. 18001809393