

\* Position paper3 - - Online Education\*- *AIPSN Higher Education Desk*

Introductory note:

In para 10 of NEP( National Education Policy) '2020, under Institutional Restructuring and Consolidation head, the target of achieving 50% of GER( Gross Enrollment Ratio) in HEIs( Higher Education Institutions) upto 2035 has been set. With this end in view ODL(Open & Distance Learning) and online teaching with Certificate, Diploma and Degree courses have been envisioned though ODL mode is in practice in our country for students other than regular Day Scholars for the last four decades. National Open School and IGNOU( Indra Gandhi National Open University) are its best examples. Online teaching practices are rather new in our country and came in prominence during Pandemic Covid'19 , popularly known as Corona, and related restrictions with lockdowns. It also advocated for preferring Blended mode of teaching- learning practices over Offline classrooms. The aim was to achieve Global Citizenship Education and to mitigate the pressure and demand of market forces, Edu.Tech companies being in the centre.

In para 23 of NEP'2020 there is much stress on Technology Use and Integration for which NETF( National Education and Technical Forum) was visualised which will facilitate the digitisation of education through use of technology in teaching- learning process and its integration with the education system.

In para 24 of NEP'2020 , provision for Online and Digital Education, ensuring equitable use of technology, has been made. Even though the intent may appear pious, it's bereft with so many flaws and practical problems of implementation that require critical scrutiny and more practical approach in tune with the purpose of eradicating existing systematic structural divides in our education system.

UGC(University Grants Commission) guidelines for Online Education:

Nageshwar Rao committee led by the vice-chancellor of IGNOU and Kuhad committee were separately constituted to explore and suggest the ways for online education and examination / evaluation respectively.

Nageshwar Rao Committee came with suggestions , a few of them are-

- expansion of online education
- Online teaching for existing 20% courses to be raised to 40%
- Universities scoring 3.01 or more in NAAC( National Assessment and Accreditation Council), achieving rank up to 100 by NIRF( National Institutional Ranking Framework) at least once for two years, and UGC approved government- run open university, will be allowed to offer courses entirely online.
- courses related to Nursing, Law, Pharmacy, Engineering, Dentistry, Medicine, Architecture, have been kept aside from the bounds of online courses.

Kuhad Committee came out with suggestions, a few of which are-  
 - encouragement for online examination, Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ) and open- book examination.

- to leave to the institutions whether they would like to conduct their examinations online.
- to accord 50% weightage of marks from internal and continuous evaluation and 50% on the basis of performance for previous semester examinations.

On the basis of suggestions made by above committees UGC formulated " Online Course Regulation' 2018". Its basic features are-

- UGC gave " in- principle approval " to the country's 1000 universities to offer online upto 40% of any of courses.
- in addition 200 odd ones out of them were also given " in- principle approval" to conduct entire degree courses online.
- admission process to be made completely digitalised
- mid- term examinations could be conducted both online or offline
- the marking system is suggested to provide weightage based on the marks obtained in the mid- term and sessional tutorials, assignment examinations and projects
- mode of teaching will be through e- lectures and e- contents.

Here comes the role and compulsory necessity of OER( open education resources) which comprise learning materials supporting legal and free copying, usage, adaption and sharing.

Some of platforms for sharing OER are-

-MOOCs: Massive Open Online Courses

- SwAYAM

Other platforms are Coursera & its various forms , Byjus and many others.

Their business has rapidly increased like anything during pandemic. Moreover, platforms through web application for students assessment and feedback are also available in market in large number. All these have created artificial demand for their products with exorbitant price through aggressive advertisement. Over all impact has been further divide in education system adding digital divide to already existing structural, social, economic, geographical and gender divide. The reality is substantiated by the reports of several surveys conducted on access, quality, equity and relevance of online education by Azim Premjee University group, Jean D'rez, BGVS( Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti) and many others.

Some of basic constraints are in the form of good ambience at home, power back up, internet connectivity, availability of devices and proper training to use it and the cost involved in the process. Regional imbalances are also there where Kerala and Himachal Pradesh are on top and Bihar and Jharkhand are at bottom.

### **Blended Mode of Teaching and learning:**

As per NEP'2020, for transformation of education , with the objective to meet the need of country, market and society at large in the age of ICT( Information and Communication Technology), blended mode of teaching and learning is better alternative and its adoption is the demand of the time.

As per draft regulation for Blended Mode of Teaching and Learning issued by UGC, BL( Blended learning) is not mere a mix of online and face to face mode, but it refers to a well planned combination of meaningful activities in both the mode. It shifts the teacher's role from knowledge provider to coach and mentor. It's an instructional methodology, a teaching and learning approach that combines face to face classroom methods with computer mediated activities to deliver instructions.

There are many approaches and mediums which come to help in BL. A few if them may be summarised as-

- Virtual lab

- AI( Artificial Intelligence) & Robotics
- Google Classroom
- IBL( Internet based learning)
- Project based learning
- Satellite based TV channel
- Online Assessment

Adoption of BL in different category of universities( Central, State, Private, Deemed) are at variance. Private universities have more resources in the form of very high fee in comparison to Central and State universities and so are in better position for BL, then come Central Universities and State Universities lag far behind resulting in aggravating structural divide. So, it doesn't provide level ground for building capacity, competency and efficiency of students.

PSM( People's Science Movement) perspective:

- Online education can't be substitute for Classroom teaching as there are many gaps at the level of infrastructural facilities, training to teachers and existing ecosystem of education system.
- A comprehensive planning and its execution at grassroot level is required before switching over to BL. However it may be initiated in selected institutions as pilot project to assess its impact in enhancing critical thinking, scientific enquiry, analysis and problem solving capacity of students.
  - Use of technology in teaching- learning and research process be encouraged as additional inputs and tools.
- Paradigm shift in education can be addressed through coexistence of classroom system and BL.
- The education policy be in the interest of students and public education, not to serve the motive and interest of EduTech companies.
- Public HEIs must be equipped with modern equipment and gadgets at par with global standard to maintain standard and quality education.
- Corporatisation of education must be arrested with public and government intervention.
- Use of ICT in education be student and teacher oriented, not driven by market force.

Our education system has not come to age to adopt market driven online education system. Experience during lockdown due to Covid'19 are neither encouraging nor fruitful.

\* Dr. Ali Imam Khan \*