

**Towards Universalisation of  
Secondary Education  
Through NIOS  
Increasing Educational Access  
through  
Online Admission  
and Flexible Examination System**

*Dinesh Singh Bist*



**National Institute of Open Schooling**  
A-24/25, Institutional Area, Sector-62, Noida (U.P.)  
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## **The Evolution of Open and Distance Learning Systems**

In an educational context, the Open Learning Systems refers to the philosophy where a learner has the freedom to choose *How* to learn, *When* to learn, *Where* to learn, and *What* to learn. Open learning has been described as a process of learning that is not enclosed or encumbered by barriers, that is accessible and available, not confined and concealed and that implies continuum of access and opportunity (Wedemeyer). The characteristics of a fully Open system include a learning process where the learner is able to set his/her own objective, choose the content, sequence the programme and decide when and how learning is to be assessed (Rowntree). Over the years Open Learning Systems (OLS) have been set up depending upon specific country requirements. While Open Schools have been set up in many developing countries of Asia and Africa as a viable response to the critical educational problems of numbers, resources, quality, in countries like New Zealand, these institutions serve the needs of scattered students. Still others focus on providing qualifications to those who went through school but did not successfully gain the qualifications (Perraton).

The philosophy of Open Learning has been best implemented by the Distance Education mode. The models of DE have progressively evolved over different generations based upon the educational needs of populations as well as the social and political agendas of governments. These include the Examination Preparation model which was meant only for those who could not afford the luxury of being enrolled in a university or who lived too far away to attend regular school. Distance education in the initial stages was characterized by the Correspondence Education model, followed by

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the Multi-media model and the Tele-learning models. The extent of flexibility and the accessibility was determined by the existing facilities available. With the expanse of technology, especially the use of internet, the distance education system now has the potential to provide learners with a much more interactive and personalized pedagogical support system than ever before. There is also a lot of scope for making the distance education system more flexible through the use of technology.

Each country has to decide the direction its Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Systems need to take, depending upon its national requirement and the level of its infrastructural preparedness.

### **India : National Educational Concerns and Open Learning Systems**

The major thrust of the Government of India, which has been reflected in various policy documents, has been to ensure that the goal of universalisation of education is achieved for the diverse population groups in the country. In doing so, the Government has adopted a number of schemes from time to time and also made modifications in existing schemes. Policy statements, including the National Policy on Education (1986), have also pushed forth a case for strengthening ODL.

Recently the sectoral allocations in Five Year Plans has shifted from Elementary Education and Literacy to Secondary Education. The present focus of the Government as reflected in the XI<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan documents is on Universalization of Secondary Education. It has been stated that the success of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and other schemes in the field of literacy and elementary education have resulted in a spurt in the number of children who are now aspirants for secondary level education. Similarly the success achieved through the National Literacy Mission wherein a large number of adults have been made literate has also opened the path of continuing education that will culminate in the Secondary Education for these persons. **The XI<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan targets that at least 15% of out of school children at secondary level should be covered by the Open Learning Systems.**

The Open Learning System at the School level in India is represented by the Open Schools at the national and state level. The National Institute of Open Schooling which began as the Open School Project of the Central Board of Secondary Education in 1979, is today the largest Open School of the world. However in view of the XI<sup>th</sup> Plan targets and the advancements

in technology in India, there is an urgent need to review the educational outreach of NIOS and to design strategies for raising it to a higher level of openness and flexibility so that the goal of the Government of India and the objectives of NIOS with respect to universalisation of education are achieved.

### **NIOS : Revisiting Openness and Flexibility**

The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), formerly known as National Open School (NOS), was set up as an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, in November 1989 for attaining the three-fold mission of assisting the Government of India in achieving Universalisation of Education, in promoting greater equity and justice in society and helping in the evolution of a learning society by providing relevant, continuing and developmental education up to the pre-degree level through an open distance system through its prioritized client group as an alternative to the formal school system. (X X XIII) MOA of NOS. In its existing form, NIOS offers need-based Academic and Vocational Programmes by developing and prescribing a spectrum of courses of study for the purposes of general, vocational and continuing education either leading to certification at school stage or up to the under-graduate level (including certificates/diplomas) or for life and job enrichment without certification. (3 (iii) (MOA) of NOS. NIOS is supposed to maintain standards with quality inputs coupled with easy entry, flexibility in selection of courses, pace of study, place of study with multiple attempts at qualifying examinations at the learner's own pace.

Under the present system, NIOS operates through its network of Accredited Institutions (AIs) (2000)/Accredited Vocational Institutions (AVIs) (900) spread all over the country and abroad. The enrolment of learners in NIOS is done through these AIs during the period of July to September of every academic year. The enrolment of a learner is valid for five years, which enables him/her to take '9' examinations after registration. The examinations are conducted twice a year in April-May and October-November. Recently, the On Demand Examination System has been introduced at selected Regional Centres. 14.27 lakh students are enrolled on a cumulative basis. The annual enrolment remains in between 2.52 to 3 lakhs per annum. Every year between 4 to 5 lakh learners take the '2' examinations of NIOS.

NIOS works in both complementary and supplementary roles in relation to

the formal school system. In spite of the impressive progress made by NIOS in its present form of OLS, there are several areas in its functioning that need review.

Some of these are as stated below:

- 1. One-Time Admission Policy** – The NIOS conducts admission once a year usually in the months of July- August. The admission period is spread over a period of 60 days and includes some days for submission of late fee. This single time period of admission restricts the inclusion of many learners who could otherwise access education through the NIOS. As a national level Open schooling system, NIOS needs to relook at its admission policy so that the ideas of anytime admission can be made tangible. This would also be in consonance with the thinking of Open learning.
- 2. Single Channel Interface** -At the operational level, the NIOS runs its programmes in partnership with formal schools, NGOs which function as Accredited Institutions and Accredited Vocational Institutions. These institutions are the only means through which a learner can enter the NIOS system. These AIs/ASVIs have a skewed and uneven geographical distribution and above all, NIOS has no administrative control over them in their pattern of functioning and also for ensuring that NIOS policies related to admission, examinations and student support services are implemented effectively by them. In several cases AIs and AVIs are selective in enrolling learners. Complaints have been received that some AIs and AVIs, exploit poor learners by taking extra money, give incomplete and incorrect admission data leading to series of operational problems later on, do not provide quality and timely student support services to the students, do not conduct personal contact programmes properly and are generally found lacking in making effective academic intervention through Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs). In effect, large number of learners are dissatisfied with the services provided by NIOS through its AIs and AVIs and are forced to come Regional Centres and Headquarters for redressal of their grievances. This projects NIOS as a sub-standard service provider to those unreached sections of society, who are already devoid of benefits of education of formal school system, thereby creating a vicious circle of lack of access to education, and further marginalization in society.

- 3. Limited Examinations Options** – The NIOS conducts ‘2’ public examinations every year. Since NIOS has to depend upon AIs/AVIs for examination support, there have been cases of malpractices in the evaluation and certification system, which has undermined these systems severely. These problems reached their peak in 2003-04 when under a policy, AIs and AVIs were made self-centres for examinations also. Recently NIOS began the On Demand Examination but this is restricted to Delhi and Pune only.
- 4. Mandatory One Year Study Period** -The present guidelines for admission/examination have been devised in such a manner that any learner, who is enrolled in NIOS for the first time, has to compulsorily study in NIOS system for atleast one year before he/she can appear in the Public examinations of NIOS. This is also applicable for those learners who have already studied through the formal school system and have failed in some subjects at Secondary and Senior Secondary Level. Many such learners are those who have already studied the course, albeit not successfully. Hence these learners are looking for the option of ‘re-examination’. At present, if these learners go back to the formal school, they have to study for the entire year and if they come to the NIOS, then too they have to study for the entire year. This loss of time and the idea of studying for another year forces many such learners to exit the educational system permanently, leading to a huge waste of national resources including human cost involved in terms of suffering of such learner. There has been large number of cases of attempted suicides, clinical depression amongst such learners, who are unable to complete schooling from formal school system and consequently who are labeled as ‘failures’ and dropouts.
- 5. Single Curriculum for Diverse Learner Needs** – At present NIOS has developed its own curriculum and learners are examined based upon this. However in today’s world it has to be accepted that NIOS curriculum cannot be the only source of learning. There are many sources of content, be these in the form of materials on the internet, audio-video materials, library support as well prior learning, peer learning, local wisdom. It is also worthwhile to accept that in developing their course materials, the institutions follow the National Curriculum Framework which makes the curriculum equivalent. The idea behind respecting the learner’s freedom to choose his/her learning

package will also ensure that the learner is not loaded with content but instead his/her competencies are developed. This would imply that the examination testing systems be redesigned so that there are stricter norms for competency based testing. In many countries there exists a National Board of Examination/Qualifications, which examines learners irrespective of the educational stream they have studied in. In view of the vast knowledge available outside the NIOS course materials, it is proposed that in the first stage NIOS should cater to an additional target group i.e. those who may have studied under some other system and are looking towards NIOS for completion of their school level certification only. In the second stage this system would also include those learners who may not have studied under any formal school but who are giving NIOS a self-certification of their competencies. Although this is already being done by NIOS for enrolling learners at secondary level, at a later stage it is proposed that such learners should be allowed to register and appear for the NIOS examination directly. In doing so, NIOS would perform its role only as a certifying Board and assisting learners to complete their school level education.

**Present Scenario: New Initiatives for Increasing Educational Access –  
By Transforming NIOS into Higher Form of OLS**

The Open School was initiated on a sound philosophical footing and it has functioned successfully till now. However the urgent national concerns, changing environment, the advancements made in technology coupled with learner aspirations have made it imperative that NIOS should grasp the opportunity to play a truly national lead role as an open and distance education system. NIOS in this capacity has to assume leadership and responsibility for the 15% out of school children immediately. Quite obviously from a nascent stage, the NIOS has now reached a new maturity and this needs to be reflected in its oncoming plans and programmes as well as in the XI<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan projections of the government also.

If NIOS has to cater to this large group, then there is a need for NIOS to stake its claim for **appropriate budgeting** from MHRD also. At present the institutions responsible for serving Secondary Education functioning under Secondary Education Bureau of MHRD, GoI are amongst others Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), and Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti

(NVS). A comparative study of the budget allocation of these institutions (all of whom receive government funding for their programmes )vis-e vis NIOS reveals that there is a great disparity in the financial outlays and this needs to be urgently addressed. The table below shows the enrolment figures as against the funds received by the three institutions.

**Table : Comparative Funds received by KVS,NVS,NIOS under Five Year Plan and Cost Per learner**

Head	NVS	KVS	NIOS
Total no. of schools	551	931	1825(AIs) + 920(AVIs) = 2745
Cumulative Enrolment (as on 3/06)	180391	9,11,993	14.27 lakh
Average yearly enrolment	30000	1 lakh	2.89 lakh (2005-06)
(i) Total Grant during Tenth Five Year Plan and Non Plan (from Non-Plan)	3167.82crores	3630 crores	27.38 crores*
(ii) Expenditures from Own Generated Funds	-	-	258.58 crores
		<b>Total</b>	<b>285.96 crores</b>
Average Grant / expenditure Per Year	633.56 crores	726 crores	57.19 crores
Average Cost funded by Government Per student	Rs. 35121	Rs. 12000**/- Per Candidates	Rs. 1906/-***

\*Amount spent from Self-earned income of NIOS (non-plan )

\*\* Includes expenditure from VVN and Public Sectors contribution over and above Plan and Non-Plan grant from MHRD.

\*\*\* this included the cost of books which is Rs 500/- per candidate

**Source :** KVS Annual Report(2005-06), NVS Annual Report(2005-06), NIOS At a Glance (2006 )

The table above shows that open learning is the only institution that has the capability to handle large learner populations. On the basis of least expenditure per leaner, apart from the issue of large number that can be only addressed by NIOS Moreover there is a huge difference in the average cost per learner funded by the government between the formal school and open school systems. The new initiatives to be taken by NIOS would entail

that appropriate budgeting is made under the XI<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan so that national priorities can be fulfilled through the OLS.

The rationale for NIOS to appropriate a larger role for OLS in the national scheme for achievement of universalization of education is also because OLS is the best and most suitable mechanism for harnessing and integrating the advancements in technology for educational purposes in comparison with formal school system.

However such harnessing necessitates the need for redesigning the structure of Open and Distance Learning in developing countries. India today is poised at the threshold of a technological revolution and is a major player in information technology. India has one of the largest populations of cell phone users, the television network in India provides for broadcast facilities to almost the entire country. India also has its own educational satellite dedicated to promotion of educational programmes. In the light of these developments, institutions such as NIOS need to revisit their existing operational strategies and redesign them so that education can truly reach Direct To Home rather than through any intervening structure.

NIOS already has the experience for running an ODL system successfully. However it needs to leapfrog from its present position to the next generation of OLS in view of the larger responsibilities that it has to fulfill. It has to be redesigned as a truly open schooling system having free entry/exit options, where learners can pursue higher studies according to their desire or till the time they find adequate employment in the labour market.

#### **Overcoming the Digital Divide – The NIOS Online (Ni-On) Model**

In the present NIOS system the learners have access to NIOS only through the traditional AI entry system. The admission system is 'Off Line'. The teaching-learning mechanism is also the traditional face to face learning. However NIOS has to step up its operations and makes provisions for using technology for learning and delivery so that it can make the NIOS learner a global learner. NIOS cannot afford to make its learners the victims of the Digital Divide. Many NIOS learners are disadvantaged as they have been pushed out of the formal school system. Such learners would now be doubly disadvantaged as they would be deprived of the new mode of learning. The

NIOS systems have to be first-class in every sense so that the quality of learning and certification of an Open learning System is considered at par if not better than the formal school system.

It is proposed that the admission system in NIOS be also made online through the NIOS Online Model. Besides the existing traditional offline system, NIOS would have '2' more streams of admission for the learners in NIOS, which would differ in term of mode of seeking admission and also in term of duration required by them to remain in open learning system before they can appear in the examinations held by NIOS for completing their school level education without disruption. All the three streams are as below:

**Existing Off Line Admissions (Stream-1):**

Off Line Admissions refers to the existing operational model of NIOS wherein all enrolment of learners are made through AIs and AVIs during fixed time of the Academic Year of NIOS. In this stream, the existing system will continue without any changes and all admissions would be open during the July to September through AIs and AVIs. Admission data will be furnished by AIs and AVIs to the concerned Regional Centres/ Headquarters and such learners would be provided traditional academic intervention of NIOS in terms of provision of study material in multi-media format, conduct of Personal Contact Programmes and TMAs etc. These learners can appear for public examination after a gap of almost one year, nine times, in five years period of their registration with NIOS. This stream is for those learners who do not access to ICT or do not want to use it. Gradually they would be indicated into other admission streams by motivation and persuasion.

**Proposed On Line Admissions and ODES Examination (Stream 2) :**

This stream allows any learner to register with NIOS at any point of time, online and opt to appear in its On Demand Examination system at the time of filling up the Admission Form Online, subject to the availability of seats in ODES on a particular day. This facility will be extended to all Regional Centres and Sub-Centres, where On Demand Examination System is available. Since the application form would be submitted online, it would be available to NIOS simultaneously at the basic server of computer unit/ admission unit of Student Support Service Department/concerned Regional Centre office/ Evaluation Department/ODES unit/MPD unit. This online application form will be processed by concerned Regional Centres as well

as admission unit of SSS Department. After making online submission of the application form, a reference number will be generated immediately for future contact of learner with NIOS. Thereafter the candidate will be given '10' days time to submit the required original documents/DOB/TOC/ Fees whichever is needed etc., with the concerned Regional Centre. After fixing a time limit (seven days) for verification of the documents, an enrolment number can be generated immediately for the learner. His/her Admit Card and other documents can be provided within '7' days of this, which can be collected from the Regional Centre itself, or downloaded by the learner from the Net.

Since the learner is opting to appear immediately for the ODES of NIOS, the learner would have the option to download all the relevant academic content himself from NIOS website. This is a purely voluntary and an informed choice on part of the learner. Suitable arrangements in Fee structure can be made for learner opting for stream-2 of Online Admission. However the learner would not have the facility of face to face PCP programme or TMA. This aspect of academic support would be available to the learner through the online support system that it also proposed to be set up by NIOS. (see below).

The learner will be allowed to appear in ODES (Wherever the facility is available and for which ever level) on the first come first basis. His/her Answer Sheets will be evaluated and marksheet will be made ready from one month of writing of all examinations. These students would also be allowed TOC facility. Since 2003-04, most of the important Secondary/ Senior Secondary Boards of the country are now providing electronic data to NIOS for verification of marks of the candidate who had appeared in On Demand Examination System through NIOS and will be less time consuming. In case of delay a copy of letter written by NIOS to the concerned school board will be made available with the candidate, who can pursue the matter with the concerned board to get it expedited. Once the TOC is verified, the marksheet will be issued to the candidate

Stream 2 of Online Admission is basically aimed for providing opportunity to all those learners of formal school system who have not been able to pass secondary and senior secondary level in the formal school system without losing one entire year. In this stream there will be no compulsion for learner to study the academic content of NIOS. The learner can appear through ODES as and when he/she feels confident to get satisfactory marks/

grades in NIOS, subject to the availability of the seats in ODES. This will be known to the learner at the time of filling up of Online admission form. At the time of filling Online admission form, a learner will have to indicate his/her choice of dates for appearing for ODE and this will be adjusted on the basis of the first- cum-first served basis. (as is done in the case Online Railway Ticket Reservation) It will ensure complete transparency, as learners will get opportunity to appear for ODES on first-cum-first served basis. In case the learner does not get dates of his/her choice, then he/she can decide to shift to Stream-1 or Stream-3 of NIOS admissions. NIOS will be in a position to offer him a bouquet of choices for choosing one of the '3' admission streams, along with the chances for appearing in NIOS exams. This scheme can be later on expanded to cover senior secondary level also across all the Regional Centres (as and when ODES is introduced there). In its final form NIOS can even drop the restriction of providing this facility to learners of the formal school system only and extend it to all those learners who have acquired desired competencies for various subjects and want to themselves get certified by NIOS examination system.

**Proposed On Line Admissions and Public Examination (Stream 3) :**

Any learner can register himself/herself with NIOS online throughout the year, and can appear in Public examination of NIOS held twice a year along with the candidates Off line admission stream of NIOS. The admissions will be done on continuous basis Online, in the following manner.

**On line Admissions –**

- (i) During 1<sup>st</sup> May to 31<sup>st</sup> October – April-May Examinations of following year (first exam which can be taken)
- (ii) During 1<sup>st</sup> November to 30<sup>th</sup> April – September-October Examinations of same year.

The learner can opt to register with NIOS online but can appear only in the Public Examinations of NIOS held twice a year with other learners. His on line admission form will be processed by the concerned Regional Centre. Once he enters NIOS on line, a reference number for a further/future queries regarding his admission/examination/Student Support Service will be generated. It will be made clear to the learner that since he wants to appear in the first Public Examination available after his enrollment with NIOS within 6-9 months of enrollment (rather than one year), NIOS will not be

able to provide any audio-video or printed academic input PCP/TMA to the learner at the same scale as is done under its existing system. Academic interventions of NIOS will be made available On-line or he can collect the study material directly from Regional Centres or AIs allotted to him, nearest to his location. The PCPs would be given at the AIs closest to their location for which the concerned AI will be given extra payments. The examination center for all such candidates will necessarily fixed in Government Schools only, to ensure that no Unfair Means associated with former scheme of direct admissions of NIOS (continued uptill 2004) takes place.

### **Making Accredited Centres into Study Centres – Creating a Dedicated Cadre of OLS Teachers/Coordinators**

At present one of the complaints against NIOS design is that the AIs restrict themselves to doing only admission and examination related work. There is hardly any teaching-learning taking place in the AIs. In the revised scheme, it is visualized that AIs must function as true Study Centres. If the online admission takes place, then a large part of manual work would be curtailed and the main role of the AI would be to work only as study centers and provide academic support through personal contact classes/TMAs, counseling etc.

Further in this model there would also be a scope for creating a cadre of dedicated teachers/coordinators who could be trained and certified by NIOS as NIOS-PCP teachers/coordinators. This trained force would provide academic support to the NIOS learners. As present NIOS is dependent on formal school teachers who themselves are not aware of the needs of distance learners and use the traditional lecture method for teaching OLS learners.

### **Strengthening Academic and Non Academic Support Online**

Since the learner will be in contact with NIOS through the Internet, it will be easy for NIOS to provide quality academic support services to the learners adequately in proper time. It is proposed that a '24 x 7' Call Centre type of mechanism be made functional in NIOS which would address all problems of the NIOS learners online. The staff handling this call Centre would be trained by NIOS in answering FAQs related to admissions/examinations initially. Later on this facility would be fully expanded to include all aspects of functioning of PCP, TMA, helpline etc for the learners of NIOS. This facility could be outsourced by NIOS else separate staff would be appointed for this.

### **Taking The National Agenda Forward**

It will greatly supplement the efforts of Government of India for Universalisation of Secondary Education. Under the 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan 15% out of school children are supposed to be covered by open schooling system.

- (a) At present there are 3.5 crore students are out of schools and 15% of this figure translated into 51 lakhs during 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan.
- (b) At present the annual enrolment of NIOS range in between 2.50 lakh to 3 lakh learners per year. Once the On-line admissions/examinations system is implemented at all India level, the NIOS enrolments are likely to rise to 7 lakh students annually without requiring a proportionate increase in the man-power for dealing with such a large number of students. The coverage of out of school children under the open learning system can be further enhanced by another '3' lakh learner per annum if State Open Schools also follow the upscaled model of NIOS. It means that NIOS and SOS together will be able to cater to admissions 10 lakh learner per annum and 50 lakh out of school children there by achieving 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan targets. NIOS can submit a self-contained proposal to MHRD and Planning Commission on these lines.

This upscaling of NIOS will help providing educational access to those in remote and difficult areas. NIOS will making its presence at district level (600 districts) in the entire country and later on at the block level also (6000), without requiring a proportionate increase in its staff strength and resources, as this upscaling and expansion will primarily be technology driven. It can be implemented with key personnel drawn out of regular staff of NIOS, with major work being outsourced to specialist agencies.

The statistics have shown that the open learning system is more financial viable than the formal system. In the present scenario, the government is funding the formal system on a large scale in order to achieve EFA. The equitable distribution of funding for the Kendriya Vidhyalaya Sangathan (KVS), Navodaya Vidhalaya Sangthan (NVS) and the NIOS will ensure that much larger numbers are dwarn into the educational net than ever before. This would help NIOS to make its contribution to universalisation

### **Benefits for NIOS due to its Upscaling on the Proposed lines**

The advantages of upscaling NIOS in this manner by this model are as follows:-

**Increase the learner base of NIOS alongwith the assured annual enrolment:** NIOS has a complementary and supplementary role to play in relation to formal school system for universalisation of Secondary Education. There are large numbers of learners who are not able to complete their secondary and senior secondary level courses/vocational courses successfully from the formal school system. As a result of this, they become either permanent or temporary dropouts from the formal school system, which represents a colossal waste of scarce educational resources in the short run and valuable human resources for the society in long run. This creates social and economic stresses in society, apart from causing suffering at personal level for the learners. These two on line admission streams will address these problems to a very great extent.

By introducing these '2' admissions streams, the enrolment of NIOS will increase significantly as this role of providing Safety Net to such learners of formal school system can be provided by NIOS only. This will also lead to substantial increase in the reach of NIOS in terms of enrollment of students.

**Improve quality of support services :** This model will work as a standard and normative system for providing quality and timely student support services and setting up of ideal teaching learning and examination standards for NIOS. The role of AIs would be reduced to a great extent there by removing the basic weakness in the organizational structure of NIOS at present. The main role of the AI would be to work, only as study centers and provide academic support through personal contact classes/TMAs counseling etc. This will eliminate a host of drawbacks in the present organizational structure of NIOS, especially in the area of admission/ examinations and student support services.

**Ensure transparency through use of technology:** This use of technology will greatly supplement the efforts of NIOS in implementing the basic concept of e-governance by integrating ICTs for bringing transparency in discharging the regulatory functions of NIOS, namely accreditation,

admission and examination, in line with the directives of Central Vigilance Commission.

**Develop an authentic and reliable database:** The computerization of admissions will help NIOS in developing a comprehensive data base of its learners alongwith the access to the learners at all point of time during their enrolment with NIOS. It will help NIOS in conducting research and conducting programme evaluation with respect to NIOS and the feedback from such research would feed into policy and decision-making not just at NIOS but government level too.

**Increase Access to NIOS:** NIOS can expand its coverage in geographical terms as well as in terms of coverage of its prioritized target groups by furnishing a bouquet of entry and exit options into the Open Learning System & Examination systems for the learners. Wherever the use of technology is restricted, the traditional system of admissions and examinations (Off-line) will continue and will be made available to the unreached target groups in its present form. Wherever the access to ICT is available, the potential learner of NIOS will have full freedom to choose anyone stream from the bouquet of admissions/examinations schemes offered by NIOS and also have the freedom to move from one stream to the other based on their changing needs in real life situation, there by making NIOS a truly flexible platform for learning and certification at school level in the country

**Easy mobility between formal and OLS:** It will help NIOS in gradually upgrading its existing structure to the proposed structure where all the admissions are on line and there is a greater flexibility in its examination system. It will allow true mobility to the learners i.e. vertical as well as horizontal mobility across the formal and open schooling system and promote greater acceptance of NIOS certification across the board.

**Improve the evaluation standard of NIOS:** This will improve the evaluation standard of NIOS, as most of the evaluation will be through ODES. The public examination system will be strengthened and streamlined. ISO-9001 certification of ODES is being planned by NIOS. It is also proposed to obtain ISO-9001 certification of its Public examination held twice a year.

A separate unit for conducting ODES, within Evaluation Department at

NIOS Headquarter and also one unit at all Regional Centres/Sub-Centres will be set up, equipped with high quality equipments like – computers, printers, scanners, CCTV units, high speed internet connectivity etc. The issues related to pre-conduct and post-conduct of examinations of NIOS will have to be dealt with in accordance to ISO-9001 certification.

**Improve Student Support Services:** It will provide an ideal upto date technology driven system in NIOS. Its Student Support Department (SSS) will be based primarily on modern and fully functional call center, which will cover all the aspects of functioning of Student Support Department (SSS) in its fully evolved form. IT will reduce the student related problems to a great extent and present hiatus in between NIOS and its distant learners will be replaced by a dynamic and fully functional call center.

#### **Making ‘Ni-On’ Operational**

The task of making the NIOS admission process online would involve the following:

#### **Analysis and Developmental Phase**

1. Development of SRS (System Requirement Specification) for On Line Application indicating the following:
  - a. Operational procedure
  - b. Flow chart for the different activities
  - c. Data Flow Diagram
  - d. Setting up of time frame for each activities
  - e. Generation and development of Admission/Examination database for Learners
2. Development of Integrated On Line Application (System) for the following:
  - a. Admission along with the Registration of ODES
  - b. Admission for existing April/Oct. Examination system
  - c. Accreditation System
3. Selection of a Software firm for the above activities

### **Operational Phase**

1. Outline activities/Responsibilities of concerned departments/Officers/ Regional Centres etc.
2. Setup of Fully functional ODES Unit at Headquarter in the Evaluation Department and Development of Standard Operating Procedure
3. Pre conduct and Post conduct operations and procedure of ODES.
4. Setup of Sub Units of ODES at all Regional Centres.
5. Setup of 24X7 call centre “4” seat at Student support Services (SSS) department for Admission/Accreditation. Detailed modalities to be worked out.
6. Setup Admission/Accreditation unit in Student Support Services(SSS) department and at Regional Centres with proper equipment and man power support.
7. Development of appropriate Fee Structure for all 3 Admission stream. Detailed modalities to be worked out for movement of learners across these streams.

### **Hardware and Manpower Requirement**

1. Assessment and deployment of Computer and other related equipments such as Web Servers/ High end Computers/ Printers/ Dedicated Internet connectivity at Headquarter and Regional Centres.
2. Assessment and deployment of Technical and Administrative staff at Headquarter and Regional Centres.

### **Quality Assurance**

1. ISO-9001 Certification of NIOS Public Examination System. Detailed modalities to be worked out to obtain the ISO Certification.

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