

National Conference on Convergence of Face-to-Face and Open Schooling: Towards Lifelong Learning

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organised by
National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), India
in Collaboration with
UNESCO Office, New Delhi

National Conference

on
Convergence of
Face-to-Face and Open Schooling:
Towards Lifelong Learning

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Organised by



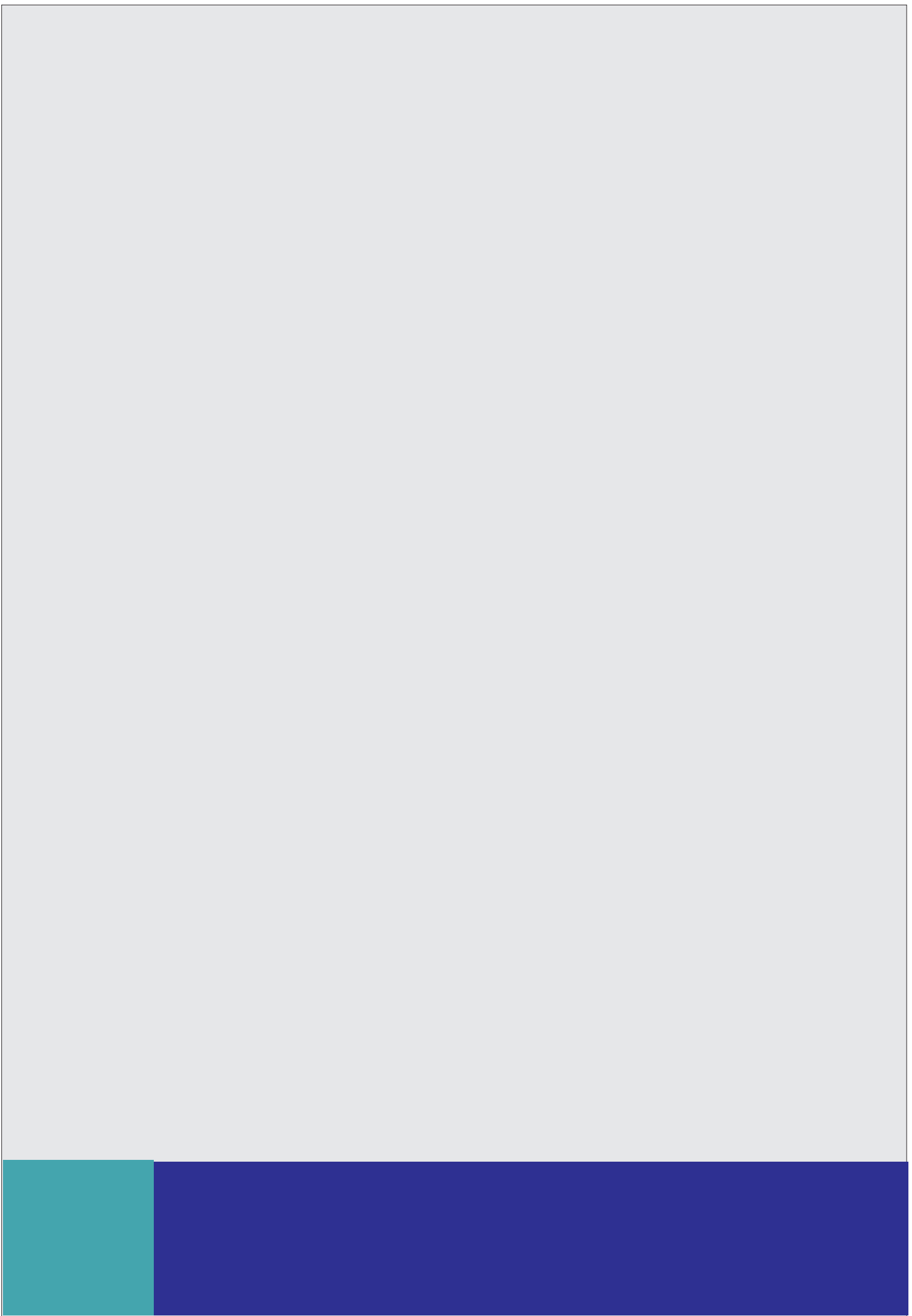
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In collaboration with



UNESCO, New Delhi Office



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Conference

Recommendations



Conference Recommendations

1. **Ensure** that national programmes and schemes provide learning opportunities that meet learners' needs and requirements and are suitable to their previous knowledge and experience, both in academic and vocational education courses.
2. **Support** a learner-centred approach that allows a learner to explore and choose the educational/learning pathway best suited for acquiring and building competencies.
3. Promote collaboration between all concerned stakeholders for better and effective learning and vocational and need-based courses.
4. **Develop** positive teacher-learner interaction through suitable training, including inputs for psycho-motor, affective and cognitive domains of development, as well as andragogy, i.e., the art and science of teaching adult learners.
5. **Encourage** the use of different methods (think tanks, symposia, seminars, flipped classroom model) and evolve methods such as participatory learning and collaborative and cooperative approaches.

6. **Provide** appropriate changes in teacher education curriculum to meet the changing needs in the context of ODL, e.g., introducing a component of teaching practice sessions at NIOS study centres.
7. **Endorse** an interdisciplinary integrated approach for developing and building different competencies at school and higher education level.
8. **Design** programmes after need assessment to render them more relevant to and effective for the stakeholders.
9. **Emphasise** autonomy in learners by giving them opportunities to make personalised choices.
10. **Assure** the optimum use of ICT to make learning more accessible, equitable and quality-based for vulnerable groups and differently-abled learners.
11. **Train** all stakeholders involved in the process of development, usage and communication of learning materials.
12. **Establish** a platform for communication between formal school learners and ODL learners.
13. **Facilitate** free and open crossover from one pathway to another for learners of formal and ODL system.
14. **Implement** the relationship between lifelong learning and the convergence of ODL and face-to-face learning through teacher development that enables teachers to become co-learners, rather than repositories of knowledge.
15. **Uphold** the ideals of holistic education encompassing scholastic development, life skills and value education, and skills for vocation.
16. **Sustain** teacher excellence at all levels by initiating teacher education programmes for entering the profession of teaching at school, college and university level.



Conference Approach Paper

Fifteen years ago, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which have now transitioned to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the context of education, SDG 4 tackles the issue from a truly multidimensional perspective. Because SDG 4 'ensures inclusive and quality education for all and promotes lifelong learning', it builds on the MDGs by setting broader and more ambitious targets. It is emphasised that education is a never-ending process to which people from all ages and backgrounds should have access, especially those in vulnerable situations. In the 21st century, the need to embed the principles of lifelong learning in education and broader development policies has taken on a more urgent tone than before. Lifelong learning encompasses learning at all ages and subsumes formal, non-formal and informal learning.

LIFELONG LEARNING

Lifelong learning has been an integral part of Indian culture. The following observation made by the Indian Education Commission (1964-66) implies this:

Education does not end with schooling, but it is a lifelong process. The

adult today has need of understanding of the rapidly changing world and the growing complexities of society. Even those who have had the most sophisticated education must continue to learn; the alternative is obsolescence.

Lifelong learning emphasises empowering people, expanding their capabilities and choices in life, and enabling individuals and societies to cope with the challenges of the 21st century.

OPEN SCHOOLING

While efforts are to be made to ensure that all children have access to quality learning opportunities in school, alternative learning pathways also need to be supported and recognised. Open schooling, with its in-built flexibilities of place and pace of learning, provides a scope for individuals to complete their schooling any time in life. Since open schooling is based on the premises of self learning, the lack or absence of quality teachers is offset by the quality self instructional materials (SIM), commonly heralded as the teacher-in-print.

Used judiciously, ODL can make a strong contribution to strategic planning. It is to be accepted that children need to learn in a social environment; ODL for children cannot be a substitute for face-to-face contact with other children or teachers. ODL can, instead, offer an alternative schooling system; support transition to, and performance within, a formal school; raise quality by providing ready-made educational solutions; and provide a platform for training educators.

MEETING THE CHALLENGE

The effective and responsible use of ICTs in education is crucial in enabling learners and teachers to adequately respond to the world of change. It is imperative to develop and utilise innovative educational platforms that facilitate every child's access to education, in particular in remote areas, and enhance the quality of learning to the degree that it may be responsive to diverse needs.

Education will be central to the challenges we face in the future. As we begin to use education as a means to achieve the SDGs, we will have to go beyond raising awareness about globalisation, climate change and

sustainability. Our education efforts must include the promotion of innovative ways to address these challenges and overcome them.

Against this backdrop, a two-day national roundtable is proposed to be organised in collaboration with UNESCO, to deliberate upon the issues related to lifelong learning and the role of open schooling in achieving SDG 4 in India. The recommendations received will also define the role of open schooling within the context of the New Education Policy of India that is currently being developed.

CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the conference will be to:

1. Examine the role of open schooling in creating lifelong learners;
2. Explore strategies of teacher development in face-to-face learning and ODL;
3. Discuss innovations to create a positive and productive environment for inclusive learning through the use of ICT and media;
4. Determine strategies for skills development through the adoption and application of a blended approach to education.

CONFERENCE SUB-THEMES

1. Lifelong Learning for All: Role of Open Schooling

Lifelong learning is central to achieving the goals of sustainable development. The SDGs proposed in July 2014 by the Open Working Group (OWG) of the UNGA advocates member countries to achieve Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning by 2030.

A majority of India's workforce is in the unorganised sector. People represented by this chunk of the workforce need regular upgrading of skills to secure the advantages of competitiveness in the globalised economy. Though huge progress has come to notice in many indicators of education, there are still some challenges that the task of improving access and quality of education at all levels is facing. Apart from the challenges in terms of a high drop-out rate, particularly among girls and various marginalised groups such as scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and various minority religious groups, unsatisfactory learning levels of

students and poor processes of teaching-learning in remote areas continue to affect the education system. A sizable population of children with a disability is still unable to access school education due to the lack of a school infrastructure favourable for differently-abled children, the prevalence of discriminatory practices negatively affecting their education and personality development, faulty policy and poor planning. Many children leave school without learning to read, write or count and other basic skills to cope with the labour market and society, thus remaining unemployable. Furthermore, these basic skills are not sufficient for children to lead a good life in the future. While the core skills, such as learning to learn, problem solving, critical understanding, etc., are considered essential for future generations, there are many other skills that are also crucial for coping with the challenges of the 21st century. These include active citizenship, learning from each other's experiences, and learning about the constructive as well as the destructive side of our culture.

It is being increasingly realised that lifelong learning through the ODL mode of education, particularly through open schooling, is the need of the hour. Thus, Open and Distance Education, with its various learner-friendly characteristics and inputs, such as flexibility in place and pace of learning, self learning material, media and ICT support, Personal Contact Programme (PCP); and recognising and accommodating the learner's preferred learning objectives will maximise the individual's chances of success in lifelong learning. This is because it can provide the scope for learning at all levels even though the individual is working or has completed his/her schooling. Thus, ODL has emerged as a potential alternative system of education. Learning to learn is the hallmark of ODL, and the same is required for lifelong learning.

The flagship programmes of the Government of India, like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (Save the Daughter, Educate the Daughter), Digital Literacy for All, schemes for the education of minorities, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, rural development programmes, special attention to disadvantaged regions, like the North East, etc., are



all important for fulfilment of the cherished goal of lifelong learning for all. Another focus group comprises the differently-abled.

2. Teacher Development for Convergence of Face-to-Face and ODL

“Wisdom is not a product of schooling but of the lifelong attempt to acquire it.”
- Albert Einstein

Education has been undergoing a slow transition from being teacher-centred to learner-centred and now it is towards learning to learn. Therefore, continuous professional development of teachers is an essential ingredient for the success of meaningful learning in the classroom. The demand for qualified and quality-oriented teachers has been increasing. It has become imperative that continuous efforts should be made and resources should be mobilised towards teachers' professional development. In order to address the growing concern for the quality of teaching and the shortage of good teachers, it is crucial to examine the core of the problem, that is, the mechanism employed for teachers' preparation and training. Programmes of continuing professional development have been implemented to upgrade teachers, help support curriculum development and develop teachers' individual careers.

Some of these have been structured, with a formal system of enrolment and regular study, while some others have been unstructured, providing opportunities for teachers without any requirement of enrolment. Teachers' education, by virtue of its nature, ought to be innovative. There are a variety of innovative programmes, such as Integrated Teacher Education, Personalised Teacher Education and Specialised Teacher Education. There have also been various innovative approaches in teachers' education, such as the Constructivist Approach, Participatory Approach, Collaborative and Cooperative Approach, Critical-Pedagogical Approach and Holistic Approach. There is a need to promote innovative ideas and programmes in teachers' education.

In India, there were 8.15 million out of school children in the age group of 6-13, accounting for 4.28% of the total (IMRB Survey, 2009). More

teachers are needed as the world moves towards the sustainable development goal of lifelong learning for all. And we need to advance the skills of the existing 5.1 million teachers (U-DISE-NUEPA, 2013), too many of whom are untrained and unqualified. Beyond that, all the skills and knowledge that teachers need are no longer fixed and familiar; new vistas open up every day. Teachers, therefore, need more opportunities than ever before, to continue learning throughout their careers. The existing mechanism, which largely caters to face-to-face teacher training, is not sufficient. Due to this, an alternative mechanism for the development of teachers and teacher-educators needs to be explored. One of the alternative approaches to strengthening the teaching profession is to use distance education or ODL. It is recognised that ODL can be strategically employed in continuing the professional development of teachers, particularly with a view to overcoming the barriers of physical distance, especially making use of self-learning strategies.

Convergence of face-to-face learning and ODL is crucial for achieving the goal of lifelong learning for all. All educators, including teachers in the face-to-face formal education system, need to understand this. They have to realise the importance of learning to learn in all educational endeavours.



3. Relevance and Quality of Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning may be broadly defined as learning that is pursued throughout life: learning that is flexible, diverse and available at different times, and in different places. Lifelong learning crosses sectors, promoting learning beyond traditional schooling and throughout adult life (Delors, 1996, Four 'Pillars' of Education for the Future).



The European Lifelong Learning Initiative defines lifelong learning as...***"a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understanding they will require throughout their lifetimes and to apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment, in all roles, circumstances and environments."*** (Watson, 2003)

To promote the philosophy of lifelong learning as part of a total education programme, a concerted effort towards integration between formal and non-formal education and out of school learning processes is required, so as to reach out to larger sections of the community, especially deprived groups, through lifelong learning programmes.

The main thrust of these programmes should be on providing relevance, quality and variety of lifelong learning opportunities to all sections of society. Moreover, education systems are required to offer training courses and modules that ensure the right mix of skills. Lifelong learning activities must ensure that people improve knowledge, skills and competencies within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective.

Relevance and quality assurance mechanisms need to be established to ensure that the existing provision for lifelong learning fulfils its aims. A principal challenge for education systems remains the need for a genuine lifelong learning culture that supports, values and recognises all learning activities undertaken through life. These

activities may be formal, non-formal or informal. This is especially critical in this period of crisis where lifelong learning should satisfy the need for creating new career pathways and second chances for people.

Relevance implies that learning is to be linked with life; both life-oriented and livelihood-oriented education is required. Quality in terms of values, skills and knowledge is aimed at to provide lifelong learning opportunities for all.

4. ICT and Media for Convergence of Face-to-Face Learning and ODL

ICT is defined as “diverse set of sophisticated and expensive technological tools and resources used to communicate, create, disseminate, store, and manage information. Media includes every broadcasting and narrowcasting medium such as radio, telephone, newspaper, magazine, TV, Internet and fax.”

ICT and media technology in education is called educational technology and e-learning that can occur in or out of the classroom. It can be either self-paced, asynchronous learning or instructor-led, synchronous learning. It is suited to distance learning in conjunction with face-to-face teaching, which is termed as blended learning. Educational technology is used by learners and educators in homes and elsewhere at any convenient time.

We live in a media-saturated world and rely on a variety of old and new media for information, entertainment and connection. The beginning of mass media and mass communication can be traced back to the print revolution that occurred in Europe in the 15th century. As we progressed through the centuries, mass communication evolved from a mechanical process to electronic transmission, which eventually paved the way for the digitised world of today. While technological advances are important parts of the narrative regarding media, the effects of media also deserve attention in this seminar.

In the ICT-led educational sector, there is a need to consider the convergence of all systems of education and collectively work towards raising the quality of how education is imparted. As educational providers, we have to offer what learners need in view of contemporary

societal requirements and put in place adequate mechanisms for attracting, retaining and nurturing talent. As a facilitator in the ODL system or in a conventional system, we have to facilitate learning (as multi-skilled professionals) rather than act as monolithic repositories and transmitters of knowledge. Today, learners have access to vast resources of knowledge through the Internet. So, we continuously innovate and work as catalytic agents for bridging the digital divide. We have to harness the power of multiple media in the best manner for the delivery of education, by integrating technology and media into overall teaching-learning process with appropriate instructional design and knowledge inputs.

The influence of ICTs in ODL in a developing country like India is noticeable in many aspects, such as the delivery of instructional content and student support services. ICTs also supplement learning activities in the face-to-face environment of the classroom. The use of ICTs and media helps to improve the quality of education in a technology-driven system of teaching and learning, which includes, among others, the employment of the 'quality circle approach' in the development of courses and learning packages and the provision of appropriate technologies to perform academic processes and achieve institutional goals.

Nowadays, numerous physical technologies are used for developing online courses, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), Virtual Open Schooling (VOS) and Open Educational Resources (OERs). These include digital cameras, video cameras, interactive whiteboard tools, document cameras, electronic media, and LCD projectors. They provide students and teachers the opportunity to create layers of digital information that includes both virtual world and real world elements, and interact with them in real time. For lifelong learning with an improving learning curve, the role of media and ICTs is significant in enhancing learning. The use of ICT in appropriate contexts of education can add value to teaching and learning by enhancing the effectiveness of learning; or by adding a dimension to learning that was not previously available in traditional ways of transacting knowledge. ICT and media may also be a significant motivational factor in the process of learning, and can support learners' engagement with collaborative learning.



EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The following outcomes are envisaged:

- Inputs to the New Education Policy and the role of open schooling in India in the context of lifelong learning; and
- Recommendations for the attainment of SDG 4 through a synergy of formal and open schooling in India.

CONFERENCE METHODOLOGY

The conference format will be a mix of thematic plenary sessions and panel discussion. The plenary sessions will have keynote speakers on each of the four sub-themes, to be followed by panel discussion. Group work on the themes will be held to arrive at the conference's recommendations.

PARTICIPANTS

To achieve the above objectives, the roundtable will have about 125 participants with the active participation of:

- Chairpersons of State Boards of Education;
- Chairpersons of State Open Schools;
- Senior management of NIOS (including Regional Directors);
- Functionaries and experts from related fields.

Inaugural Session



The inaugural session started with the lighting of the lamp by the dignitaries -

Dr Subhash Chandra Khuntia,

IAS, Secretary to the Government of India, Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD);

Prof C B Sharma, Chairman,

National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS);

Dr Alisher Umarov,

Chief of Education and Programme Specialist, UNESCO;

Dr Kuldeep Agarwal,

Director (Academic), NIOS and

Mr C Dharuman,

Secretary, NIOS.

Prof C B Sharma welcomed the dignitaries and the participants, and spoke about the programmes, activities and achievements of NIOS. He emphasised the need for a convergence of face-to-face learning with the open and distance learning (ODL) modes of education as a pragmatic solution to better learning. He informed that the increasing use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in almost every domain of life has made it possible to reach the unreached in remote areas. Hence, with these new tools, education can be made available through the distance mode to several students left out of the formal schooling system. He gave the example of a school he had visited in a remote area

of a Nordic country which was completely managed by a mainstream school in Helsinki (Finland). Prof Sharma brought to notice that India was the only country to have a satellite for education and has a vast potential for utilising it for the advancement of learning through teleconferencing and ICT between mainstream schools and ODL students. In this context, he mentioned the recent initiative of NIOS titled Mukta Vidya Vani, a web based radio programme. The audio programme is already being used by many learners and has the potential of benefiting even more learners



under the open schooling programme as well as the students studying through formal schooling. Another issue to be addressed in the seminar, he said, was the importance of lifelong learning and on the job learning. Also, he stressed how NIOS could be a vehicle for such learning.

Prof Sharma welcomed and introduced Dr Umarov to the audience. In his opening remarks, Dr Umarov appreciated the contribution of NIOS to the education sector. He noted NIOS's commendable service in the field of education and that it could be the source for lifelong learning for all. Highlighting the importance of education for development, he informed that after the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the United Nations had emphasised education in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be adopted from 2015 onwards. He said that previous efforts for bringing students to the schools were not found to be adequate and many children continued to stay out of the school education system. Thus, new goals of inclusive, equitable, and quality lifelong learning for all were being envisaged in the new policy. In the new scenario, open schooling and face-to-face learning should not be treated as opposites, but should be considered as a blended way

of learning. He hoped that this conference would provide further impetus to the educational endeavour by suggesting ways and means to develop systems and strategies for lifelong learning of children through the convergence of face-to-face schooling and the ODL mode of education.

Dr Umarov aptly noted that traditional ways of learning, such as memorising and assessments, were becoming obsolete while newer methods of continuous self learning and immediate assessments were becoming relevant. NIOS, he added, had the ability to bring in this change of blended learning which could be available to the learners at all times.

Dr Umarov's address was followed by a spirited introduction to the objectives and agenda of the seminar by Dr Agarwal. He thanked Dr Umarov for talking about NIOS and its work on the international platform and boosting everyone's efforts by thinking of the capabilities that could be developed henceforth. Dr Agarwal felt that it was only through the coming together of open schooling and formal schooling that the objective of sustained learning for all could be fulfilled. He pointed out how crucial it was to familiarise teachers in the formal system of education with the



developments in education so that they might themselves learn to learn before imparting it to others. Dr Agarwal felt that the recommendations of the conference as a result of deliberations in various sessions would offer significant input for the New Education Policy.

Next, the Chairman invited the chief guest, Dr Subash Chandra Khuntia, to unveil the calendar for the new year. He mentioned that the calendar had been a proud contribution by the specially-abled students of NIOS. In his inaugural address, Dr Khuntia mentioned that the convergence of formal schooling and open schooling was already happening without us even realising it. Highlighting the advancement of technology, he said that organising meetings or having communication through distance mode had not only become possible, but much more sophisticated. He exemplified his point by talking about the Khan Academy Videos, which were equally useful for the students from both systems of education. He further said that children learn in different ways and parents, as well as teachers, should be aware of ways to meet their educational needs. Education is a tool for adding more knowledge to what already exists and, as such, it is actually a potential enabler through which all other SDGs, besides educational goals, can be achieved. He emphasised the need for guided learning through the open and distance learning mode of education because, due to a variety of reasons, a substantial number of children could not benefit from the formal education school system. Dr Khuntia rightly noted that the education system should ensure the development of quality education material to enable all learners to have its benefit, irrespective of the education system which they may be pursuing.

'Learning how to learn' with continuous upgrading of knowledge and technology, more focus on learning quickly and re-learning for lifelong learning are the needs of the day and these can be effectively addressed only through the convergence of different systems. Dr Khuntia emphasised the needs of converting all books into electronic form and creating more virtual classrooms so that greater contact with learners in distance learning programmes would be possible. While articulating these objectives and devising strategies, he felt it is important that demographic profile should also be kept in mind.

Mr C Dharuman concluded the inaugural session by proposing a vote of thanks.



Keynote Address



The keynote address was delivered by Professor Santosh Panda, Chairman, National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE). He started by giving a background to the concept of lifelong learning, included as a policy statement in 1996 by UNESCO, after several years of deliberations keeping in view each country's cultural, political, economic and linguistic backgrounds. He set the tone of the discussion by talking about the avenues which could actualise these policies of distance learning; convergence of learning; and lifelong learning. Prof Panda further talked about three kinds of characteristics when it came to lifelong learning:



- **Development in the field of technology that everyone can use;**
- **Effective use of ICT for personal, political and national development; and**
- **Application of new knowledge in social context to solve problems.**

Prof Panda emphasised that lifelong learning has to be within the social context of each country, so while it may differ from country to country,

the need for it remains universal. To keep up with that need, skilling, de-skilling and re-skilling of the workforce need to be constantly defined. It is important that new ways of learning should create new skilled manpower capable of contributing to changes taking place around us in every society. He clarified that lifelong learning needs to be understood as an extension of adult education and distance learning. Creating a learning environment and facilitating one's own learning is the new way forward. This has to happen irrespective of age, gender, class and economic status. He reiterated that for the first time, the national policy of education was talking about different methods of education where non-formal methods were given as much importance as formal ones. Thus, independent learning and resource-based learning were the new buzzwords. In this context, the open schooling system could introduce credit-based learning and continuous upgrading of knowledge. Adult education and continuing education have already been there, so the question that arises is whether we need lifelong learning. In this connection, the big challenge is how to provide universal access in terms of lifelong learning. The learning opportunities and learning possibilities need to be focused with the ODL system in mind.

He also said that there was actually no debate between formal and non-formal learning. This is because when we talk of face-to-face and distance learning, we actually refer to a combination or mixture of both formal and non-formal learning. Over time, different methods of learning have been articulated and the challenge is how to employ them while simultaneously tackling real life challenges. He further said that the concept of independent learning has now become very popular and it is possible when resources are available. So, upon consideration, the new competencies need to be defined to deal with the changing world. In the new emerging world, every society and community exchanges a lot of ideas and information through mobile phones. Therefore, learning in groups, in community, and in one's context is happening all the time.



Moving forward, Prof Panda suggested four points as to how lifelong learning works:

- **Individualised learning;**
- **Social cohesion learning;**
- **Community learning; and**
- **Innovative learning.**

In this context, he referred to the four pillars of lifelong learning:

- **Learning to know**
- **Learning to do**
- **Learning to be**
- **Learning to live together**

He said that the time had come to think again of these pillars because they could never go out of context. The development that took place in the field of ODL was almost 200-300 years old. But lifelong learning is a post-modern concept. It connects to the post-industrialisation process where the possibilities can be divided on two bases:

- **How communication is mediated; and**
- **How learning set is distributed.**

He continued this train of thought by saying that in today's free and democratic world, an individual should have the freedom to use technology in whichever way he/she wants. When it comes to mass education, the use of technology needs to be seen very seriously. Once anything gets institutionalised, it becomes a part of national policy and then curriculum politics begins to play an important role. And in that, things should be developed accordingly. One should remember in this regard that best learning is always based on:

- **Activity;**
- **Context; and**
- **Culture.**

In the context of the above discussion, he said lifelong learning and open schooling easily converge. The parity of formal and non-formal education, continuing education and lifelong learning all converges at the national framework level. Prof Panda concluded his talk by saying that the entire education technology needs to



be blended and the focus should be on de-skilling and re-skilling the community of learners and the future workforce. The credit system needs to be defined in the national policy framework and also offer a clear understanding of credit equivalency. Competency and ability need to be defined for good results as well. Dialogue, debate and discussion are crucial for lifelong learning. Lifelong learning needs to be seen as an opportunity from womb to tomb, and learning has to be practised in social context.

Discussion on Keynote Address

Prof NK Ambasht former Chairman NIOS, Prof HS Srivastava former head Dept. of Evaluation & Measurement NCERT, Prof Saroj Yadav Dean Academics NCERT and others made the following observations, comments and suggestions:

- **Differences between the formal and informal education systems; how it connects with convergence of lifelong learning.**
- **Language and grammar need to be considered and addressed for strong foundation.**
- **Implementation of context and dialogue needs to be focused because it is very poor.**
- **Systemic paradigm in terms of implementation of scheme in different culture; the environment of one culture may not be applicable to another. so the modern operands of implementation need to be discussed.**
- **Clarity needs to be made about learning for a job or learning for living a good life.**
- **Re-designing of curriculum is required when it comes to convergence of face-to-face and ODL.**

Prof Panda responded that the foundation system needs to be articulated and implemented. Due to the non-availability of a foundation system, the problem arises. The boundaries need to be broken so that one may have access to both face-



P anel Discussion (Theme 1)



Chairperson
Dr Alisher Umarov,
Chief of Education Section
and Programme Specialist,
UNESCO Speakers
Dr Kuldeep Agarwal,
Director (Academic), NIOS
Prof Nilma Bhagabati,
Professor of Education,
University of Science and
Technology, Guwahati, Assam
Dr Babli Chaudhary,
Assistant Professor, Guwahati
University, Assam

Lifelong Learning for All: Role of Open Schooling



Dr Agarwal emphasised that lifelong learning was critical to the need of achieving 21st century life goals. The knowledge learned at school constitutes only a small part of what a person needs, while the major part is to be acquired through practice and constant learning activities. Lifelong learning encompasses a flexible learning continuum ranging from formal to non-formal and informal learning. Quoting from Faure Report: A Turning Point in Education Planning (William J Platt, 1973), he described the lifelong concept as covering all aspects of education, embracing everything in it.

Quoting from the Delors Report, Dr Agarwal felt that there was a need to rethink and update the concept of lifelong learning so as to reconcile three forces: competition, which provides incentives; cooperation, which gives strength; and solidarity, which unites. Lifelong learning must also constitute a continuous process of forming whole beings - their knowledge and aptitudes - as well as the critical faculty and ability to act.

There has been a paradigm shift in school education with an emphasis on learning, not qualification alone; learning to learn and experiential learning. There are many people across the nation who have the requisite knowledge and skills in their respective fields. There is a need to certify them and recognise their talent. Recognition of prior learning is thus the need of the hour.

ICT and media need to be used extensively to reach the unreached group of population.

ODL has innumerable advantages, such as overcoming physical distance; solving problems related to time or scheduling; expanding the limited number of places available; accommodating low or dispersed enrolments; making best use of the limited number of teachers available; dealing with cultural, religious and political considerations.

Focusing on the role of open schooling in achieving the goal of Lifelong Education for All, Dr Agarwal suggested the following recommendations for the conference and for the New Education Policy:

- **ODL is an acceptable, cost-effective and efficacious mode of learning at all levels.**
- **In order to attain SDG 4 Goal by 2030, ODL has to play a crucial role.**
- **The task of universalisation of elementary education has been accomplished to a large extent. The time is ripe to start thinking about and planning for the universalisation of secondary education, where ODL will have to play a crucial role.**
- **Any policy/legislation on Education for All, e.g. the Right to Education Act, 2009 of India, should include open schooling as an acceptable mode of education.**
- **Illiterates, neo-literate adults and school drop-outs are the main target group for lifelong learning opportunities for all.**
- **Quality in education cannot and should not be compromised with. All education, including open schooling, should take steps towards ensuring quality in**

curriculum, study materials, programme delivery, evaluation, etc.

- Learning opportunities being provided by schools, including open schools, should be holistic and aim at developing desirable knowledge, skills and values. It should be both life-oriented and livelihood-oriented. There should be a judicious mix of academic and vocational/skill development courses. Inculcation of values and life skills should be given a central place in educational programmes and policies.
- The hallmark of ODL lies in flexibilities on the one hand and technology (multimedia/multiple media) on the other. ODL institutions may ensure optimum use of ICT to make learning more accessible, equitable and quality-based.
- The OER movement is in consonance with the open schooling movement; both need to be given a boost for achieving the SDGs, particularly Goal 4 (Ensure quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030).
- Online learning and VOS is another mode that should be explored.
- The powerful mediums of radio and television should be exploited more and more for 'reaching the unreached'. Mobile learning and Internet-based learning also have great potential in education.
- One unreached target group is that of the differently-abled. Special strategies should be worked out for this clientele.
- Skill development, along with academics, needs to be focused on how livelihood is as important as education. It is imperative to prepare learners for the world of work. Gender equality and equity are important parts of the SDGs. They need to be addressed consciously and positively through schooling.
- Capacity building of all ODL functionaries is vital for enhancing the quality as well as the efficacy



of ODL. Teachers/educators in the face-to-face education mode should also be oriented towards ODL, particularly in the context of conceptual underpinnings that lifelong learning and learning to learn carry.

- **It is imperative to encourage and give the appropriate boost to research in ODL.**
- **Collaboration, cooperation and communication among organisations/institutions, as well as individuals, will help in boosting the open schooling movement for achieving the SDGs. Networking at national and international levels will be important in this context.**

Prof Bhagabati made her presentation on “Reaching Out of School and Disadvantageous Children: Role of Open Schooling”. The goal of universal education is high on the agenda of the Government of India since the adoption of the Constitution and initiation of developmental planning from 1951. Successive developmental plans, policies and acts have been formulated and enacted to make provisions for free and compulsory education for the age group of 6-14 years, but access to education is yet to be ensured to meet the goal of Education for All. NIOS has a huge target to meet the demand and cater to the multiple needs of the society and the nation as a whole, through vocational education courses.



Prof Bhagbat suggested the following:

- **Media should be activated.**
- **Monitoring mechanisms should be introduced to assess quality of education in open schooling.**
- **Competent coordinators need to be appointed in study centres.**
- **Research work should be conducted to discover the efficient functioning of study centres.**
- **Collaboration with agencies like UGC, ICSSR and NGOs should be sought and realised.**
- **Orientation should be given to students after enrolling.**
- **Study centres should be expanded.**

Dr Chaudhury made a presentation on the topic "The Convergence of Open Schooling and Face-to-Face Education for Lifelong Learning". Lifelong learning has become a fact of life. Every individual, working or otherwise, needs to continuously update his/her knowledge as it is not possible to go back to school at a later stage because of professional and family commitments after completing school education or higher education. Since a majority of India's workforce is in the



unorganised sectors, those from this chunk of workforce need regular upgrading of skills to compete in the globalised economy. Equipping the labour force with relevant skills implies the need for creating a variety of learning and training opportunities. Dr Chaudhary intends to conduct research in the area of the convergence of open schooling and face-to-face education for lifelong learning. She presented the need and methodology of conducting research in similar areas.

When the panel discussions were over, some questions were raised and suggestions were given.

Dr Umarov summed up the panel discussion and thanked the panelists and participants for their valuable observations and suggestions.



P Panel Discussion (Theme 2)

Chairperson
Prof N K Ambasht,
Former Chairman, NIOS
Speakers

Prof NK Dash,
Director, School of Education,
IGNOU

Prof CK Saluja,
Former Associate Professor,
CIE, Delhi University



Teacher Development for Convergence of Face-to-Face Learning and Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

Prof Ambasht mentioned that with the emergence of the New Education Policy and the upcoming changes in teacher education and the curriculum for it, teacher development and the relevance of ODL in the development of education for teachers and teacher-educators cannot be denied. The ODL components included in the two-year B.Ed. programme by the NCTE like MOOCs, etc., highlight the upcoming exponential expansion in the area of teacher education.

Prof Dash began his discussion by explaining the relationship between lifelong learning and convergence by considering lifelong learning to be the goal of society and convergence as a means to achieve it. According

to him, convergence is the result of the natural evolution of the education system including both the relevant and extraneous factors, signifying a hybrid of face-to-face and ODL. He mentioned the following drivers of convergence:

- **Emerging schooling system in particular and education system in general are being seen as a system where quality and retention are as important as access. So they need to be given equal attention.**
- **Creating effective and productive citizens of a country is the ultimate goal of lifelong learning. To attain this goal, a symbiotic relationship between teacher education and school education is a must.**
- **Knowledge base is expanding and it should be augmented with teacher education. To accomplish this task, a new model of convergence is required.**
- **In this period of globalisation, understanding multi-cultural practices of different counties is as important as recognising the cultural dimensions of the Indian hinterland.**

He went on to say that in this technologically advancing world, a student should be treated as an autonomous learner. Blended learning, particularly in the areas of physical education, technical education and management education (to name a few), is going to be the new way of mediated learning with mentors. Talking further in the context of contemporary concerns of India, he built upon the ideas of inclusive growth, skilling of India and democratisation of education. In this backdrop, schools would become a knowledge hub, children will be knowledge workers and teachers the producers of these knowledge workers. Hence, the community-school-home-learner interface should be given importance for local indigenous knowledge, and all this is possible with convergence.

Prof Ambast further said that in order to survive, a teacher has to



become a co-learner rather than a storehouse of knowledge as the quantum of knowledge is expanding and changing every day, and no one can cope with that. Besides, no textbook can be comprehensive and up to date enough to suffice the growing needs of the learners. Therefore, e-learning is going to be very important in future. In this scenario, the role of teacher would be of a co-learner, a moderator and a collaborator. As a result of this shift in focus, evaluation should be made to know and find the strength of the child and not to penalise him/her for his/her loopholes. A learning environment is called for, where what he/she already knows is created and then he/she is encouraged to learn more.

Professor CK Saluja carried the same thoughts further and emphasised a strong relationship between education and life, referring to its place in the Constitution of India. He strongly felt that teachers' education and training should also evolve according to the changing needs and times. Teachers and educators should be sensitised towards the varying needs of ODL learners, and modify their teaching curricula and practices accordingly. He felt that increasing the duration of a B.Ed. course to two years was not justified because it was not introducing any new pedagogy. On the contrary, the component of distance learning pedagogy should be a part of the B.Ed. curriculum. Teachers should



be motivated to use their life experiences and behaviour to teach rather than merely employ what they acquire during the course of the training imparted as per the pre-defined curriculum. Any new innovation like the Grading System or Comprehensive and Continuous Evaluation (CCE) should be introduced with proper preparation and orientation of concerned stakeholders. There have to be appropriate changes in the curriculum for teacher's education in line with the right to education. Children involved in various kinds of work should be evaluated only on the basis of their knowledge of specific skills with which they are familiar, and not on the basis of their understanding of different skills; otherwise, asking them to learn something new would be unjust. There have to be different ways of pragmatic monitoring and evaluation, and continuous changes in the curriculum should be encouraged with time to meet the needs of learners. He also reiterated the fact that education in its true sense should create a humane and enlightened society. Face-to-face learning is meaningful because it is needed to impart values, exchange experiences and teach

through practical methods, as well as transfer knowledge from textbooks that have not been updated for years.

Prof Ambasht summed up the discussion by saying that open school should not be looked upon as an alternate school system, but as a process of learning for the overall development of the learner. A diagnostic and remedial approach should be practised, and the regimented education system should be discouraged. Education should be looked at as a tool for holistic development of head, hand and heart. And for this, the need of the hour is a change in the existing pedagogy. ODL and the face-to-face system of education should be complementary and not in opposition to each other.

He emphasised that the Right to Education (RTE) would be realised in its true sense when it would also provide children the right to be loved and to play. Teacher education programme should be separate from school education and higher education. He advocated that Home Science should be taught as a compulsory subject for boys, too. He also emphasised the need and importance of andragogy training for all teachers through contact programmes to make them good teachers. An education that teaches dignity of labour, encourages community work, stresses the sustenance of economy through emphasis on major professions like agriculture, carpentry, etc., should be promoted.



Parallel Sessions

(Theme 1)

Four parallel sessions were organised for brainstorming and intensive deliberations on the four themes of the conference. For this purpose, participants were divided into four groups. Each group worked under the aegis of the chairperson. The observations, suggestions and recommendations that emerged in the parallel session are as follows.



Lifelong Learning for All: Role of Open Schooling

1. Ensure that the benefits of national programmes and schemes develop suitably to provide learning opportunities to vulnerable sections of society;
2. Address the issue of drop-outs by giving learners a chance in Open Schooling as per their needs and requirements, suitable to their previous knowledge and experience, both in academic and vocational education courses;
3. Support should be extended for a learner-centred approach that allows a learner to explore and choose his/her own educational/learning pathway for acquiring and building competencies;
4. Promote collaboration between different educational institutions/organisations, government and non-governmental agencies and other concerned stakeholders, for better and effective learning, and vocational and need-based courses;
5. Effective use of ICTs and new media for reaching the vulnerable population;
6. Robust monitoring and evaluation, backed by in-depth research, to be encouraged for any further planning.

Parallel Sessions (Theme 2)



Teacher Development for Convergence of Face-to-Face and ODL

1. Promote positive teacher-learner interaction through suitable training, including inputs for overall development of the teacher in psycho-motor, affective and cognitive domains of development;
2. Encourage the use of different methods such as think tanks, symposia, seminars, flip model, as well as evolve methods such as participatory learning, collaborative and cooperative approaches;
3. Ensure appropriate changes in teacher education curriculum in keeping with the changing needs in the context of ODL, like introducing component of teaching practice sessions at NIOS study centres;
4. Introduce an optional paper on 'Open and Distance Schooling System' in different teacher education curricula encompassing different components of ODL like philosophy of ODL, psychological foundations, pedagogy, ICTs in ODL;
5. Introduce short-term courses and refresher courses (online and offline mode) for pre-service and in-service teachers training to match contemporary needs;
6. Training in andragogy, i.e., the art and science of teaching adult learners should be included in teacher training programmes;
7. Action research must be undertaken by professionals dealing with ODL learners for exploring viable solutions to the current challenges of education.



Panel Discussion

(Day 2)

Panel Discussion (Theme 3)



Chairperson
Mr MC Pant,
Former Chairman, NIOS

Speakers
Dr Kuldeep Agarwal,
Director (Academic), NIOS
Prof Anil Shukla,
Lucknow University
Dr Indu Kumar,
Associate Professor, CIET,
NCERT, New Delhi

Relevance and Quality of Lifelong Learning

Mr Pant emphasised that every citizen has the right to live a quality life. It is the state's responsibility to make education available to everybody and this is now being implemented through the RTE Act. According to this Act, every child in the country has the right to free and compulsory education till the age of 14 years. He said that 30% of people in India are illiterate, 90% of people are working in the unorganised sector, and about 70% of people are dependent on agriculture. People are mostly semi-skilled. With such a heterogeneous population, it becomes difficult to attain a quality of life. In this dynamic system, where the horizons of knowledge are expanding every day, and the knowledge acquired tends to become obsolete in three to four years of learning, lifelong learning assumes great importance. Professional development and upgrading skills has become a requirement to cope with the challenges in a globalised world and to maintain a quality of life.

To deal with these challenges in the field of education, the formal education system is trying to make the child competent enough to face

the global world. However, the formal education system has its limitations. Those limitations can be met by the ODL system. With its flexibility and inherent nature of openness, ODL can make things possible.

Mr Pant requested the panelists to focus on the issue of how quality of life can be provided by giving opportunities and support to people, motivating them to realise that they are competent enough to face the challenges.



Dr Agarwal started his discussion by mentioning that education in India needs to be relevant for individual, society, economy, nation, humanity and thereby the whole universe. He added that education needs to be goal-oriented. Adults are considered to be mature when they have characteristics such as cognitive autonomy (thinking skills), emotional autonomy (balanced feeling), moral autonomy (value inculcation), and economic autonomy (earning a livelihood). Education should therefore be able to fulfil these aims.

Education has to be need-based. Every individual has physical and safety needs, psychological needs (need for belonging), social needs (need for status and self-esteem), aesthetic needs and self-actualisation needs. As regards multiple intelligence in learning, its parameters include intelligence quotient (intellectual), emotional quotient, social quotient, spiritual quotient, artistic ability/talent, literary ability/talent, and talent/ability in sports.

Quoting extensively from the UNESCO report on sustainable education, he said that the development should be environmentally sound, socially equitable, culturally sensitive and economically viable. Only sustainable education leads to knowledge and teaches the correct way of doing, being humane, interacting with others and changing the world for a better tomorrow. Learning should be enjoyable, hands-on and relevant to life outside school and addressing problems in society and the world outside. Sustainable learning leads to genuine learning opportunities throughout life – at home, in school, in the workplace, and within the community. It prepares learners to enter the workforce;

handle a crisis; be resilient; become responsible citizens; adapt to change; recognise and solve local problems with global roots; meet other cultures with respect; and strive towards creating a peaceful and sustainable society.

Holistic education is concerned with the growth of every person's intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, creative and spiritual potentials. It is a quest for understanding meaning. It recognises the innate potential of every learner and all knowledge is created within a cultural context. Holistic education values spiritual knowledge. It also aims at integrating/maintaining balance among values, skills and knowledge. An holistic school curriculum should aim for:

- **Value inculcation/patriotism/love for humanity**
- **Knowledge/understanding/appreciation of/pride in our beloved nation's glorious past/contribution to knowledge**
- **Understanding of our nation's rich culture**
- **Intellectual development/scientific temper**
- **Emotional development**
- **Socialisation**
- **Spiritual development**
- **Arts and aesthetics characterising interest in fine arts, performing arts/aesthetic sense**
- **Literary ability reflecting interest in poetry, drama, prose or any other literary genre**
- **Physical development such as yoga and sports**
- **Skill development/work education/vocational education for livelihood**
- **Gender sensitivity/social equity, equality and justice**
- **Sustainable development**



Dr Agarwal related the relevance of lifelong learning with values. He said that till now, the emphasis was on gaining knowledge, but knowledge leads to power and power leads to conflict; whereas what is needed is wisdom which can lead towards peace. He mentioned different types of values, such as universal and eternal values which are the quest for truth, beauty and goodness; constitutional values; harmony with nature, with

other humans and with oneself; religious/inter-faith values; scientific humanism; behavioural values; and Gandhian values (related to truth and non-violence). Life skills and a sustainable development approach are the key components of lifelong learning.

Gender equity and sensitivity is required in light of the rise in crime against women, such as domestic violence, child abuse, rape, child marriage, sex determination and female infanticide, dowry and adverse sex ratio. As women are doing well in most fields, the inculcation of values relating to behaviour towards women through education may ensure gender equity and sensitivity for women.

Skill education is of the utmost importance to one's livelihood. It is the need of the hour for employment or self-employment. Skilled personnel are needed for the socio-economic and sustainable development of the country. Skill development should be a part of holistic education. A blended approach is required for the convergence of face-to-face education with ODL.

Prof Shukla emphasised that education should prepare everyone for accepting unprecedented situations in order to lead a quality life. If people are independent in mind and thought process and live a quality life, only then can the political and social atmosphere improve. There is a challenge before society to provide quality education. He said that our education system is competition-oriented, where students are taught to cover merely the syllabus and

get marks. However, it is the moral duty of every teacher to prepare students for life-long education. To improve the quality of education, we have to analyse our education system from different perspectives. Various challenges that we are facing are economic inequality and gender inequality.

The education system is required to transform the learner into an automated learner. Quoting the words of the late Dr A P J Abdul Kalam, former President of India, he stated that to prepare an automated learner, the following qualities are required:

- **Creativity**
- **Technological savvy**
- **Entrepreneurship**



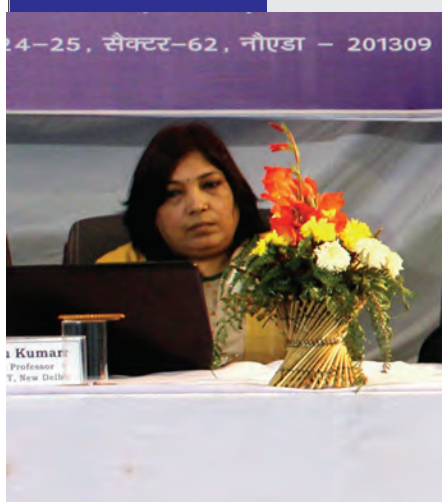
- **Moral leadership**

According to him, the Indian education system faces the following problems and challenges:

- **There are trainers but no teachers.**
- **There is a shortage of learning communities where knowledge can be shared and conserved.**
- **There is a need to identify requirements and characteristic needs.**
- **A generation gap exists because education is not flexible.**
- **There is a need to prepare a proactive plan for education.**
- **There is also a need to prepare a learning-to-learn society.**
- **Education should not aim at age; we need competency-oriented institutions.**
- **Our educational institutes are like teaching machines; they should aim at becoming capacity-development hubs.**
- **Curriculum should not be imposed. Rather, it should evolve according to the needs of the learners.**

Suggestions for the New Education Policy:

- **We have to prepare an anticipatory form of education.**
- **It should be competency-oriented rather than age-specific.**
- **No ready-made curriculum can solve the purpose.**
- **In the 21st century, a flexible and electronic form of curriculum has to be evolved.**



Dr Kumar said that since we live in a knowledge society and are witnessing a rapid pace of technology/advancement, lifelong learning has become very important. We as human beings have within us a physical being (physical well-being), an intellectual being (intellectual stimulation), an emotional being (emotional well-being), a social being (recognition, belonging), a political being (ideas about citizenship, right and duties) and an economic being (economic independence, livelihood). A sense of our being does not stop growing even after schooling; therefore, learning is a lifelong process. Learning begins at home and continues even

after schooling. However, the role of school in learning cannot be ignored; school is an important stage where we can control the quality of learning. Assessment of other dimensions of personality is also important and it leads to lifelong learning. As regards the new National Policy on Education,

she suggested that quality education infused with equality, equity and technology is the need of the country. For the expansion of equality, more schools should be opened and equity should come along with it. Accessible technology for all sections of society in schools needs to be ensured, and it would be even better if it is provided in their languages. The role of ICT in school education and for lifelong learning is of paramount importance.

Conclusion:

Mr Pant emphasised that there is a need to recognise lifelong learning, as every individual keeps growing and the process of development never stops. With the ever-increasing spread and impact of ICTs, the role of a teacher will become more important, as a facilitator, moral guide and mentor. An expert shows his/her expertise, but a teacher has the capability to make an expert out of an ignorant person. A good teacher may not be a subject matter expert but he/she should be aware of enabling conditions in which learning can happen. Mr Pant ended on a positive note and linked this session with the next session on ICTs and their importance in different learning conditions, like face-to-face education and ODL.



P

anel Discussion (Theme 4)



Chairperson
Prof Madan Mohan Pant,
Former Pro-Vice Chancellor,
IGNOU

Speaker
Prof Sudesh Mukhopadhyay,
Former Head, Department of
Inclusive Education, National
University of Educational
Planning and Administration

ICT and Media for Convergence of Face-to-Face and Open Distance Learning

Professor Mukhopadhyay began the panel discussion by emphasising how media had become an important part of everybody's life. Media is everywhere. We use it all the time for all purposes. She gave the example of how, in several years of her working with differently-abled children, she had seen the challenges of their not being able to read continuously or not being able to understand through mere words. In such situations, due to multimedia learning through pictures, audio narration, videos, and animated stories, the objective of learning is easily achieved. She also talked about how in daily life, we get knowledge and information from all sources simultaneously: young people watching a match and working on their laptops while talking on the phone. Thus, a convergence of learning is happening all the time. She further talked



about an MIT Study of 2001 where it was understood that new skills for managing information, new structures for transmitting information across channels, and new creative things for exploitation of the potential of these emerging structures need to be developed. Prof Mukhopadhyay discussed how media convergence had always been happening from the postal method of learning in the ODL format to radio and TV, and then with videos and computers, to the present age of smart TV, smart phones and digital format of music and pictures. At the same time, she made us aware of the fact that the use of multimedia technology is not static and constantly developing, so the cost factor and continuous updates can be an issue. She also pointed out that the isolation of learners through only technological and individualised learning could be another issue. In the backdrop of these challenges, it is very important to keep the balance between face-to-face learning through traditional methods and learning through ICT and media learning in the ODL system. Thus, flexibility and choice of the learner are important conditions in open distance learning. While ICT makes learning possible, media makes it more sustainable. Media convergence processes include technological, economic, social and organic convergences. In addition, cultural and global convergences are aspects that need to be paid attention to. The greatest challenge in ICT, as she said, is the absence or disability of the use of computers and associated technologies in pre-service teacher education. A significant majority of our pre-service teacher education programmes do not use this technology when training future teachers. Besides, they also do not prepare them to use it with their own students. She concluded her discussion by saying that firstly, the teachers have to be made aware of the new types of literacy that are emerging so that they may transmit the same to learners in the ODL mode.

After a brief round on questions on the role of teacher and transmission of knowledge through different media, Prof Pant summed up the session by stating that teachers never get replaced; in fact, they become more important as educators involved with a new pedagogy. He very appropriately noted that teachers of today could be the catalytic force who could change the whole educational





scenario with their ability to create exclusive content in the form of lectures, which would then simultaneously be delivered to millions of screens worldwide in as many institutions as one wanted. Therefore, a teacher's role is to create conditions for learning to happen. A good teacher

need not be a subject matter expert. However, it's important to guide and create an enabling environment for students to learn more and more.

Professor Pant elaborated how today time all information is already available, but information could sometimes be contradictory, and even mislead the learners. Thus, what is needed is an educator who can take charge and direct the right information to the right users. He said that the practices in formal education are extinct and irrelevant; wasting time in finding solutions is not the answer because answers are everywhere, as computers are already there to solve problems; we as humans just need to understand what those problems are in this fast-changing world. He gave some apt examples to prove his point by talking about the emerging problems of climate change, global market crisis and unemployment. He said that the existing education system was not acknowledging these current issues at all.

He went on to add that the open system should look beyond formal education and formal degrees. It should encourage certification courses for different skills and new job-oriented subjects. The focus should be laid on the needs and requirements beyond the mainstream. Learners who are geographically dispersed should have the flexibility and choice to learn what the new world demands. He said that with mobile technology, access to information has become a moot point because all knowledge, whether it is an NCERT lesson or a Harvard lecture, can be accessed through mobile apps. Similarly, admission to NIOS should be simplified, and procedures should be digitised through apps for the benefit of everyone. He concluded his talk by requesting the audience to understand the power of smart phones and using them for ODL.

The session was concluded by Professor CB Sharma, Chairman, NIOS. He

said that throughout history, knowledge has remained concentrated in the hands of a few because it was traditionally contained in elite languages like Sanskrit or later, in English. He said that the time had come to delink knowledge from books to whichever medium somebody was interested to learn in. It could be through recorded lectures and videos in whatever language one wanted that knowledge to be in. He further impressed upon the audience that, as mentioned earlier by Prof Pant, teachers would be a very valuable community as long as they had something valuable to say. Learners would learn from them irrespective of whether they were masters in their field. To tap the teachers who have the best resource material is the need of the hour for NIOS and all other institutions. He further said that media was just a way to transmit this content to those sections of the population that were left out of the traditional modes of learning. In this regard, ICT could be the appropriate tool. He added that when a teacher prepares self-learning material, his/her knowledge gets embedded in that lesson and, subsequently, reaches out to people who are unreached and more deserving. This can be the biggest achievement of ODL.



P Parallel Sessions

(Theme 3)



Relevance and Quality for Lifelong Learning

1. Encourage interdisciplinary integrated approach for developing and building different competencies;
2. Relevance is subjective to individuals and therefore providing opportunities to make the personalised choices would ensure autonomy to learners;
3. Design programmes after need assessment, making them more relevant and effective for the stakeholders;
4. Ensure quality in delivery and transaction of programmes through ICT-enabled teaching-learning.

P Parallel Sessions

(Theme 4)



ICT and Media for Convergence of Face-to- Face Learning and ODL

1. Establish and promote online digital learning platform for better teacher-learner interaction encompassing expertise from different fields in different languages;
2. Establish a platform for interaction between formal school learner and ODL learners;
3. Develop ICT-enabled materials to address the needs of differently-abled learners;
4. Radio and TV should be utilised extensively for the benefit of formal as well as ODL learners;
5. Training should be provided to all stakeholders involved in the process of development, usage and communication of learning materials.

Valedictory Session



Chief guest
Dr Alisher Umarov,
Chief Education &
Programme Specialist,
UNESCO

Speakers
Dr Kuldeep Agarwal,
Director (Academic), NIOS

Presidential Address
Prof CB Sharma,
Chairman, NIOS

Vote of Thanks
Sh. C Dharuman,
Secretary, NIOS

Valedictory Session

Dr Agarwal welcomed the chief guest, Dr Umarov. He was appreciative of Dr Umarov's support for NIOS and the ODL system and hoped that UNESCO would continue supporting NIOS in its many important activities. Such supportive measures would go a long way in implementing the SDGs in India, particularly goal no. 4, i.e., "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". Along with the above mentioned goal, convergence of ODL with the formal education system is also important because only then can we think of providing lifelong learning to all in the country. He added that the theme of the conference implies that the Open Schooling system is very important for achieving this goal. Indeed, the outcomes of the conference would go a long way in (i) giving inputs for the New Education Policy; (ii) implementing the SDGs; and (iii) improving the overall education system across the country.

After this, he presented a brief report on the proceedings and deliberations of the conference. Thereafter, he invited the participants,

other than those from NIOS, to share their insights and observations on the work done during the conference.

Mrs Kavita Sharma, Founder Director, Autism Society of India, shared her happiness at attending the conference. She spoke from the perspective of a parent and an end user of NIOS for her son, offering fresh insight into the proceedings. She felt that significant inputs could be provided to the New Education Policy through the recommendations of the conference. She discussed bringing digital literacy to learners, their parents, or other family members, so that learning could become a shared effort. She also talked about increasing the core competency of teachers by introducing incentives. She noted that when we talk about relevance, we should focus on accessibility, adaptability, affordability and awareness with respect to ICT and digital literacy.



Mr SK Saxena, Principal, Rukmani Devi Public School, Delhi, observed that the conference had proved to be very informative. He lauded the efforts and knowledge of all who had contributed to the conference, and said that everyone should add their little bit to the task of nation building.



Ms Priyanka Raja, Director, Business Development EDUI, India and Malaysia, said that we need young people to contribute more into lifelong learning. Being the youngest member of the congregation, she spoke about the role of young people in promoting lifelong learning in education. She aptly pointed out how the younger generation could be the flag-bearers for the new policies and developments in the field of education.



Prof CB Sharma Chairman, NIOS, appreciated the efforts of Dr Agarwal in organising the conference and working towards its success. He felt that the recommendations of the conference had enabled everyone to provide useful inputs

towards the implementation of the New National Policy of Education. He expressed his satisfaction that the ideas that emerged in the conference would definitely prove useful in individual understanding and to our institutional perception to form better synergy among different schools, institutions and NIOS. He also felt that the follow-up action on the recommendations of the conference would increase NIOS's visibility in



the country and help NIOS to find more ambassadors to society. He thanked UNSECO for its support in organising the conference, and to the dignitaries and participants for their valuable contribution.

Dr Umarov made his concluding remarks and offered important recommendations for the future. He said that the conference had brought forward several issues of open schooling in order to push the idea of

lifelong learning in line with the new SDGs and with the global agenda of education. There have been several meetings at global and regional levels and it was decided that 2016 would be dedicated to follow up in order to promote advocacy and awareness for the new SDGs. He noted that, as usual, open schooling had quickly made big strides in education. This is another case where, when other countries are planning to do something in 2016, NIOS has already emerged as a leader and a pioneer by organising this conference. He said that the conference had succeeded in its endeavour by producing significant and noteworthy recommendations. These recommendations had a potential not only for inclusion in the New Education Policy, but also for useful policy inputs for UNESCO programmes.

In addition to his observations about the outcomes of the conference, Dr Umarov suggested the following:

- Open school understanding should be very massive, if we want education to reach every citizen; everyone should know about open schooling.
- Everyone should benefit from open schooling because open schooling makes education and lifelong learning possible for all.

He stated that the last Education For All Global Monitoring Report is worth mentioning for two reasons:

- a. It presented the final conclusion which included achievements of education for all goals and movement that should be continued in new SDGs.
- b. There was a mention of certain institutions and best practices, which could serve as a means to achieve the SDGs. Amongst those, half a page contained information about NIOS's success. He felt very proud to convey that it was a global report which had gone to every single country, their ministries and institutions. Dr Umarov felt that NIOS deserved this kind of recognition and representation.

He further asserted that open schooling would be accepted and demanded only if stakeholders ensured very good quality, quality of delivery, quality of designing materials, quality of ODL providers, and quality of using modern IT technology.



Dr Umarov emphasised that one recommendation to make for the New Education Policy would be to make NIOS fully recognised as an integral part of the education system. He said that it should no longer be viewed as a specific exceptional case. Rather, it

should be embedded, integrated, and blended as part of the education system. He said that it was great to see how NIOS was able to create a ripple effect for the new Education Policy and this should be recognised.

Focusing on the use of IT technologies for open schooling, Dr Umarov felt that there was a need to bring new and innovative ways in open schooling. Technology should not only be TV, radio or IT, because many more technologies are on the way. He shared an example from Paris where more learning was happening at the Metro stations. As passengers enter the station, each pillar speaks to them. Pillars have the latest news and one pillar is for parents. It mentions what kind of questions children should ask their parents. He said that these kinds



of things should be brought by open schooling into peoples' daily lives.

Dr Umarov suggested that the mode of open schooling should be accessible to everyone. One should ascertain if it covers out of school children, tribal children, the illiterate, the unskilled, adult learners, etc. He reiterated that

only open and distance learning was an efficient mode to promote global citizen education. ODL is a window or a gate that is open to the entire world. What our learners would get in order to have high values, to be responsible, and to have commitment, passion and a future, would mostly depend on those who are bringing open schooling and face-to-face learning together. He said that in today's context, face-to-face learning also included touching the screen, i.e. virtually as well. This would teach learners how to be a global citizen, instead of a terrorist and/or a lazy citizen, who just demands from the country without contributing to its growth and development.

In conclusion, Dr Umarov congratulated the participants for their valuable contribution and looked forward to their continuing co-operation.

Mr C Dharuman proposed a vote of thanks to all. He thanked Prof CB Sharma, Dr Subash Chandra Khuntia, Dr Alisher Umarov, and Dr Kuldeep Agarwal. He also thanked all the education panelists, former Chairman and Secretaries of all the Boards. He thanked all the dignitaries for gracing the occasion with their presence. He also acknowledged the contributions of all who had participated in the conference. Finally, he thanked UNESCO for its collaboration and support in organising the conference.



P Programme Schedule

Day-1(13 December 2015)

9:00 a.m. – 10.00 a.m.

Registration

10:00 a.m. -11:00 a.m

Inaugural Session / Opening Ceremony

- **Welcome Address** –
Prof C B Sharma, Chairman, NIOS
- **Opening Remarks** -
Dr Alisher Umarov, Chief Education & Programme Specialist, UNESCO
- **About the Conference** -
Dr Kuldeep Agarwal, Director (Academic), NIOS
- **Inaugural Address** -
Dr Subhash Chandra Khuntia, IAS, Secretary, Department of School Education & Literacy, MHRD
- **Vote of Thanks** -
Sh. C Dharuman, Secretary, NIOS

11:00 a.m. -11:30 a.m

Tea Break

11:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m

Key note Address- Prof Santosh Panda, Chairperson, NCTE

Chairman's Remarks – Prof C B Sharma, Chairman, NIOS

12:30 p.m. -2:00 p.m

Panel Discussion

Theme-I- Lifelong Learning for All: Role of Open Schooling

2:00 p.m. -2:45 p.m

Lunch break

2:45 p.m. -4.15 p.m

Panel Discussion

Theme-II-Teacher Development for Convergence of Face-to-Face and ODL

4.15 p.m. -4.45 p.m

Tea Break

4:45 p.m. -6.15 p.m

Parallel Sessions of Theme I & II

6:15 p.m. -7.15 p.m

Presentations of Theme I & II

7.15 p.m. onwards

Dinner

Day-2(14 December 2015)

10:00 a.m. – 11.30 a.m.

Panel Discussion

Theme-III--Relevance and Quality for Lifelong Learning

11:30 a.m. -12:00 Noon

Tea Break

12:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m

Panel Discussion

Theme– IV- ICT and Media for Convergence of Face- to- Face and ODL

1:30 p.m. -2:15 p.m

Lunch Break

2:15 p.m. -3:45 p.m

Parallel Sessions of III & IV

3:45 p.m. -4.30 p.m

Presentations of Theme III & IV

4.30 p.m. -5.30 p.m

Closing Ceremony/Valedictory Session

- Remarks - Dr Alisher Umarov, Chief Education & Programme Specialist, UNESCO
- Conclusions & Recommendations of the Conference -
Dr Kuldeep Agarwal, Director (Academic), NIOS
- Valedictory Address - Dr Sushma Yadav, Former PVC, IGNOU
- Presidential Address – Prof CB Sharma, Chairman, NIOS
- Vote of Thanks - Sh. C Dharuman, Secretary, NIOS

5.30 p.m

High tea

Acknowledgements

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Specialist, UNESCO
Dr Kuldeep Agarwal,
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Prof Santosh Panda,
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Prof N K Ambasht,
Former Chairman, NIOS
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