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Comprehensive Assessment and Evaluation in Blended Mode of Teaching

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Introduction :

The world is changing constantly and the various domains are also influenced by the change. There is no exemption even in the education domain. The evolution of the digital learning platforms has a huge impact in educational institutions and has eventually put the traditional methods in the back seat.

However, there are demands for both technology and traditional learning methods. As a result of this, the art of combining digital learning tools with more traditional classroom face to face teaching gave birth to the term "Blended Learning"(BL) is not a mere mix of online and face-to-face mode, but it refers to a well-planned combination of meaningful activities in both the modes. The blend demands consideration of several factors, mainly focusing on learning outcomes and the learner centered instructional environment.

Given the emergence of digital technologies and the emerging importance of leveraging technology for teaching-learning at all levels from school to higher education, the NEP 2020 recommends for use of blended models of learning. The NEP-2020 states that while promoting digital learning and education, the importance of face-to-face in-person learning is fully recognized. Accordingly, different effective models of blended learning will be identified for appropriate replication for different subjects.

The important features of Blended Learning (hereafter referred to as BL) environment are:

•Increased student engagement in learning.
- Enhanced teacher and student interaction.
- Responsibility for learning.
- Time management and flexibility
- Improved student learning outcomes
- Enhanced institutional reputation.
- More flexible teaching and learning environment
- More amenable for self and continuous learning
- Better opportunities for experiential learning

The advantages of BL for students include increased learning skills, greater access to information, improved satisfaction and learning outcomes, and opportunities both to learn with others and to teach others.
Recent research identifies the following key benefits of BL:

• Opportunity for collaboration at a distance: Individual students work together virtually in an intellectual Endeavour as a learning practice.

- Increased flexibility: Technology-enabled learning allows for learning anytime and anywhere, letting students learn without the barriers of time and location but with the possible support of in-person engagement. (Any speed, any mode, any language)
- Increased interaction: BL offers a platform to facilitate greater interactivity between students, as well as between students and teachers.
- Enhanced learning: Additional types of learning activities improve engagement and can help students achieve higher and more meaningful levels of learning.
- Learning to be virtual citizens: Learners practice the ability to project themselves socially and academically in an online community of inquiry. Digital learning skills are becoming essential to be a lifelong learner, and blended courses help learners master the skills for using a variety of technologies.
- Making BL Work Technology integration in itself is not necessarily BL.
- BL provides making learning resources and experiences repeatable, reliable and reproducible.

Role of Teachers in BL Environment :

BL shifts the teacher's role from knowledge provider to coach and mentor. This shift does not mean that teachers play a passive or less important role in students' education. Quite the contrary- with BL, teachers can have an even more profound influence and effect on students' learning. Traditionally, classroom instruction has largely been teacher-directed, top-down, and one-size-fits-all, with a bit of differentiation thrown in, but with BL, it now becomes more student-driven, bottom-up, and customized, with differentiation as a main feature. Much of this new learning dynamic is due to the enhanced role technology plays in instruction. BL provides an appropriate balance between online instructions, which offers the interactive, tech-based learning, individualized pacing, and privacy that keep students continuously engaged and motivated, and teacher-led instruction, which personalizes the learning experience and adds the human elements of encouragement, compassion, and caring guidance that only teachers can give. This new learning dynamic benefits students and teachers alike. Giving students permission and space to become active learners who gain knowledge directly lets them assume some control over their learning and helps them develop self-reliance. As more students are working independently, time opens up for teachers to provide face-to-face support and individualized instruction more frequently for more students, effectively improving differentiation.

Assessment and Evaluation in Blended Learning :

Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation :

Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation should be encouraged in universities and colleges. Focus of new national education policy is learner centered education systems. Summative evaluation will not suffice the need of testing all levels of learning outcomes. Modular curriculum demands assessment at several intervals during and after achievement of learning outcomes specified for every module. Cognitive skills such as logical thinking application of knowledge and skills, analysis and synthesis of concepts and rules demands evaluation strategies other than summative paper pencil tests. Innovative evaluation strategies are to be used by teachers during the semester. Increased weightage of internal evaluation should be encouraged by including innovative assessment and evaluation strategies.

Innovative trends in Evaluation and Assessment :

Out-of-box thinking about summative as well as formative evaluation is expected from the teacher implementing BL mode. The following paragraphs throw light on a few innovative strategies. The list is not exhaustive but mentions a few points with the expectation of continuous exploration of such strategies by the teachers.

Summative Evaluation Strategies

(1) Open book examination:

It is a right way to move away from the conventional approach of examination where remembering and reproducing is prime. In real functioning beyond formal education, life is all about open book examination. Hence in Higher Education system, we must prepare students for work life by making them acquainted with open book examinations. It will also facilitate better understanding and application of the knowledge with a better potential for its positive impact.

(2) Group examinations even for conventional theory papers:
Such an approach is followed some time for project and also laboratory assessments. But for theory type examinations it is generally not followed. The group examinations once introduced for theory papers can improve the average performance of a class as 27 students would be encouraged to share their knowledge with each other and also help them improve their general understanding.

(3) Spoken / Speaking examinations:
These types different approached can be introduced now with the support of new generation of technologies. They can make examination faster and easier and also can be helpful to students with different abilities.

(4) On demand examinations:
In most cases students are forced to write examination in a single go and collectively. However, with advent of new methods which are technology based and also blending of teaching-learning and examinations in new form, it would be a good approach to offer examination on demand to offer more flexibility and student centricity.

Formative Evaluation Strategies :

(1) ePortfolio :
ePortfolio is not only a compilation of a few best assignments, activities of a learner throughout the programme, but his/her reflections about the assignments, experience and challenges faced during the process of working on these assignments, overall approach, attitude, philosophy towards life as a learner and also his/her academic resume. ePortfolio is a comprehensive tool which becomes a mirror to ta learner for the world.

(2) Creative Products :
Innovative Pedagogies and relevant ICT tools enable learners to come out with creative products as an individual or group learning activities. These products are learning experiences in the beginning, but learners should always be given corrective feedback about their outputs. Once feedback is sought, learners need to be given chance to improve on their products and then can be considered for formative evaluation. e.g. preliminary concept-map can be revised after discussion of the topic, summarization and feedback. Revised concept-map can be assessed.

One creative/collaborative activity may then be led towards the another product which can be an assessment activity. e.g. Group or individual presentations by self-learning would be a learning activity and not an assessment activity. (Many teachers make mistake of giving marks to the first presentations made by learners after self-study). Once teacher provided corrective feedback during such presentations, learners can be expected to revise the same presentations, add a small write-up /infograph /video to it and submit as an assignment.

Creative assignments such as digital stories, Cartoon strips, drama scripts, eNewsletter, eMagazine, Recorded interviews of stakeholders, Case studies, etc. can be used for formative assessment.

(3) Classroom/Online Quizzes :
Though paper-pencil tests, over-use of question-answers may be discouraged for formative assessments, a few ICT tools for quizzes and games can be used eventually for formative assessment.

(4)Use of AI tools for Proctoring as well as assessments:
During the Covid time, many exams were forced to be conducted in an online mode. These were supported by variety of tools which came into being in recent times and were based on proctoring through Artificial Intelligence tools. However, AI as technology can be used for many more assessments like, attention levels, speed of learning, level of learning etc. Hence new tools should be experimented with for examinations and assessments.

Assessment and Evaluation in Blended Learning:
Continuous assessment and evaluation play a major role in a learning process. Students can be informed about their performance in online assignments and quizzes through technology. They may be given constant access to their online reports for them to monitor their growth over the time against their individual learning goals.

There should be good means to assess the performance of students. Well defined tools to assess the student's growth and accomplishments should be used. Objectivity and standardization should gain significance. This will also encourage students to participate in self-assessment and peer assessment activities. The minimum or suggestive requirements for a University / College / Institution are indicated in table given below:

Table
Essential Guidelines for Evaluation in IPSIT

Aspects	Minimum Standards	Desirable Standards
1. Online assessment	Online assessment strategies should be introduced at least to some extent.	Online assessment strategies should be used at least partially for all subjects.
2. Product and process evaluation	- Analysis, Application and Create level learning outcomes should be defined for all subjects under BL. These higher level outcomes should be evaluated through internal evaluation. Process and product evaluation should be encouraged. - At least 2 rubrics per course of 3-4 credit should be designed for subjects under BL Process evaluation through grading of synchronous groupchats, discussion forum posts, collaborative infographs, etc. can be achieved. Grading of concept-maps, mindmaps, stories, infographs, etc. - Grading of concept-maps, mind maps, stories, infographs, etc. Rubrics should be developed for all courses. All possible cognitive learning processes and creative products to be evaluated. 40 created by students can be used for product evaluation.	Rubrics should be developed for all courses. All possible cognitive learning processes and creative products to be evaluated
3. Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE)	Modes of CCE should be innovative, learner-centered and competency-based.	Necessary evaluation systems should be in place and all evidences of internal evaluations to be maintained. Paper-pencil tests, unit-end exams to be completely discouraged for CCE. Instead, other modes of evaluation should be used.
4. Open Book/Closed Book	Both models to be followed selectively for courses under BL.	Both models to be followed selectively for all courses under BL.
5. Group Examinations and Evaluation	At least one group-work activity should be evaluated per course of 3-4 credit under BL.	Group-work evaluation and Group Examinations should be encouraged for all subjects
6. Viva Voce	Viva-voce for at least 70% experiments, group-projects should be mandatory	Viva-voce for all experiments, research projects, group projects should be mandatory
7. Project Presentations	Presentations to be planned against evaluation of projects and dissertations at least 2 times per course.	Presentations to be planned for evaluation of projects and dissertations at least 3-4 times per course. Evaluation

		Rubrics to be developed for such presentations.
8. ePortfolio	ePortfolio in any easiest form should be encouraged for at least one subject, preferably for the professional subject.	ePortfolio should be encouraged for all students.

Best Practices :

(1) IITE,Gandhinagar has already applied Open Book exam, Online Viva Voce and portfolio last year for B.Ed.Course due to CORONA Pandemic. Which is very Successful.

(2) IITE,Gandhinagar organized open book exam for B.Ed. students and successfully declared result.

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