

**Consultative Workshop on
“Promotion of Virtual Open Schooling”**

15 May 2015

REPORT

Organized by

National Institute of Open Schooling

in Collaboration with

Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia

SESSION I- INAUGURAL

A one day National Consultative Workshop for Promotion of Virtual Open Schooling was organized on 15th May 2015 at National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) Headquarters with the collaboration of Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA). The chief- guest of the programme was Prof. Mohd. Akhtar Siddiqui, Former Chairman, NCTE. Inaugural session was initiated with the floral welcome, lighting of lamp and playing the NIOS song. The inaugural plenary session had brief addresses by Prof. C.B. Sharma, Chairman, NIOS, Dr. R.C. Sharma, Director, CEMCA, Prof. Mohd. Akhtar Siddiqui, Former Chairman, NCTE and Dr. Kuldeep Agarwal, Director Academic.

During welcome address Prof. C.B. Sharma, Chairman NIOS emphasized the importance of Virtual Open Schooling through open and distance learning (ODL). The idea of Virtual Open Schooling (VOS) is to create knowledge and make it available digitally to the learners thus provide new ways and opportunities in the teaching learning process. He further opined that knowledge is the key part to the 21st century and as an organization, NIOS should work for it because knowledge is also money. No one should be denied opportunities of education. Opportunities of education to be given to all the children and should not be denied in any form because today it is a constitutional right guaranteed by the Right to Education Act. NIOS has to be geared to motivate the learners because once they fail to succeed they become demotivated and do not return to the system. So the most important task is to bear the conviction to develop and provide the best quality of material and technology in an efficient manner. He concluded by saying that the priority is to identify our learners and their requirements. He said that the provision of online self-learning materials (SLM) is an excellent opportunity to bring all the learners together on one platform. All educational material must be shared publicly because it is an open resource.

In the remarks Dr. R.C. Sharma, Director, CEMCA informed that work on the development of e-content in five subjects of NIOS had been initiated in a joint project of NIOS-CEMCA. He assured of the timely completion of the task of VOS. He also extended his wholehearted support in the development of e-content in other subjects as well. He laid stress on the importance of technology and said that this is the age of technology and we have to utilize it fully in the teaching learning processes. The VOS shall not only help NIOS learners but also be extremely beneficial for other stake holders like State Open Schools in the States of India. He concluded by thanking NIOS for their willingness to engage with the latest technology for the benefit of their learners and hoped that the workshop would be fruitful and beneficial to NIOS and all other stakeholders.

Prof. Mohd. Akhtar Siddiqui, Former Chairman, National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), in his inaugural address talked about the cardinal principles of success. He emphasized that the learners are at the core of the teaching learning system and they should always be motivated. The learners need to be imparted certain skills, so that they capitalize on the market opportunities. The gap between the supply and demand needs to be minimized through quality education in the school sector. He further said that there was no doubt that education faces numerous challenges like access and quality but the system has to work together to minimize these challenges. The variety of languages spoken and the economic divide are the most challenging in this respect. The possibility of choices can be increased through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Educational ICT today is seen as an opportunities to study anywhere at any time and VOS shall be a very effective addition. He further stressed that the conventional or formal system of education makes effective use of internet and other technology. Similarly, the non-conventional or the 'open' system can also use it as an effective technique for teaching learning. The most important part of this system is to provide technology as per the need and requirement of learners while considering the cost and economies of scale.

The vote of thanks was delivered by Dr. Kuldeep Agarwal, Director Academic. He pointed that the VOS is the need of the day and it is the appropriate time to bring learners under the umbrella of ICT. He said that it is very important to provide quality material; to re-visit the learning material of NIOS, digitize it and make it public. He also informed NIOS shall take up the development of e-content in all the subjects at Secondary and Secondary levels. He thanked all the participants from the State Open Schools, NIOS and other national and state level bodies.

SESSION II- TECHNICAL SESSION

In his introductory remarks at the beginning of the session, Dr. Kuldeep Agarwal, Director (Academic) highlighted the importance of VOS for open school learners. He said that the VOS platform was launched by NIOS in collaboration with CEMCA to serve learners to continue their education and skill development. This workshop is a way to carry forward the initiatives taken to work further on the platform. He emphasised that the VOS will empower the learners to learn at their own pace at any time. Dr. Agarwal also informed the participants about the objectives of the programme and significance of Virtual Open Schooling.

This was followed by the technical session. Sh. S.K. Prasad, System Analyst and Programmer (SA/P), NIOS explained the technical features of the VOS and the activities

which would be covered under VOS. Virtual Open Schooling (VOS) of NIOS provides opportunity to learners to study online courses and earn credits for certification. The courses are based on existing courses of NIOS including its Open Educational Resources (OER), and are built around a learning management system with content stored on online repositories. Digital media integration would facilitate effectiveness of curriculum. Synchronous and asynchronous technologies would facilitate interaction - with peers, with teachers, and with content. VOS is accessible at <http://vos.nios.ac.in>. He informed that presently NIOS offers two vocational courses through the VOS, i.e. ICT Applications and Rural Technology which are already developed under NIOSOER. He emphasized Virtual Open Schooling systems are beneficial in the following manner:

- Flexibility: Anywhere anytime access, learners can enrich their skills in learning a new subject or take up a course or class normally not available at their schools
- Lower costs: Saves on permanent infrastructure costs
- Access to high quality education: Access to quality teachers and peers, increases collaboration

NIOS is using Learning Management system (LMS) for the direct interaction between the learners and teachers which has enabled the following features:

- ✓ Online Admissions
- ✓ Online content related to the subjects with multimedia (audio, video, animation, simulation etc.)
- ✓ Online live Chat-rooms
- ✓ Discussion Forum
- ✓ Blog
- ✓ Online Classes through Video- conferencing
- ✓ Online assessment
- ✓ Different media used for classes i.e. Presentation, documents, video, animation etc.

SESSION III- GROUP WORK

The objective of the consultative workshop was also to make the participants aware of the issues involved in offering the courses through the virtual open schooling platform. In order to foster a clear understanding of the issues, all the participants were requested to deliberate upon the challenges and faced and their recommendations while discussing the following issues--

1. Registration/ Admission Issues
2. Delivery mode
3. Evaluation

The groups separately brainstormed on the challenges, opportunities and threats in these areas of Virtual Open Schooling. All the groups were requested to make a presentation of the deliberations of their group. Dr R.C. Sharma, Director, CEMCA moderated the group presentations.

Group I - Registration/ Admission Issues

Deliberating upon the given topic the members of the group identified the major challenges in the area of registration/ admission. They were able to pinpoint eight areas of concern such as-

1. Lack of IT literacy
2. Lack of brand image of institution
3. Lack of Internet infrastructure at user end
4. Verification of documents
5. Cost of advertising, publicity etc.
6. Fees
7. Virtual Labs
8. Funding support

After identifying the challenges, a discussion was held on how to overcome these challenges so that probable candidates can take admission smoothly and effortlessly. Their recommendations are-

- Introduce Mobile applications that will ensure a wider reach.
- Provide Tablets with pre-loaded content which will reduce the infrastructure cost address the issue of availability of materials.
- Content may be developed in Regional Languages.
- Multimedia rich content is desirable
- Aggressive advertising and publicity, SMS alerts on “Why VOS of NIOS”
- Fee may be allowed to be paid in installments
- Scholarship assistance may be considered
- Assistance for obtaining an education loan may be given
- Offer Job Portal Link to Recruiter

Group II - Delivery mode

Discussing the issues in the delivery modes for virtual open schooling, this group identified the following challenges in the delivery of the content in VOS-

- (i) Infrastructure- No/poor internet connectivity, problem of electricity supply, overcharging by cyber cafes for accessing e-content
- (ii) Lack of content in the regional language/vernacular
- (iii) Structuring of content to suit the varied pace of learners
- (iv) Necessity of frequent updates of the content
- (v) Advocacy of the content of VOS
- (vi) Coordination between the content developers and the various stakeholders

The group made the following recommendations to address the challenges-

- Development of mobile applications for easy access of content
- Collaboration with the State Open Schools regarding the development of e-content in the vernacular
- Utilisation of the Common Services Centres for the facilitation of VOS.
- Use of suitable software for practical components of the content

Group III - Evaluation

The third group was tasked with identifying the challenges in evaluation of the courses offered through the VOS platform. These are-

- (i) Mentors to be trained for keeping all records related to evaluation (tracks)
- (ii) Assessing through subjective items.
- (iii) Giving credit for formative assessment
- (iv) Assessing practical components.
- (v) Authentication of the examinee
- (vi) Assessment of values and skills

The recommendations of the group are-

- Giving credit for both formative and summative assessment at the time of certification
- Variety of tools may be used for formative assessment- MCQs Quizzes matching puzzles, one word fill in the blanks, etc.
- Training of mentors should be done
- Clear criteria for assessing summative items needs to be developed

SESSION IV- CONCLUSION & WAY FORWARD

Speaking at the Valedictory Address Prof. C.B. Sharma, Chairman, NIOS said that NIOS has to take the lead and play a vital role as a mentor for under-privileged learners. Prof. Sharma stressed that the poorest learner of India should be a part of NIOS for the purpose of nation building. Prof. Sharma assured that all efforts shall be made to expedite the development of the online course materials and more subjects shall be taken up in the same manner. He thanked all the participants, especially the representatives from the State Open Schools who had spared their time on short notice to attend the workshop.

**National Institute of Open Schooling
&
Commonwealth Education Media Centre for Asia**



**National Consultative Workshop for
Promotion of Virtual Open Schooling**
Conference Room, I Floor, Chairman Block, NIOS
Date: 15 May, 2015

Time	Session	Format	Facilitator/Presenter
9:30 – 10:00	Registration		
10:00 – 11:00	INAUGURAL SESSION	Plenary Session	<i>Floral Welcome, Lighting of Lamp, NIOS Song</i>
	Welcome Address		Prof. C.B. Sharma , Chairman, NIOS
	Remarks		Dr. R.C. Sharma , Director, CEMCA
	Inaugural Address		Prof. Mohd. Akhtar Siddiqui , Former Chairman, NCTE
	Vote of Thanks		Dr Kuldeep Agarwal , Director (Academic), NIOS
11:00 – 11:15	Health Break		
11:15 – 12:00	Virtual Open Schooling	Plenary Session and Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory remarks Dr Kuldeep Agarwal • Technical Report Mr S.K. Prasad, SA/P, NIOS
12:00 – 13:30	Group Work	Group Discussion	Themes- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration/ Admission Issues • Delivery modes • Evaluation: Formative and Summative
13:30 – 14:30	Lunch		
14:30 – 15:30	The Way Forward	Plenary Session and Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of group reports Moderator- Dr. Manas Ranjan Panigrahi , Programme Officer, CEMCA
15:30 – 16:00	Valediction	Plenary Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remarks Dr. R.C. Sharma, Director, CEMCA • Valedictory Address Prof. C.B. Sharma, Chairman, NIOS • Vote of Thanks Mr R. Thyagarajan, HAF, CEMCA

List of Participants
(NIOS Faculty)

Sl. No.	Name	Designation
1.	Dr. C.B. Sharma	Chairman, NIOS
2.	Shri. C. Dharuman	Secretary, NIOS
3.	Dr. Kuldeep Agarwal	Director, (Acad.)
4.	Sh. S.K Prasad	SAP
5.	Dr. Sandhya Kumar	D.D.(Academic)
6.	Dr. Mamta Srivastava	D.D. (Vocational)
7.	Dr. Manju Gupta	D.D. (Vocational)
8.	Dr. Rachna Bhatia	A.D. (Academic)
9.	Dr. Kaushlaya Barik	A.D.(Academic)
10.	Dr. Manoj Thakur	REO
11.	Mr. Ram Narayan Meena	A.O.(Sanskrit)
12.	Sh. Sukant Mahapatra	A.O.(Sociology)
13.	Dr. Azmat Noori	A.O. (History)
14.	Ms. Shivali Chawla	A.O.(Secretarial Practice)
15.	Dr. Shoaib Raza Khan	A.O. (Urdu)
16.	Ms. Tarun Punia	A.O. (Geography)
17.	Dr. Chunnu Prasad	A.O. (Political Science)
18.	Dr. Saumya Rajan	A.O. (English)
19.	Dr. Piyush Prasad	A.O. (Accountancy)

20.	Dr. Alok Kumar Gupta	A.O.(Physics)
21.	Ms. Radhika B	A.O.(ICT)
22.	Dr. B.K. Rai	A.O.(Hindi)
23.	Ms. Madhur Bhatia	A.O.(Teacher Education)
24.	Dr .Rajender Kumar Nayak	A.O. (Maths)
25.	Dr. Neelima Pant	A.O. (Agriculture)
26.	Dr. Sanghmitra Suryapani	A.O. (Biology)
27.	Ms. Asheema Singh	Project Co-ordinator (AEP)
28.	Ms. Neelam Gupta	SEO (Academic)
29.	Ms. Sanchita Bhattacharya	SEO (Academic)

List of Participants (Invitees)

Sl. No.	Name	Organization
1.	Dr. R.C. Sharma	Director, CEMCA
2.	Dr. Manas Ranjan Panigrahi	Programme Officer, CEMCA
3.	Dr. K.M Veerraiah	Director JSS Karnataka Open School
4.	Smt. P.Parvati	Director Andhra Pradesh SOS
5.	Smt.Tumngam Loyi Nyodu	State Project Officer Arunachal Pradesh SOS
6.	Dr.Dharinidhar Goswami	Dy Secretary Assam SOS
7.	Ms. Kaneez Fatima	Director (Academic) Jammu and Kashmir SOS
8.	Shri. S.R Mohanty	Additional Chief Secretary Madhya Pradesh State Open School
9.	Shri.Daya Ram Maharia	Secretary Rajasthan SOS
10.	Dr. R.K. Parasar	Professor NCERT
11.	Dr. Yash Pal Sharma	Dr. Yash Pal Sharma Assistant Professor NCERT
12.	Dr. Anil Gaur	Dr. Anil Gaur Board of School Education Haryana
13.	Mr. Nepal SinghTanwar	Assistant (Academic) Board of School Education Haryana