OPEN SCHOOLING SYSTEM THAT TOUCHES & CHANGES THE LIVES OF MILLIONS

The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), formerly known as National Open School (NOS), was established in November, 1989 as an autonomous organisation in pursuance of National Policy on Education, 1986 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India. NIOS is mandated to offer pre-degree courses up to senior secondary level as one of the national level board of the Govt. of India. It has also been providing a number of vocational, life enrichment and community-oriented courses linking education with livelihood. With more than 2.2million students on its roll in a given time, it is considered to be one of the largest open schooling systems in the world. Majority of its learners are school dropouts, youths from socio-economically disadvantaged sections and persons with disability, who have missed their first chance of formal education.

The National Skill Development Policy aims to empower all individuals through improved skills, knowledge and qualifications so that they have access to decent employment and enhance India's competitiveness in the global market. The policy focuses on creating opportunities for all to provide/acquire skills especially for youth, women and disadvantaged groups, promoting commitment by all stakeholders to skill development initiatives and most importantly developing a high quality of skille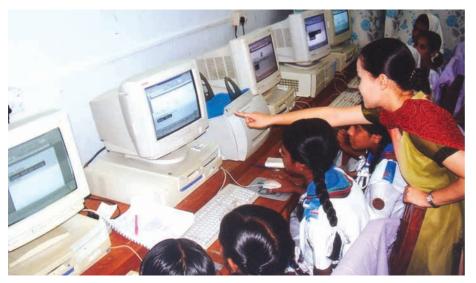d workforce/ entrepreneurs relevant to current and emerging employment market needs. The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) aims at development of flexible models of skills development and an innovative system of skill training with an objective of reaching out to a huge workforce and strengthen the government's skill development programme. At this juncture NIOS in collaboration with National Informatics Centre (NIC) has come up with a proposal for preparation of courseware on web design and development with specific emphasis on Guidelines for Indian Government Websites (GIGW). The NIOS has received the NCPEDP &

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MPHASIS universal design award for the year 2012 for its newly created website. It is worth mentioning that there is a shortage of technical manpower in the area of Web Development and Maintenance particularly with the knowledge of W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and GIGW.

The programmes on "Web Designing and Development" with specific emphasis on Guidelines for Indian Government Websites (GIGW) may play a significant role in enhancing skill of the aspiring youths

and preparing them for the expected opportunities particularly in the field of developing websites where the number of trained technical manpower is less. This collaborative programme is being developed based on the National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF) for IT - Sector Skills Council.

The objectives of this initiative are as follows:

1. To provide vertical and lateral mobility of learners, specifically those at senior secondary level in web designing programmes.

2. To develop program in accordance with guidelines for Indian Govt. Websites.

3. To prepare learners for web designing and development of GIGW compliant websites.

4. To create the contents for skill based curriculum by sharing knowledge/ faculty resources.

Three academic programmes are being developed under this collaboration following the modular approach in course delivery. The courses so designed are:

1. Web Designing and Development as an academic subject (8 credits) at Senior Secondary level. The course may be offered as one of the subjects in the core group for the newly introduced vocational stream on Computer and IT area at Senior Secondary (+2) level by NIOS.

2. A certificate programme on Web Designing and Development (16 credits) that will include 2 modules.

3. A diploma programme on Web Designing and Development (32 credits) that will include 4 modules.

The three programmes are presented in a modular structure so that there is option for students for upward mobility and credit transfer. A student can take admission to any of these programmes directly or can move from one programme to another in a gradual manner.

The minimum duration of the Certificate programme is six months and Diploma programme is one year. Thus a learner can appear in the public examination of NIOS after six months or one year as the case may be. The learner can complete this course within five years of registration by appearing in any public examination as per NIOS norms, which is unique to the course delivery of pacing the study as per convenience of the learner.

The NIOS courses are normally offered using multi-channel and multi-media delivery mode with a judicious mixture of:

■ Self-instructional print material

■ Face-to-face counselling

■ Hands-on Experience/Practical facilities at study centre (AVIs/AIs)

■ Audio/Video Multimedia Components

■ ICT-based instructional system

Central and State examination boards mostly restrict the choice of streams to Science, Commerce and Humanities. NIOS is in the process of adding a vocational stream which will widen the scope of studies and enable students to opt for job-oriented courses. Vertical mobility and lateral entry are also taken into consideration as students can opt for various unconventional combinations of subjects, as per their interest and choose for other diploma, specialization or degree courses.

There is a unique provision of lateral entry of learners to its specialised vocational courses. Learners who have completed 12th standard with the 8 Credits course on 'Web Designing & Development' are allowed the facility of credit transfer under the scheme. Thus they have to do additional 8 credits if admitted to Certificate Programme. Similarly they have to do 24 credits if admitted to Diploma Programme.

This programme would help in filling up the gap for developing and maintaining the accessible websites. The learners can also be absorbed in the private sector as web designer or as instructor. They can even set up their own business unit on website design, development, implementation and maintenance.