



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

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National Consultative Meeting of State Open Schools

Vocationalising Open Schooling: Pathways, Partnerships and Possibilities

23-24 April 2026

Report

National Consultative Meeting of State Open Schools

On

“Vocationalising Open Schooling: Pathways, Partnerships and Possibilities”

Organised by

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REPORT

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Expanded Version
ABC	Academic Bank of Credits
AESE	Apprenticeship Embedded School Education
APAAR	Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry
AVI	Accredited Vocational Institution
CEMCA	Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia
COL	Commonwealth of Learning
CSC	Common Service Centre
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
GER	Gross Enrollment Ratio
ITI	Industrial Training Institute
LMS	Learning Management System
MoE	Ministry of Education
MSDE	Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NAPS	National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme
NCF-SE	National Curriculum Framework for School Education
NCrF	National Credit Framework
NCVET	National Council for Vocational Education and Training
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training

NEP	National Education Policy
NHEQF	National Higher Education Qualifications Framework
NIOS	National Institute of Open Schooling
NOS	National Occupational Standards
NSDC	National Skill Development Corporation
NSQF	National Skills Qualifications Framework
ODL	Open and Distance Learning
OJT	On-the-Job Training
PMKVY	Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SOS	State Open School
SSC	Sector Skill Council
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
SVEC	State Vocational Education Cell

Executive Summary

The two-day National Consultative Meeting on “Vocationalising Open Schooling: Pathways, Partnerships and Possibilities” organised by the Commonwealth of Learning through the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia on 23–24 April 2026 in New Delhi, served as an important national platform to deliberate on vocationalisation of State Open Schooling (SOS) systems in India. The meeting brought together Directors and senior representatives of State Open Schools, experts from national institutions, industry partners, and academicians to explore strategies for strengthening Open Schooling through vocational and skill-based education.

The primary objective of the consultation was to assess the contemporary status of Open Schooling across India and develop a roadmap for integrating vocational education to make learners employable and industry-ready. Discussions highlighted the significant role of Open Schooling in addressing the educational needs of out-of-school children, school dropouts, working youth, women, and socially disadvantaged learners. However, participants also identified critical challenges such as low enrolment, limited public recognition of Open School certificates, weak institutional support, financial constraints, outdated learning materials, insufficient digital infrastructure, and inadequate vocational integration.

The state representatives from Rajasthan, Telangana, Kerala, Bihar, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, and Sikkim showcased diverse institutional practices, enrolment patterns, and innovative interventions. While some states demonstrated some progress in vocational integration and digital learning, others highlighted the need for policy support, NCVET recognition, and stronger industry linkages.

The sessions presented by the experts focused on aligning Open Schooling with key national frameworks such as the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), the National Credit Framework (NCrF), and the objectives of the National Education Policy 2020. Discussions also addressed Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), dual certification pathways for ITI learners, and the role of Sector Skill Councils in curriculum development and certification.

The meeting adopted participatory methodologies, including thematic group discussions, state presentations, problem mapping exercises, and collaborative action planning. Key recommendations included expanding vocational offerings, strengthening digital and blended learning systems, promoting public awareness, improving learner segmentation, and enhancing partnerships with industry and NGOs. The meeting concluded with a proposed roadmap under the National Skills-to-Employment Mission (NSEM) 2030, outlining phased implementation for vocationalising State Open Schools and creating sustainable pathways linking education, skills, and employment.

Introduction

The Commonwealth Learning's Commonwealth Media Centre for Asia (COL-CEMCA) organised a two-day National Consultative Meeting of State Open Schools on 23–24 April 2026 in New Delhi, focusing on “Vocationalising Open Schooling: Pathways, Partnerships and Possibilities.” The workshop brought together Directors and senior representatives of State Open Schools (SOS) across India, along with key stakeholders from national bodies, industry, and academia. It served as a strategic platform for deliberating on the strengthening of Open Schooling systems, particularly for out-of-school and marginalised learners. The consultation builds on earlier initiatives (2024–2025) and aligns with national priorities such as NEP 2020, aiming to transform Open Schooling into a robust, skill-oriented and inclusive education pathway.

Background

India is currently home to one of the world's largest populations of out-of-school children. While the nation has made commendable strides in universalising primary enrolment, a persistent reality is that millions of children remain outside the formal education system at the secondary and senior secondary levels. For these 'unreached' learners due to various disadvantages, be it geography, economic hardship, or social barriers, the State Open Schools together with the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) have long served as a critical lifeline. By offering flexible, affordable, and inclusive certification pathways, these institutions provide a vital bridge back to formal learning that conventional schooling often fails to sustain.

The Policy Catalyst and the Implementation Gap

The introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marked a transformative turning point for the sector. For the first time, the role of Open Schooling was explicitly recognised as central to achieving universal secondary education. The policy mandates a radical shift, calling for the seamless integration of vocational education with academic streams and the strict alignment of curricula with the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF). This shift effectively redefines the Open School not merely as a safety net, but as a prestigious engine for national skill development.

However, an enabling policy environment is only the first step. In practice, State Open Schools continue to navigate a landscape of significant hurdles. Awareness remains limited among parents and employers, infrastructure for hands-on vocational delivery is often inadequate, and the linkages between schools, Sector Skill Councils (SSCs), and Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) remain fragile. Furthermore, the uneven recognition of SOS certifications across state borders creates unnecessary friction for graduating students. Consequently, there is an urgent need for collective reflection and coordinated action to bridge the gap between policy intent and ground reality.

Building the Foundation for Change

Recognising this need, COL-CEMCA has spent the last several years actively building a foundation for systemic reform. This journey began in April 2024 at an international conference at the NIOS premises in NOIDA, where the urgent requirement to 'vocationalise' the Open School network was codified into a set of core recommendations. Building on that momentum, COL-CEMCA and NIOS hosted a landmark capacity-building workshop in May 2025. This event empowered over 70 vocational educators from across the country, equipping them with 21st-century methodologies, digital tools for blended learning, and strategies for AI and ICT integration.

This was not merely a technical exercise; it was a commitment to transforming vocational education into a future-ready ecosystem led by empowered instructors.

The Vision for 2030 and the New Delhi Consultation

The most ambitious chapter of this initiative unfolded on 20 November 2025 at the Dr Ambedkar International Centre in New Delhi. Here, approximately 90 stakeholders from government, industry, and academia converged to co-develop the 'Business Plan 2030'. The consultation birthed a bold vision: to scale vocational enrolment through Open Schools from the current 40,000 learners to a staggering 4 million by the end of the decade.

As COL-CEMCA now finalises this Business Plan 2030, the National Consultative Meeting on “Vocationalising Open Schooling: Pathways, Partnerships and Possibilities” on 23–24 April 2026 represented the critical next step. This gathering in New Delhi served as the forum where assumptions were validated and state-level ownership solidified. It is here that the broad vision of the past two years sought to be translated into concrete operational pathways, ensuring that every State Open School in India is equipped to turn the promise of NEP 2020 into a tangible reality for millions of learners.

Thematic Focus Areas

The consultation was structured around four interlocking themes designed to move from diagnostic reflection to strategic implementation. The proceedings commenced with a comprehensive review of the State of Open Schooling in India. During this segment, various State Open Schools presented their current enrolment figures, certification reach, and most successful programme initiatives. This was followed by a facilitated mapping exercise to build a shared 'problem wall', allowing delegates to identify and categorise the primary challenges faced across different states, from administrative bottlenecks to regional pedagogical gaps.

Ensuring Policy and Framework Alignment

The second theme focused on Policy and Framework Alignment, ensuring that state operations are synchronised with national standards. Expert-led sessions unpacked the specific opportunities available to SOSs under the NEP 2020, NCF-SE, NSQF, and NCVET. A pivotal moment in this track was a presentation by Professor N.S Kalsi on the findings from the previous vocationalisation consultation. This presentation provided a critical baseline for discussion, ensuring that current debates are informed by established evidence and previous stakeholder consensus.

Expanding Vocational Pathways and Partnerships

The third theme, Vocational Pathways and Partnerships, shifted the focus to practical operational models. Three targeted sessions addressed the mechanics of delivery, including the implementation of dual certification between Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and Open Schools. Discussions also explored the use of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to facilitate re-entry into formal education and help learners transition into formal job roles. Furthermore, the collaboration with the Textile Sector Skill Council was examined as a flagship model for how SOSs can successfully partner with industry-specific bodies.

Defining Strategy and Coordinated Action

The consultation concluded with a focus on Strategy and Action. Dedicated working groups co-developed a future-facing strategy to enhance the visibility and credibility of SOS certifications, utilising modern audience outreach and digital-first communication approaches. The final session included a rigorous action-planning exercise; here, each State Open School committed to specific, time-bound follow-up actions, while COL-CEMCA formally articulated its ongoing support commitments to ensure the sustainable success of the 2030 vision.

Workshop Objectives

The primary objective of the Consultative Meeting was to collectively assess the current landscape of Open Schooling in India and co-create a roadmap for its vocationalisation. The specific objectives of this meeting included

1. mapping enrolment, certification, and programme status across states;
2. identifying administrative, financial, and pedagogical challenges;
3. strengthening alignment with policy frameworks such as NSQF and NEP 2020; and
4. exploring new job roles and industry linkages for out-of-school children through vocationalising Open Schooling system.

The workshop also aimed to enhance outreach and social acceptance of SOS certifications through a unified promotional strategy.

Outcomes

The consultation was designed to produce several concrete outputs.

These include:

- a comprehensive mapping of SOS activities and enrolment trends;
- a status report on certification levels (Grades 8, 10, and 12);
- a collaborative framework for digital resource sharing among states; and
- a draft promotional roadmap to improve visibility and enrolment.

Most importantly, the workshop aimed to finalise a time-bound, state-wise action plan with defined roles and responsibilities, ensuring coordinated progress towards the 2030 vision of scaling vocational education in Open Schooling.

Methodology Used

The workshop adopted a participatory and multilayered methodology. It combined state presentations, expert lectures, facilitated group discussions, and thematic sessions on policy alignment and vocational pathways. Interactive tools such as “problem wall” mapping helped identify key challenges & Opportunities, while working group sessions enabled co-creation of strategies on outreach, industry partnerships, and digital learning. Plenary discussions and action-planning exercises ensured synthesis of ideas into actionable commitments which ensured both diagnostic analysis and solution-oriented planning for participating open Schools.

Participants

The success of this national dialogue relied on a diverse and high-level assembly of stakeholders, ensuring that the strategies developed are both representative and technically sound. Central to these discussions are the Directors and senior officials from State Open Schools representing nearly every corner of the country, including Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Sikkim. Their participation ensured that the unique geographical and administrative nuances of each state are central to the new 2030 framework.

DAY 1

Understanding the Landscape

INAUGURAL SESSION

Dr. B. Shadrach, Director, COL-CEMCA, opened the consultation with a presentation on “*The State Open Schooling System in India*,” highlighting the importance of Open Schooling as a safety net for students unable to continue in traditional schools. The Open Schooling system aims to support nearly 20 million out-of-school children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, the system faces major challenges including social stigma, weak institutional support, outdated learning materials, inadequate study centres, examination-related issues, and the digital divide.

He pointed out that State Open Schools often suffer from a “second-class” perception, where certificates are viewed with less credibility by employers and higher education institutions. In comparison, the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) enjoys stronger national and international recognition. The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) offers notable advantages such as on-demand examinations, transfer of credit, and acceptance for competitive exams like UPSC, JEE, and NEET, making it a sound alternative.



Photo 1. Inaugural Session – Dr B. Shadrach Addressing Participants

He highlighted that despite over 2 crore out-of-school children aged 14–18, the combined annual enrolment of NIOS and SOS reaches less than 10% of them. Poverty, lack of awareness, exam fees, language barriers, and limited digital access have further widened this gap.

Dr Shadrach stressed that to improve the system, as recommended by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, certain concerted efforts and strategic reforms are essential — including community outreach, policy equivalency, expansion of study centres, and vocational mainstreaming of Open Schooling in India. Special focus must be placed on skill-based education through ITI bridges, apprenticeship credits, and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) as recommended by the NEP 2020. Priority sectors — including healthcare, green skills, digital literacy, and traditional arts — should be central to the strategy for vocationalising the Open Schooling system. The long-term vision is to achieve 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio and ensure that at least 50% of learners graduate with one industry-aligned vocational skill by 2030.



Photo 2. *Proceedings at the Inaugural Session*

Session 1 & 2

State Open Schools: Current Practices

State representatives presented overviews of their respective Open Schools, highlighting key initiatives, current status, standout practices, and challenges, as summarised below.

Dr. T. N. Giri, Director (Vocational Education) of NIOS chaired the session and steered the presentations.

Himachal Pradesh State Open School (HPSOS)

Mission and Objectives

Himachal Pradesh State Open School (HPSOS), Dharamshala, was established in 2011–12 in collaboration with National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) aimed to provide flexible and inclusive education for school dropouts, working youth, learners from remote and rural areas, and economically weaker sections. Its central mission is “second-chance education” by bringing deprived learners back into the mainstream of formal schooling. It focuses on accessibility, flexibility in examinations, and digital inclusion while ensuring equivalence with formal school education.

Types of Courses Offered for Dropout Students

The HPSOS offers programmes such as-

- Middle level (Class 8)
- Secondary level (Class 10)
- Senior Secondary level (Class 12)

These programmes are specifically designed for students who could not continue regular schooling. Examinations are conducted twice a year (March and September), allowing learners flexibility based on readiness.

Admission Trend and Passing Percentages

The HPSOS consistently enrolls more than 15,000 learners per examination session across Classes 8, 10, and 12, indicating strong public trust and institutional reach. Admissions for the September 2026 session were fully online through 321 study centres (175 Government + 146 Private). However, the exact passing percentages could not be ascertained, though the system highlights re-evaluation and re-checking mechanisms to improve transparency and learner confidence.

Status of Vocational and Skill Development Courses

Vocational and skill education at HPSOS is at an early stage of development. HPSOS has recently received dual recognition from NCVET and is preparing to launch vocational training for out-of-school learners, particularly those with prior informal skills. Formal enrolment data for vocational programmes is not yet available.

Telangana Open School Society (TOSS)

Mission and Objectives

The TOSS aims to provide flexible secondary education to learners who are unable to complete formal schooling. Its objective is to ensure educational access without age barriers or attendance restrictions while integrating education with employability and community outreach. The institution strongly emphasises convergence with Adult Education, SERP, and vocational skilling systems.

Types of Courses Offered

The TOSS offers:

- SSC (Secondary School Certificate)
- Intermediate (Senior Secondary equivalent)

Students can choose subjects and examination schedules according to convenience. This flexibility makes the system suitable for dropouts, working youth, and disadvantaged learners, especially for the girls' students.

Admission Trend and Passing Percentages

In the 2025–26 admission cycle, enrolment reached approximately 1 lakh learners, while the average enrolment during the last three years remained around 65,000 annually. This significant increase reflects the impact of inter-departmental convergence and targeted awareness campaigns. Pass-rate data for TOSS was not available at the time of the consultation.

Vocational and Skill Development Courses

The TOSS has integrated vocational subjects and skills into its academic framework. Internal assessments and simplified learner handbooks support employability orientation. The FY 2027–28 strategic plan specifically mentions issuance of vocational certifications. The State is currently seeking NCVET approval for vocational and skill development certification.

State Council for Open and Lifelong Education – Kerala (SCOLE Kerala)

Mission and Objectives

Established in 1999, SCOLE Kerala is one of the earliest State Open Schools in the country. Following its restructuring in 2016, the institution provides higher secondary education alongside lifelong learning opportunities. Its mandate extends beyond school completion to encompass upskilling, reskilling, and employability enhancement through diploma and vocational programmes. SCOLE Kerala does not offer programmes at Class 10 or below, reflecting the state's high literacy rate and low early-stage dropout rates.

Types of Courses Offered

Academic courses include:

- Higher Secondary Open Regular
- Higher Secondary Open Private
- Additional Mathematics

Vocational and skill programmes include:

- Diploma in Computer Application (DCA)
- Diploma in Yogic Science and Sports Yoga
- Diploma in Domiciliary Nursing Care (DDNC)
- Diploma in Child Care and Pre-School Management (DCPM)
- Diploma in Disaster Risk Management (DDRM)
- Diploma in Theatre Arts (DTA)

These programmes are especially suitable for school dropouts and working learners.

Admission Trend and Passing Percentages

For Higher Secondary (2025–27):

- Open Regular: 6,100
- Open Private: 21,401
- Total: 27,501
- Additional Mathematics enrolled learners: 1,380

Vocational and Skill Development Status

The SCOLE has a strong vocational profile with measurable admissions:

DCA:

- 2013–14: 1,320
- 2014–15: 813
- 2024–25: 2,162
- 2025–26: 1,708

Yoga:

- 2023–24: 511
- 2024–25: 448
- 2025–26: 300

DDNC:

- 2024–25: 239
- 2025–26: 53

DCPM:

- 2025–26: 424

This demonstrates a well-established vocational ecosystem, though placement opportunities remain a challenge.



Photo 3. Mr Jinesh Kumar MM representing SCOLE Kerala

Bihar Board of Open Schooling and Examination (BBOSE)

Mission and Objectives

BBOSE is focused on reintegrating school dropouts, adolescent girls, and out-of-school youth into education, with a strong emphasis on employability and entrepreneurship. Its goal is to strengthen educational continuity, livelihood opportunities, and gender empowerment through flexible schooling and vocational convergence, in alignment with NEP 2020 and NCF-SE.

Types of Courses Offered

It offers flexible academic pathways from Classes 9–12 with choice-based curriculum. Students can select subjects based on aptitude and regional relevance.

Admission Trend and Passing Percentages

The enrolment trend in the BBOSE has progressively declined since 2022 (91849) to 18221 in 2025 even though in Bihar the secondary dropout rate is 25.6% and at the Upper Primary dropout rate: 25.9%. While exact pass percentages are not mentioned, the institution has digitised admissions and partnered with Educate Girls to increase enrolment, especially among girls.

Vocational and Skill Development Courses

The BBOSE has few initiatives on skill orientated programmes, which are largely delivered as below:

- OJT-based practical training
- Linkages with ITIs and skill labs
- Apprenticeship Embedded Degree Programmes (AEDPs)
- Entrepreneurial training and incubation support

Though the admission trend figures for vocational programmes are not separately stated, but the framework is clearly designed for education-to-employment transition.



Photo 4. *Mr Sanyay Kumar representing BBOSE*

Board of Open Schooling and Skill Education (BOSSE), Sikkim

Mission and Objectives of the Open School

BOSSE's primary mission is to advance "education for all" through Open Schooling, with a focus on learners unable to continue formal education due to economic, social, geographical, or personal circumstances. It offers second-chance education to school dropouts, women, working youth, marginalised communities, and out-of-school learners through flexible pathways to school-level completion.

Its objectives include creating a learner-centric academic framework that allows flexibility in subject choice, pace of learning, and progression. The BOSSE follows a multi-entry and multi-exit policy, enabling students to continue education according to their circumstances rather than rigid institutional schedules. The Board also supports credit transfer mechanisms, allowing learner mobility across boards and recognition of prior learning. This prevents unnecessary repetition and encourages re-entry into the education system.

Another major objective is the integration of academic education with vocational and skill development. The BOSSE seeks to enhance employability and livelihood opportunities by combining formal academic qualifications with practical skill-based learning. It also aligns its educational approach with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 through blended learning pedagogy, self-learning materials (SLM), and digital teaching-learning programmes such as virtual classes and recorded lectures for wider accessibility.

Types of Courses Offered

The BOSSE offers education at both Secondary and Senior Secondary levels designed specifically for learners who require flexible alternatives to formal schooling. At the Secondary level, the Board offers 24 academic subjects and 8 vocational courses. At the Senior Secondary level, it offers 32 academic subjects and 15 vocational courses. These programmes allow learners to choose subjects according to their aptitude, career goals, and personal circumstances.

The BOSSE also permits recognition of prior learning through credit transfer of up to four subjects, enabling learners who had partially completed education elsewhere to resume without starting afresh. The Board's flexible examination policy is another important feature. Learners are allowed multiple opportunities, up to nine examination attempts, to gradually complete their academic requirements. This reduces academic pressure and significantly improves accessibility for working learners and socially disadvantaged groups.

Admission Trend and Passing Percentages

BOSSE has demonstrated strong enrolment growth since its establishment, reflecting growing acceptance of and confidence in the Open Schooling model. Between 2021 and 2025, Secondary level enrolment increased from 1,124 to 14,360 students, while Senior Secondary enrolment rose from 1,215 to 21,257 students. In view of its All-India jurisdiction, its fee structure reflects a self-sustaining model built on its all-India reach. BOSSE has undertaken targeted outreach initiatives to identify and enrol learners into the Open Schooling system.

Among its standout practices, the Board highlights high learner retention as a key institutional strength. The flexible examination system, which allows up to nine attempts, has helped reduce dropout rates and improve course completion, though exact data related to passing percentage was not presented. According to the Board's representative, learner success is measured not only through pass percentages but also through sustained retention and completion over time.

Status of Vocational and Skill Development Courses

Currently, BOSSE offers 8 vocational courses at the Secondary level and 15 vocational courses at the Senior Secondary level. These programmes are aligned with skill development priorities and are intended to improve employability, entrepreneurship, and income generation opportunities for learners.

The Board's focus is on integrating skill learning with formal education so that students do not have to choose between academics and employability. This is particularly important for dropout students who often seek immediate livelihood opportunities alongside educational completion.

The BOSSE identifies vocational education standardisation as a key challenge and recognises the need for stronger alignment with national skill frameworks and industry standards. This indicates that while the vocational structure is well established, further strengthening of certification quality and employability linkages remains necessary.

Overall, BOSSE represents a modern Open Schooling model that combines flexibility, inclusion, academic continuity, and skill development, making it a significant institution for educational recovery and lifelong learning.

Jammu & Kashmir State Open School (JKSOS) under J&K Board of School Education

Mission and Objectives

The core mission of JKSOS is to ensure equitable and inclusive education by providing second chance learning opportunities to students who have dropped out of formal schooling. The institution works on the principle that education should remain accessible regardless of age, gender, disability, geography, or socio-economic background.

JKSOS seeks to mainstream out-of-school learners by offering flexible pathways at the Secondary and Senior Secondary levels. Its core aim is to reduce educational exclusion in the difficult terrain and underserved communities of Jammu & Kashmir, where formal schooling is often disrupted by social, economic, or geographical barriers.

JKSOS offers courses mainly at two academic levels:

- Secondary Level (Class 10)
- Senior Secondary Level (Class 12)

These courses are specifically designed for learners who have discontinued regular schooling and require flexible timing, self-paced learning, and supportive assessment systems. The Board uses Open Schooling methodology rather than rigid classroom attendance, making it suitable for employed youth, women with domestic responsibilities, and learners in geographically isolated areas.

Study support is provided through accredited study centres established across districts of Jammu and Kashmir. The Board has 17 accredited study centres in the Kashmir Division and 17 in the Jammu Division, covering districts such as Anantnag, Baramulla, Srinagar, Jammu, Kathua, Rajouri, Udhampur, and others, mostly located in the government schools. These centres act as local support hubs for counselling, assignments, examinations, and learner facilitation.

The teaching and learning system includes self-learning materials, tutor-marked assignments for continuous assessment, and personal contact programmes for direct academic guidance. This structure helps dropout students complete schooling without the rigid constraints of conventional education.

Admission Trend and Passing Percentages

The enrolment trend of JK SOS reflects both institutional growth and certain operational challenges. The enrolment figures are as follows:

Year	Enrolment in X	Enrolment in X	Total
2021–22	1,293	Not Available	1293
2022–23	1,097	Not Available	1097
2023–24	656	457	1113
2024–25	341	432	773
2022–23	1,097	Not Available	

The Secondary (Class 10) enrolment shows a declining trend from 1,293 in 2021–22 to 341 in 2024–25. This decline is likely attributable to awareness gaps, weak learner engagement, and infrastructure limitations noted in the presentation. Senior Secondary (Class 12) admissions began later and show relatively stable enrolment after introduction, with 457 admissions in 2023–24 and 432 in 2024–25.

However, though exact pass percentages are not available, the Board identifies high dropout rates and weak learner engagement as key concerns. Since Open Schooling depends heavily on self-paced learning, many students struggle with sustained motivation and completion. The institution addresses this challenge through strong learner support systems such as academic counselling, mentoring, helplines, and community-based facilitation.

Status of Vocational and Skill Development Courses with Admission Trends

Unlike some other State Open Schools, the JK SOS primarily focuses on academic programmes and inclusive education measures rather than formal vocational and skill development courses. No separate vocational education framework, list of vocational subjects, or skill certification programmes is specifically available.

However, learner-centric pedagogy and ICT-enabled education create an enabling foundation for future vocational integration. The use of digital platforms, flexible curricular choices, and inclusive learning support can facilitate the introduction of vocational, and employability linked programmes in the future. Therefore, the vocational education may either be at an early stage of development or not yet institutionalised as a major independent component within JK SOS.

The Board's current focus appears to be on strengthening foundational academic access, improving retention, and ensuring equitable education delivery across remote and disadvantaged regions. Once infrastructure, awareness, and learner retention improve, vocational and skill development programmes may emerge as the next important area of institutional expansion.

Overall, JK SOS represents an important educational intervention in Jammu & Kashmir by extending flexible, inclusive, and accessible education to learners who would otherwise remain outside the formal education system.

JSS Karnataka Open School (JSS KOS), Mysuru

Mission and Objectives of the Open School

The primary mission of JSS Karnataka Open School is to provide accessible, flexible, and inclusive education to learners who are unable to complete formal schooling. It particularly focuses on school dropouts, learners from rural and unreached areas, economically weaker sections, and those deprived of educational opportunities due to social or personal circumstances.

Its objective is to ensure “sustainable inclusive learning with universal and flexible access to quality school education and skill development”. The institution seeks to promote Secondary and Higher Secondary education among the unreached sections of society and to ensure that even those who have left school can re-enter the educational system through open and distance learning.

Types of Courses Offered

JSS Karnataka Open School mainly provides foundational education leading to Secondary School Leaving Certificate (SSLC), equivalent to Class 10. The programme is designed for students who have passed or failed Class 7, 8, or 9 and for learners who have completed 15 years of age.

This makes the system especially suitable for dropout students who could not continue formal schooling but still wish to complete secondary education. After completing the course, students become eligible to appear for the 10th standard examination conducted by KSEEB. Students who pass in six subjects are permitted by the government to join Pre-University Education (PUC), vocational education, and other higher educational pathways. Thus, the Open School serves as a bridge between dropout status and further academic or vocational progression.

The institution started with only 8 study centres and has now expanded to more than 100 study centres across Karnataka, making access easier for learners in rural and remote areas. More than 3,000 students pursue studies in these centres every year.

Admission Trend and Passing Percentages

Enrolment shows a slight decline, from 396 students in 2024–25 to 362 in 2025–26. This decline likely reflects the challenges noted in the presentation, including convincing parents in border and rural areas, lack of financial assistance, and low awareness regarding the value of Open Schooling.

For 2024–25, the passing percentage can be approximately 11.6%. This relatively low pass rate suggests that while access has improved, learner retention and academic success remain important concerns. The institution recognises this challenge and emphasises stronger learner guidance, monitoring, and improved implementation strategies to increase successful completion.

Status of Vocational and Skill Development Courses

Skill development is one of the declared priorities of JSS Karnataka Open School. The institution specifically mentions “providing skill-based education” and “skill upgradation and training” as central to its educational mission. The goal is not only academic completion but also livelihood enhancement for learners who may need immediate employment opportunities.

Students completing the Open School programme are eligible to pursue vocational education after passing the required subjects. The institution also highlights the importance of providing training suited to the jobs learners are already doing, rather than limiting education to purely academic progression. This reflects a practical approach aligned with employability and local economic needs. It appears that vocational education functions more as an integrated pathway following SSLC completion rather than as a separate institutional stream with dedicated admission statistics.

The Board also seeks government financial support to strengthen facilities for vocational education and training. Its future direction clearly includes stronger integration of education with employability, particularly for rural learners and those who must earn while continuing education.

Overall, JSS Karnataka Open School plays a significant role in educational recovery and social inclusion by offering second-chance education, flexible learning pathways, and skill-oriented opportunities for school dropouts across Karnataka.



Photo 5. *Mr. Channappa delivering a presentation.*

Rajasthan State Open School (RSOS)

Mission and Objectives of the Open School

The primary mission of RSOS is to expand the reach of education and improve quality through open and flexible schooling. Its objective is to provide “second-chance education” to learners who have either dropped out of formal schooling or failed in regular board examinations and wish to complete their studies through an alternative system.

The RSOS particularly aims to serve students deprived of regular school education under Stream-1 and failed learners from RSOS or other recognised boards under Stream-2. It also provides opportunities for partial admission, mark improvement, and special admission facilities for ITI first-year students seeking Class 12 certification.

A major institutional objective is learner flexibility. Students can apply fully online using SSO ID, and the Board provides multiple opportunities for correction during online verification. The institution also offers Transfer of Credit (TOC), allowing students from other boards exemption in up to two subjects and RSOS students exemption in up to four subjects. This prevents repetition of already passed subjects and supports faster completion of education.

RSOS also promotes inclusive education through fee concessions. Under the Kalibai Bheel Mahila Sambal Shiksha Setu Yojana, all newly admitted women and girls are exempted from admission and examination fees. This strengthens female participation and educational inclusion. Its digital initiatives such as E-PCP (E-Personal Contact Programme), QR-coded admit cards, and online evaluation systems further support transparency and accessibility.

Types of Courses Offered

RSOS offers two major academic programmes:

- Secondary Level (Class 10)
- Senior Secondary Level (Class 12)

At the Secondary level, the Board offers:

- 17 subjects in Hindi medium
- 10 subjects in English medium

At the Senior Secondary level, it offers:

- 26 subjects in Hindi medium
- 20 subjects in English medium

These courses are based on the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) curriculum and allow learners to select subjects according to their needs and educational background. The system is especially useful for dropouts, failed candidates, and working learners who require flexible scheduling.

RSOS also provides:

- Partial admission for students already passed in 10th/12th who want additional qualifications
- Mark improvement opportunities within one year of passing
- Special registration for first year ITI students for Class 12

On-demand examinations are conducted six times a year i.e. July, August, September, October/November, January, and February, allowing students multiple opportunities to appear according to readiness. This significantly reduces academic pressure and improves completion rates.

Admission Trend and Passing Percentages

RSOS has one of the largest enrolment bases among State Open Schools. During the academic session 2025–26, more than 1,21,000 students applied for admission. This includes:

- Stream-1 Examination: 91,000 students
- Stream-2 and Supplementary Examination: 30,000 students
- On-Demand Examination: 300 students

This large enrolment reflects strong institutional reach and public acceptance of the Open Schooling system in Rajasthan.

Approximately 70% of total learners generally pass the examinations. This is a significant achievement considering that many students entering the system are former dropouts or previously unsuccessful candidates. The availability of TOC, repeated examination opportunities, and online learner support contributes substantially to this relatively high pass percentage.

The Board operates through a vast network of 977 government senior secondary school-based reference centres across the state, which strengthens learner access and support, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas.

Status of Vocational and Skill Development Courses

While RSOS primarily focuses on academic secondary and senior secondary programmes, vocational linkage is evident through special integration with ITI education. One of the important provisions is the special registration facility for first year ITI students to pursue Class 12 simultaneously. This creates a direct academic and vocational convergence where students can combine technical skill training with formal school certification.

The Board's flexible pathways also help learners who want to improve qualifications for employment, government jobs, and technical education progression. Mark improvement, partial admissions, and on-demand examinations strengthen this employability dimension. This suggests that vocational education functions primarily through institutional linkages rather than as an independent stream with separately reported data.

Overall, RSOS demonstrates a highly mature Open Schooling model with large scale enrolment, strong pass percentages, inclusive policies for women and disadvantaged learners, and flexible academic & vocational pathways. Its success lies in combining accessibility, digital governance, repeated examination opportunities, and strong learner support for educational continuity.



Photo 6. Mr. Suneel Kumar Sharma delivering a presentation.

Punjab State Open School

Mission and Objectives of the Open School

Punjab Open School, functioning as a wing under the Academic Branch of the Punjab School Education Board (PSEB), which serves as an important institution for providing flexible and inclusive education opportunities to learners who are unable to continue formal schooling. Its primary mission is to ensure access to education for disadvantaged and marginalised sections of society, particularly SC, ST, OBC communities, rural and urban poor, slum dwellers, and differently abled learners. The objective of the Open School is to promote equitable access to secondary and senior secondary education by creating an alternative learning system that supports learners who have dropped out of regular schooling or could not pursue formal education due to social, economic, or personal reasons.

Types of Courses Offered

Punjab Open School offers courses at two levels: Secondary (Class 10) and Senior Secondary (Class 12). Instruction is offered in three languages — Punjabi, Hindi, and English — ensuring accessibility for a broader learner base. Punjabi, Hindi, and English are also offered as subjects. The curriculum followed by the Open School is the same as that implemented for regular students under PSEB, ensuring academic parity and consistency. Textbooks and learning materials are provided free of cost to students, reducing the financial burden on learners and supporting higher enrolment. For certification, Class 10 students must complete six subjects, while Class 12 students must complete five subjects. Punjabi is a compulsory subject, though students from other states may substitute it with Punjab History and Culture.

The admission process is designed with flexibility. Admissions for the regular cycle begin in May and continue until 31 October, with examinations conducted in February/March. Under the new Block-2 policy, admissions are also open from November to 30 April, with examinations held in July/August. This dual-cycle admission system increases opportunities for students to join throughout the year. In 2022–23, admissions in Secondary Education were 10,588 and in Senior Secondary Education were 14,738. These numbers increased in 2023–24 to 11,516 and 16,070 respectively, showing growing demand. However, admissions declined slightly in 2024–25 and further in 2025–26, with 8,780 admissions in Secondary and 13,156 in Senior Secondary. Additionally, Block-2 admissions introduced in July–August 2025 enrolled 1,233 secondary and 1,226 senior secondary students.

The examination performance indicates a reasonably strong success rate. In Secondary Education, the pass percentage was 79.71% in 2022–23, improved to 80% in 2023–24, but declined to 73% in 2024–25. Similarly, Senior Secondary results showed 77.20% in 2022–23, 77% in 2023–24, and a significant drop to 67% in 2024–25. This suggests the need for stronger academic support systems and learner engagement strategies. The number of study centres also remained stable, with a total of 848 centres in 2022–23, increasing to 866 in 2023–24, and then slightly declining to 830 in 2025–26.

Status of Vocational and Skill Development Courses

At present, vocational and skill development programmes are not fully operational within the Open School system, but this is a major focus for the future. The institution plans to introduce vocational subjects already offered to regular students, which will help improve employability and skill development among learners. Punjab Open School is also seeking consultancy and guidance from NIOS in strengthening various aspects of Open Schooling. This reflects a progressive vision aimed at combining academic learning with practical skill-based education to meet the evolving needs of students and the labour market

Madhya Pradesh State Open School Education Board (MPSOS)

The Madhya Pradesh State Open School Education Board is a state initiative aimed at providing flexible and inclusive education to learners who are outside the formal schooling system. MPSOS primarily caters to school dropouts, failed students, working youth, women, and learners from disadvantaged and rural backgrounds who cannot attend regular schools. Special schemes like Ruk Jana Nahi and Aa Laut Chalein target students who failed in board exams or discontinued their education at different points of time.

Status of Admission & Examination:

Admissions are flexible and learner-centric, conducted throughout the year or in defined cycles. Candidates can apply online, and provisions exist for fresh admission, credit transfer, and re-admission. In some schemes, admission may involve a basic eligibility or entrance-based screening. The board offers Secondary (Class 10) and Senior Secondary (Class 12) programmes with multiple subject choices across Science, Commerce, and Arts streams. These programmes are equivalent to formal schooling and recognised for higher education and employment. Examinations are conducted multiple times a year, providing flexibility and “second chance” opportunities. Learners can appear in regular, supplementary, or improvement exams under different schemes, allowing them to complete certification at their own pace. MPSOS reports a pass rate of approximately 60% — a meaningful achievement given the socio-economic challenges faced by its learner population. at Sr. Secondary Level and 70% at Secondary level.

Status of vocational and skill courses:

MPSOS emphasises vocational and need-based education aligned with employability. While academic courses dominate, the board promotes skill-oriented curricula and integration of vocational subjects to prepare learners for the labour market. The Open School’s alignment with formal vocational and skill development programmes remains limited.

Innovations undertaken:

Key innovations include flexible admission cycles, multiple examination opportunities, credit transfer, and special schemes for failed students. The open and distance learning model, along with online support and study centres, enhances accessibility and learner autonomy.

Overall, MPSOS plays a pivotal role in bringing out-of-school learners back into education and expanding equitable access to secondary schooling across Madhya Pradesh.



Photo 7. Mr. Ram Kumar Vaidya delivering a presentation.

Session 3

Group Work on State Open Schools: Challenges and Opportunities

A group activity was conducted during the post-lunch session on 23 April 2026 using “progressive grouping method”. All participants were divided into five groups, each comprising two representatives from different Open Schools. Each participant was asked to present a brief overview of their partner Open School’s ‘Challenges and Opportunities’ before sharing their findings in a brief plenary presentation. Modelled as an interactive “speed dating” exercise, this activity facilitated structured peer engagement across institutions. The session enabled participants to present their institutional activities, identify shared challenges, and explore collaboration opportunities within the context of Open Schooling and skill development.

Participants were divided into five working groups, each comprising representatives from different states and institutions to encourage cross-learning and diverse perspectives. Groups included representatives from Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, and Jammu & Kashmir. Each group’s representatives presented a brief profile of their institution and outlined the challenges they face in implementing the programmes as well as scaling up of it.

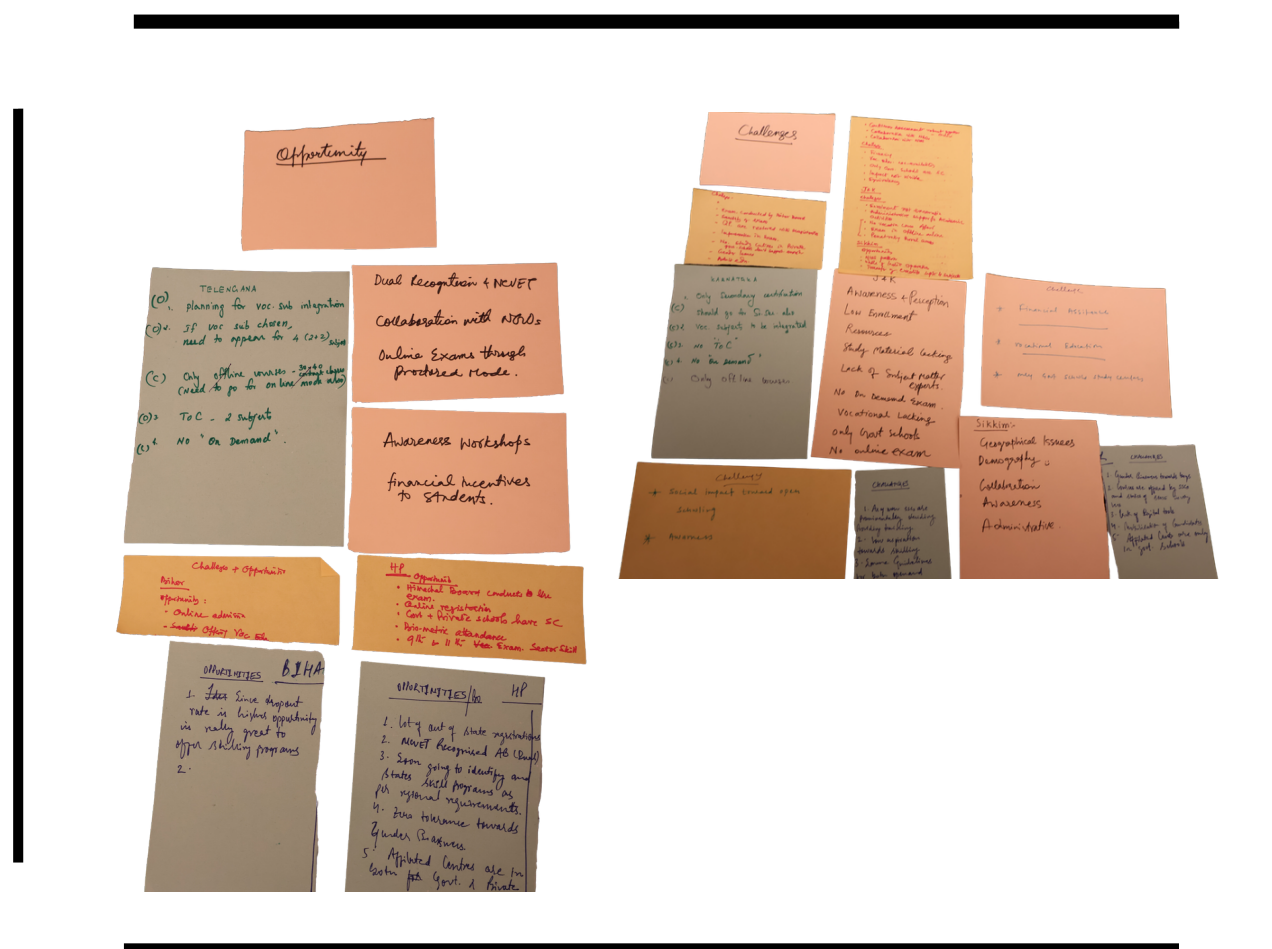


Photo 8. Problem Wall built by the representatives of State Open Schools.

Challenges:

- Awareness Development & Building positive perception
- Sustaining Open Schooling System due to low enrolment
- Development of localise self-learning materials due to lack of subject experts in the state
- Conducting Free and fair examination and thereby establishing credibility of the system
- How to integrate vocational subjects in the curriculum
- Establishing credibility on ToC and On-demand examination
- Obtaining Financial Assistance from the State Government
- How to make the organisation self-sustained
- Balancing quantity vs. quality
- Measuring Social Impact on Open Schooling

Opportunities:

- Dual recognition & certification
- Industry aligned certification and thereby creating job opportunity for pass outs
- Online examination through proctored mode
- Reduction of drop-out rate
- NCVET recognition to vocational & skill-based courses
- Creating network of organisations, especially government schools
- Digitalisation of Open Schooling system
- Developing collaboration and networking of institutions/organisations
- Tapping credible NGO resources
- Raising funds through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives for skill development courses

Overall, the discussions highlighted the need to strengthen the credibility, sustainability, and quality of the Open Schooling system while expanding access and relevance. Key opportunities include digitalisation, dual recognition, vocational and industry-aligned programmes, institutional partnerships, and CSR-supported skill development. Addressing these challenges through strategic collaborations, financial sustainability, and robust quality assurance can help create a more inclusive, credible, and future-ready Open Schooling ecosystem.

Session 4**Policy Provisions for State Open Schools to Vocationalise Education**

Mr. Amit Sharma, Consultant, National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET) led a session on ‘Policy Provisions for State Open Schools to Vocationalise Education’ which is one of the important sessions of this consultative meeting. The presentation explains the roles and responsibilities of the NCVET in strengthening India’s skilling ecosystem. NCVET, under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, was established to integrate and regulate the fragmented vocational education and training system by combining the functions of NCVT, NSDA, and the regulatory roles of NSDC and Sector Skill Councils. Its main purpose is to ensure standardisation, quality assurance, and effective governance in vocational education and training (VET) across the country.

The NCVET plays a central role in aligning vocational qualifications with the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), which classifies qualifications from Level 1 to Level 8 based on knowledge, skills, aptitude, and responsibility. It grants recognition to Awarding Bodies (ABs), Assessment Agencies (AAs), and Skill Information Providers (SIPs), while also monitoring their performance through a structured Excellence-Risk Framework. The NCVET also maintains the National Qualifications Register (NQR), which serves as a public repository of NSQF-aligned qualifications.



Photo 9. Mr. Amit Sharma delivering a presentation.

The presentation highlights the integration of skilling with school education under NEP 2020 and NCvE, promoting vocational exposure from Grade 6 onwards and reducing the gap between academic and vocational streams. As of July 2024, 201 entities, including 133 Awarding Bodies and 68 Assessment Agencies, were recognised by NCVET. Around 2,685 active NSQF-aligned qualifications are available across multiple sectors, including future skills like AI, EV technology, cybersecurity, and green energy.

NCVET also promotes multilingual vocational learning, digital platforms like KaushalVerse, grievance redressal systems, DigiLocker certification, and international equivalence of skills. Its long-term goal is to create a flexible, inclusive, and industry-aligned skilling ecosystem that improves employability and lifelong learning opportunities.

Mr Sharma also emphasised the importance of Open Schools obtaining recognition as awarding bodies and thereby mainstreaming the vocational and skill education initiatives of Government of India. To achieve this, Open Schools should apply for NCVET recognition by submitting a 'Letter of Intent'. This will facilitate the Open Schools to build its capacity in developing many skill training courses which has local relevance.



Photo 10. Group photograph of the participants.

DAY 2

Solutions, Strategy and Commitments

Session 5

Vocationalisation of State Open Schools

Professor Nirmaljeet Singh Kalsi, Former Chairperson of NCVET shared insights on ‘Vocationalisation of State Open Schools: Key recommendations and action points’. Prof. Kalsi while setting the tone of the session emphasised the immediate requirement for making the youth employment ready through vocationalisation of Open Schooling system in India. In his presentation he pointed out that India is at a critical juncture in its development journey as it advances toward the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047. While access to education has expanded significantly, the central challenge now lies in ensuring that education leads to employable skills, productive capacity, and dignified livelihoods. Despite serving millions of learners across school and higher education sectors, a persistent structural disconnect remains between educational attainment and employability, leaving many youths without market relevant skills or clear pathways to work.

The vocationalisation is, therefore, positioned not as a supplementary reform but as a national imperative. The proposed solution is an integrated framework linking education, skilling, apprenticeships, employment, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning. At the core of this strategy, it is necessary to reimagining of Open Schooling system in India as a mainstream pathway for vocational education and livelihood readiness. In this context a draft Business Plan 2030 is developed which proposes scaling vocational Open Schooling to 110 lakh learners annually within five years, supported by expanded infrastructure, digital platforms, and industry partnerships.

Aligned with key policy frameworks such as NEP 2020 and the National Credit Framework, the plan promotes flexible, credit-based, and competency driven learning pathways, enabling mobility between academic and vocational streams. It outlines a comprehensive implementation strategy, including Accredited Vocational Institutions, digital platforms, apprenticeship models, quality assurance systems, and outcome-based metrics. Importantly, the plan broadens the focus beyond wage employment to include entrepreneurship and self-employment, integrating financial and digital skills. It prioritises inclusivity, targeting underserved groups such as school dropouts, women, and rural learners.



Photo 11. Prof. N.S Kalsi addressing the participants

Table. Key Recommendations

Recommendation
A large-scale expansion of vocational education through Open Schooling, targeting 5 crore learners between 2025–2031. The initiative must aim to increase vocational participation from the current ~40,000 annual learners to around 40 lakh annually at steady state, transforming youth from informal job seekers into skilled workers and entrepreneurs aligned with national qualification frameworks.
Education pipeline analysis shows that although 1.25–1.30 crore students complete Class 12 annually, only about 1.1 crore transition to higher education, while many others enter the labour market directly. Across all stages, roughly 0.9–1.0 crore students exit the school pipeline each year, highlighting the need for structured vocational pathways linked to employment.
India's NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) population is estimated at 8.5–9.5 crore youth, representing nearly one-quarter of the 15–29 age group. A large share of this cohort consists of school leavers below senior secondary level, indicating that strengthening vocational pathways at secondary and post-secondary transition points is essential to reconnect youth with productive economic participation.
Why Open Schooling is the Strategic Solution: Conventional institution-based training systems such as ITIs and polytechnics cannot alone address the scale of demand. The Open Schooling ecosystem—serving over 37 Lakh learners through NIOS and State Open Schools—offers a flexible platform capable of reaching school dropouts, working youth, and adult learners through modular, work-integrated training models.
Alignment with Viksit Bharat 2047: Building a skilled workforce is central to India's ambition of becoming a \$30 trillion economy by 2047. Large-scale vocational expansion can contribute to higher labour productivity, increased formal employment, and improved sectoral competitiveness across manufacturing, services, and emerging digital industries.
NIOS and the network of 15-17 State Open Schools collectively provide the institutional infrastructure required for national scale delivery. With over 4 crore learners served historically and more than 5,000 accredited centres, the system offers a proven foundation for expanding vocational education nationwide.
Labour market projections indicate that formal employment alone cannot absorb all workforce entrants. With 10–12 crore new workers expected by 2030, entrepreneurship and micro-enterprise development must complement wage employment. Integrating entrepreneurship competencies within vocational programmes therefore becomes essential for expanding livelihood opportunities.
India's education system has achieved scale but still faces a significant transition gap between schooling and productive employment. With nearly 80–90 lakh youth entering the workforce annually without formal skills and a large existing NEET population, strengthening vocational pathways is a national development imperative.
India's vocationalised Open Schooling initiative thus represents neither reinvention of the wheel nor imitation of foreign models. It is a sophisticated synthesis of proven global practices, adapted to Indian realities, and scaled to match India's unique demographic and economic imperatives.
The strategic framework is ambitious but achievable. It builds on proven models (COL Progressive Blended TVET, Bangladesh/ Malaysia successes), leverages existing infrastructure (NIOS/ SOS network), and aligns with India's policy ecosystem. Most critically, it measures success by employment outcomes—not inputs, activities, or enrollment numbers. Vocationalised Open Schooling, implemented through 6-Pillar Model, may transform Indian youth into skilled, employable, productive citizens

Session 6

RPL for Job Roles through Open Schools

Dr. Sarabjit Kalsi, Strategic Leader, led a virtual session on “Assessment, Certification, and Bridging the Gap for Learners to Re-enter Formal Education Systems,” focusing on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) at the school level. Dr. Kalsi pointed out that about 90% of workforce in India are engaged in in-formal sectors. These workers are predominantly employed in the services, construction, and manufacturing sectors. It is essential to give due recognition to their skills which they have acquired through informal training while working under a master trainer known as “Ustad”. A tailored programme must be developed to assess these skills, certify workers at appropriate NCVET-notified levels, and provide workplace-based bridging training where needed to meet job-role certification requirements. This will improve their socio-economic standing and qualify them for higher wages.

Session 7

Dual Certification for ITI and Open Schools Students

Dr. N.R Aravindan from Directorate General of Training (DGT), delivered an expert session on Bridging the gap between skill training and formal education to gain National Trade Certificate and School Leaving Certificate at Secondary/ Senior Secondary Level. He highlighted out that a unique initiative has been taken up by the DGT and one of the leading open School in the country, National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) through a MOU. The key highlights of the MoU signed on 16 October 2025 between these two organisations marks a significant step toward integrating vocational and formal education in India at the School levels.

Dr Aravindan highlighted the core objective of this initiative is straightforward yet transformative: ITI trainees should not have to choose between skills and schooling. Through this collaboration, learners enrolled in ITIs and other DGT institutions can now pursue a dual certification pathway—earning both the National Trade Certificate and a Class 10 or Class 12 certificate simultaneously.

A major strength of this model lies in its flexibility. NIOS provides an open and distance learning system that allows trainees to align their academic studies. This flexibility is further strengthened through a Transfer of Credit mechanism, where vocational subjects completed under DGT are recognised by NIOS. As a result, duplication of learning is minimised, and learners can efficiently accumulate credits.

The academic structure has been carefully designed. For example, in a one-year trade, learners typically complete three vocational subjects and two academic subjects (one language compulsory), totalling 1200 hours. Similar balanced structures are in place for longer-duration trades, ensuring that both skill and academic components are adequately covered.

Importantly, the initiative also introduces standardised credit transfer methodologies, ensuring that marks from trade theory, practical, and employability skills are normalised and integrated into the academic framework. From an accessibility standpoint, the programme remains affordable, with a clearly defined fee structure. The entire admission process is digital, involving verification through the NCVET portal, online registration, document submission, and fee payment, making it transparent and user friendly.



Photo 12. *Dr Aravindan addressing the participants*

The expected outcomes are highly significant. This initiative aims to reduce dropout rates in vocational training, enhance employability by combining skills with formal qualifications, and create pathways for higher education. Most importantly, it aligns closely with the vision of the National Education Policy 2020, which emphasises the seamless integration of vocational and academic streams.

Session 8

Sector Skill Councils: Partners of Open Schools

Dr. Swapna Mishra representing Textile Sector Skill Council (TSC) led a session on Sector Skill Council collaboration with State Open Schools for vocational integration, RPL recognition and new job role alignment. Dr Mishra provided a comprehensive overview of the textile skilling ecosystem and its integration with Open Schooling systems such as NIOS. While the session effectively covered the breadth of initiatives and institutional frameworks, its analytical depth varied, with stronger descriptive content than critical analysis.

A key strength of the session lay in its clear articulation of the scale and economic significance of the textile sector, emphasising its role as a major employment generator and contributor to GDP and exports. The documentation of TSC's institutional capacity — including NSQF-aligned Qualification Packs, a wide network of training partners, and high certification and placement rates — demonstrates a well-established skilling infrastructure. However, many of these claims, particularly those related to placement rates exceeding 90% and employability outcomes, would benefit from independent validation and citation of credible data sources, as the presentation relies primarily on internal reporting.

She also highlighted innovative initiatives, including 'DigiBunai', handloom entrepreneurship programmes, and B.Voc pathways, demonstrating responsiveness to technological and market shifts. The emphasis on vertical mobility and multiple entry-exit options is well aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Credit Framework (NCrF). Nevertheless, the session did not sufficiently examine implementation challenges such as regional scalability, quality assurance in decentralised training systems, or programme uptake among marginalised communities.

A notable contribution of the session was its identification of the disconnect between academia and industry — including outdated curricula, insufficient on-the-job exposure, and low graduate employability. TSC’s proposed role as a bridge — through curriculum alignment, training of trainers, and facilitation of internships and apprenticeships — is conceptually well-founded. The identification of emerging job roles in areas such as sustainable textiles, recycling, and CAD design reflects forward-looking planning. The inclusion of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for traditional artisans is a commendable step towards greater inclusivity.

The discussion on integration with Open Schooling systems is particularly relevant for policy discourse. The approach of curriculum mapping, credit integration, and joint certification represents a progressive model for blending vocational and academic education, supporting flexible learning pathways and lifelong learning. However, the session did not address critical operational issues such as credit equivalence standardisation, assessment parity, institutional coordination, and learner tracking systems — all of which are essential for effective implementation.



Photo 13. *Dr Swapna Mishra addressing the participants*

Session 9

Working Group Session: Co-Creating a Future Strategy

A Group Activity was undertaken by dividing the participants into five working groups. The group was formed based on a theme as outlined below:

Group 1: Visibility, Promotion and PR

Group 2: Recognition of Prior Learning Strategies

Group 3: Industry Alignment for Course Development

Group 4: Learner Segmentation

Group 5: Digital and Blended Approaches

Each group was tasked to prepare an outline of activities to be undertaken and prepare an action plan for 2026-27, both at the state and national level, including identification of stakeholders, a collaboration plan, and expected outcomes. The following recommendations were made by each group:

Group 1: Visibility, Promotion and PR

Increase enrolment by 50% of the total out-of-school population

Integration of State Open Schools with the main-stream education

Organisation of seminars and workshops, both at the national and state levels for promoting the concept of Open Schools

Developing media planning at the state level and effective collaboration with different media houses, both print and non-print media.

Celebration of different days of national and state importance by engaging Open School children

Inter Open School collaboration for learning strength of Open School system and innovative practices.

Group 2: Recognition of Prior Learning Strategies

Notification of RPL Regulations at the National Level and adoption of the same by the state governments

Identification of beneficiaries for RPL assessment engaged both in formal and informal sectors

Partnerships with NGOs and local governments

Making RPL an aspirational strategy at the state level

Development of criteria related to assessment, training mode, training of ToTs

Signing of multi-level MOUs to make RPL aspirational.

Integration with Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

Developing dual certification model (institutions and Industries) for making assessment useful to the assesses

Group 3: Industry Alignment for Course Development

Mapping out the status courses offered by the SOSs

Identification of courses relevant to learners which has high employment possibilities by partnering with relevant SSCs

Mentoring support to learners

Possibility to offer blended online courses

Organising exposure visits to relevant industries.

Group 4: Learner Segmentation

Definite planning for improving GER

UDISE registration of Learners pursuing courses through Open Schools

Relaxation of enrolment beyond geographical locations for capturing migrants

Flexibility in admission criteria for SoSs.

Tracking of drop-out students

Integration of skill courses to make the learner job-ready

Harnessing support from NGOs and Common Services Centres (CSCs)

Group 5: Digital and Blended Approaches

Identification of digital landscape of the districts in the states

Integration with IT@School Programme

Mass level use of television channels (VICTORS of Kerala model)

Transformation through Smart Classes at the Study Centres

Development of common LMS for Open Schools

Session 10

Action Planning and Next Steps

Prof. Sitansu S. Jena outlined the commitments made by State Open Schools and COL-CEMCA, and presented a roadmap with a defined timeline and responsibility matrix. The roadmap, framed under the National Skills-to-Employment Mission (NSEM) 2030, outlines a structured pilot framework for integrating vocational education within State Open Schools, with technical support from COL-CEMCA. The initiative seeks to establish a coherent skills-to-employment pipeline — linking curriculum, training delivery, certification, and placement — within a defined timeline from May 2026 to January 2027.

The roadmap is anchored in five sequential phases. It begins with the identification of high-demand job roles, ensuring that programme offerings are demand driven and aligned with labour market needs. This is followed by the development or adoption of National Occupational Standards (NOS) based curricula across 37 Sector Skill Councils, reinforcing standardisation and industry relevance.

Institutional readiness is addressed through the identification, accreditation, and inspection of vocational institutions (AVIs), alongside regulatory compliance via submission of Letters of Intent to NCVET. The next phase focuses on capacity building, including localisation of content, recruitment of trainers, and Training of Trainers (ToT), supported by enrolment drives and CSR-based resource mobilisation.

Programme implementation is scheduled between September and December 2026, incorporating a dual-track assessment system involving both SOS and Sector Skill Councils. The final phase emphasises employment outcomes, with job fairs and placement drives planned for January 2027.

COL-CEMCA's role is positioned as a technical and monitoring partner, responsible for organising capacity building workshops, facilitation on field level monitoring, mid-term assessments, and outcome evaluation at the end. This ensures continuous oversight and adaptive implementation.



Photo 14. *Prof.S.S Jena leading a group discussion*

The proposed roadmap for State Open Schools and COL-CEMCA is presented below:

For State Open Schools

Identification of High Demand Job Roles
Development/Adoption of NOS based Curriculum (37 SSCs) Identification of Accredited Vocational Institutions (AVIs) Submission of Letter of Intent (LoI) to NCVET for approval Screening & Inspection of AVIs
Development/Translation of Localise Content Recruitment of Trainers Training of Trainers Organising Enrolment Drives CSR Mobilisation for Funding
Delivery of Training Programmes Assessment of Learners (Dual Track System (SoS + SSCs) Monitoring, Field Verification and Quality Feedback
Organising Job Fairs/Placement Drive

For COL-CEMCA

Organising Workshop for Handholding SOS-related to Step-2 Deliverables
Organising Visits to States for Monitoring of Programme Implementation
Organising Workshop to obtain status on Programme Delivery & Learner Assessment (Mid-term Assessment) related to Step-4
Assessment on Outcome of Deliverables

The roadmap presents a workable implementation framework for bridging education and employment through State Open Schools. However, its success will depend on realistic phasing, institutional capacity strengthening, and robust monitoring systems. Addressing these factors will be critical to translating the roadmap into measurable employment outcomes.

Valedictory Session

Closing Remarks

Dr. B. Shadrach, Director, COL-CEMCA delivered the closing remarks at the conclusion of the Consultative meeting. His address highlighted the key reflections, priorities, and way forward emerging from the deliberations.

The major points emphasised during his address are summarised below:

Vocationalisation of Open Schooling is a national necessity:

India's education system must move beyond mere access to education and focus on employability, livelihood generation, and skill development. Vocationalisation of Open Schooling is, therefore, viewed as essential preparing youth for productive employment and entrepreneurship.

Open schooling can address the large NEET population and school dropouts:

It is essential for Open Schools to target NEET learners which just cannot be address alone by the exiting school without employable skills. Open schooling, due to its flexible and inclusive structure, must develop strategy plan to reconnect these learners with education, skilling, and employment opportunities.

Need for large-scale expansion of vocational education:

It is equally important to expand vocational education through Open Schooling by targeting NEET learners at scale, in response to labour market demands and demographic challenges.

Integration of education, skills, apprenticeships, and entrepreneurship:

An integrated ecosystem linking academic learning with vocational skills, apprenticeships, employment, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning is essential; particular emphasis should be placed on competency-based learning, digital skills, financial literacy, and self-employment opportunities.

Existing Open Schooling infrastructure provides a strong foundation:

Institutions such as NIOS and State Open Schools already possess significant infrastructure, including accredited centres and large learner networks, which can be leveraged for nationwide implementation of vocational education. The proposed framework is well-grounded, building on existing systems, strong policy support, and proven international practices.

Time-line Matrix for Open Schools:

The timeline matrix presented during the meeting must be adhered to, and State Open School representatives are expected to develop action plans for integration of academic courses with vocational courses as identified by different agencies. COL-CEMCA will provide full facilitation support throughout this process.

Way Forward

Major Recommendations from the Consultation

The National Consultative Meeting on “Vocationalising Open Schooling: Pathways, Partnerships and Possibilities” provided a comprehensive platform for dialogue and exchange among policymakers, experts, State Open Schools, education practitioners, and other key stakeholders on strengthening the role of Open Schooling in expanding access to vocational and skill-based education. The deliberations examined the existing opportunities, challenges, institutional experiences, and emerging pathways for integrating vocational education within the State Open Schooling (SOS) ecosystem.

The discussions were informed by expert presentations, experiences and good practices shared by State Open Schools, stakeholder interventions, and group activities undertaken during the meeting. Particular attention was given to issues relating to curriculum integration, industry linkages, certification and recognition, quality assurance, digitalisation, learner assessment, financial sustainability, institutional partnerships, and the employability of learners. The deliberations also highlighted the importance of balancing scale and accessibility with quality, credibility, and relevance to local and emerging labour-market needs.

Based on these deliberations and the collective insights emerging from the meeting, the following major recommendations are proposed to strengthen, expand, and institutionalise the vocationalisation of the State Open Schooling (SOS) system in India.

These recommendations seek to provide a practical framework for making vocational education more accessible, flexible, credible, industry-aligned, and responsive to the diverse needs of open-school learners:

- i. **Integrate Vocational Education with Open Schooling:** State Open Schools should systematically integrate vocational and skill-based programmes with academic courses at Secondary and Senior Secondary levels to improve employability and livelihood opportunities as proposed under the NEP 2020.
- ii. **Alignment with National Frameworks:** All vocational programmes offered through SOSs should be aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), and National Credit Framework (NCrF).
- iii. **NCVET Recognition for State Open Schools:** The State Open Schools should apply and obtain recognition from the National Council for Vocational Education and Training as Awarding Bodies to facilitate standardised vocational certification and improve institutional credibility.
- iv. **Promotion of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):** A structured RPL framework should be developed for assessing and certifying informal and experiential learning acquired by workers in different sectors.
- v. **Industry-Aligned Curriculum Development:** Vocational curricula should be developed in collaboration with Sector Skill Councils and industries to ensure relevance to local labour market needs and emerging employment sectors.

Major Recommendations from the Consultation

- vi. **Expansion of Accredited Vocational Institutions (AVIs):** The State Open Schools should identify and accredit vocational institutions, ITIs, NGOs, and community organisations as training partners for large scale implementation of skill training programmes.
- vii. **Strengthening Digital and Blended Learning:** Open schools should adopt Learning Management Systems (LMS), smart classrooms, online assessment systems, and blended learning approaches to expand learner access and flexibility.
- viii. **Dual Certification Pathways:** Mechanisms should be developed for enabling learners to simultaneously obtain vocational qualifications and school level certification through partnerships with ITIs and skill institutions.
- ix. **Focused Outreach for NEET and Dropout Youth:** Special enrolment drives and awareness campaigns should target NEET youth, migrant learners, women, and disadvantaged groups to improve participation in Open Schooling.
- x. **Enhancing Social Acceptance and Credibility:** National and state level advocacy campaigns should be undertaken by the Open Schools to improve public perception and acceptance of Open Schooling certificates among employers and higher education institutions.
- xi. **Localisation of Self-Learning Materials:** State-specific and multilingual self-learning materials should be developed to address regional and linguistic diversity among learners.
- xii. **Capacity Building of Trainers and Administrators:** Continuous training programmes should be organised for teachers, counsellors, trainers, and administrators on vocational pedagogy, learner support, and digital education. The support from the National & State Level institutions may be explored to avail.
- xiii. **Integration of Entrepreneurship Education:** Vocational programmes should incorporate entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and digital competencies to promote self-employment and micro enterprise development.
- xiv. **Establishment of Monitoring and Quality Assurance Mechanisms:** Robust systems for learner tracking, assessment, certification, field monitoring, and outcome evaluation should be institutionalised to ensure quality and accountability.
- xv. **Creation of a National Collaborative Network of Open Schools:** A formal platform should be established for collaboration among State Open Schools, National Institute of Open Schooling, Sector Skill Councils, industries, NGOs, and international agencies to facilitate resource sharing, innovation, and policy coordination.

ANNEXURE 1 – PROGRAMME AGENDA

**National Consultative Meeting of State Open Schools on
Vocationalising Open Schooling: Pathways, Partnerships and Possibilities**
23 – 24 April 2026 | Hotel Lemon Tree, Aerocity, New Delhi

Day 1: 23 April 2026 Understanding the Landscape		
Time	Session / Description	Speaker / Facilitator
09:00 - 09:30	Registration	
09:30 - 10:00	Inaugural & Welcome Opening Remarks	<i>Dr B. Shadrach, COL-CEMCA</i>
10:00 - 11:00	State Open Schools: Current Practices Presentation by each of the Open School Systems at the State-level, highlighting their key initiatives, current status, standout practices and challenges	<i>Chair: Dr T N Giri, NIOS</i> <i>Presenters:</i> Representatives of SOSs from <i>Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka</i>
11:00 - 11:30	Tea / Networking Break (Group Photo)	
11:30 - 13:00	State Open Schools: Current Practices Presentation by each of the Open School Systems at the State-level, highlighting their key initiatives, current status, standout practices and challenges	<i>Chair: Dr T N Giri, NIOS</i> <i>Presenters:</i> Representatives of SOSs from <i>Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Telangana</i>
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch	
14:00 - 15:00	State Open Schools: Challenges and Opportunities Facilitated open floor group discussion on shared problem points and emerging opportunities. (30 minutes for presentation)	<i>Facilitator:</i> <i>Ms Monica Sharma, COL-CEMCA</i>
15:00 - 15:30	State Open Schools: Mapping Challenges SOSs identify top five challenges & build a problem wall.	<i>Facilitator:</i> <i>Mr Aflaq Shah, COL-CEMCA</i>
15:30 - 15:45	Tea Break	

15:45 - 16:45	Policy provisions for State Open Schools to Vocationalise Education Opportunities facing SOSs in the light of educational reforms in NEP 2020, NCF-SE, NSQF and NCVET	<u>Speaker:</u> <i>Prof Ashok Gaba, NCVET</i>
16:45 - 17:00	Day 1 Wrap-Up & Preview of Day 2	<i>Dr B Shadrach, COL-CEMCA</i>

Day 2 : 24 April 2026 Solutions, Strategy and Commitments		
Time	Session / Description	Speaker / Facilitator
09:30 - 09:45	Recap of Day 1 & Framing for Day 2 Summary of Day 1 & Focus areas for Day	<i>Dr B. Shadrach</i>
09:45 - 11:00	Vocationalisation of State Open Schools Key recommendations and action points.	<u>Speaker:</u> <i>Professor Nirmaljeet Singh Kalsi</i>
11:00 - 11:15	Tea / Networking Break	
11:15 - 11:45	RPL for Job Roles through Open Schools Assessment, Certification and Bridging the Gap for learners to re-enter formal education systems	<u>Speaker:</u> <i>Shri Sarabjit Kalsi</i>
11:45 - 12:00	National Curriculum Framework – School Education Integration of work and education, 4-stage structure of school education and the specifics of vocational streams	<u>Speaker:</u> <i>Professor N S Kalsi</i>
12:00 - 12:30	Dual Certification for ITI and Open Schools Students Bridging the gap between skill training and formal education to gain National Trade Certificate and School Leaving Certificate at Secondary/ Senior Secondary Level.	<u>Speaker:</u> <i>Shri N Aravindan, DGT</i>
12:30 - 13:00	Sector Skill Councils, partners of Open Schools SSC collaboration with SOS for vocational integration, RPL recognition and new job role alignment.	<u>Speaker:</u> <i>Dr Swapna Mishra, TSC</i>
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch Break	

14:00 - 14:45	Working Group Session: Co-Creating a Future Strategy • Visibility, Promotion and PR • Recognition of Prior Learning Strategies • Industry Alignment for Course Development • Learner Segmentation • Digital and Blended Approaches	<u>Facilitator:</u> <i>Mr Aflaq Shah, COL-CEMCA</i>
14:45 - 15:15	Plenary: Group Presentations and Synthesis Presentation by groups highlighting priority areas for COL-CEMCA support.	<u>Facilitator:</u> <i>Ms Monica Sharma, COL-CEMCA</i>
15:15 - 15:30	Tea Break	
15:30 - 16:15	Action Planning and Next Steps Commitments by SOSs and COL-CEMCA. Timeline and responsibility matrix agreed.	<u>Facilitator:</u> <i>Prof S S Jena, COL-CEMCA Consultant</i>
16:15 - 16:45	Valedictory and Closing Remarks Summary of outcomes. Vote of thanks. Way forward communicated to all participants.	<i>Professor N S Kalsi</i> <i>Dr B Shadrach, COL-CEMCA</i>

ANNEXURE 2 – List of Participants & Experts

National Consultative Meeting of State Open Schools on Vocationalising Open Schooling: Pathways, Partnerships and Possibilities 23 – 24 April 2026 | Hotel Lemon Tree, Aerocity, New Delhi

S No	Full Name	Gender	Designation	Institution/Organisation	Email ID
1.	Dr. T.N Giri	Male	Director (Vocational Education)	NIOS	dirvoc@nios.ac.in
2.	Mr. Shiva Kumar Narasimhappa	Male	Vice Chairman	Board of Open Schooling & Skill education, Sikkim, Gangtok	vicechairman@bosse.ac.in
3.	Mr. Suneel Kumar Sharma	Male	Academic Officer	Rajasthan State Open School Jaipur	suneel.birthla@gmail.com
4.	Dr. (Major) Vishal Sharma	Male	Secretary	HP Board of School Education Dharamshala	hpbosesecretary@gmail.com
5.	Mr. Channappa	Male	Chief Coordinator	JSS Karnataka Open School, Mysore, Karnataka	jsskos99@gmail.com
6.	Mr. Sanjay Kumar	Male	Deputy Director	BBOSE, Patna	lrosanjay@gmail.com
7.	Mr Jinesh Kumar MM	Male	Executive Director	Scole-Kerala	jinesheramam2023@gmail.com
	Dr Arif Jan	Male	Deputy Director Academics	JKBOSE, J & K	dydirectorkd.jkbse@jk.gov.in
	Dr. Ratheesh Kaliyadan	Male	Additional Private Secretary to Chief Minister	Chief Minister office, Kerala	apstocmkerala@gmail.com
10.	Smt. Vangaluri Geetha	Female	State Technical Assistant	TOSS - Educate Girls	geetha.vangaluri@educategirls.ngo
11.	Mr Ram Kumar Vaidya	Male	Assistant Director	MP State Open School Education Board Bhopal	vaidyarkdpc@gmail.com
12.	Ms Seema Chawla Arora	Female	Incharge Open School	Punjab school Education Board	seemapseb@gmail.com
13.	Ms Sunita Sharma	Female	Superintendent	Punjab school Education Board	ddopenschool@yahoo.com
14.	Mr Pardeep Kumar	Male	Senior Assistant	Punjab school Education Board	ddopenschool@yahoo.com

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S No	Full Name	Gender	Designation	Institution/Organisation
15.	Dr. B.Shadrach	Male	Director	COL-CEMCA, New Delhi
16.	Prof. N. S. Kalsi, IAS (Retd.)	Male	Former Chairperson,	NCVET, New Delhi
17.	Dr. N. R. Aravindan,	Male	Dy. Director General	DGT
18.	Dr Swapna Mishra	Female	Chief Executive Officer	Textile Sector Council
19.	Sh. Amit Sharma	Male	Consultant Gr-II	NCVET, New Delhi
20.	Mr Sarabjit Singh	Male	Strategic Leader	Chandigarh through Video Conferencing
21.	Prof. Sitansu S Jena	Male	Professor & Dean (Retd), & Former Chairman, NIOS	Dr. B.R.Ambedkar University Delhi
22.	Ms. Monica Sharma	Female	Programme Coordinator	COL-CEMCA, New Delhi
23.	Mr Aflaq Shah	Male	Consultant	COL-CEMCA, New Delhi

