



National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and Blended Learning

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Abstract:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India encourages the implementation of blended learning (BL) approaches, as a way to enhance quality of education which combine routine and traditional classroom teaching with online learning, digital resources, and technology-enabled education system. Blended learning (BL) has the potential to increase the quality of education by making learning more personalized, interactive, and accessible. However, it also comes with its set of challenges and opportunities like infrastructure, teacher training, and teacher availability, etc.

Keywords: *New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Blended Learning (BL), Prospects, Challenges.*

Introduction:

The world is changing constantly and the various domains are also influenced by the change. There is no exemption even in the education area. Also in India, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has laid the foundation for the employment of blended learning models at each and every possible stage of learning and teaching i.e., schools as well as higher education institutions across the country. 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'.

Blended learning is a key component of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which advocates for integrating traditional face-to-face instruction with digital resources and online learning to create a more effective and flexible educational experience. This approach aims to improve learning outcomes by allowing for personalized learning, increased accessibility to resources like the DIKSHA and SWAYAM platforms, and a greater focus on conceptual understanding, critical thinking, and skills development. The NEP 2020 also supports the creation of a National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) to facilitate the use of technology in education and emphasizes the need for teacher training to effectively implement blended learning.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the concept of blended learning with reference to NEP 2020.
2. To study the key aspects of blended learning under NEP 2020.
3. To study the prospects of blended learning.

4. To study the challenges of blended learning.

Methodology

This study is a descriptive one. As per the nature of the study descriptive method is suitable for the current study. To achieve the goal, secondary data was collected from a wide range of sources, such as papers, journals, and the official website of the Indian government.

Blended Learning

To apply technology in teaching-learning process at all levels from school to higher education, the NEP 2020 recommends for use of blended models of 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. It is an educational approach that combines traditional classroom teaching with online learning activities. In a blended learning environment, students engage in a mix of face-to-face instruction and digital learning experiences. This model integrates the best of both traditional and online learning methods, allowing students to benefit from the structure and social interaction of a physical classroom, as well as the flexibility and personalized learning opportunities offered by online resources. The blend demands consideration of several factors, mainly focusing on learning outcomes and the learner-centered instructional environment. This approach utilizes a variety of learning styles, including online discussion forums, video conferencing, webinars, and other interactive learning tools. BL can be used in a variety of educational settings, such as primary and secondary schools, universities, and professional training. It can also be used to supplement traditional teaching methods. Blended learning can be used to increase student engagement and motivation, as well as to create a more personalized learning experience. It can also be used to create a more efficient learning environment by reducing the need for physical infrastructure and reducing the amount of time needed for instruction.

The important features of blended learning 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 and 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.

Key aspects of blended learning under NEP 2020:

Integration of technology: The policy encourages the use of technology in both classroom teaching and online platforms to provide a richer learning experience.

Personalized and flexible learning: Blended learning allows students to learn at their own pace and for teachers to tailor instruction to individual needs, leading to more personalized learning opportunities.

Accessibility to resources: Digital platforms like DIKSHA and SWAYAM provide access to high-quality educational content, even for students in remote areas.

Focus on higher-order skills: By shifting away from rote memorization, blended learning supports the NEP's goal of emphasizing conceptual understanding, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving.

Teacher development: The successful implementation of blended learning requires training and equipping teachers with the skills to effectively use technology and blend different teaching methods.

Holistic development: Blended learning is part of the NEP 2020's broader vision for a holistic education that includes academic, extracurricular, and vocational streams, without hard separations between them.

Role of Teachers in Blended Learning 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. BL provides teachers with a fuller, more accurate picture of how each student is doing. BL yields more frequent and more personal teacher interaction with individual students' teachers have the opportunity to deepen and strengthen student/teacher relationships. The trust that comes with close relationships can give teachers insights into students' personal struggles and needs -insights which empower teachers to comfort and coach students through challenges that often serve as obstacles to learning. In summary, BL combines the best aspects of online learning with the best aspects of direct instruction, helping teachers easily manage to do much more to meet student needs without adding to an already weighty workload.

Role of a Learner in the Blended Learning Environment

Increase student interest –When technology is integrated into school lessons, learners are more likely to be interested in, focused on, and excited about the subjects they are studying.

Keep students focused for longer - The use of computers to look up information & data is a tremendous lifesaver, combined with access to resources such as the internet to conduct research. This engagement and interaction with the resources keeps students focused for longer periods than they would be with books or paper resources, this engagement also helps develop learning through exploration and research.

Provides student autonomy - The use of eLearning materials increases a student's ability to set appropriate learning goals and take charge of his or her own learning, which develops an ability that will be translatable across all subjects.

Instill a disposition of self-advocacy - Students become self-driven and responsible, tracking their individual achievements, which helps develop the ability to find the resources or get the help they need, self-advocating so they can reach their goals.

Promote student ownership - BL instills a sense of 'student ownership over learning' which can be a powerful force propelling the learning, it's this feeling of responsibility that helps the feeling of ownership.

Allow instant diagnostic information and student feedback - The ability to rapidly analyze, review and give feedback to student work, gives the teacher the ability to tailor his teaching methods and feedback for each student while improving time efficiency.

Enables students to learn at their own pace - Due to the flexibility of BL and the ability to access internet resources allows students to learn at their own pace, meaning a teacher can help speed up the learning process or give more advanced resources if necessary.

Prepares students for the future - BL offers a multitude of real-world skills that directly translate into life skills, from: Research skills, Self-learning, Self engagement, helps to develop a 'self-driving force', Better decision making, offers a larger sense of responsibility, Computer literacy.

Opportunities of Blended Learning according to NEP 2020

Increased Access - Blended learning creates a bridge between physical classrooms and virtual classrooms, allowing students to access learning materials from anywhere, anytime. This makes education more accessible to students, especially those who lack resources or are geographically isolated.

Improved Learning Outcomes - Blended learning helps students retain more information, leading to improved learning outcomes. It also encourages critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving skills.

Customized Learning - Blended learning allows teachers to tailor their instruction to the individual needs of each student. This helps to maximize learning potential.

Flexibility - Blended learning gives students the flexibility to learn at their own pace, allowing them to progress at their own speed.

Personalized Learning - Blended learning allows for personalized learning paths, where students can progress at their own pace. Adaptive learning platforms can cater to individual learning needs and styles.

Resource Accessibility- Digital platforms provide access to a vast array of educational resources, including videos, simulations, and interactive lessons, enhancing the learning experience.

Teacher Collaboration - Blended learning encourages collaboration among teachers. They can share best practices, resources, and innovative teaching methods, leading to professional growth.

Parental Involvement - Technology enables better communication between teachers and parents. Parents can actively participate in their child's learning process, staying informed about their progress and areas needing improvement.

Lifelong Learning - Blended learning fosters a culture of lifelong learning. Adults and working professionals can access education conveniently, enhancing their skills and knowledge.

Innovation and Creativity - Blended learning encourages the use of multimedia and interactive tools, fostering creativity and innovative thinking among students and teachers alike.

Challenges of Blended Learning according to NEP 2020

Digital Divide - One of the most significant challenges is the unequal access to digital devices and the internet. Many students, especially in rural areas, lack access to necessary technology, making it difficult for them to participate in online learning.

Teacher Training - Implementing blended learning requires teachers to be proficient in using technology effectively. Proper training and professional development are essential to ensure that teachers can integrate digital tools seamlessly into their teaching methods.

Content Quality - Ensuring the quality and relevance of digital content is crucial. There is a need for standardized, high-quality educational materials that align with the curriculum and cater to diverse learning styles.

Data Security and Privacy - With the increased use of online platforms, ensuring the security and privacy of student data becomes a concern. Schools and institutions need to implement robust data protection policies and practices.

Engagement and Motivation - Keeping students engaged and motivated in an online environment can be challenging. Schools need to explore innovative methods to maintain student interest and participation.

Assessment and Evaluation - Designing fair and effective assessments for online and offline components is crucial. Finding methods to prevent cheating and plagiarism in an online setup is a challenge that needs to be addressed.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, while blended learning under the NEP 2020 presents challenges related to accessibility, teacher training, and data security, it also offers opportunities for personalized learning, resource accessibility, and fostering a culture of innovation and collaboration. Addressing the challenges effectively can help harness the full potential of blended learning in transforming the education landscape in India.

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