



## A SWOT ANALYSIS OF BLENDED LEARNING IN ACHIEVING THE GOALS OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Education, vital for societal advancement, has evolved in response to changing needs, learner expectations, technological expansion, and the implementation of New Education Policy (NEP)-2020 that is aimed towards global competitiveness in the Indian education system. Additionally, Covid-19 pandemic expedited India's digital transformation, propelling blended learning into prominence, offering huge scope in accomplishing NEP-2020 goals. This paper critically reviewed existing literature to assess the effectiveness of blended learning vis-à-vis NEP-2020's vision. A SWOT analysis was performed to identify its potential as a facilitator or barrier to NEP-2020 objectives. Additionally, the paper explored opportunities, essential guidelines and lessons learned to ensure that blended learning serves as an enabler in attaining the NEP-2020 aspirations. Understanding the benefits and hurdles of blended learning, would empower policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to make informed decisions regarding its integration into the education system for the successful execution of NEP-2020, leading to transformation of the educational landscape in India.*

**Keywords:** National education policy (NEP): 2020, Blended learning, SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat) analysis.



## INTRODUCTION

The Indian education system, rooted in the ancient Gurukul traditions and influenced by colonial legacies, has evolved into a globally competitive, digitally self-sufficient system. Driven by changing needs, technological development, emergence of new policies, and prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, our education system has undergone huge transmutation. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the introduction of the National Education Policy-2020, aims to address 21<sup>st</sup> century needs, emphasizing on access, equity, and inclusivity, while promoting a dynamic knowledge society. NEP-2020 encourages the extensive use of technology in all facets of education, along with integrating India's rich culture, values, and traditions. Therefore, blending online education with experiential and activity-based learning (p. 59 of NEP-2020 draft), by integrating quality online resources with the prevailing higher education institutions' curriculum. (Gulati et al.,2023) also investigated that there is an increase in the online trends among the college students for educational resources. Meantime, amidst the COVID-19 crisis, blended learning emerged as the preferred model for sustainable education. Blended learning (BL)that combines traditional face-to-face teaching with online computer-mediated instructions (Graham, 2006), is considered as the "new normal" in education (Norberg et. al.,2011). BL offers a mix of offline and online learning, providing wide range of learning methods and modes (Bakar, 2021). There are various definitions of blended learning by many scholars, but the major concept acknowledged is the integration of virtual and physical environments in learning. However, its success depends on effective instructional design and pedagogical approaches (Luca, 2006). King and McSporrان (2005) emphasized the need to consider the strengths and limitations of different methods when blending them, providing a framework for effective implementation.



NEP-2020 advocates a student-centric education where learners can take any subject combinations and can also have multiple entry and exit points in their academic career. In view of this, blended learning comes out as a game-changer by allowing students to design and seamlessly steer their own learning according to their choice. Recognizing its benefits, the University Grants Commission mandated a 40:60 ratio of online and offline learning for higher education institutions. Ruling out a predominant screen-based education and accepting the essential social, affective, and psychomotor aspects of learning, BL is gaining huge popularity worldwide. While many articles have discussed the incorporation of blended learning in education, a comprehensive review is still missing on the potential of this learning approach aligned with the NEP-2020 goals, which can establish a theoretical foundation for subsequent empirical studies. Such an overview based on secondary research evidence, can provide an in-depth analysis of blended learning's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to education, in short by SWOT analysis, a tool used since 1950's for strategic planning in organisations (Benzaghta et al., 2021), which is extensively used in different fields including education.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Blended Learning as an enabler towards achieving NEP-2020 aspirations.***

Issues such as a lack of trained teachers, educational resources, facilities, and high dropout rates plague education systems globally (UNESCO, 2002). Addressing the issues, NEP-2020 uptakes Quality, Affordability, Equity, Access, and Accountability in education as the immediate challenges that needs to be fixed. Gauging the needs, blended learning has gained popularity in universities worldwide for raising the bar of education, increasing pass rates, reducing learning cost, being



flexible and overcoming geographical barriers (Kumar et al., 2021). Even teachers and students are positive towards employing blended learning approaches in their teaching (Saboowala & Mishra, 2021).

**Quality Education:** Quality education for all is a major concern in India. Quality management concerns apply to both quality principles as well as quality management methods (Mukhopadhyay, 2001, p. 14). Numerous studies and educators worldwide have acknowledged that blended learning is highly effective in increasing students' achievement score in all levels of education and courses (Kundu et al., 2021; López-Pérez et al., 2011; Balakrishnan et al., 2021, Garnham & Kaleta, 2002), indicating improve in the quality of education (Twigg, 2003). Blended learning also increases students' motivation and satisfaction (Ranjan, 2020; Means et al., 2013). Further, being conducted in a collaborative setting it promises to adhere to our cultural, ethical, and social context (Bansal, 2014). The in-person component of blended learning promotes humanistic features like enhancing feeling of community among students and through adequate use of the institution infrastructure (Rovai & Jordan, 2004; Dziuban and Moskal, 2001) collectively improves the quality of education.

**Accessibility:** Due to the challenges posed by a large population, traditional education systems struggle to reach everyone, with improper infrastructure, socio-economic, linguistic, and physical barriers (Bhattacharya and Sharma, 2007) hindering access to education. Blended learning promises lucrative opportunity for all types of students, irrespective of their time, geographical area, and situation (Horn & Staker, 2015). Additionally, it presents a significant opportunity for adult learners to pursue higher education (Rovai & Jordan, 2004) without hampering their daily life.



**Affordability:** Blended learning is cost-effective (Twigg, 2003; Kennedy, 2021), and successful in reducing drop-out rates (López-Pérez et al., 2011; Dziuban et al., 2018). In such mixed learning environment, students get the freedom to personalize their learning pace and path based on their interests and needs (Babaeva and Khasanova, 2020). Being a tailor-made approach it gives utmost importance to students' needs and convenience, and teachers can leverage this approach according to their needs (Mukherjee, 2024).

**Equity and Inclusivity:** Blended learning fosters autonomy and equality among students (Gülbahar & Madran, 2019), but careful implementation and designing are crucial to ensure quality education regardless of background. In inclusive classrooms, face-to-face interaction with the special educators along with access to virtual resources, enhances learning outcomes (Jennifer Hall Rivera, 2017). Blended learning's scaffolding capabilities and ability to reduce absenteeism in special education classes (McCown, 2014; Keramidis, 2012), make it adaptable for special students. Despite its potential to promote inclusivity in education, challenges like lack of digital literacy among students (Chen, 2010), technical issues (McCown, 2014) and insufficient training of special education teachers in blended instructional models remain barriers to its successful implementation. However, inclusive education teachers show favourable attitude and willingness towards adopting blended learning practices in inclusive classrooms (Claudio, 2023).

**Challenges for blended learning:** Availability of online resources, efficiently trained teachers (Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003), organisational readiness, motivated faculties, along with proper feedback channels (Tabor, 2007) play crucial role in the proper enactment of blended learning



courses. Brown, (2016) in his study reported that while using online technology for instruction, teachers and students are facing difficulties such as technological anxiety, complexity, and illiteracy. But despite the teachers' lack of preparation, they are eager to include this learning style in their lessons (Kundu et. al., 2014). Due to inadequate undergraduate education in this field, all participants acknowledged lack of comprehension of the blended learning models and application processes (Bursa, 2003).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study is Qualitative descriptive in nature. The researcher consulted online articles and journals available in Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar, and ResearchGate as the literature source and the findings focused solely on blended learning, its challenges, achievements, and potentialities aligned with NEP-2020 recommendations. The following research questions forms the framework of the study:

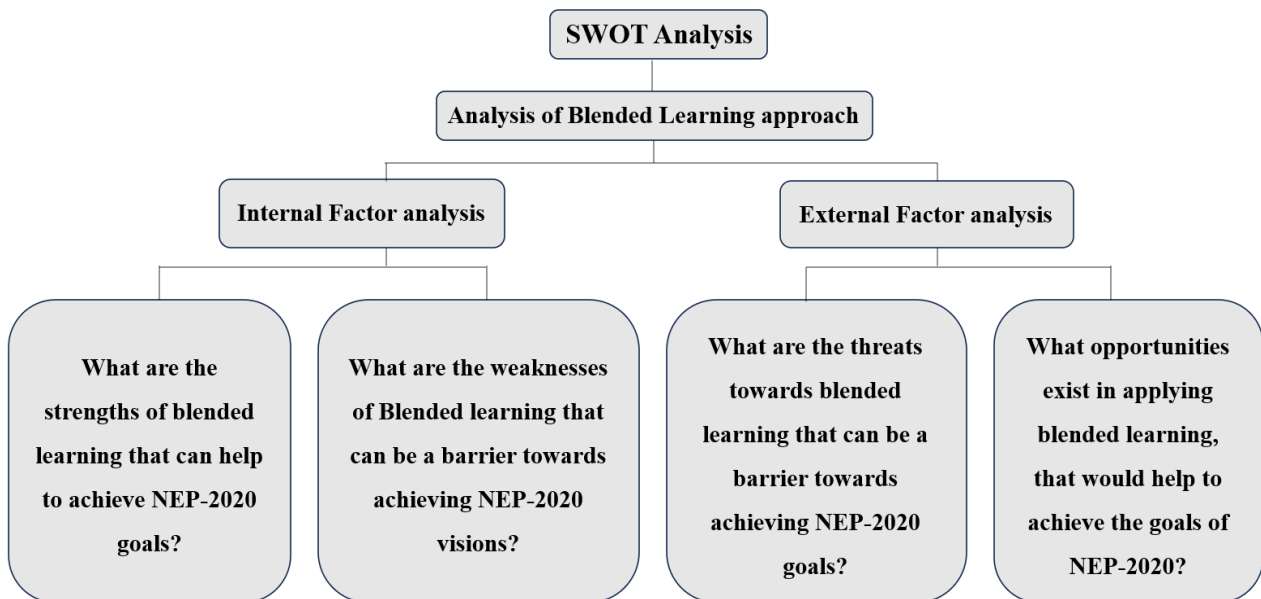


Figure 1: Research questions towards SWOT analysis of blended learning

## SWOT ANALYSIS OF BLENDED LEARNING

The assessment of literature provides the following summary of the (strengths, weaknesses) internal and external factors (opportunities, threats) of blended learning that aligns with the visions of NEP-2020.

**Strengths-** The strength portrays the advantages of blended learning like being more efficient and focused as contrast to either pure traditional or the pure online learning mode (Singh, 2003), thus creating a robust educational process, promoting active engagement by discarding passive methodologies. It enables ubiquitous access to education, resulting in significant time and cost savings while concurrently reducing transport expenses. Furthermore, it facilitates enhanced learning retention through accessible recordings, enhances ICT skills acquisition and students' overall achievement. Aligned with student-centric ethos of NEP-2020, blended learning empowers learners



with greater autonomy and control over their learning process. It advocates a flexible, convenient, and interesting learning environment, fostering satisfaction and motivation among students.

**Weakness-** Weaknesses depicts the factors that prevents blended learning in achieving its full potential and decreases its influences on the NEP-2020 goals. Firstly, blended learning is highly dependent on strong network and electricity. Studies indicate that inadequate network infrastructure disrupts online classes, assignment submissions, and exam process for both students and educators. In a country like India, most students face financial crisis and thus cannot afford uninterrupted internet facility or own personal computers, consequently facing difficulties in accessing blended learning materials. Along with being a time-taking approach, increased workload for teachers stands a weak point, as they find it difficult to prepare instructions in a mixed method style keeping in mind the intricacies of BL objectives. As blended learning is very new in India, proper techniques and models are yet to get developed and implemented practically in classrooms. Poor integration of online and offline mode and lack of proper planning stages a weakness of this approach.

**Opportunities:** Blended learning bridges the gap towards accessing quality education for underprivileged children, improving academic performance and welfare (Dey & Bandyopadhyay, 2019). It facilitates learner-centric teaching initiatives (Ranjan, 2020) where learners hold the pivotal place and emerge as self-directed learners. Students can study at their own schedule, speed, and location, thus enjoy ultimate flexibility. The learning approach enhances social competencies and increases opportunities of collaboration and in-person communication. Advocating a personalised teaching experience tailored by the instructors, it caters to students with different learning styles.



Moreover, it facilitates remote connections between students and teachers while allowing in-person communication when necessary. During the COVID-19, blended learning emerged as a well-suited approach, signalling its role as the newest trend in education.

**Threats-** Rapid changes in policies, technologies, and circumstances possess the biggest threat towards new approaches. Dearth of dynamic, tech-savvy, and well-trained teachers, with broad mindset and scientific attitude, proficient in both online and offline modes (Lalima & Dangwal, 2017) are major issues towards achieving the goals outlined by NEP-2020. Technological illiteracy among students and teachers is again a big challenge (Brown, 2016), compounded by inadequate internet and computer facilities (Lalima & Dangwal, 2017). Additionally, in highly populated Indian classrooms, BL becomes a chaotic endeavour. Lack of proper classroom infrastructure, teachers' knowledge gaps (Alam et al., 2022; Jagadeesh and Manjula, 2022), and stakeholders' resistance, possess major external threats towards incorporating blended approach in the classrooms. Additionally, funding shortages impede the establishment of necessary infrastructure, training, and resources needed for running blended courses in institutions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This SWOT assessment of blended learning reveals its potential in education, which also highlights specific challenges (depicted in Figure 2) that strikes as a barrier towards achieving NEP-2020 goals. Blended learning, encompassing its beneficial and detrimental effects, is still in its early stage, necessitating further empirical investigation.

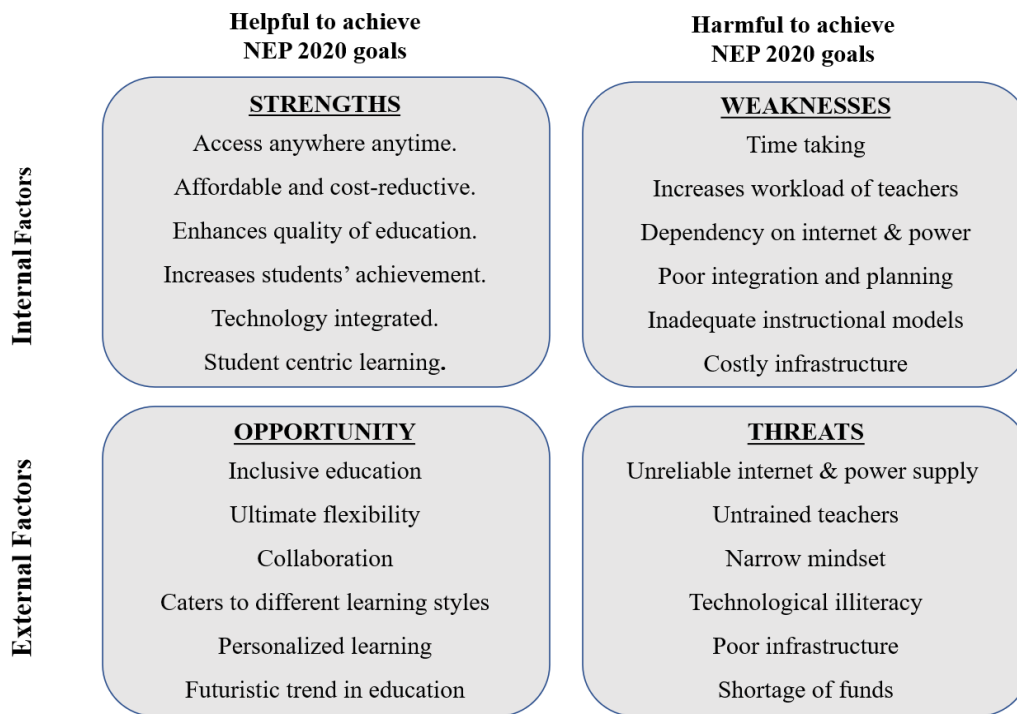


Figure 2: SWOT analysis of blended learning as an enabler of NEP2020 goals

The objective of this analysis is to support the effective implementation of NEP-2020 and the overall advancement of education in India. Considering the results, the researchers recommended-

- To invest in robust and sustainable digital infrastructure, including reliable internet and power supply across all regions.
- Develop comprehensive teacher preparation courses to equip educators with essential abilities and knowledge for blended learning.
- Conduct awareness campaigns and stakeholder engagement initiatives to promote the benefits of blended learning and address concerns.
- Adopt phased approaches, starting with trail programmes and progressively expanding them based on best practices and lessons learned.



- Continuously monitor and evaluate the implementation process and make data-driven decisions for improvement and refinement.

## CONCLUSION

While exploring these aspects, policymakers, educators, and stakeholders must collaborate to leverage the strengths, address the weakness, seize the opportunities, and mitigate the threats associated with blended learning to effectively realise the vision outlined in the new education policy. Through strategy planning, innovation and commitment, blended learning can emerge as a transformative force in advancing educational excellence and equity in the 21st century. Undoubtedly, Blended learning strengths are more than its possible threats. A teacher is required to wisely plan and use the offline and online resources to enable effective learning among students.

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