

# **Bridging the Gap in Girls' Education through Open Schooling in India**

## **Prospects and Provisions**

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### **Abstract**

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*Education of girls has been a high-priority area for the Government of India. The Central and State Governments have been making efforts to achieve the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education. Despite the initiatives, the gender gap in India has persisted in the field of education since Independence. Enrolment of boys is more than girls at all levels of school education and drop-outs rates for girls are also higher – indicative of a gender gap that needs to be bridged (though in recent years, it has narrowed considerably at the elementary stage). Though the situation continues to improve, girls still have lower enrolments, lower attendance rates as well as higher drop out rates compared to boys. Open schooling has created enormous opportunities for the expansion of educational opportunities. A variety of variables pertaining to open schooling appear to have made an impact on learners' response to open schooling – the structuring of the programme and its requirements, the in-built flexibilities created for the learners – all independently and collectively influence the enrolment of both male and female learners in open schooling. With this context, the present paper seeks to uncover the impact of different aspects of open schooling in enrolment and retention of the female learners.*

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### **Introduction**

It is becoming well recognised and an accepted fact that education is an important input instrument for

promoting peace and prosperity in a given society. The evidence is also clear that the total benefits to education multiply when schools open their doors

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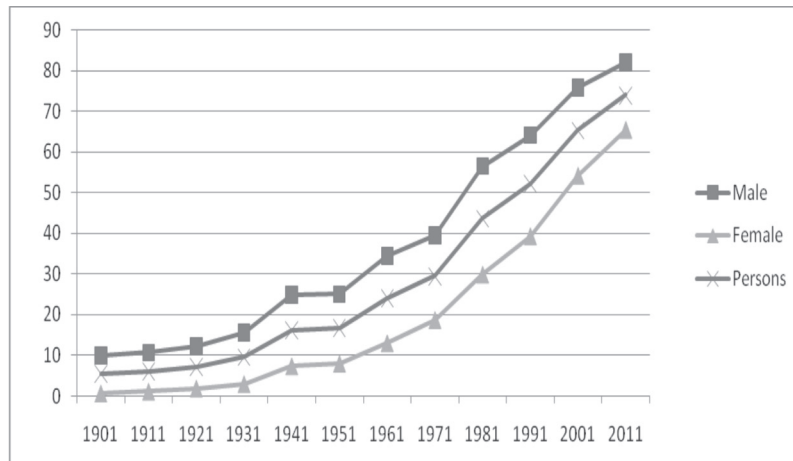
to both the sexes equally. In particular, girls' education has been one of the most powerful forces that contribute to the all round improvement in society's life (Berelson, 1969; Kingdon, 2002). Benefits of educating women are manifold ranging from improved productivity, income and economic development at the national level to better quality of life at the individual level, notably a healthier and well-nourished population and greater autonomy among women. It is also well documented that there is link between mothers' education and their children's readiness for learning, and between girls' education and productive self employment. Thus education of women is a contributor towards a substantial economic and social return to a country.

In a developing country like India, the main challenge is to expand access and to improve retention in schools so that all children are able to attend the school without dropping out and to facilitate better learning achievements. The Constitution of India is committed to give free and compulsory education to all children of 6-14 years. The National commitment to provide free and compulsory education to all children in the 6-14 years age group is now a Fundamental Right of every child in India after the passing of the Constitution (86th Amendment) Act in December, 2002. Educational attainment has found direct linkage with growth of the individual and nation. In translating

this into action, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Bill was drafted in 2005. This was revised and became an Act in August 2009. The icing on the cake is the RTE Act which states that every child should receive education which is based on equality of opportunity and without any discrimination on any grounds. To attain this, India will have to transcend mere non-discrimination and opt for positive differential treatment to attain social justice. Despite the constitutional provisions there is huge task to be accomplished as there is gender gap in education. Women inequality holds back growth of the society, as they form significant proportion of the population. There are 940 women per 1000 male as per 2011 Census in India. It is more than 49 percent of the total population. For the growth of the country it is essential that women are educated and participate in the economic activities in an equal proportion.

Though the female literacy rate increased from 8.86 per cent in 1951 to 65.5 per cent in 2011, it is still considerably lower than male literacy. As per the 1991 Census, the female literacy rate was 39.42 per cent compared to 63.86 per cent for male. In 2011, the scenario changed. As per the 2011 census, female literacy rate rose up to 65.5 per cent and male literacy rate to 82.2 per cent. This shows that gap in male-female literacy rate narrowed from 24.4 per cent in 1991 to 16.7 per cent in 2011 (Fig. 1).

**Fig. 1: Growth of Literacy in India (in terms of percentage from the Year 1901-2011)**



**Source:** Government of India (2001a) and Government of India (2011): Provisional Population Totals Paper 1 of 2011 India Series 1, Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India

While India's economy booms, educational opportunities remain out of grasp for large number of rural poor, especially girls. The situation in rural India is even worse (46.1 per cent) against (72.9 per cent) urban India (Census, 2001). Moreover literacy rate for females in rural area is much lower than males (Table 1).

**Table 1: Literacy Rates by Sex and Region (1951-2001)**

Literacy Rate* (%)			
Year	Persons	Male	Female
1951 (5+ years)			
Rural	12.10	19.02	4.87
Urban	34.59	45.60	22.33
Total	18.33	27.16	8.86
1961 (5+ years)			
Rural	22.50	34.30	10.10
Urban	54.40	66.00	40.50
Total	28.30	40.40	15.35

1971 (5+ years)			
Rural	27.90	48.60	15.50
Urban	60.20	69.80	48.80
Total	34.45	45.96	21.97
1981 (7+ years)			
Rural	36.00	49.60	21.70
Urban	67.20	76.70	56.30
Total	43.57	56.38	29.76
1991 (7+ years)			
Rural	44.70	57.90	30.60
Urban	73.10	81.10	64.00
Total	52.21	64.13	39.29
2001(7+ years)			
Rural	59.40	71.40	46.70
Urban	80.30	86.70	73.20
Total	65.38	75.85	54.16
2011(7+ years)			
Rural	68.95	78.57	58.75
Urban	84.98	89.67	79.92
Total	74.4	82.14	65.46

\* (1) Literacy rates for 1951 refer to effective literacy rates and the break up of rural, urban and male-female components are crude literacy rates. (2) Literacy rates for 1981 exclude Assam whereas the 1991 literacy rates exclude Jammu and Kashmir where Census could not be conducted due to disturbed conditions. (3) Literacy rates for Census of 2001 exclude the entire Kuchchh district and three taluka of Rajkot district, one

taluka of Jamnagar district in Gujarat and the entire Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh where population enumeration of Census of 2001 could not be conducted due to natural calamities.

**Source:** Government of India (2001 a) and Census of India (2011)

The state-wise data also reflects that there are gender disparities in literacy

**Table 2: Literacy Rates State-wise (2011)**

S.No	State	Literacy Rate (2011 Census)	Male Literacy Rate (2011 Census)	Female Literacy Rate (2011 Census)
1	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	86.3%	90.1%	81.8%
2	Andhra Pradesh	67.7%	75.6%	59.7%
3	Arunachal Pradesh	67.0%	73.7%	59.6%
4	Assam	73.2%	78.8%	67.3%
5	Bihar	63.8%	73.5%	53.3%
6	Chandigarh	86.4%	90.5%	81.4%
7	Chattisgarh	71.0%	81.5%	60.6%
8	Dadar & Nagar Haveli	77.7%	86.5%	65.9%
9	Daman & Diu	87.1%	91.5%	79.6%
10	Delhi	86.3%	91.0%	80.9%
11	Goa	87.4%	92.8%	81.8%
12	Gujarat	79.3%	87.2%	70.7%
13	Haryana	76.6%	85.4%	66.8%
14	Himachal Pradesh	83.8%	90.8%	76.6%
15	Jammu and Kashmir	68.7%	78.3%	58.0%
16	Jharkhand	67.6%	78.5%	56.2%
17	Karnataka	75.6%	82.8%	68.1%
18	Kerala	93.9%	96.0%	92.0%
19	Lakshadweep	92.3%	96.1%	88.2%
20	Madhya Pradesh	70.6%	80.5%	60.0%
21	Maharashtra	82.9%	89.8%	75.5%
22	Manipur	79.8%	86.5%	73.2%
23	Meghalaya	75.5%	77.2%	73.8%
24	Mizoram	91.6%	93.7%	89.4%
25	Nagaland	80.1%	83.3%	76.7%
26	Orissa	73.5%	82.4%	64.4%

27	Puducherry	86.5%	92.1%	81.2%
28	Punjab	76.7%	81.5%	71.3%
29	Rajasthan	67.1%	80.5%	52.7%
30	Sikkim	82.2%	87.3%	76.4%
31	Tamil Nadu	80.3%	86.8%	73.9%
32	Tripura	87.8%	92.2%	83.1%
33	Uttar Pradesh	69.7%	79.2%	59.3%
34	Uttarakhand	79.6%	88.3%	70.7%
35	West Bengal	77.1%	82.7%	71.2%
-	INDIA	74.04%	82.14%	65.46%

**Source:** Census of India (2011)

This dismal situation has been stated in the various policy documents published by the Government of India from time to time. The Programme of Action (POA), 1992 in the context of National Policy on Education 1986 mentioned that “there are significant rural urban disparities among women”. The National Policy on Education (1986) admitted that the school would not reach all the children, particularly millions of girls and working children whose participation in the school system was thwarted by socio-economic conditions of life.

It is very difficult to achieve Universal Elementary Education (UEE) unless concrete efforts are made to reach out to the girl child. As quoted in POA: “Girls who cannot attend formal schools or have had to dropout will be provided educational opportunities through alternative schooling. The open school, distance education system and other innovative programmes will reach out to girls in rural remote areas and urban slums” (1.7.1, P.O.A.).

Availability of basic facilities in schools not only attracts more girl children to schools but also helps in improving retention rate. An assessment of the scenario in terms of basic facilities that facilitate enrolment and retention of girls also indicates that much more needs to be done in terms of factors such as provision of separate girls' toilet, female teachers. As per the DISE (District Information System for School Education) data about 50 per cent elementary schools in India during the year 2008-09 had separate toilets for girls and nearly about 44 per cent primary schools in India had girls toilet. The figures pertaining to enrolment of girls at primary stage (48.38 per cent) and upper primary stage (47.58 per cent) also indicate that the girls are lagging behind in enrolment. The percentage of female teachers (43.3 per cent in primary schools and 43.46 per cent in all elementary schools) also needs to be improved.

The direction of gender disparity in primary education can be indicated using Gender Parity Index. In a situation

of perfect equality between boys and girls, the value of GPI is 1, and 0 in case of highest disparity. The average of 35 states and UTs in 2008-09 (DISE data) indicates a Gender Parity Index (GPI) of 0.94 in primary classes and 0.93 in case of all elementary schools taken together. The analysis clearly indicates that boys outnumber girls both at the primary and upper primary level.

The positive link between women's education and social progress is a well-established one. As discussed earlier, in spite of policy statements by the Government of India from time to time, there are a number of factors that create hurdles in the progress of women's /girls education. In order to sustain interest and commitment in continued schooling of girls/women, open schooling provides a viable and workable solution to the

**Table 3: Selected Indicators Pertaining Girls Enrolment as per DISE Data (2008-09)**

S.No.	Indicators	Primary Schools	Upper Primary Schools	All Schools
1.	% Girls Enrolment ( Primary)	48.38	47.58	48.15
2.	% ST girls to ST Enrolment	48.50	46.45	48.01
3.	% SC girls to SC Enrolment	48.31	47.53	48.09
4.	% Female Teachers	43.30	35.82	43.46
5.	% Schools with Girl's Toilet	44.37	61.44	53.60
6.	Gender Parity Index (GPI)	0.94	0.91	0.93

\* **Note:** The term All Schools includes schools having classes from Class I to VIII

**Source:** Analytical Report, DISE 2008-09, NUEPA

### **Education of Girls through Open Schooling**

A popular model for girls/women's education in India is that of the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). In addition to this there are also State Open Schools. Eleven states have already got State Open Schools. These are located in Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal. There are 8 states namely Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Assam, Chattisgarh, Uttaranchal and Bihar which are in the process of setting up State Open Schools.

challenges of equity in educational provisions for girls and women. Some salient features of open schooling programmes that are addressed to the special needs of the girls/women are as follows:

### **Policy Regarding Entry to NIOS Courses**

The open schooling ensures access to education of the learners as it addresses the shortcomings of the traditional system in terms of its rigidity. The NIOS expects a minimum level of competence for entry into its courses. Any student who has passed primary school can enroll himself/herself in the Foundation Course or the Secondary

Level course. To enroll in the Senior Secondary course, however, a candidate must have a secondary pass certificate, to maintain equivalence with other examining bodies.

In NIOS, there are no rigid entry qualifications and no upper age limit for admission. It has a diverse student profile at the secondary stage having young and old learners ranging from 14 years to 89 years, distributed throughout the country. Flexibilities of the open learning system with regard to entrance policy makes possible for the girls/women engaged in household responsibilities to join NIOS programme at a time suitable to them. They have the freedom as well to discontinue their studies for a while to attend to socio-economic responsibilities. The NIOS provides them an opportunity to rejoin the course at a point where they had left it due to compulsions of life. As such, instead of leaving educational pursuits forever, Open Learning and Distance Education delivery system enables girls and women to pursue their educational efforts without disturbing normal rhythm of life and needs of the family. The open learning can benefit the family without taking the wife/mother away from the house to pursue her studies. Thus the open learning enables the mother to stay home with children and study as well. The strength of open learning system is that it allows women a bit of breathing space within a striffling situation of gender inequality.

There is yet another motivating factor that promotes girls/women's education. Many parents cannot afford

expenses on private cost of education of their children. Due to this, they have to make a choice as to whom they should send for education; for which they prefer the son, as he is seen as the future earning member of the family. To encourage greater participation of women/girls, the NIOS allows partial fee exemption to them for different levels of courses. In order to promote the involvement of women, the NIOS accepts the name of the mother as parent in the relevant column of the Learner's Admission Form.

### ***The Programme Focus***

Objectives of the programme, especially under the NIOS vocational and life enrichment stream, are to empower women with required knowledge, life skills, pre-vocational skills, vocational skills and attitudes for their sustainability. Broadly some of the significant aspects of NIOS programmes that accelerate girls/women's education are:

- extending the knowledge of recent advances in science and technology and skill oriented education to the large population of women/girls including those residing in remote and isolated villages;
- changing their mindset about their perceived role towards family, society and country, at large thereby improving their quality of life.

### ***Programme Dimensions***

NIOS through open learning and distance education delivery process has mounted a number of programmes.



It runs courses for out-of-school girls/ women as well as for other categories of personnel who are desirous of pursuing the basic education (Class III, V, and VIII)/ secondary/senior secondary level open school courses, general and vocational education courses. Open Basic Education courses cater to the special needs of girls in the age-group 6-14.

It also provides a course for adolescent girls and adult women, named, the *Paripurna Mahila* (Completely Empowered Women). This course covers vast range areas of women's empowerment, namely, legal literacy, health, nutrition, general awareness and the like. The major objectives of the courses are to equip, especially, rural women with better skills and enhance their knowledge so as to prepare them to face new challenges due to technological development. There are several subject areas in which the NIOS is working for

the betterment of the women. Some such subject areas are – *Jan Swasthaya* (public health), early childhood care and education, cutting and tailoring, beauty culture, computer applications and poultry farming. Because of the diversity of the courses offered and flexibility of the NIOS programme there has been a gradual increase in the number of NIOS learners and also of the female learners.

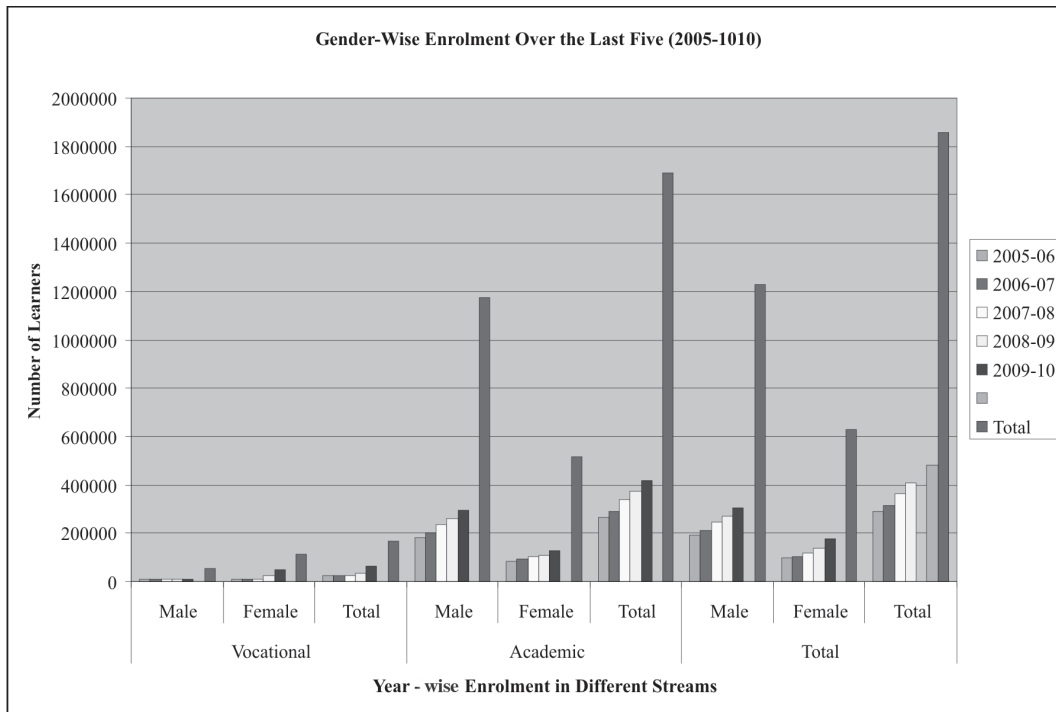
The curriculum content serves as a role model for students and plays an important role in breaking gender stereotypes. Gender specific knowledge is integrated in the curricula in all subjects. Also the course teams involve participation of women and men. Care is taken while presenting the graphics and pictures in the course material so that it is gender sensitive. As a result there has been a steady increase in enrolment of women in open schooling (Refer to Table 4 and Fig 2).

**Table 4: Gender-Wise Enrolment at NIOS during the Last Five Years (2005–2010)**

Year	Vocational			Academic			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2005–06	11186	11693	22879	182440	84586	267026	193626	96279	289905
2006–07	11329	10837	22166	199788	91195	290983	211117	102032	313149
2007–08	11558	12116	23674	235649	104693	340342	247207	116809	364016
2008–09	10450	25661	36111	261063	110562	371625	271513	136223	407736
2009–10	11511	50300	61811	294158	125544	419702	305669	175844	481513
Total	56034	110607	166641	1173098	516580	1689678	1229132	627187	1856319



**Fig. 2: Increase in Women Enrollment in Last Five Years (2005–2010)**



This basically is a comprehensive programme directed towards gender equity. It is directed at generating awareness among girls/women forging an urge for equity measures. Most often, women lag behind initiating enterprising activities, not because they lack ability, but because they do not possess the required skills and access to relevant information that can enable them to set-up their own enterprise. Components of entrepreneurship are inter-woven in the NIOS programmes. The courses seek to develop requisite attitudes and abilities, enterprise management, growth and sustenance of the creative entrepreneurship. The NIOS is taking steps to identify more such gender

sensitive courses that would promote women's empowerment. The enrolment in the courses also shows that some of the courses are distinctly popular among the female clientele.

In addition to this, the students can choose the subjects according to their own needs and interests. There is ample choice before the girls/women to select any combination of courses from among the given alternatives. The students can take up vocational subjects along with academic subjects. For example, a senior secondary student may choose play-centre management courses along with any three academic subjects and one language.

### **Nature of Courses and Course Structure**

The NIOS offers a wide spectrum of courses of general and continuing education for different categories of learners through distance education mode. It has worked out a course equivalent to Class III and V to enable the neo-literates to attain primary level competencies. These courses provide an avenue to the women/girls who had to drop-out due to various factors, such as, migration of parents/guardians to another village, death of a family members, etc. The other academic courses offered by the NIOS, such as, foundation course (equivalent to Class VIII), which serves as a bridge course to those joining secondary level programme (equivalent to ten years of schooling); and the secondary level programme which leads to senior secondary programme (equivalent to twelve years of schooling) provides a graded continuity to the female learners. The learners can take up subjects according to their preference/area of interest.

The NIOS in collaboration with Bihar Education Project has implemented the 'Hunar' scheme. 'Hunar', a scheme has turned out to be a huge success in Bihar with over 13,000 of them joining the programme. The scheme was jointly launched by the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development and Bihar Government to make women from minority communities' self-dependent. Under the scheme, started on an experimental basis in July 2008, women from minority communities are being trained in computers and other skills like weaving, knitting, and child and maternity care. A total of 1,37,68 Muslim

girls have been imparted skill training in courses like *Gram Sakhi*, Cutting, Tailoring and Dress Making, Basic Rural Technology, Jute Production, Bakery and Confectionery, Beauty Culture and Early Childhood Care and Education. Out of 1,37,68 girls, 11347 girls passed the examination and got certificate in respective trades. It is interesting to mention that not even one learner, dropped out of this programme. The success of the Hunar Project in Bihar encouraged NIOS to launch the project in Delhi also. It is very important to note that approximately 61 per cent of the Vocational admission is that of girls and women in the age group of 14-20 years.

Seeing the success of this project, the Government of Bihar offered NIOS to make it continuous for phase II and a target of 50,000 more girls of Muslim, SCs, STs and most backward community were targeted for the session 2010-11. About 45,298 students enrolled and 12,252 appeared in the examination held in July 2011. Apart from 298 accredited institutions (i.e., study centres) under Hunar phase I, 723 new study centres were accredited for running this programme. These 723 study centres were Model cluster schools, institutions and NGOs.

The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) started offering vocational education programmes through Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode in 1992. Courses in the broad areas of Agriculture, Engineering and Technology, Health and Paramedical, Home Science and Hospitality Management, Computer and Information Technology, Business and Commerce, and Teacher Training

are available. Vocational courses became quite popular among students, and enrolment increased sharply till 2002–03. In subsequent period, however, a declining trend in enrolment is observed. In order to bring out the underlying reasons of such a trend, the paper analyses enrolment data of NIOS for the period 1997–98 to 2009–10. It is found that share of vocational stream in total enrolment of NIOS is very low. Enrolment is concentrated in few states and vocational education is not popular in many states. Moreover, many vocational programmes have negligible enrolment and these programmes have become deadweight for NIOS. A positive feature, however, is that women outnumber men in admission to vocational programmes of NIOS.

The NSS Report (64th Round) (NSSO, 2010) surveyed the educational expenditure and participation in India for the period July 2007 to June 2008. It found that per capita expenditure for males in vocational education was Rs. 13,480 compared to Rs. 2,595 in general education and Rs. 32,594 in technical education. On the other hand, per capita expenditure for females in vocational education was Rs. 17,705 compared to Rs. 2,293 in general education and Rs. 31,111 in technical education. An implication of the above is that vocational education for females is more expensive compared to that for males. This is in sharp contrast to general education and technical education where per capita expenditure for females is cheaper than that for males. No such disadvantage is faced by female students in vocational courses of NIOS. The disincentive in terms of higher expenses of vocational

education in conventional mode works as an incentive for females to join NIOS. The bias against females in conventional mode explains to some extent why more females opt for vocational courses of NIOS.

**Table 5: Gender-wise Vocational Admission Trend**

Gender	2008–09	2009–10	2010–11
Boys	10450 (47%)	8562 (44.89%)	8902 (39.08%)
Girls	11893 (53%)	10511 (55.11%)	13877 (60.92%)

**Source:** Annual Report of NIOS, 2008-09, Annual Report of NIOS, 2009-10 & Annual Report of NIOS, 2010-11

### **Student Support Services**

Carefully designed self-instructional printed material, audio-video programmes, teleconferencing and personal contact programmes at the study centres give enormous potential to the open learning system as it provides the women/girl opportunity to learn at their own pace and place.

Realising that the distance education methodology is still new to the learners, the NIOS gives importance to the face-to-face instruction also. The Student Support Services are provided through the study centers. The study centers are located in formal schools, colleges; teacher's training institutions and non-government organisations with the capacity to provide academic support to the learners.

Lack of facilities and lack of accessibility are factors that affect education of girls in the rural areas. To send girls to far-off places for education is not economically viable and socially

unacceptable in such a context. The NIOS has been striving to identify good schools and vocational institutes in semi-urban, rural and remote parts of the country to bring more and more girls/women into its fold. Today, the National Institute of Open Schooling reaches out to women and girls through a network of about 4,102 study centres distributed all over the country.

One of the reasons why less number of rural parents are sending girls to schools is the co-educational status of the schools. Surprisingly this feeling exists as much in the urban areas as in rural areas. NIOS has sought a way out by having study centres for 'girls only' in areas where their strength is significant. These schools usually have lady teachers who can understand the problems of girl students better. It is because of these features that its coverage has been expanding. Classes are held on Saturdays and Sundays or evenings of working days. Some Study Centres have special timings for women. Sometimes classes are held in the afternoon when women are free from their domestic responsibilities. This has widened the scope for gender equity in access to educational opportunities to girls/women.

### ***Learner Evaluation***

In pursuance of its policy of learner-friendly approach, the National Institute of Open Schooling allows students to take examinations when they are ready. Examinations are held twice a year and students are free to take the examinations according to their convenience. This allows the girls/women to study at their own pace

and convenience. In addition to this, the NIOS has introduced a scheme of transfer of credits through which learners who have cleared one or two subjects from the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) but not qualified in the full course can seek admission in the NIOS and take the remaining subjects in the Secondary/Senior Secondary programmes.

The NIOS also introduced On-Demand Examination (ODES). This has opened up wider opportunities for appearing in the examination by parts as per the date and time suitable to the learner.

### **Future Concerns**

Through innovative thinking and experimentation, NIOS has already demonstrated that the rigid mould can be broken. The flexibility in timings and schedules for studies and provision of academic support that they invariably need are the factors that can prevent girl child from becoming workers by default, and the entry of older girls into the workforce can be delayed. But still poverty is a major impediment in girl's education and costs of education, as well as girls' contribution to work, remain serious issues to be considered. The present policy of the NIOS that aims at providing concessions to girl/ women candidate addresses to some extent the constraint of poverty in relation to education of the girl child. Where girls' work is concerned, it is important that the diversity of open schooling programme should address to generate sustainable livelihoods of the poor. So in that context it seems that the NIOS needs to widen its horizon by offering

more livelihoods-oriented courses, and also focussed on catering to girls from all walks of th life.

The NIOS has been alert to the needs of the self employed girls as in its vocational courses it has blended the elements of entrepreneurship, thereby making an attempt to prepare job-creators and not job seekers. The NIOS, as an Open School, furthermore, should find out what forms of self employment are most common amongst it students, and design vocational education and training that will increase their productivity and skills in that self-employment. This would help to create and improve livelihoods, not simply to train its learners in an abstract way in the hope that employment will open up. Through widening its course offerings further it is equally possible to improve livelihoods and reduce poverty by increasing the quality of self employment.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Education for women's equality is a vital component of overall strategy of securing equality and social justice in education. It is important that the emphasis should be on improving conditions for assimilation by enabling women to participate in the educational process.

Through open schooling the possibility of improvement in access and retention of female education is immense.

In view of the constraints faced by the girls/women, provision of open schooling facilities goes a long way in stepping up enrolment and retention. The open schooling has made remarkable efforts to widening access to education by reaching out to the women in remote rural areas.

A variety of variables appear to have an impact on learner experiences and subsequent response to open schooling- the structuring of the programme and its requirements, the flexibility, course material design- all independently and collectively influence the learners' enrolment in open schooling, and as a result, have been successful in helping us bridging the gap between the enrolment of male and female learners at school level. Open schooling programmes can significantly expand and improve educational opportunities, for women and girls as it "can address in a comprehensive manner the most important obstacles to girl's participation in education such as: lack of access to schools, poverty, inflexible schedules, irrelevant curricula, and lack of female teachers".

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