

A Critical Study of the 1990-94 Enrolment in the National Open School

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National Open School (NOS) has been functioning as an autonomous body since 1989-90. It had been functioning as an "Open School" with CBSE from 1979-80 to 1988-89. From 1990 National Open has been conducting a bridge course and two other courses in the Secondary and Senior Secondary stages. It has set up several Accredited Institutions (AIs) in India in different States and Union Territories for academic and vocational courses. Universalisation of education, promotion of equality and justice in the society and expansion of democratic values amongst the peoples of India, are the major objectives of NOS. Besides, it has promised to extend educational opportunities particularly to women, scheduled castes and tribes, the rural poor, unemployed and partly employed peoples of India in the age group of 15 to 35 years.

The utility of NOS will be relevant in a democratic country like India, only when it fosters the spirit of democracy, by universalising education, irrespective of any kind of geographical social or political barriers and by expanding its network within the country, in smooth homogeneity. National Open School should not deviate from its mission and should provide educational opportunities to hitherto neglected sections of the society. We expect this paper to stimulate more thinking on the issue raised here so as to focus the attention of distance educators and policy makers towards shaping appropriate and viable policies to spread distance education at the school level.

The author analyses the registration status of the students of NOS in different states to find out whether any imbalance existed in enrolment with respect to the regional distribution of students in India. He also estimates enrolment rate in the AIs in different States and finds that numbers of AIs in a particular State were not in conformity with the strength of enrolment there. The author has concluded that activities of NOS were highly localised and specific planning was not ensured before expanding its network in the country.

INTRODUCTION

The Eighth Plan (1992-97) of the government of India gives priority to the ongoing concern of human resource development. The plan reads, "It is now universally acknowledged that the goal of plan efforts is human development of which human resource development is a necessary pre-requisite. Education is the catalytic factor, which leads to human resource development," In the 1991 census the literacy rate was slightly higher than 52 percent. But Eighth Plan still included universalisation of elementary education as the priority area, along with eradication of adult illiteracy, achievement of Education for all, by 2000 A.D. and strengthening of vocational education. To achieve these goals Eighth Plan proposed to utilise the formal, non-formal and open channels of learning. The plan further elaborates, "A combination of vocational and academic courses would be offered at secondary stages with open education as an important channel". Presumably with these objectives in view National Open School was geared up in India, in response to the above recommendation of the Eighth Plan.

The National Open School proposed (NOS) to give priority to the following categories of candidates, in the matter of admission.

- (a) Women
- (b) Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

- (c) Rural and Urban poor
- (d) Unemployed, partly employed candidates, and those who are in search of employment
- (e) Candidates within age limits of 15 to 35 years.

The reasons for joining NOS, were assumed to be the following:

- a) Failure in the regular courses of formal schools.
- b) Financial backwardness of the peoples.
- c) Geographical distance of the place of residence of the candidates.
- d) Necessity of certificates for employment.
- e) Social and cultural constraints and other liabilities of the family.

STUDENT ENROLMENT

NOS received the autonomous status in the year 1990. In that very academic year (1990-91) altogether 40,884 students were initially admitted to the Bridge Course, Secondary Course and Senior Secondary Course offered by NOS. The largest number of students (20,889) which was 51.09 percent of the total enrolment in that academic year, were admitted in the secondary stage, while 42.44 percent of the total enrolment went to Senior Secondary Course that registered 17351 students in that year. In short, these two courses of NOS received a remarkable response from the expected categories of students. But the Bridge Course had registered 6.47 percent of total

enrolment in that academic session, enrolling only 2644 candidates.

In the following academic years enrolment pattern retained the same trend in all the three courses and an overall growth of registration was observed in NOS. The graph (1) indicates the variation of student enrolment in NOS for different academic years starting from (1990-91) to (1993-94).

STATE WISE REGISTRATION

In the academic year 1990-91, NOS continued its activity

in 26 States and 5 Union Territories of India. It gradually expanded its network in the following academic years to other States and Union Territories. Tripura and Goa came under its umbrella from the year (1991-92) while Meghalaya, Pondicherry, Daman and Diu were included in the NOS-Network from the year 1992-93. Table-1 shows the Registration status of the students in NOS at various States and Union Territories of India.

An Analysis of student profile at different States as indicated in Table-1, shows that the states can be classified into Four Categories, on the basis of the trends of enrolment in them.

Table 1 : State wise Registration Status of the Students in NOS

Center Code	State Name	1990-91		1991-92		1992-93	
		Total Enrolment	Percentage	Total Enrolment	Percentage	Total Enrolment	Percentage
1.	Andhra Pradesh	381	0.93	391	1.12	616	1.15
2.	Assam			55	0.16	78	0.15
3.	Bihar	7,548	1.34	633	1.82	1,038	1.94
4.	Gujrat	107	0.26	121	0.35	95	0.18
5.	Haryana	5,127	12.54	3,997	11.50	6,114	11.41
6.	Himachal Pradesh	228	0.56	353	1.01	876	1.64
7.	J & K	49	0.11	35	0.10	67	0.13
8.	Karnataka	186	0.45	175	0.50	199	0.37
9.	Kerala	240	0.58	40	0.11	126	0.24
10.	Madhya Pradesh	494	1.20	478	1.37	757	1.41
11.	Maharashtra	1,918	4.69	1,627	4.67	2,679	5.00
12.	Manipur	424	1.03	609	1.75	956	1.78
13.	Meghalaya	—	—	—	—	32	0.06
14.	Nagaland	192	0.47	644	1.85	1,155	2.16
15.	Orissa	316	0.77	237	0.68	234	0.44
16.	Punjab	858	2.10	729	2.09	901	1.68
17.	Rajasthan	1,051	2.57	1,658	4.77	1,721	3.21
18.	Sikkim	1,273	3.11	481	1.38	854	1.59
19.	Tamilnadu	164	0.40	99	0.28	205	0.38
20.	Tripura	—	—	177	0.50	403	0.75
21.	Uttar Pradesh	1,657	4.05	1,620	4.65	4,033	7.53
22.	West Bengal	5,127	12.52	6,097	17.53	6,850	12.79
23.	A & N Island	91	0.22	221	0.63	350	0.65
24.	Arunachal Pradesh	250	0.61	881	2.53	1,250	2.33
25.	Chandigarh	1,368	3.35	691	1.98	1,281	2.39
26.	Delhi	18,527	45.32	11,879	34.15	19,485	36.38
27.	Goa	—	—	181	0.52	368	0.69
28.	Mizoram	287	0.70	643	1.85	771	1.44
29.	Pondichery	27	0.06	39	0.11	58	0.11
30.	APO	—	0.06	39	0.11	58	0.11
31.	Daman & Diu	—	—	—	—	05	0.01

Source: All India Registration Status of the Students (1990-91), (1991-92), (1992-93): National Open School, New Delhi.

Category I

Upward Trend: In some States and Union Territories NOS had registered a growing trend in overall enrolment at the succeeding academic years. The number of states coming under this category is 14 and these States are: Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland, Rajasthan, Tripura, West Bengal, Delhi, Andaman & Nicobar Island, Arunachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, APO, Goa and Mizoram. It is obvious that Northern and North-Eastern states exhibited good response in student-enrolment.

Distant and geographically isolated states like Andaman & Nicobar Island, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland showed very encouraging response to NOS. In Nagaland, the enrolment percentage had increased from 0.47 (1990-91) to 2.16 (1992-93), a five fold increase in just three years. In Arunachal Pradesh the corresponding increase was from 0.61 percent to 2.33 percent in 1992-93.

Category II

Downward Trend: In this category of States and Union Territories there is a downward trend of enrolment in NOS since 1990-91. This category includes the following States and Union Territories: Gujrat, Haryana, Kerala, Orissa, Punjab, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, and Chandigarh.

In Gujrat, normal enrolment is remarkably low, that again drops from 107 (1990-91) to 95 (1992-93). In Haryana, the number of students enrolled in NOS, however increased from 5127 (1990-91) to 6114 (1992-93), but in respect of the percentage of enrolment in the national framework, the strength drops from 12.54 percent (1990-91) to 11.41 percent (1992-93). Karnataka, Kerala, Orissa, Tamil Nadu responded poorly to the Open School movement in India.

In other words, the Southern states in general did not show spontaneous and encouraging reactions to National Open School.

Category III

Steady Trend: In this category of States, the rate of enrolment did not fluctuate abruptly in the year under study and remained more or less steady with respect to the percentage of students enrolled in NOS. Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh remained in this category.

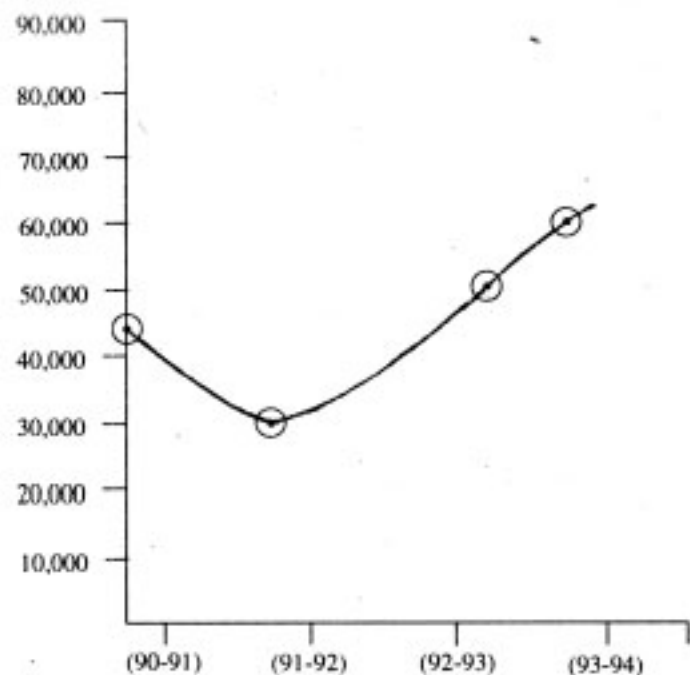
Category IV

Sudden Fall: Enrolment rate had dropped in most of the states during the academic year 1991-92. In Chandigarh, Delhi, Kerala, Haryana, Sikkim and Tamil Nadu, there was a stupendous fall in registration in this session. In Delhi, the number of students dropped from 18,527 (1990-91) to 11,879 (1991-92), a fall of nearly 11.17 percent. In

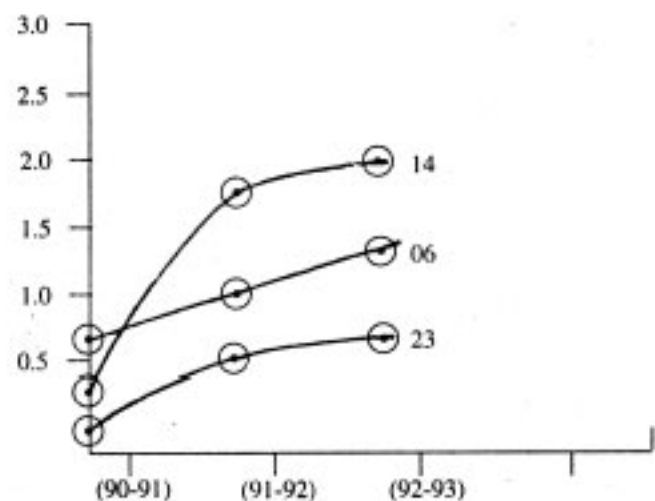
Kerala, the enrolment was normally very low, and it again dropped from 240 (1990-91) to mere 40 (1991-92), a fall of 0.47 percent. In Sikkim it dropped from 1273 (1990-91) to 481 (1991-92), a fall of 1.73 percent.

However, some states offered tremendous resistance to this downward trend of enrolment in the academic year 1991-92. Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujrat, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Mizoram, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Arunachal Pradesh had retained the increasing trend of enrolment even at this academic session (1992-93). In Rajasthan enrolment percentage nearly doubled from 2.57 (1990-91) to 4.77 (1991-92) in this period.

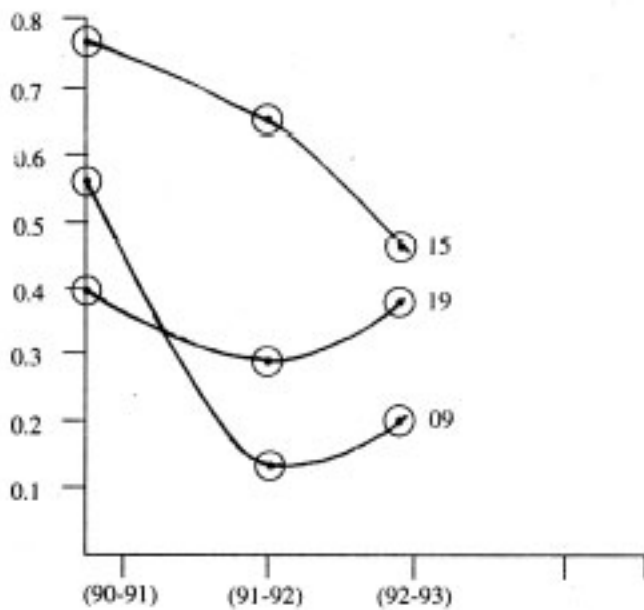
The trends of enrolment in different categories of States for the academic sessions under study, are shown graphically in the graphs 2, 3 and 4. In this case only a few states are considered, in each category and they are indicated by the corresponding code numbers.



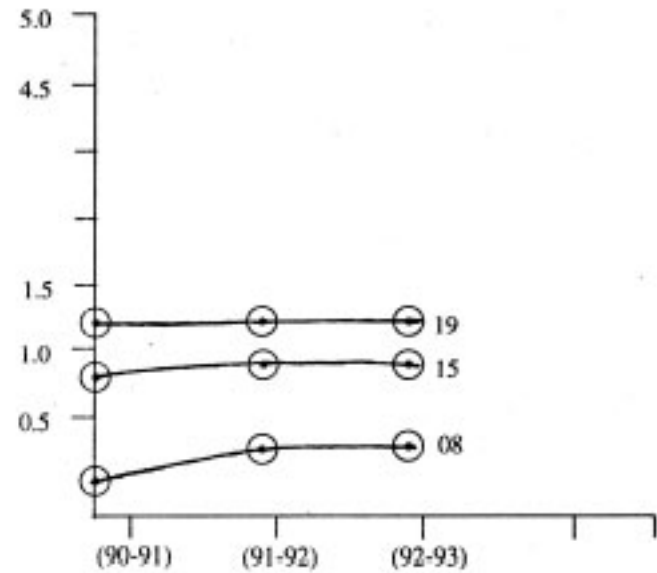
Graph 1 : Growth of enrolment in NOS from (1990-91) to (1993-94).



Graph 2 : Category I : States: Enrolment exhibits upward trend



Graph 3 : Category II : States: Enrolment Exhibits
Downwards trend



Graph 4 : Category III : States: Enrolment Exhibits
Steady Trend

Accredited Institutions (AIs)

According to the informations obtained from NOS, till 3rd August 1992, there were 303 AIs for academic courses and 16 for vocational courses within its network in India. Table 2 shows the number of AIs in each state and also the enrolment rate for each AI in the corresponding state, for the academic session (1992-93). This academic session was considered for the study because the overall trend of enrolment in NOS became steady from this academic year onwards.

In the academic session (1992-93) total enrolment in NOS was 53,567, of which 10,385 (19.38 percent) students enrolled for vocational courses and 43,182 (80.61 percent) students enrolled for academic courses. So the overall average enrolment per AI is estimated to be 168.45. But considering AIs (16) for the vocational courses only, the average enrolment rate per AI is estimated to be 649.06, and for AIs of academic courses, (302) the enrolment rate is calculated to be 142.98, which is presumably closer to the overall average value of enrolment per AI.

Table 2 : Enrolment Rate per Accredited Institution of NOS for the Academic Year (1992-93) at different States

Centre Code	Name of the State	Total Enrolment in academic year 1992-93	Percentage of Enrolment	Number of Academic Study Centres	Number of Vocational Study Centres	Enrolment Per AI
1.	Andhra Pradesh	616	1.15	5	—	123.20
2.	Assam	78	0.15	1	—	78.00
3.	Bihar	1,038	1.94	14	3	61.05
4.	Gujrat	95	0.18	2	1	31.67
5.	Haryana	6,114	11.41	25	—	244.56
6.	Himachal Pradesh	876	1.64	10	—	87.60
7.	Jammu & Kashmir	67	0.13	1	—	67.00
8.	Karnataka	199	0.37	3	—	66.33
9.	Kerala	126	0.24	4	1	25.20
10.	Madhya Pradesh	757	1.41	10	—	75.70
11.	Maharashtra	2679	5.00	12	1	206.07
12.	Manipur	956	1.78	3	—	318.67
13.	Meghalaya	32	0.06	1	—	32.00
14.	Nagaland	1155	2.16	4	—	288.75
15.	Orissa	234	0.44	4	1	46.80

16.	Punjab	901	1.68	6	—	150.16
17.	Rajasthan	1721	3.21	17	—	101.23
18.	Sikkim	854	1.59	6	—	142.34
19.	Tamil Nadu	205	0.38	4	1	41.00
20.	Tripura	403	0.75	1	—	403.00
21.	Uttar Pradesh	4033	7.53	35	2	109.00
22.	West Bengal	6850	12.79	33	1	201.47
23.	A&N Island	350	0.65	2	—	175.00
24.	Arunachal Pradesh	1250	2.33	4	—	312.50
25.	Chandigarh	1281	2.39	6	1	183.00
26.	Delhi	19,485	36.38	81	4	229.23
27.	Goa	368	0.69	3	—	122.67
28.	Mizoram	771	1.44	2	—	385.50
29.	Pondichery	10	0.02	1	—	10.00
30.	APO	58	0.11	1	—	58.00
31.	Daman & Diu	05	0.01	1	—	05.00

Sources: 1. All India Registration Status of the Students (1992-93): State wise distribution: National Open School, New Delhi.
2. Information Brochure for the coordinators of NOS (1992): National Open School.

A critical study of figures shown in Table 2 reveals the following facts:

A. There was a tremendous imbalance in the enrolment rates of AIs of different states. In Tripura, the enrolment rate per AI was as high as 403.00 and in Daman and Diu the corresponding rate was as low as mere 5.00. Mizoram (385.50), Manipur (318.67), Arunachal Pradesh (312.50) exhibited high enrolment rates. Naturally the AIs in those States are overburdened with students, in contrast to the overall average rate of AI of NOS i.e. 168.45.

The enrolment rate in Pondichery (10.00), Tamil Nadu (41.00) Orissa (46.80), Meghalaya (32.00), Kerala (25.20) and Gujrat (31.67), was very low, with respect to the overall average rate in the country.

B. A crucial disparity existed amongst the states with regard to the Number of AIs in them. Delhi had 81 AIs, Uttar Pradesh 35 AIs while Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Meghalaya, Tripura, Pondichery, APO and Daman and Diu had only 1 AI of NOS. each. As a matter of fact, the numbers of AIs in these States were not in conformity with the area and population of the States concerned.

C. Accredited Institutions of NOS for the vocational courses are overburdened with students, with respect to those for the academic courses. Out of 31 States under study only 11 States have AIs for vocational courses. Out of these 11 States, 6 AIs are again located in Delhi and Uttarpradesh. So to promote vocational educational as dictated by National Education Policy more AIs for vocational courses are to be established.

Statistical Analysis

The States (31) under study were grouped under specific intervals according to the average rate of enrolment in the AIs in those States. Then the frequency of the States in different interval scale was calculated. It is seen that

the frequency of States within the interval (0-50) and (50-100) was maximum, being 7 in both cases. From the following Table 3, various statistical parameters are computed, to estimate the nature of distribution of students in the country under National Open School System.

Table 3 : Distribution of States on the basis of their Average Enrolment Rate in AIs.

Enrolment Rate Interval	Mid Point	Frequency	Deviation	F	fx	x^2	fx^2
400.5-450.5	425.5	1	+7	31	7	49	49
350.5-400.5	375.5	1	+6	30	6	36	36
300.5-350.5	325.5	2	+5	29	10	25	50
250.5-300.5	275.5	1	+4	27	4	16	16
200.5-250.5	225.5	4	+3	26	12	9	36
150.5-200.5	175.5	2	+2	22	4	4	8
100.5-150.5	125.5	6	+1	20	6	1	6
50.5-100.5	75.5	7	0	14	0	0	0
0.5-50.5	25.5	7	-1	7	-7	1	7

$$N = 31 \quad \sum fx = 42 \quad \sum fx^2 = 208$$

In the above table, the states are grouped in specific Enrolment Rate Interval and Corresponding frequency of States. Median and Mode of the above distribution are calculated, that gives the following values:

1. Mean = 143.24
2. Standard Deviation = 110.38
3. Median = 111.21
4. Mode = 50.5

CONCLUSIONS

1. National Open School received a mixed response in India. It is evident that Northern and North-Eastern States gave favourable response to Open School movement, as fostered by NOS. But most of the southern states and some states in the western regions did not reacted accordingly to this Philosophy of openness at the school level. Perhaps the medium of Instruction in NOS, which are only English and Hindi, might be one of the repulsive factors for the low enrolment of students from the southern states. So to enhance student states. So to enhance student registration in NOS, in non-Hindi speaking areas of India regional languages mediums should be encouraged, and for this, study materials for various courses should be prepared in the major regional languages. Specific efforts must be made as not to alienate NOS from the different linguistic groups of India; because of the language actor as a medium of NOS courses.
2. Enrolment in NOS depends on the Socio-Political Conditions of the different States and the political patronage of the Government existing in the corresponding States. Socio-Political instability had reduced the enrolment in many States remarkably during the academic session (1991-92). However other factors like literacy level, and social awareness of the people may be equally responsible for low enrolment at NOS in some States.
3. The number of AIs in a State are not in conformity with the strength of student enrolment in that State. A crucial imbalance exists in that sphere. NOS presumably did not adopt any scientific approach in promoting AIs in various States, while expanding its network. Concentration of NOS units in some of the States, particularly in Delhi and Uttarpradesh contrasts sharply with the situation in other states. This does not synchronise with the democratic mission and objectives as envisaged by National Open School.

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