

**International Conference
Education for All: Role of Open Schooling
13th -15th March 2013**

1. Education for All – International Perspective

“Education for all” declares that everyone has a right to education. Its aim is to give everyone a chance to learn and benefit from basic education – not as an accident of circumstance, or as a privilege, but as a right.”

The aspiration of making education available to all is not new. More than two hundred years ago, Adam Smith argued for universal education on the grounds of public order and the preservation of freedom. By the mid-20th century, education was enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: *“Everyone has a right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.”*

As an international initiative, Education for All (EFA) was first launched in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 to bring the benefits of education to “every citizen in every society.” In order to realize this aim, a broad coalition of national governments, civil society groups, and development agencies such as the World Bank and UNESCO committed to achieving six specific education goals:

- Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
- Ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, those in difficult circumstances, and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free, and compulsory primary education of good quality.
- Ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programs.
- Achieve a 50% improvement in adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
- Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieve gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls’ full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.
- Improve all aspects of the quality of education and ensure the excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

After a decade, the international community reaffirmed its commitment to EFA in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000 and again in September of that year. In the September meeting, 189 countries and their partners adopted the two EFA goals that are also Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

There were 40 million more children in schools in 2006 vis-a-vis in 1999. This success was achieved by focusing international effort after 2000 on the core goal of Universal Primary Education (UPE). The Dakar Forum had articulated six goals, covering aspirations ranging from the expansion of early childhood education to a drastic reduction in adult literacy. Two of the Dakar goals – UPE and Gender Equality – were incorporated into the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** are eight international development goals that United Nations member states and international organizations have agreed to achieve by the year 2015. The goals are:

1. eradicating extreme poverty and hunger,
2. achieving universal primary education,
3. promoting gender equality and empowering women
4. reducing child mortality rates,
5. improving maternal health,
6. combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases,
7. ensuring environmental sustainability, and
8. developing a global partnership for development.

Achieving the Education for All goals is critical for attaining all 8 MDGs—in part due to the direct impact of education on child and reproductive health, as well as the fact that EFA has created a body of experience in multi-

partner collaboration toward the 2015 targets. Simultaneously, achieving the other MDGs, such as improved health, access to clean drinking water, decreased poverty, and environmental sustainability, are critical to achieving the education MDGs.

The movement towards *Education for All* revitalized educational reforms all over the world. Major progress has been made in terms of access to primary education and declining number of out of school children between 6-11 age groups but a wide vacuum still has its presence in the effort to achieve the goal of Education for All. Although there has been steady progress towards achieving many EFA goals, challenges remain. According to the latest data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), 61 million children of primary school age were out of school in 2010. It is a matter of great concern that the number of out-of-school children has remained at 61 million over the last three years. Much of this global stagnation is due to trends in sub-Saharan Africa, where the number of out of school children has actually risen over the past three years - from 29 million in 2008 to 31 million in 2010. Of the 61 million children who were out of school in 2010, 47% are expected to never enter school. A further 26% have attended but left school, and the remaining 27% are expected to enter school in the future. A more serious challenge is that there are roughly 28 million of the global numbers out of school children who are expected to never gain access to schooling. Girls are more likely to be out of school (28%) than boys (25%).

2. Education for All in India

At the time of Independence, India inherited a system of education which was not only quantitatively small but also characterized by structural imbalances. Only fourteen per cent of the population was literate and only one child out of three had been enrolled in primary school. As education is vitally linked with the totality of the development process (education being "the basic tool for the development of consciousness and reconstitution of society," in the words of Mahatma Gandhi), the reform and restructuring of the educational system was recognized as an important area of state intervention.

The need for a literate population and universal education for all children in the age group of 6-14 was recognised as a crucial input for nation building and was given due consideration in the Constitution as well as in successive Five Year Plans.

The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986, revised in 1992, resolved to achieve the goal of Universalization of Elementary Education by the turn of the century, emphasizing three aspects: universal access and enrolment; universal retention up to 14 years of age, and to bring about substantial improvement in the quality of education to enable all children to achieve essential levels of learning.

The Policy set the goal of decentralised planning and management of elementary education. This thinking led to the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments that provide for decentralisation of the activities and facilitate transfer of power and participation of the local self-government institutions or the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).

In *Unnikrishnan Vs. State of Andhra Pradesh* (Writ Petition No.607 of 1992), Supreme Court held that citizens of this country have the fundamental right to education and the said right flows from Article 21 of the Constitution. This right is, however, not an absolute right. Every child/citizen of this country has the right to free education until he/she completes the age of fourteen years. Thereafter, his/her right to education is subject to limits of the economic capacity and development of the State. This movement has culminated in the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 notified on 27th August, 2009, popularly called RTE Act.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was launched by the Government of India for achievement of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in a time bound manner, as mandated by 86th amendment to the Constitution of India making free and compulsory Education to the Children of 6-14 years age group, a Fundamental Right.

After the success of SSA, pressure has increased on the secondary education sector. The Govt. of India is now moving towards universalization of secondary education, for which the RMSA (Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan) has been launched on the lines of SSA in a missionary mode. There is a move to extend the scope of RTE Act to the target group beyond 14 years of age.

3. Role of Open schooling

While the countries have struggled to build schools and train teachers, both of which are necessary to achieve universal primary education, the limited primary infrastructures and inadequate economic resources and lack of quality teaching learning mechanisms to provide a quality secondary schooling are serious challenges that are being faced by government policy-makers. Therefore, there is a need of serious thinking and strategic planning to achieve the massive tasks ahead. In this backdrop, open and distance learning, has the paramount importance for achieving the goal of Education for All with the potential of surpassing traditional barriers that may result from prior educational, financial, geographic, time or disability-related constraints.

It is being increasingly realized that the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode of education, especially at the Secondary and the Senior Secondary school education levels, is the need of the hour and should be practiced in all

countries, along with the formal system of education. The Open Schooling system, with its various learner friendly characteristics and inputs like flexibility in place and pace of learning, self learning material, media and ICT support, Personal Contact Programme (PCP), recognizing and accommodating learner's preferred learning objectives (programmatic or course- or module-specific), his or her selected means for accomplishing the learning and demonstrating its attainment, and his or her need for student support services that will maximize the individual's chances of success, thus has emerged as a potential alternative system of education. As a result, massive expansion of Open Schooling Institutions has been found over the past few years.

Globally, the progress of Open Schooling programme is varied in nature and scope. Whereas in some countries the Open School programme has made significant strides, in several countries it is at the initial stage. Some countries have not started the open schooling programme, but they essentially need to open up to the idea of open schooling to achieve the goal of Education for All.

If EFA has to be achieved by 2015, it is obvious the open schooling will have to play a more vital role. It is in this context that an international conference is being visualized for deliberating upon the role of open schooling in fulfilling this cherished goal in all developing countries, particularly those that come under the umbrella of the *Commonwealth*.

4. Objectives

The objectives of the conference will be to

1. exchange and share existing national and international experiences/practices for achieving Education for all
2. discuss issues and concerns pertaining to education for all at different levels and types of school education
3. suggest strategies and interventions to achieve the goal of Education for All through open schooling

5. Sub-Themes

The sub-themes of the conference will be

- a) Issues of Access & Equity:
 - Expansion and meeting of demand; Retention/completion
 - Awareness Building and Advocacy for open schooling
- b) Issues of Quality (materials, curriculum, delivery system, evaluation)
 - relevance (need based); contextualised; goal-oriented
 - Learner Support Services and delivery system
 - ICT & Multimedia
 - Capacity Building
 - Research and Development
 - Innovation
- c) Institutional related issues and operational strategies:
 - Management of open schooling
 - Financing of Open Schooling
 - Monitoring and Quality Assurance in Open Schooling
 - Networking and Collaboration
 - Resource Mobilisation
 - Documentation of Success Stories
- d) Issues pertaining to Skill Development through Open Schooling:
 - Levels (elementary, secondary and senior secondary)
 - Types (general, vocational)
 - Integration of Academic Education and Vocational Education/Skill Development

6. Expected Outcomes

- Collection and compilations of Status position about the open schooling programme in different countries.
- Recommendations of the conference mentioning strategies for (i) promotion/ up scaling of the open schooling programme in various countries, (ii) increasing access with equity, (iii) ensuring quality of materials and methods, and (iv) effective programme delivery.
- Networking within the open schooling system and with other educational development sectors.
- Compilation & dissemination of a document, including proceedings, conference papers, Group Reports and Recommendations.

7. Conference Methodology

The conference format would be a mix of thematic and plenary sessions, panel discussion and presentation of papers. If needed, parallel session may be organised for presentation of papers. In the end, recommendations of the conference will be drafted and deliberated in a plenary session for adoption.

1. Participants

To achieve the above objectives, the Conference will witness active participation of experts in the field of education/ODL and officials involved in policy making at school level. Participants will include:

- Experts in EFA/ODL from India & abroad
- Educational Planners/Policy makers/Administrators from India & abroad
- Representatives of Open Schools from India & abroad

Core Advisory/Organizing Committee

Conference Chairperson:	Dr. S.S Jena Chairman, NIOS
Conference Director:	Dr. Kuldeep Agarwal Director (Academic)
Conference Convener:	Sh. Sukanta Mahapatra Academic Officer (Sociology)

Call for Papers

National Institute Open Schooling (NIOS), an autonomous organization under the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of HRD, Government of India invites papers from Experts in EFA/ODL, Educational Planners/Policy makers/Administrators, Representatives of Open Schools & other interested individuals from India & abroad on the above mentioned themes.

The paper should be typed in **MS-word, font size-12 (Times New Roman) within 4000 words** along with an **abstract of 500 words**. The contributors are requested to send the full paper and abstract to ***The Academic Officer (Sociology), National Institute Open Schooling (NIOS), A-24-25, Institutional Area, Sector-62, Noida-201309 (U.P) India***. A soft copy is required to be sent via e-mail to sukantamahapatra@nios.ac.in, with a copy marked to directoracademic@nios.ac.in. The last date of receiving the full paper with abstract is **December 31, 2012**. No paper will be considered after this date. **Details including name, designation, address and contact details with email id of the presenter should be given along with the papers.**

A limited number of papers will be selected from the papers received from contributors till the last date by an Expert Committee constituted by the NIOS. Intimation to the authors of the selected papers will be communicated separately indicating details of the Conference.

Local hospitality, including boarding and lodging will be offered to all participants, including those from other countries. Participants from India will also be entitled to reimbursement of travel expenses as per norms of NIOS and as per their entitlement. Air travel, if entitled, will be admissible only by Air India.

Important Deadlines

Submission of full Paper with abstracts	: 31st December, 2012
Notification of acceptance of Paper	: 20th January, 2013
Confirmation of participation (With itinerary) by Presenter	: 10th February, 2013

Contact Details:

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