QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF MASTER OF EDUCATION (M Ed) PROGRAM UNDER BLENDED MODE AT BANGLADESH OPEN UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Bangladesh Open University (BOU), for the first time, has gone through quality assessment of Master of Education (M Ed) program using the common instrument developed by the Quality Assurance Unit, University Grant Commission (UGC). The evaluation was carried out at the time when major changes were taking place in teacher education under traditional open and distance learning (ODL) to blended under the open educational resources (OER). Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) members in association with the Blended Learning Courses for Teachers Educators between Asia and Europe (BLTEAE) members made a group tasked with the planning of the evaluation. The group’s task was to assess the quality of the program. The main aim of the evaluation of blended teacher education was to produce an overall picture and information on the state as well as strengths of the teacher education. To obtain a comprehensive picture of blended teacher education, the M Ed program was examined from five perspectives: governance, curriculum design, content and review, teaching and learning, student support service and research & extension. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS. Quantitative results demonstrated positive perspectives regarding all aspects of enquiry.

Keywords: Quality; Evaluation; Blended Learning; Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

The Master of Education (M Ed) is the prime education program of Bangladesh Open University (BOU), being imparted by the School of Education (SoE) for more than two and a half decades. Every year a good number of graduates graduate from program with absolute majority being employed in education sector. As education is the main support of any national development effort, maintaining quality of this education program is very crucial, which has been echoed in different national and international agenda, including Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 2030) [1].
Blended learning is a formal education program in which a student learns, at least in part, through online delivery of content and instruction, with some element of student control over time, pace, and/or space, and, at least in part, at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home [2]. Additionally, blended learning is called with different terms such as distributed learning, open and flexible learning, and hybrid learning.

BOU uses a blend of media considering the access and affordability of the learners. The choice of media varies from program to program. Both synchronous and asynchronous modes are chosen for the effective delivery of the courses. The media used so far in BOU programs are print materials, weekly lectures, audio broadcasts, video broadcasts, Internet, BOU Tube, YouTube, email, Facebook etc. Another innovative media is mobile device/set compatible SD card containing e-books and audio visual materials which ready to provide learners on demand. Now the learners are able to browse their study materials on their mobile phone sets. BOU has launched WebTB and WebRadio. Thus, the learners can watch the tutorial lessons and other relevant presentations live-streamed directly from the BOU’s Media Center’s studios [3].

According to literature in blended learning, teacher educators have taken advantage of the interactivity and flexibility of blended learning. Teacher educators used the blended format mainly for developing reflection skills [4]. The major technology tools used for blended learning in teacher education were online forums and blogs [5].

Quality of education depends on the institutional fitness for the purposes in terms of capacity and process to attain learning outcomes. Institutional capacity and process includes many factors, which have immense impact in determining quality of educational programs offered by the institution. So, quality assessment of the programs and taking required development measures are pertinent for maintaining their quality [6].

A program self-Assessment is a comprehensive evaluation technique of identifying a program’s strengths and weaknesses as observed by those working with or in partnership with the program. It is a valuable tool for program managers to strengthen the quality of the program and improve the learning outcomes. Conducting this self-assessment study to assess the Internal efficiency of the M Ed program and exploring strategies for bridging the gaps can enhance the quality of the programs and give a momentum to the overall institutional quality assurance drive of BOU [7].

Objectives of the Study

The prime aim of this study was to assess the quality of the M Ed program. To this end, this study specifically attempted to achieve the following specific objectives:
1. To understand the current state of the quality of the M Ed programs delivery in against of some defined quality indicators involved in the input, process and output level.
2. To identify the strengths and weaknesses of the M Ed program that needs further consolidation and improvement for maintaining the overall quality of the programs.
3. To suggest measures for improvement of the M Ed program by addressing the areas of deficiency.

METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire survey was conducted for the study. A situational analysis was done to review mainly the existing scenario of BOU against the different quality indicators.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in six major (former) administrative divisions of the country, namely Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, Sylhet and Barisal.

Criteria of Assessment

The following criteria were chosen to assess the quality of M Ed program [7].
1. Governance
2. Curriculum design, content & review
3. Teaching and learning
4. Student support services
5. Research & extension

Stakeholders of the Study

To learn about the status of the mentioned criteria of assessment, the study was administered on the four major groups of stakeholders [7].
1. Graduating/existing students
2. Alumni
3. Academic staff
4. Non-academic staff
Sample and Sampling Technique

Table I gives an account of the sample of this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Existing students</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Alumni</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Academics (Tutors and Faculty)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Non Academics</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A two stage sampling technique was employed to select the sample. At the first stage, six tutorial centers/study centers from the six selected administrative divisions were selected purposively, as the major data sources. Later, convenience sampling technique was used to collect data from the multiple sampling units.

Data Gathering Tools and Development Process

Four sets of questionnaires were used for the survey. The questionnaires were duly validated by organizing an instrument validation workshop, participated by all the faculties of School of Education. The questionnaires then were submitted to a group of senior faculty, IQAC director and expert for their valuable opinion. Some structural changes of the questionnaires were done as per suggestions of the experts. In this modification process, some items of the questionnaires were transformed to nominal scale from Likert five-point scale and some more items were included in the survey questionnaires to make them aligned with the context of BOU [7]. Finally, the questionnaires got approved by the concerned authority for field administration.

Data Analysis

To make decision about the prevailing situation, overall means/percentage and the item wise mean values (mean of each of the indicators under every criteria) were calculated and compared to draw inferences/decisions. The overall means of each of the criteria were used as the reference point to determine the strong and weak areas. In this decision making process, the item wise mean values above the overall mean were considered as the strengths and those below the overall mean were considered as the weak areas.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Governance

Good governance and quality assurance depends on integrated approach of management by the statutory bodies of the institution and its individual units. A dramatic change over recent decades in higher education landscape, governance has become a crucial factor in quality assurance in higher education. The following data and discussion present an overall scenario of the status of governance of BOU.

Students’ view about governance was assessed against 15 statements of which, Likert’s’ five-point scale (Figure 1) was used for the first six statements, the next three (7, 8, 9) statements were of ‘yes-no’ type (Figure 2) and the last six items (10-15) included questions with three possible answers - yes, no and don’t know (Figure 3). The findings against these inquiries are presented below.

Graduating Students’ View

The mean perception of the students against the first six statements is presented in Figure 1. The M Ed students had the highest level of perception (4.67) about Item No. 2 i.e. the Learning outcomes satisfy the program objectives. The M Ed students had the lowest perception (2.96) on Item No. 6 indicating SoE did not review its policy and procedure periodically. The M Ed students also held negative perception (3.36) in one more area i.e. students’ opinion regarding academic matters were not addressed properly.

Figure 1. M Ed Students’ Mean Perception about Governance (Items 1 to 6)
7. Academic calendar is maintained strictly.
8. Examination holds in time.
9. Results are published within expected time.

As revealed by Figure 2, about 82% of the M Ed students reported that the academic calendar was maintained properly. Examination was found to be held in time reported by 55% of the M Ed students. About 70% of the students expressed their dissatisfaction over the issue on publishing of semester final examination i.e. results are not published in time.

Figure 3 shows that about 57% of the M Ed students found university disciplinary rules and regulation exist, while more than one third expressed their ignorance about it. Also, majority of about 57% stated that the rules and regulation were communicated to the stakeholders. Code of conduct was found to exist by around 70% of the M Ed students. Majority of about 80% stated that website was updated regularly with the flow of required information, but about one-fourth expressed contradictory view i.e. the website was lacking in providing required information on the programs.

1. Clearly defined disciplinary rules and regulations.
2. The disciplinary rules are communicated to all.
3. University has explicitly defined code of conduct for students and employees.
4. Code of conducts are communicated to all.
5. Website is updated regularly.
6. Website provides required information about the program.

Figure 3. M Ed Students' View (Yes- %) about Governance (Items 10 to 15)
Likewise, the assessment process of the students’ perception about governance, the alumni’s perception about the first six indicators of governance was measured by a Likert’s five points scale (Figure 4), the next three (7, 8 and 9) statements were of ‘yes-no’ type (Figure 5) and the last six items (10 to 15) were assessed by use of a three points scale (yes/no/don’t know type - Figure 6). Figure 4 includes the mean values of the first six items. The M Ed alumni were negative about three areas. They termed clear statement of program objectives as the strongest area.

The alumni’s view on items 7, 8 and 9 (Figure 5) clearly indicated that academic calendar was maintained strictly in conducting of tutorial class. But examination and result publishing time remained as major areas of concerns to the M Ed alumni. According to them, neither examinations nor results publication were not held in time.

In Figure 6, about 53% of the M Ed alumni perceived disciplinary rules. They remained either negative or neutral in other five areas of investigation. However, the overall findings indicated that the governance of the institutions were lacking in terms of communicating the disciplinary rules and code of conduct to the stakeholders. They further mentioned that the university website was not updated regularly and did not provide required and updated information about the programs.
10. Clearly defined disciplinary rules and regulations.
11. The disciplinary rules are communicated to all.
12. University has explicitly defined code of conduct for students and employees.
13. Code of conduct are communicate to all.
14. Website is updated regularly.
15. Website provides required information about the program.

Figure 6. M Ed Alumni’s View (%) about Governance (Item 10 - 15)

Academics’ View

Table II reveals that academics’ perception about governance was asymmetrical to that of the alumni against almost all the indicators. They showed the lowest perception (about 30%) about examination and result publishing time. The other weak areas are absence of participatory decision making process, non-communication of disciplinary rules and code of conduct. It was mentionable that experienced blended/online instructors also ranked the quality of their institutions’ blended and online courses markedly higher (68% and 55% Satisfactory to Excellent, respectively) than did instructors who taught traditional courses only (55% and 30% Satisfactory to Excellent, respectively) [8].

TABLE II. INDICATOR WISE PERCEPTION (FREQUENCY AND PERCENT) OF THE ACADEMICS ABOUT GOVERNANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of Evaluation</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Objectives of the programs are stated clearly in students' guide</td>
<td>5(26.3)</td>
<td>12(63.2)</td>
<td>1(5.3)</td>
<td>1(5.3)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Program objectives/learning outcomes were reviewed in consultation with the stakeholders</td>
<td>3(15.8)</td>
<td>8(42.1)</td>
<td>7(36.8)</td>
<td>1(5.3)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The intended learning outcomes satisfy the objectives of the entity</td>
<td>3(15.8)</td>
<td>12(63.3)</td>
<td>3(15.8)</td>
<td>1(5.3)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Academic calendar is maintained strictly by the entity</td>
<td>6(31.6)</td>
<td>9(47.4)</td>
<td>1(5.3)</td>
<td>3(15.8)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Exams held in proper time</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6(31.6)</td>
<td>3(15.8)</td>
<td>8(42.1)</td>
<td>2(10.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Results are published in time</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3(15.8)</td>
<td>7(36.8)</td>
<td>6(31.6)</td>
<td>3(15.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The entity reviews its policy and procedure periodically for further improvement of the programs</td>
<td>4(21.1)</td>
<td>2(10.5)</td>
<td>7(36.8)</td>
<td>4(21.1)</td>
<td>2(10.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The university has clearly defined disciplinary rules and regulations</td>
<td>3(15.8)</td>
<td>11(57.9)</td>
<td>4(21.1)</td>
<td>1(5.3)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Non-academics’ View

Figure 7 showing mean perception of the non-academics revealed 7 out of 13 indicators scored above the overall mean, which can be considered as the strong areas of governance. The rest of the six areas with below the overall mean was the weaker aspects of M Ed. The weak areas were absence of explicit disciplinary rules and code of conduct and non-communication of them to the target stakeholders. Examination time as well as result publishing time was the weakest areas.

![Figure 7. Indicator Wise Mean Perception of the Non-academics about Governance](image-url)
Summary of Findings

The four sets of data on governance portrayed almost same scenario against majority of the indicators of governance. They held similar as well as had mixed views on different issues. In some of the areas, their views did not uphold the real situation [9]. Taking into cognizance all these aspects and based on the review of the SAC (Self-Assessment Committee) members, a number of strong and weak areas have been identified, which are as follows:

**Strengths**
1. The objectives of the programs are clearly defined;
2. Academic calendar is maintained properly in holding tutorial class;
3. Learning outcomes satisfy objectives of the programs and the mission of the university.

**Weaknesses**
1. Delayed semester final examination;
2. Delay in publishing semester final examination result;
3. Disciplinary rules and code of conduct are not communicated to its stakeholders properly.

Curriculum Design, Content and Review

Curriculum is the total implementation plan of an education program. It includes goal, objectives, learning experiences, course of studies, teaching-learning strategies, evaluation and assessment techniques, etc. Quality of curriculum plays a vital role in achieving intended learning outcomes, vision and mission, quality and overall effectiveness of a program [1].

Graduating Students’ View

Figure 8 shows the indicator/item wise mean perception against each of the areas of inquiry, as expressed by the M Ed students. The mean values were found to show two weak areas of curriculum design by the group of respondents. Accordingly, the curriculum of M Ed program was little overloaded and had little deficiency in addressing the program objectives and learning outcomes [1].
Alumni’s’ View

Alumni’s’ view as presented in Table III about curriculum was asymmetrical to that of the students.

**TABLE III. INDICATOR WISE PERCEPTION (FREQUENCY AND PERCENT) OF ALUMNI ABOUT CURRICULUM DESIGN, CONTENT AND REVIEW**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of evaluation</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Courses in the curriculum from lower to higher levels are consistently arranged</td>
<td>10(2.8)</td>
<td>27(67.5)</td>
<td>1(2.5)</td>
<td>1(2.5)</td>
<td>1(2.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teaching strategies are clearly stated in the curriculum</td>
<td>9(22.5)</td>
<td>26(65.0)</td>
<td>2(5.0)</td>
<td>2(5.0)</td>
<td>1(2.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Assessment strategies are explicit in the curriculum</td>
<td>8(20.0)</td>
<td>18(45.0)</td>
<td>7(17.5)</td>
<td>5(12.5)</td>
<td>2(5.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Curriculum load is optimum and exerts no pressure</td>
<td>8(20.0)</td>
<td>20(50.0)</td>
<td>5(12.5)</td>
<td>6(15.0)</td>
<td>1(2.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Curriculum fulfils the learning needs of the students</td>
<td>4(10.0)</td>
<td>22(55.04)</td>
<td>5(12.5)</td>
<td>9(22.8)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Numbers in Parenthesis Indicates the Percentage Distribution of the Frequency*

According to the findings, alumni expressed weak perception in two items out of five. Accordingly, the curricula of the education programs were beset with two problems: curricular load and deficiency in addressing program objectives and learning outcomes.

Academics’ View

The mean values (Figure 9) indicated six strong areas out of eight by academics. The identified weak areas are not seeking relevant persons’ opinion in curriculum design and review process and the curricula were not updated regularly. The academics attached the highest value on fulfilment of first day skills at job and the lowest on curriculum updating i.e. the education curricula were not updated regularly.
Summary of Findings

According to the findings from all the three sources and as per observation of the SAC members, the curricula of M Ed were designed properly and they were characterized with many good elements.

**Strengths**
1. Curricular goal and objectives are clearly stated;
2. Teaching-learning strategies are clearly mentioned
3. Assessment techniques are meticulously defined.

**Weaknesses**
1. The curricula are not reviewed and updated on a regular basis;
2. Opinions of all the stakeholders are not considered in reviewing the curriculum;

**Teaching and Learning**

Teaching-learning constitutes the core of any education program. It is the responsibility of the institution to ensure effective teaching and learning for quality education.

**Graduating Students’ View**

As illustrated in Table IV, majority of the students (about 80%) expressed positive views for all the indicators of teaching and learning. They stated that tutorial classes were interactive and supportive. Class size was optimum for interactive learning, had adequate opportunities of practical exercise in real life situation and tutors were sincere in discharging their duty.
TABLE IV. INDICATOR WISE PERCEPTION (FREQUENCY AND %) 
OF THE STUDENTS ABOUT TEACHING AND LEARNING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of evaluation</th>
<th>Stronglyagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Stronglydisagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teaching-learning is interactive</td>
<td>73(48.7)</td>
<td>58(38.7)</td>
<td>1(.7)</td>
<td>4(2.7)</td>
<td>1(.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Class size is optimum for interactive learning</td>
<td>56(37.3)</td>
<td>46(30.7)</td>
<td>8(5.3)</td>
<td>21(14)</td>
<td>2(1.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Entity provides adequate opportunities for practical exercises to apply in real life situation</td>
<td>54(36.0)</td>
<td>57(38.0)</td>
<td>7(4.7)</td>
<td>12(8.0)</td>
<td>2(1.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Tutors are sincere in their duty</td>
<td>64(42.7)</td>
<td>60(40.0)</td>
<td>2(1.3)</td>
<td>4(2.7)</td>
<td>2(1.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers in Parenthesis Indicates the Percentage Distribution of the Frequency

Methods and Techniques used in the Teaching-Learning Process

Significant to mention that there was good practice of discussion, group work and individual work in T-L (Teaching-Learning) as indicated in Table V.

TABLE V. METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Lecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Pair work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Individual work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use of Modern Devices in Learning Process of Students

As reported by the students, some of the modern devices were used as part of their self-learning, but the extent of use was not at optimum level (Table VI).

TABLE VI. MODERN DEVICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mobile technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. BOU tube</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. E-books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Projector</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learning Process Used by the M Ed Students

About four-fifth of the M Ed students were dependent on the course modules published and distributed by SoE/BOU. About half of them studied other books and research report. Only one-third viewed TV programs transmitted by BTV. The number of users of the radio program was small. About 41% depended on tutorial session. Although one-third of the respondents mentioned about the use of on-line education, but the finding was questionable as BOU had not introduced any such program.
Alumni’s View

Alumni’s perception regarding teaching-learning is presented in Table VIII. According to the alumni, teaching-learning of M Ed was not interactive and tutorial class size (teacher-student ratio) was not suitable for conducting teaching and learning in interactive manner. The findings further revealed that the M Ed had very limited use of modern devices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of evaluation</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teaching-learning is interactive</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25(62.5)</td>
<td>15(37.5)</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Class size is optimum for interactive learning</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1(2.5)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>32(80.0)</td>
<td>7(17.5)</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Entity provides adequate opportunity of learning in real life situation</td>
<td>6(15.0)</td>
<td>23(57.7)</td>
<td>5(12.5)</td>
<td>4(10.0)</td>
<td>2(5.0)</td>
<td>3.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Entity provides adequate opportunities for practical exercises to apply in real life situation</td>
<td>2(5.0)</td>
<td>25(62.5)</td>
<td>4(10.0)</td>
<td>7(17.5)</td>
<td>23(5.0)</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Course outlines are provided before starting of class</td>
<td>3(7.5)</td>
<td>17(42.5)</td>
<td>4(10.0)</td>
<td>14(35)</td>
<td>2(5.0)</td>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Tutors are sincere in discharging their responsibility</td>
<td>4(10.0)</td>
<td>14(35.0)</td>
<td>7(17.5)</td>
<td>11(27.5)</td>
<td>4(10.0)</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Modern devices are used to improve teaching-learning process</td>
<td>Used in a very limited extent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Diverse teaching methods and techniques were used to facilitate teaching learning</td>
<td>Used in a very limited extent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Multiple teaching aids are used by the learners for learning</td>
<td>M Ed students were not used diverse learning process.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Academics’ View

A cursory look at Table IX reveals that to majority, the teaching learning was interactive, class size was optimum, course outline was provided in time, diverse teaching-learning methods and techniques were used. About opportunities for practical exercise in real life situation, half of the respondents opined positively. In additional, they had negative view about use of modern devices in T-L process.
TABLE IX. INDICATOR WISE PERCEPTION OF THE ACADEMICS ABOUT TEACHING AND LEARNING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of evaluation</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teaching-learning is interactive</td>
<td>5(26.1)</td>
<td>10(52.6)</td>
<td>1(5.3)</td>
<td>1(5.3)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Class size is optimum for interactive learning</td>
<td>4(21.1)</td>
<td>9(42.4)</td>
<td>2(10.5)</td>
<td>4(21.1)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Entity provides adequate opportunities for practical exercises to apply in real life situation</td>
<td>4(21.1)</td>
<td>6(31.6)</td>
<td>4(21.1)</td>
<td>3(15.8)</td>
<td>2(10.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Students can get life oriented education from the program.</td>
<td>1(5.3)</td>
<td>1(5.3)</td>
<td>5(26.3)</td>
<td>9(47.4)</td>
<td>3(15.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Course outlines are provided before starting of class</td>
<td>5(26.3)</td>
<td>10(52.6)</td>
<td>2(10.5)</td>
<td>2(10.5)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Modern devices are used to improve teaching-learning process</td>
<td>3(15.8)</td>
<td>4(21.1)</td>
<td>7(36.8)</td>
<td>3(15.8)</td>
<td>2(10.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Diverse teaching methods and techniques were used to facilitate teaching learning</td>
<td>Academics were found to use varied teaching-learning methods and techniques like lecture, discussion, Group work, pair work etc.</td>
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Numbers in Parenthesis Indicates the Percentage Distribution of the Frequency

Summary of Findings

Strengths
1. Tutorial classes are conducted in interactive manner.
2. Students get adequate opportunity for practical exercise of their acquired knowledge and skills in real life situation.
3. Diverse teaching methods and techniques are used in tutorial class as the concerned curricula have been made that provision.

Weaknesses
1. Limited/no use of modern devices in conducting tutorial class is a major challenge.
2. Class size/teacher-student ratio is high to conduct the tutorial session in interactive way.

Student Support Services

Student support services (SSS) is one of the vital determining factors for progress and success of an academic program. It helps students to overcome a number of obstacles that stand way of pursuing the stated educational goals and thus contribute for making the program more effective. It is more pertinent in distance education delivery, followed by distance education organizations including BOU, due its nature and different mode of learning.

Graduating Students’ View

The students’ view about student support services is presented in Figure 10. About 70% of the students agreed that SoE provided academic guidance and counselling to the students. Majority (65%) of the students were affirmative about receiving the course materials on time. Regarding co-curricular activities, 50% students ventilated positive view and rest 50% was negative. Students expressed their dissatisfaction in other areas of SSS. For example, no alumni association for
the graduated students; no scope of addressing alumni’s feedback on academic affairs and no opportunity to be involved in community service. Important to mention that there were at all no facilities for the students in the areas where majority expressed negative view, although few of them opined positively, which indicated they indiscriminately answered to these items without logical thinking.

![Figure 10. Students' View ('yes' response) about Student Support Services](image_url)

**Alumni's’ View**

The alumni’s’ view about student support services is presented in Figure 11.

![Figure 11. Alumni's View ('yes' response in %) about Student Support Services](image_url)

Alumni expressed less positive views, than that of the students against all the issues of SSS, some of which were quite deplorable. Regarding co-curricular activities, their perception was much lower and quite negative.

**Academics’ View**

Figure 12 shows the mean values of the M Ed academics regarding the issues of SSS.
According to the overall and indicator wise mean values (Figure 12), academics’ perception was of above average level in only two areas: guidance provided by SoE and receipt of study materials on time. They had negative view about the rest five areas. The weak areas were absence of financial grant for needy students, students had no exposure to co-curricular activities, absence of an alumni association and lack of opportunity of the students to be involved in community services.

Summary of Findings

Strengths

All the three groups of respondents (graduating students, alumni and academics) felt encouraged by only two positive aspects. They are:

1. SoE provides guidance and counselling to the students. The fact is true. Whenever the entity members go to the SCs (Study Centers) for visiting the exam, they provide answer/solution to many of their problems, but in informal manner.
2. Students generally receive instructional materials on time except a little variation.

Weaknesses

1. Entity as well as the curricula has made no scope to develop students’ skill on co-curricular activities.
2. The university has so far not constituted any alumni association.

Research and Extension

The purpose of research is to inform action on a problem. It is important for both teacher and students to have research skills by being involved in it. Efficiency of an educational institution also depends much on the research efficiency of its staff as well the student.
Students’ and Alumni’s’ View

Student and alumni’s perception on researches was drawn by using three questions of yes-no type and the findings are presented in Figures 13 and 14. Fifty-eight percent of the students and 40% alumni opined that entity had a well-defined research policy. More than 50% of the students stated to have a mechanism to involve students in research exists which was done by only 10% alumni. Quite majority of the respondents answered negatively about the opportunity to be involved in community service.

![Fig. 13. Students' View about Research](image1)

![Fig. 14. Alumni’s’ View about Research](image2)

Academics’ View

![Figure 15. Overall and Mean Perception of Academics about Research](image3)

The item wise mean values (Figure 15) show the M Ed academics held positive and high values about the research policy BOU has adopted for its academic and non-academic staff. They demonstrated the least agreement about teachers’ research fund searching initiative, which according to them not at all satisfactory. Extension of research findings for community service was also a much neglected area.
Summary of Findings

Strength
1. The institution has a well-defined research policy under which the faculty and non-faculty can get an amount of research fund in a year to conduct study on BOU related matter.

Weakness
1. The research policy of BOU has created scope for conducting research only to the BOU academics and non-academics and has no provision for involvement of the students in BOU implemented research study. There is no opportunity for the students of any programs of BOU to be involved with it.

CONCLUSIONS

As stated in introduction, the main objective of the study was to assess the implementation status of the M Ed program. Accordingly, the study has identified a plethora of positive aspects as well as deficiencies of the said program, which need to be addressed for a better and quality program delivery.

This report highlights a number of findings on implementation procedures and practices that should be re-examined and strengthened. Also, a number of areas have been highlighted where policy to be formed and intervention is needed.

Recommendations and suggestions for improvement of weak areas have been made in the spirit of constructive criticism based on the survey findings and experience and knowledge. It is believed that all of these cannot be redressed in the short term but SoE and BOU authority can take opportunity to reflect on the identified issues and problems and where feasible take necessary steps through formulating an appropriate development plan. Indeed, some of the recommendations are simple and straight-forwards and only requires changes in practice and behaviour of the programs, which could be done by SoE alone. Others are complicated and will require changes in or formulation of policy by BOU authority and in some areas support from external agencies/development partners may be required. Ultimately, the result of the study and action taken on the recommendations should be strengthening SoE, BOU in all aspects of its provision of achieving the desired learning outcomes by the students towards realization of the goal, objectives of the program and vision and mission of the university.

It is mentionable that many instances where quality standards were maintained and in many areas were absent or minimal or not taken into considerations. It is also observed that some of the quality standards cannot be a deciding factor of the quality of open and distance learning of BOU because of the differences in program delivery mode. In such case, BOU should have the
freedom to way out in its own way as per the practices and quality standards of other open and distance learning university in the region and in other countries and are suggested by renowned open and distance learning experts.

In conclusion, SoE/BOU has the willingness, commitment and capacity to deliver the programs with due quality. So, the areas of concern, as have been identified in this self-assessment study, need to be addressed by the dean and faculty members efficiently to ensure that what learning is provided to the student is of quality calibre. Some of the notable areas needing immediate attention are providing quality student support services, strengthening teaching-learning and assessment, timely examination and result publication, proper monitoring of students’ progress and providing feedback on their achievement, ensure technological facilities in study centers, development of a quality assurance framework, periodical review of curriculum and assessment procedure, etc. are needed to be strengthen for overall quality improvement of the education programs of BOU.

Finally, the finding and recommendations of the study will be useful in drafting a proper improvement plan for SoE and BOU, which could be conducive for the university to achieve its vision of offering quality blended mode education to all its target groups by taking effective mission for addressing the areas need to be improved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. BOU should take immediate measures for timely holding of the examination of the M Ed program and publishing the results within a maximum three months from the time of examination held.
2. SoE should conducting need assessment survey(s) on the stakeholders. before designing/revising curriculum of any program and to identify the areas of change/improvement in participatory manner.
3. BOU should have a well-defined policy to review the curricula of its different programs. The schools will take measures to revise/update curricula of their own programs accordingly at regular interval and institutionalize that as a BOU system.
4. A mechanism for monitoring of students’ progress should be devised. The faculty of the entity and the relevant people from other relevant divisions will be responsible for this monitoring process. Monitoring will be done on fixed format and be reported to the entity so that measures could be taken accordingly.
5. A central provision should be set up for periodical review of the assessment procedures of different program. The entities should act accordingly to review the assessment procedures of their own programs.
6. BOU should develop a quality assurance framework in right direction in terms of quality and in fulfilment of the accreditation criteria set by the national accreditation council and that of internationally recognized universities.
7. SoE/BOU should take initiative to ensure use of modern device in delivery of tutorial class. BOU/SoE can create a fund for buying some of the devices to the Tutorial Centers (TCs) based on a written policy.

REFERENCES