India Case Study: Educational Sector

National Institute of Open Schooling

Background

The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) has developed a policy framework for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) (NIOS, 2013). The RPL framework includes generally agreed quality assurance principles, procedures, policies and processes to assess competences and skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning, leading to National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) awards as per the level of competency attained. NSQF also maps the levels acquired through RPL and formal education.

Thirty per cent of the population of India is illiterate and only 50 per cent of students reach high school. About 60 per cent of students leave school at different stages before reaching grade 10.

Main activities

The activities around RPL are two-pronged:

- RPL or qualifications acquired outside the formal learning path.
- Recognition of credits obtained through formal learning.

This will lead to options for personal or career development or to gain credit towards other qualifications or learning programmes to learners and workers who have the skills but no certificate to prove it. It will help learners and workers make clearer connections between the learning they have already achieved and future learning and/or career opportunities.

The NIOS conducts assessments at several levels:

1. Open Basic Education (OBE).
2. Adult neo-literates (those who have completed a basic literacy programme) in cooperation with the National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA).
4. Vocational education.

1. The OBE programme is implemented by NIOS with the aim of providing primary and upper primary level education through alternate means of open schooling to those who are unable to attend formal school or have left school without attaining a school leaving certificate. The OBE programme has been recognised by the Government of India as education different from, but equivalent to formal school for purposes of higher education and employment. Different states have indicated their interest in the programme for out-of-school children, as well as for neo-literate adults (neo-literates are those who have completed a basic course in literacy).
As part of the OBE programme, NIOS provides qualifications equivalent to the formal educational system and develops learning programmes for neo-literate adults. These qualifications give early school leavers and neo-literate adults access to further studies. NIOS has also developed resource materials including skills programmes for the A, B and C levels which are equivalent to grades three, five, and eight in formal schools. The NIOS conducts assessments against learning outcomes standards at the Vocational Education and Training (VET) levels one to four of the NSQF, so that vocational skills and work experience may be assessed and avenues for certification and lifelong learning are created.

2. NIOS assesses and certifies the competence levels of neo-literate under the national literacy programme of the Government of India called *Sakshar Bharat* (Literate India) (NLMA, 2010), launched in 2009. Assessments of neo-literate includes:

- Assessing the proficiency levels of functional literacy skills (3Rs) attained.
- Recognising achievements at basic literacy levels through certification.
- Enhancing informal experience.
- Providing access to appropriate learning and life skills through customized programmes.

For the implementation of the OBE programme, the NIOS has developed partnerships with about 341 agencies (voluntary, public and private) providing facilities at their study centres. The NIOS provides resource supports such as a revised model of curricula, study materials, joint certification, orientation of resource persons and the popularisation of OBE to voluntary agencies and governmental agencies at the district level, which includes the Zila Saksharta Samitis (ZSSs), for the implementation of its OBE programme. Its goals are to provide a learning continuum based on a graded curriculum, ensuring quality of education for out-of-school children, neo-literate, early school leavers and non-formal education (NFE) completers.

3. At the secondary and senior secondary levels, NIOS provides flexibility in the choice of subjects/courses, accelerated learning, and transfer of credits (awarded through the Central Board of Secondary Education, the Board of School Education and State Open Schools) to enable learners’ continuation of education. A learner is offered as many as nine chances to appear in public examinations spread over a period of five years. The credits gained are accumulated until the learner clears the required credits for certification. The learning strategies include: learning through printed self-instructional material, audio and video programmes, participating in a Personal Contact Programme (PCP), and a Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA). Enrichment is also provided to the learners through the bi-annual magazine, *Open Learning*. The study materials are made available in English, Hindi and Urdu. The On-Demand Examination System (ODES) is in operation at the secondary and senior secondary stages. NIOS offers 26 subjects in seven languages (Hindi, English, Urdu, Marathi, Telugu, Gujarati, and Malayalam) for secondary examinations and 19 subjects in Hindi, English and Urdu for senior secondary examinations. Besides these, the NIOS have provision for offering vocational subjects in combination with academic subjects at the secondary and senior secondary levels.

3. NIOS’s vocational education programme provides prospects for the learners to become young entrepreneurs. It offers 86 vocational education programmes in different areas such as agriculture, business and commerce, engineering and technology, health and paramedical science, home science and hospitality management, teacher training, Computer and Information Technology (IT) related sectors, life enrichment and general services. Knowledge, skills and qualities of entrepreneurship have been made essential components in curricula for vocational education with emphasis on practical and on-the-job training in related industrial units.

**Outcomes and ways forward**

Since 2010, NIOS has assessed and certified more than 3,410,029 adult learners. NIOS supports literacy and post-literacy linked to vocational education.
NIOS has created alternative pathways through open and flexible education and training and meets individuals’ diverse learning needs.

As a way forward, NIOS is continually aligning its VET courses to meet requirements of the NSQF level descriptors.

**Resources and references**


National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). Webpage of the Institute. (www.nios.ac.in.)


**Partner/s**

Dr. Mamta Srivastava (Deputy Director of Vocational Education) and
Dr. S.S. Jena (Chairman) National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS)
(An autonomous organization under MHRD, Govt. of India)
A-24/25,
Institutional Area
Sector - 62
NOIDA
Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar,
Uttar Pradesh - 201309,
India

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