



# Working towards blended learning in India

A cost-effective learning process in a time-bound manner is the essence of Digital India initiative in higher education

With the emergence of new technologies every year, our perception of the world around us has changed. Digital technological interventions have transformed traditional face-to-face classroom teaching and learning ambience. The growth of ICT infrastructure, tools and devices like reliable internet connectivity, mobile phones, laptops have made possible online delivery of high-quality learning material anywhere, anytime, at any location, in any language. Online education offers the potential of unrestricted access to quality education.

The concept note rolled out by the University Grants Commission on May 20, 2021 to introduce blended mode of teaching and learning in universities and colleges, where up to 40 per cent of any course can be



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taught in online mode and rest 60 per cent Offline, is a welcome step as this will be more effective in increasing learning skills of students and providing them greater access to quality education.

Learning is a dynamic process that changes with time, keeping pace with technological developments. India has been the center of learning for many thousands of years and in ancient India in 'gurukul' format, oral teaching and memorizing texts followed by meditation were foundations of teaching-and-learning process. With the passage of time schools, colleges and present-day universities were established where education is provided conventionally in chalk-talk face-to-face interaction mode.

The Covid-19 pandemic has given us the opportunity to

become digital literate, to organize webinars, to get accustomed with digital learning platforms and to realize the power of digital devices for imparting online education. Online learning ensures greater participation of teachers and students in the overall process of learning.

Blended learning involves a combination of classroom teaching and online learning. It is now possible to craft student-centric quality teaching materials involving modern multimedia tools. Electronic lectures, unlike face-to-face teaching, can be perpetually accessed by learners and that helps in better understanding and memorization of concepts. With skilful use of ICT, content-rich, interactive lessons can be developed that excite learners and transform the learning environment, making it stu-



dent-centered and where the teacher becomes the facilitator rather than knowledge provider.

With blended learning a teacher can accurately assess the knowledge a student has gained and can provide him e-materials to explain concepts more efficiently. Attractive e-lessons can create greater interest in learners. Blended learning mode opens the possibility of a greater teacher-student interaction, better empowering the

student with knowledge and skills compared to either modes of face-to-face or online learning. Teachers and students remain more engaged with each other; students get more opportunity to interact with the teachers to get deeper knowledge.

In blended mode teachers get more time for personal interaction with students as online delivery of learning materials saves face-to-face classroom teaching hours, which can be utilized for learner-centric activities, better interaction and mentoring. The mix of teaching approaches helps more students to grasp subjects easily. This will reduce stress on slow learners who may find face-to-face classroom teaching more challenging. Fast learners will get more satisfaction due to content-rich e-materials.

When students get used to

working on online tools, they can collaborate and communicate amongst themselves in a much better way. Students become more responsible and attentive in online learning, as they have to meet the deadlines for timely completion of various assignments online. This generates confidence and autonomy in the students.

The policy document on education, NEP-2020, has also stressed the need for the extensive use of technology in teaching to enhance learning in students, to achieve the target of 100 per cent literacy and address societal challenges. The policy envisages developing digital infrastructure and to empower teachers to create quality e-learning materials. Importantly, blended learning will help to pursue the objectives of NEP-2020 in internationalising indigenous knowl-

edge through digitized course contents.

In a nutshell, blended learning will help learners to learn at their own pace and also inculcate the spirit of collaboration enabling participants to work together and engage in discussion. The urge for learning will drive the participant towards scientific accomplishment of their syllabus and enable them to create new knowledge. As such blended learning is a journey towards 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' through a collaborative approach between learners and teachers. Such learning also enables students to promote ownership of learning. A cost-effective learning process in a time bound manner is the need of the hour and blended learning stands out as the flag bearer of Digital India initiative in higher education.