

# **Open Basic Education (OBE) Programme: A Case Study of Different Learning Practices Adopted by Accredited Agencies of NIOS**

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## **Abstract**

*Basic education to all is essential to achieve social justice and equality. These were the vision behind the establishment of Open Basic Education Programme. The Open Basic Education (OBE) programme of NIOS was initiated in June 1994 with the aim of providing primary and upper primary education through alternative means of open schooling. It is an equivalency programme and provides three tier educations under OBE programme i.e. A level (equivalent to class 3 of formal schooling), B level (equivalent to class 5 of formal schooling) and C level (equivalent to class 8 of formal schooling). In the year 2000 the programme was also operationalised for children between 6 to 14 years age group.*

*OBE programme of NIOS has been implemented in collaboration with Accredited Agencies (NGOs, various self motivated institutions working for providing educational opportunities) spread across the country. These AAs are working with different kind of target groups i.e. out of school children, girls, marginalized groups, minorities, migratory people and children with special needs etc.*

*This paper acknowledge different successful practices being used for access and learning of learners by Accredited Agencies, reflecting their efforts which they are making to provide education to all who are in need. Achievement made by learners who accessed to such innovative practices has also been highlighted in this paper.*

## **Primary Education in India**

The Indian society has a diversified socio-economic structure. It is very complex and due to vary socio-economic background equal opportunity to all was not achieved as it was proposed.

Primary education is first step for an individual for an equal opportunity. Like any other country of the world, it is a matter of great concern in India for providing a quality and affordable education to all. Being second most populated country of the world, the number of school going children are also in much quantity. As per the Census 2011, the population of India was 121.02 Crore. The Census 2011 also reflected that 20.41 Crored children come in the age group of 6-13, out of these an estimated 60.41 Lakh (2.97%) are out of school. These children are expected student of primary and upper primary education.

In recent decades India has made significant progress on access to primary education. Enrolment in primary education in India has been a success story. It could be possible due to various programs and initiatives of the government to increase enrolment. These programmes were equally implemented in the remote areas of the country and were successful. These efforts have been reflected in Gross Enrolment Ratio, where 95% of children were enrolled at elementary level in the session 2013-14. (As per given data)

The Right to Education Act, 2009 provides children's access to elementary schools within the defined area. The Sarva Shiksha Abhigyan (SSA) has been supporting several interventions for facilitating universal access and enrolment. One of the key priority tasks under SSA was to ensure the enrolment of all children in the age group of 6-13 years within a reasonable distance. These interventions were really effective and contributed for the expansion of primary and upper primary schooling facilities and increase in enrolment.

However, after all these efforts, the major challenge was to retain these students till higher education. As per data, about 29% of children leave the school before completing five years at primary level. At upper primary, the dropout rates reaches up to 43%. However, RTE Act had made elementary education compulsory. Hence, it becomes compulsory to enrol children of 6-13 years age group in formal school.

Large number of children comes from migratory population, who shift from one place to another in search of employment. Many women and persons with disability are also part of out of school children who cannot be admitted to formal schooling, therefore, distance learning becomes an alternative for providing educational opportunities at their doorstep with many flexibilities. The Open Basic Education Programme of NIOS is providing educational opportunities to such out of school children.

### **Open Basic Education Programme**

The Open Basic Education Programme is one of its own kind in India. It is an excellent example of public-private partnership for providing quality education at primary and upper primary level to the deprived section of the society. The Open Basic Education (OBE) Programme was initiated and implemented in June, 1994 with the aim of providing the primary and upper primary education through alternative means of open schooling. The programme was offered to neo-literates who have not accessed education and was not able to take the advantage of formal system of schooling. The OBE Programme is an equivalency Programme, which provides three tier of education:

- **Level 'A'**- Level 'A' is equivalent to standard III of the formal school system
- **Level 'B'**- Level 'B' is equivalent to standard V of the formal school system
- **Level 'C'**- Level 'C' is equivalent to standard VIII of the formal school system

Later in the year 2000, the programme was also operationalised for children between 6 to 14 years of age group considering the demand and need of the programme. The OBE

Programme provides competency based learning and ensure quality of the education. The curriculum of OBE Programme is based on National Curriculum Framework 2005.

### **Target groups for the OBE Programme**

The target groups identified for Open Basic Education (OBE) programme are diversified. The programme has been divided into two groups on the basis of the clientele it caters. These are:

- Children (6-14 years) and
- Adolescents and Adults (Above 14 years).

***Children (6-14 years)*** – This group caters the school dropouts from the formal schooling system. The programme is also being offered to the left-out children from Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan, out-of-school children particularly girls from marginalized groups and children with special needs.

***Adolescents and Adults (Above 14 years)*** – At this age group, the dropouts; neo-literates, first generation learners and adults, women of marginalized, qualified candidates of Basic Education Literacy Assessment programme of NLMA groups are the clientele of the programme.

### **Objectives of the programme**

The Open Basic Education Programme was started with a positive attitude to provide education to all. The specific objectives of the programme are as follows:

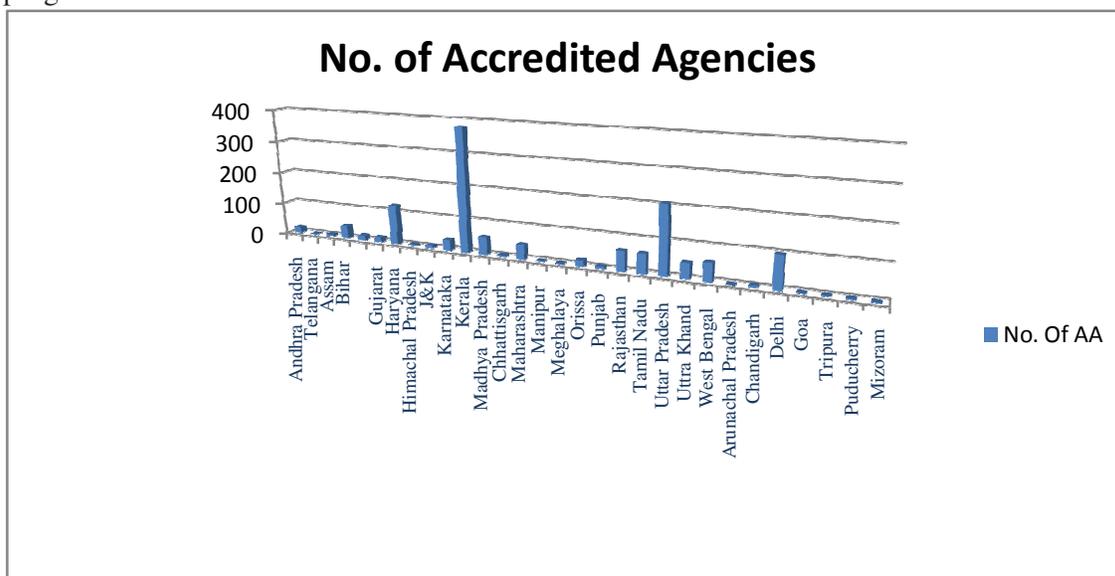
- To provide an alternative education programme equivalent to the formal education system through Open Learning using Distance Education Mode (DEM).
- To provide learning continuum based on a graded curriculum ensuring quality of education for neo-literates, school dropouts and individuals studying in any alternative system.
- To contribute to accomplishment of the constitutional commitment to achieve the goal of universal elementary education and to fulfil the requirement of Education for All (EFA).
- To promote Continuing Education with a view to develop a learning society.
- To reach the unreached by developing alternative models of basic education using the potentialities of Distance Education Mode (DEM).
- To reduce disparities in access to education, especially with regard to girls/women and disadvantaged groups leading to democratization of education.

### **Functioning of OBE Programme**

NIOS has partnership with NGOs and other voluntary agencies for effective implementation of the programme. These study centers are called Accredited Agency (AA). Under the programme, NIOS has taken the responsibility of providing resource support such as model curricula, exemplar study materials, joint certification and orientation of Resource Persons. Admission of learners, conduct of classes, assessment and evaluation are done by partnering agency.

## The Network of Accredited Agencies

The Open Basic Education Programme is being implemented in collaboration with Accredited Agencies. Presently, 1313 Accredited Agencies are working under the programme.



*Number of Accredited Agencies under OBE Programme*

## The success story of OBE Programme

After successful completion of the programme, NIOS certify the learners. It may not come with a huge numbers, but they are significant as they are representing a different group of learners. These learners were not in position to achieve education with normal system of schooling. Table below shows the representation of learners certified across the country.

Regional Centers of NIOS	Year and number of learners				
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Pune	177	984	429	411	313
Kolkata	618	511	281	154	95
Chandigarh	2581	1937	1514	2133	568
Kochi	8715	3841	1072	3499	631
Delhi	1065	1358	1774	1680	2052
Jaipur	231	376	289	664	468
Patna	1062	576	586	674	157
Allahabad	1059	923	1645	1137	462
Bhopal	678	270	792	889	435
Dehradun	3001	2755	4414	2253	3771
Visakhapatnam	0	0	0	0	84
Bengaluru	378	734	374	339	65
Gandhi Nagar	48	142	134	164	148
Raipur	73	109	32	19	0
Ranchi	177	0	118	29	0

Chennai	780	1170	1104	1057	844
Dharamshala	0	0	0	17	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>20643</b>	<b>15686</b>	<b>14558</b>	<b>15119</b>	<b>10119</b>

### **Learning Practices in OBE Programme**

NIOS is catering a different kind of target group under OBE Programme. These are drop outs of formal schooling, out of schools children, neo-literates, migratory population and person with disabilities. Hence, their access to school education is entirely different. This leads to devise and adopt a different kind of learning approach as per the clientele. The Accredited Agencies under OBE Programme has changed their learning approaches and practices according to need of their learners. NIOS has recognised these practices and tried to provide the flexibilities in the system, so that the objective of providing learning opportunities to the marginalised people can be achieved. Some of learning practices implemented by Accredited Agencies has been identified and are being presented here, as they have made significant changes at the grass root level.

#### ***Innovation Mobile School , New Delhi***

Innovation Mobile School was associated with NIOS since 2013 and working in the urban area of Delhi and NCR. The organisation comes with a unique idea of mobile schools for catering the need of education of the underprivileged children of the migrant labourers at their door step. These children and adults had left their schooling due to their migratory nature of families in search of work from village to urban areas in Delhi-NCR region.

They do not have any specific location. Normally, they made their temporary huts near to construction sites or outskirts of the city. Hence, the organisation planned to reach these children and adults at their doorstep with all basic facilities for learning. These mobile vans are equipped with teaching and learning materials and a teacher. They have also made some mobile huts, where these learners can find school like atmosphere. Presently, 8 such mobile schools are working in the Delhi-NCR.

#### ***Jan Shikshan Sansthan Bhimtal, Nainital, Uttarakhand***

Jan Shikshan Sansthan, Bhimtal is working in Uttarakhand and was associated with NIOS since 2003. The organisation is providing educational opportunities in the rural areas of Nainital, Almora, Champavat and Tihri-Garhwal districts of Uttarakhand. The learners in these areas are mostly under BPL category. Most of them are women, who have been motivated by the efforts of Mahila Sakhya Programme. These women and other learners were motivated to reach the nearby centre of JSS in their locality. These learners are full of their life experiences. JSS connected these life experiences with the content, which made learning more effective and experiential. The success of the programme in this area can be seen as successful learners in the given table.

Level	Years					Total
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
A	894	619	617	752	336	<b>3218</b>
B	814	711	987	459	430	<b>3401</b>
C	1246	1138	1728	694	470	<b>5276</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2954</b>	<b>2468</b>	<b>3332</b>	<b>1905</b>	<b>1236</b>	<b>11895</b>

### ***Manovikas Kendra, Kolkata, West Bengal***

NIOS had granted accreditation to Manovikas Kendra in the year 2006. The Manovikas Kendra is providing learning opportunities to the learners with special need. The organisation was associated with NIOS because of its flexibilities and relaxation in curriculum. As admission under OBE Programme is valid for five years, these learners with special need can continue their learning according to their pace.

It was found that parents approached Manovikas Kendra, as their child was facing problem in coping up with mainstream curriculum. The organisation assesses learner's competencies and accordingly registers them in OBE program.

Regular learning assistance are being provided to the learners through special classes further guidance and support. These learners are guided to appear in 2 to 3 subjects at a time as per their ability. Before the final examination a mock tests are being held to prepare and evaluate them so that they can improve and rectify their mistakes. As learners need to be motivated continuously, certificates are handed over to learners along with a token of appreciation, in presence of their parents and co-learners.

### ***Central Jail No. 6, Tihar, New Delhi***

Jails are not being meant to punish criminals but also give them a second chance to become a good person and continue their life after completing their term in jail. If such facilities are not provided, there are more chances that they may continue and get involved in criminal activities. Hence, these jail inmates need to be provided such atmosphere, where they can access educational opportunities to live normal life after completing their term.

NIOS in partnership with many jails across the country are providing educational opportunities to jail inmates. Tihar jail is known for their various efforts for skilling the jail inmates to live their normal life. The central jail No. 6, Tihar was associated with NIOS in 2015. The center is working in the jail no. 6.

### **Conclusion**

Learning needs to be learner centric. Many learners, who cannot deal with the rigid system of formal education, may be left behind. The Open Basic Education Programme is an example of such programme, where a learner can learn as per their pace, place and choice of subject. Distance education may not be a second alternative; it can be a first, if it is dealt with the

learners demand. The OBE programme is still expanding and it has capacity to provide educational opportunities to the larger group who are still out of reach.

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