

A Report
on
National Consultative Workshop on
Virtual Open Schooling in India



Organized by
National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), Noida
&
Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia,
(CEMCA), New Delhi



Date: 16 October 2012

Venue: Indian Habitat Centre, Casuarina,
Habitat World, Lodhi Road, New Delhi - 03

Report of the 'National Consultative Workshop on Virtual Open Schooling in India'

A one-day workshop on 'Virtual Open Schooling' was organized jointly by National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) at India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi on 16th October 2012. The workshop was attended by the Chairman/Directors, State Open Schools, Vice Chancellors of State Open Universities, representatives of National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT), Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), Kendriya Vidyalay Sangathan (KVS), Jawahar Nehru Vidyalay (JNV), and officials of CEMCA & NIOS along with eminent educationists in the field of Information and Communication Technology and Education.

The consultative workshop was planned in view of the requirements under XII Five Year Plan where need has been felt to strengthen Open and Distance Learning(ODL) System at school level to meet the goals of Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) launched by Government of India in 2010.

Open schooling has provided the best opportunities to the youths that missed out schooling in their childhood, and other working adults and disadvantaged groups to get the quality education. However, further efforts are desired to use the potential of Open and Distance Education system using the ICT for providing the education. In various reports, it has been highlighted that the most important way forward is online learning and collaborative models as institutions all over the globe are facing financial resource crunch. As Internet has emerged most strong medium of learning and exchanging new information, emergence of virtual schools is considered as a possible solution to all the problems presently being faced by education system. Virtual schools are beneficial to personalize, tailor content suited to individual learning with the flexibility of anywhere, anytime access. Student can enrich their skills in learning a new subject or take up course or class normally not available at their schools. It will also save on permanent infrastructure cost and provide access to high quality education and access to quality teachers and peers to increases collaboration. All open schools through its body-National Consortium for Open Schooling will benefit from the initiative of Virtual Open Schooling by sharing a common online platform and learning recourses for promoting open schooling system in India.

Inaugural Session

The workshop began with the lightening of lamp by dignitaries on dais. While welcoming the dignitaries, Dr. Sanyam Bhardwaj, Director (Student Support Services), NIOS expressed that the consultation meeting will consider views of the stakeholder and add to the preparation of a feasibility report to operationalize the concept of Virtual Open Schooling (VOS) in India.

Thereafter, in his inaugural address, Dr. Jena informed about the need of the Open Schooling. He pointed out that even today NIOS and State Open Schools (SOS) are serving to approximately 5 million students only. Though, as per National Policy on Education and recommendation made by CABE committee, country needs to strengthen the Open and Distance Education mode of learning to serve a larger target group which could be only made possible by establishing VOS.

Dr. Sanjaya Mishra, Director, CEMCA in his remark, stated that NIOS is already providing a large number of services online. If we move in the right direction and integrate the existing activities such as online admission, Open Educational Resources, On-Demand Examination system, etc. it would be possible to quickly operationalize the idea of VOS. He further stated that NIOS being the world leader in open schooling, CEMCA has decided to enter into an MOU to play a catalytic role in the further development of NIOS. He also emphasized that the idea of VOS is not to create another organization, but to use the advancement in information and communication technologies (ICTs) to take open schooling to the next level.

Delivering inaugural address, Ms. S. Radha Chauhan, Joint Secretary, School Education, MHRD, Government of India emphasized on the importance of VOS. She mentioned that VOS is the need of the hour and the initiative by NIOS and CEMCA is in the right direction. Ms. Radha Chauhan further deliberated that ICT is an enabler and one should be able to use it for the development of the Nation. She also said that in 12th five year plan more than 90% of our children in the age group of 14 years should be in School. In order to achieve this target, we may need 20,000 physical schools with lots of fiscal constraints. Virtual schooling could be one of the alternatives for achieving this target. Explaining the importance of ICT as an enabler which will provide relevant tools on a virtual platform, Ms. Chauhan also pointed out the huge challenge of developing and delivering e-content vis-a-vis the common belief that a teacher cannot be replaced. She also urged the NIOS to take up this task on a priority basis by

working out the strategies to be adopted to meet the goal of Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan. She concluded by saying that outcome of this workshop would be used to develop a framework for the VOS.

Signing of MOU

A MoU was signed by Dr. Sanjaya Mishra, Director, CEMCA and Sri. U. N. Khaware, Secretary, NIOS in the presence of all dignitaries and participants. The objective of the MOU is to collaborate and cooperate in undertaking activities for developing model for Virtual Open Schooling in India, development of technical and vocational skills, strengthening of knowledge resources of both organizations and also to develop knowledge resources through Open Education Resources and carrying out joint activity in regards to use and production of educational media in open schooling.

Sh. U. N. Khaware, Secretary, NIOS conveyed his thanks to Ms. S. Radha Chauhan, Joint Secretary, School Education, MHRD, Government of India for stressing the importance of Virtual Open Schooling and to all the guests and participants together with coordinators for making the workshop a grand success.

Second Session

Second session was started with the presentation by Dr. S. S. Jena, Chairman, NIOS on “Open Schooling in India: The RMSA Perspective”. He pointed out the importance of Open Schooling in India from RMSA perspective. In the discussion, he cited the report of National Policy on Education (NPE) and Central Advisory Board on Education (CABE) committee direction on expansion of Open schooling in India. He also highlighted Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan framework in the context of Open Distance Learning for universalisation of Secondary education in India. He described the paradigm shift in school education as:

- learning from classroom to anywhere
- teacher centric classroom to learner centric classroom
- teacher as instructor to facilitator
- Institution based instruction to learner based instruction.

He also reminded that the present enrollment of NIOS and State Open School (SOS) together is about five million and in the present context there is an urgency to create “safety net” for drop outs and disadvantaged groups in our society. He discussed about the hallmarks of open schooling in relation to its self-paced

learning, need based vocational courses, integration of academic courses with vocational skills along with flexibility of choice of courses. Dr. Jena highlighted the target group and instructional strategies of NIOS and informed about the Mukta Vidya Vani (an i-Radio initiative started with the support of CEMCA), the present innovative delivery system of NIOS and its impact on students' learning. He also depicted about the examination pattern and certification of learners followed by NIOS. He outlined about the On Demand Examinations (ODEs) followed by NIOS and its suitability to learners. Finally, he elaborated the rationale behind virtual open schooling in India in the context of Right to Education Act – 2009 (RTE) and RMSA.

Dr. Sanjaya Mishra presented a brief on “Emerging Trends for Open Schooling”. In his presentation, Dr. Mishra focused on role of ICT that optimize the existing capacities of educational system. He highlighted initiative of NIOS and National Consortium for Open Schooling (NCOS) for universalisation of school education in India, and illustrated different innovative pedagogy that can be used in virtual open schooling as:

- Pedagogy of e-books
- Badges to accredit learning
- Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC)
- Seamless learning
- Personal inquiry learning

He presented briefly the trends of virtual open schooling from the global perspective and pointed the readiness of NIOS for implementing VOS in India and role of State Open Schools (SOS) for the success of system of the proposed model.

Dr. R C Sharma, IGNOU, while discussing on VOS highlighted internet world connection density and NMC Horizon report-2012 on alternative education. He presented blending learning model for Virtual (Online) schools. Dr. Sharma cited working model of Virtual Schools all over the globe, particularly on the Utah Open Uigh School, Open High School Turkey, Florida Virtual School and Virtual School British Columbia. He also discussed on emerging trends in use of ICT in Open Virtual schooling. He illustrated practices of different technologies like Course Management System, cloud computing, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), Open Educational Resources (OERs) in Virtual Open Schooling. Dr. Sharma also discussed about some major organizations, companies and industries offering OERs. He explained briefly structural model and management of virtual open

schooling. He also focused on the funding mechanism and teaching learning strategies of VOS, and identified the possible issues of Virtual Open Schooling in India.

Third Session: Group Discussion

In this Session, participants were divided into three groups to discuss about the Admission Requirements, Teaching and Learning, Content Development, Assessment and Examination and Administration and Quality Assurance in view of Virtual Open Schooling.

Keeping in view that NIOS would be the nodal agency for starting Virtual Open Schooling in India, following recommendations were made by the Groups:-

Group I:

1. Digital chalk and talk model
2. Content availability through OER
3. Content in modular format supported by audio, video, animation, simulation etc.
4. Support system in the form of facilitators, tutors through online / teleconference / email/ blog etc. for solution of the academic problems faced by learners.
5. Academic delivery through mobile, Tab, DTH, SMS, ETC.
6. Continues assessment after each topic
7. Facility to go level-wise for Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) questions/ evaluation.
8. Feedback after each assessment
9. On Demand Examination in the form of virtual Online Examination with facility to provide result immediately after exam is over.
10. Final assessment by Certifying Agency.
11. Credit of continuous assessment in the final result for certification.
12. Single window help desk able to provide following services:-
 - (i) Registration of candidates
 - (ii) Capturing of biometric identification
 - (iii) Capturing of photograph of the candidate
 - (iv) Payment of online fee for registration, examination, duplicate documents etc.
 - (v) Information to candidate about confirmation of admission by Open School

- (vi) Issue of Identity Card with photo and biometric identification to registered candidates
- (vii) Maintenance of email account of their registered candidates
- (viii) Information about dispatch of study material
- (ix) Organising PCP, Tutorials, TMA, Practical facilities with the help of neighboring schools
- (x) Conduct of practical examinations, On Line Examination, Continues assessment etc
- (xi) Feedback on all issues
- (xii) Facility of grievance redressal

Group II:

1. Content should be in the form of audio/video, multimedia and animation
2. Content should be converted in Open Educational Resources platform so that inputs on the lessons can be enriched by anyone at anytime
3. Facilitators may be available online for particular time, so that students can have an interaction with facilitator by online or offline
4. Continuous evaluation and assessment may be added in the assessment part.
5. On-demand examination and on-line examination may also be recommended for Virtual Open Schooling.
6. Objective and subjective type questions may be included to evaluate student performance.
7. Common service centre may be provided for registration, biometric process, for taking photographs of the student, collecting fees, etc.
8. Feedback should be taken from students from time to time
9. Trained and competent tutors may be engaged for Virtual Open School
10. Online interactions between learners and tutors should be facilitated
11. The courses may also be in regional languages to get more enrolment.
12. Learning material in the form of OER will help learners and institution.
13. Face to face practical examination can also be included.
14. Virtual open schooling system should be monitored frequently.
15. Content should be user-friendly.
16. Multimedia based content in the form of telecast, broadcast and interactive.
17. Content of the course should be same across all over India.
18. Credit accumulation and credit transfer facilities may be given to learners.

GROUP III:

1. Training to Cyber Cafe operators and experts for on line admissions.

2. Very Simple Content in modular approach, supported by audio, video and animation.
3. Translation & Transformation of Content in Regional Languages and not simply by dubbing of learning material
4. On Line Support system through online, teleconferences, emails, blogs etc. for solution of the academic problems faced by learners.
5. On Demand Academic Content through mobile, Television and Tabs etc as movie on demand and song on demand without payment by learner.
6. More stress on Objective Type Question Papers with specific Time Limit.
7. Continuous assessment through On Line System
8. On Line Feedback after each assessment
9. On Demand Examination in the form of virtual Online Examination with facility to provide result immediately after exam is over.
10. Final assessment by Certifying Agency i.e. NIOS/SOS.
11. Credit of continuous assessment in the final result for certification.
12. Single window help desk.

Fourth Session: Closing up and Action plan

By summing up the workshop, Dr. Mishra stressed upon the establishment of Virtual Open Schooling in India for which he said that further action according to the recommendation made by various groups would be taken and a roadmap would be prepared to achieve the goal in fixed time schedule. The feasibility study will be finalized by the end of December 2012 with the support of all the stakeholders. A questionnaire will be distributed to collect baseline data which will be used along with the suggestions received to prepare the feasibility report.

Dr. Jena, while concluding the session expressed satisfaction on the outcome of the one day deliberation on Virtual Open Schooling in India, and said that NIOS is interested to take this project forward and pilot test the model as soon as CEMCA finalizes the action plan.

The deliberations ended with thanks to all the participants and the organizers.

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Programme Schedule

09.00-10.00	Registration
10.00-11.00	Inauguration
	Presentation of Bouquet
	Lightening of Lamp
	Welcome by Director (SSS), NIOS
	Introductory remarks by Chairman, NIOS
	Remarks by Director, CEMCA
	Inaugural Address by Joint Secretary, School Education, MHRD
	Signing of MoU
	Vote of Thanks by Secretary, NIOS
11.00-11.30	Tea/Coffee Break
11.30-11.50	Open Schooling in India: The RMSA Perspective by Dr S.S. Jena
11.50-12.30	Emerging Trends for Open Schooling by Dr. Sanjaya Mishra
12.30-13.15	Presentation of Virtual Open Schooling by Dr. Ramesh C. Sharma
13.15-14.00	Lunch Break
14.00-15.00	Group Discussion
	- Admission requirements
	- Teaching and Learning
	- Content Development
	- Assessment and Examination
	- Administration and Quality Assurance
15.00-15.30	Tea/Coffee Break
15.30-16.30	Group Report Presentation and Discussion
16.30-17.00	Action Plan and Summing up- Dr. Sanjaya Mishra

List of Participants

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