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COUNSELLING ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA

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BORNO STATE CHAPTER

BORNO Counsellor

MAIDEN EDITION VOL.1 NO.1



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Problems and Prospects of Blended Learning in Nigerian Higher Education System: A Conceptual paper

By

Babakura Mamman, Kaumi Umara, Habib M.A., Kaltum Ali, Tahiru Zanna, Ahmed Jime, and Khashiyat Abdulfattah

Abstract

This paper is aimed to examined the challenges and opportunities associated with blended learning in Nigeria's higher education system. The integration of technology into classroom teaching and learning has become ingrained in all levels of education. The concept of blended learning has gained traction in classroom teaching and learning as educators and students embrace incorporating technology into classroom activities. Blended learning in higher education has become necessary due to the global pandemic of Covid 19, which has made it mandatory to lockdown schools worldwide. These opportunities for overcoming obstacles presented by information and communication technology (ICT) cannot be overstated. It established a foundation for communicating with students online and through other means to prevent the obstruction of the school curriculum, particularly in the advanced technologies of the world. This paper provided an overview of the issues and research on blended learning in Nigeria's higher education system. Additionally, it identifies several significant impediments to implementing blended learning in Nigeria's higher education system. The paper made recommendations for resolving several factors that may impede the integration of information and communication technology into teaching and learning. This include the provision of essential facilities needed to establish a state of the arts blended learning in Higher Education system in Nigeria.

Keywords: Blended Learning, Information and Communication Technology, Higher Education

Introduction

There is no universally accepted definition of Blended Learning. Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) (2012) sees blended learning as a structured opportunity to learn by the learner(s) by applying more than one form of learning method used within and outside the classroom. This may include the various forms of pedagogical approaches (such as lecture, discussion, guidance practices, reading, games, simulations,

problem-solving, corporative learning, collaborative, etc.), the application of different delivery methods (face-to-face, computer-assisted instruction or computer media). In contrast, additional scheduling, on the other hand, includes synchronous or asynchronous and the different level of guidance include instructor, individual, expert or group led. One of the importance attached to a blended classroom is that, it offers the potential to create effective and efficient learning and it also makes learning more appealing to learners (Crawford, & Jenkins, 2015). These teaching techniques are usually delivered using several models of blended learning. Blended learning can implement teaching in one of the following models: station rotation, lab rotation, individual rotation, flipped classroom and A La Carte (Staker and Horns, 2012). This paper will use the station rotation model to examine the effect of screencasts video in enhancing students learning.

There is a lack of consensus among researchers, authors, educators and scholars on the term Blended learning. The difficulty arises because of the divergent views held by these bodies (Tomlinson & Whittaker, 2013). This lack of acceptable definition was caused by individual differences in perception and how people see things according to their way of thinking. However, these meanings do not change that they mean different things altogether. Most of the definition have some iota of similarities. For instance, some call it hybrid learning, mixed learning, b-learning, or e-learning; due to these terminologies and different attributes from these authors' conglomerates tend to view blended learning from different perspectives. However, one of the standard definitions of blended learning is face-to-face instruction and online instruction (use of modern technologies). Similarly, face-to-face learning and online web-based

learning are the two most central terms used by many authors to describe the concept of blended learning (Lam, 2014).

This assumption could be understood by explaining the two. For example, according to Watson (2008), the term blended learning evolved through three generations. The first generation of blended learning is characterized by an instructional delivery system including TV, Radio and Mail. The second generation is comprised of distance education with a single technology that requires web-based instruction or computer-based learning. The third generation of blended learning involves the combination of both face-to-face instruction and multiple technologies to deliver content and materials. In order words, blended learning combines face-to-face and computer technology with instructional experience. The concept of blended learning combines face-to-face instruction with computer-mediated instruction. This describes learning that integrates several teaching approaches, including face-to-face instruction, e-learning, self-paced learning, problem-based learning, collaborative learning, and corporative learning (Graham, 2006). These approaches influence learners' perception of the environment through which learning occurs (Poon, 2013).

According to Driscoll (2002), blended learning constitutes four essential mixtures of all forms of web-based learning: virtual classroom, socialization, collaboration, media technology, mixure of pedagogical approaches like cognitivism, behaviorism and constructivism, a combination of instructional technology like Screencasting, face to face instruction, internet-based learning, mixing instructional technology and actual job activities to create a smooth learning environment. Graham (2006), defined blended learning as a learning strategy that brings together face-to-face instruction and web-based instruction. Blended learning,

according to Olelewe (2014), could be defined as the combination of various even-based activities that includes face-to-face learning, self-paced learning, video-based learning, virtual learning environment, artificial intelligence video conferencing and other forms of technology-based learning. For example, face-to-face instruction entails teacher guide instruction, as is usually seen in conventional teaching and learning processes. Both teacher and students are physically met in the classroom for instructional purposes. Self-paced learning has to do with the ability of learners to use their free or leisure time to study, in order words, it is a situation where learner employ their choice of time and place to learn a particular concept at their pace. While video learning may come in diverse ways. It may go in video conferencing, where two or more groups of persons in a different location meet to interact through the conference to have a robust discussion on a particular subject matter.

Video conferencing and some important academic meetings for example, are being held through this medium. Students and academic advisers meet to discuss students' academic progress in separate locations through live streaming. Also, there is another form of video-based learning that is called video capture. This usually happens while the lecture is taking place; the captured video will be disseminated through the various means of technological devices to reach learners: YouTube, card readers, CD plates external hard disk, computer, laptop, tablet, smartphones, and online. Above all, the teacher can record instructional activities on a computer screen by capturing the screen with audio narration to disperse it through those channels mentioned above. Screencasting is now trending in teaching and learning; this video is believed to ensure effective learning because it is learner-friendly and can be accessed on all forms of technological devices.

Issues on Blended Learning in Nigeria

Blended learning has suffered a setback in the Nigerian educational system due to infrastructural decay and shortage of qualified personnel to teach the concept. Its adoption and implementation among teachers and faculty members at all levels of education are low (Akinbobola & Asagha, 2013). According to Akinbobola & Asagha, 2013; Aladejana, 2008; Omiola, 2012; Regha, 2015; Umoh & Akpan, 2014, the current state of blended learning adoption and utilization in Nigerian schools is a result of factors such as inadequate funding, infrastructure decay, scarcity of technical and teaching staff capable of handling existing technology, and lack of a maintenance culture. Despite setbacks, the Nigerian federal government, to improve the quality and standard of education available to its citizens, has implemented several education policies to address the needs of various sectors of society and procure an education for multiple dimensions of societal needs (Adeyemi et al., 2012).

It has been observed that integration of technology into teaching and learning in higher education in Nigerian schools is uncommon, with the few that do so relying heavily on PowerPoint and sparingly on sophisticated technology tools such as online learning, e-learning, Learning Management Systems, interactive boards, and flipped classrooms (Adeola, Adewale, and Alese (2013). While PowerPoint is quite adequate, the tool lacks some interactive resources that would aid in thoroughly engaging learners in classroom interaction (Hill, Arford, Lubitow, & Smollin, 2012). Thus, to foster active classroom interaction, blended learning techniques must be implemented in the classroom (Oigara & Keengwe, 2013). Although the authorities have acquired few modern technologies for classroom instruction, the number of faculty members who use these technologies for instructional purposes is

minimal. Indeed, there is an urgent need for faculty members to be trained to use such equipment properly. The delivery of content must incorporate a new approach to learning, the learners' instructional needs, scientific research, computer models and simulations that can assist learners in developing skills (Stuckey, 2012).

Despite the widespread use of blended learning in some quarters of Nigeria's higher education institutions, traditional teaching methods may still be widely used (Ali Zalina Mohd Shahabuddin, Suradi, Mohd, & Zainol, 2011; Olive, 2014). There appear to be insufficient individuals with the technical skills necessary to integrate technology into classroom teaching and to learn (Ali, 2013; Anene, Imam, & Odumuh, 2014). These are just a few possible challenges associated with teaching and learning. Additionally, there is growing concern about overcrowding in Nigerian universities' classrooms and lecture theaters (Adeola et al., 2013 and Nsofor, 2014). These and other issues could be resolved by combining current trends in educational technology, such as screencasts and video, with the desired instructional principles.

Numerous challenges exist in Nigerian institutions of higher learning, including insufficient workforce skills, poor internet connectivity and a lack of necessary computer equipment. These are identified as factors impeding the adoption and implementation of blended learning in Nigeria (Regha, 2015). In Nigerian institutions, the challenge of blended learning is a lack of high-speed internet bandwidth, lack of ICT expertise among educators, lack of sufficient computers and the technical skills required to manage existing technology, and a lack of continuity in technology usage (Umoh & Akpan, 2014). These factors contributed to a significant setback in the classroom adoption of blended learning strategies. Additionally, the successful integration of blended learning in Nigeria may be due to a lack

of a maintenance culture, poor network connectivity, anemic power supply, and a scarcity of competent technical personnel (Akinbobola & Asagha, 2013). Due to limitations of ICT equipment, some higher education institutions have been unable to run a full-scale online programme due to factors such as insufficient internet facilities and infrastructural decay (Boitshwarelo, 2009). Nonetheless, there is widespread concern about Nigerian students' poor performance in final exams. This could be attributed to shortage of qualified teachers, predominantly traditional approach to learning, insufficient funding for the education sector and lack of required instructional materials (Omiola, 2012).

Additionally, some educational institutions in Nigeria lack adequate ICT infrastructure for implementing blended learning. It is suggested that Nigerian institutions identify the challenges and opportunities associated with blended learning and devise strategies to diversify pre-service teacher education (Umoh & Akpan, 2014). The increased technology adoption in teaching and learning has presented several challenges and opportunities for the global education sector, particularly in developing countries. These obstacles are numerous due to the rapid changes brought about by technology, which is multiplying. Multiple technologies are being developed for educational purposes, while others are being incorporated to meet specific academic demands. In this case, educational technologists devise methods for incorporating these technologies into classroom instruction. Online education, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, virtual laboratories, video conferencing, LEDBoards, interactive whiteboards, screencasting technology, virtual libraries and blended learning are just a few available technologies (Regha, 2015).

However, these lingering issues that contribute to the failure of the blended learning system to be adopted in the Nigerian education sector may be resolved through the current state of the art of information and communication technology that is lacking in Nigerian institutions of learning, which are some of the blended learning challenges in Nigeria. It is necessary to provide essential technological tools to address these issues and bridging the divide between traditional teaching styles and blended learning which is critical (Umoh & Akpan, 2014). Improving our erratic power supply to facilitate the operation of technological equipment on the ground is essential for encouraging teaching and learning via computer-mediated instructions (Regha, 2015).

Similarly, there is the need for organized seminars, workshops and personnel training and a clarion call for the establishment of a pilot study center that will kick-start the programmes from strategic locations throughout Nigeria and encourage collaboration with international bodies and agencies to bring blended learning to fruition. The Nigerian Ministry of Education has launched a pilot programme of blended learning in six strategic universities across the country's six (6) geopolitical zones. However, reports indicate that faculty members at these six pilot institutions are yet to embrace the process entirely. Thus, blended learning should be encouraged at all levels of education in Nigeria (Omiola, 2012). Additionally, to revitalize the Nigerian educational system, there are viable options available to address these issues permanently (Regha, 2015). For example, the adoption and implementation of technology-mediated instruction and adequate funding of the system from the ground up are viewed as the barometer for achieving a feasible solution to the problems associated with integrating technology into classrooms.

Studies on Blended Learning in Nigeria

Despite numerous obstacles and setbacks associated with teaching and learning blended learning in Nigerian schools, a few studies have demonstrated the concept's prospects in Nigeria. For example, a survey on the opportunities and constraints of blended learning at Nigeria's National Open University (NOUN) discovered that blended learning has numerous benefits: it helps reduce student mortality, it enables students to study anywhere and at any time at their own pace, and it promotes collaboration among learners (Ezekoka, 2015). Additionally, the study found out that only three of the six blended learning models were used at the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). This could be a face-to-face driver model, a rotational driver model, or a self-blended driver model. Academic achievement between male and female students is significantly different (Abidoye, 2015). There is a significant difference in how blended learning approaches compare to traditional teaching techniques when teaching learners. Abidoye (2015), observed that teaching and learning in Nigerian schools are characterized by conventional teaching methods, which distort students' critical thinking abilities due to their unfavorable learning styles. The importance of utilizing and applying media technology to ascertain the effect of blended learning among pre-service teachers in Nigerian institutions of higher education cannot be overstated. Following that, experimental studies have demonstrated that blended learning is an effective method of teaching and learning. Yapici & Akbayin (2012) found out a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups in their study. The result indicated that the experimental group's mean score was more important than the control group. Learners who received instruction using a blended learning approach performed significantly better than those using a traditional

teaching approach (Akinbobola & Asagha, 2013). A significant difference between the experimental and control groups was said to have been discovered. Aladejana (2008), asserted that the experimental group receiving treatment substantially improves the mean difference compared to the control group receiving no treatment.

The availability of interactive conferencing and smartphone technologies has increased interest and participation in education. This educational practice may be compatible with the blended learning pedagogical approach used in our classrooms (Olelewe, 2014). However, due to the lack of facilities that would enable this dream to be realized, teachers and faculty members are urged to supplement technology integration with other appropriate avenues. For instance, the global system for mobile communication (GSM) revolution has resulted in developing world countries gaining access to the Internet and the use of mobile-enabled devices has resulted in intimate interaction among students worldwide. Nigeria is not an exception in this regard, as many students in higher institutions of learning possess some form of smartphone or another device.

Using smartphones to access the Internet via network providers' data bundle subscriptions is highly prevalent among Nigerian students. These students frequently took advantage of this opportunity to engage in meaningless interactions with their peers. They waste valuable time socializing with acquaintances, some of whom they have never met. However, this can be redirected to beneficial use, the teacher can use this medium as part of meeting the student after school via one of the social networking sites such as Facebook or WhatsApp to interact and share thoughts. This could go a long way towards extending classroom interaction to non-classroom settings, where socialization and

collaboration among learners can be strengthened. This paper aims to integrate screencast video technology to facilitate the creation of a blended social and collaborative learning environment.

Conclusion

Blended learning strategies that incorporate information communication technology (ICT) are gaining traction in classrooms at all levels. Additionally, the Covid 19 pandemic that ravages the globe has triggered concern about using ICT in teaching and learning. However, the full integration of technology into the teaching and learning environment will not occur until institutions of higher learning make cross-curricular use of these tools a central component of their programms. Blended learning is an excellent method for achieving this. Through blended learning, institutions of learning leverage their students' interests and familiarity with a variety of information communication technologies to foster and facilitate an engaging learning environment, both online and face to face.

Recommendations

1. There is the need to provide essential facilities needed to establish a state of the arts blended learning in Higher Education system in Nigeria.
2. It should be made mandatory for all faculty members and student alike to acquire computer literacy skills to enable them utilize the existing blended learning facilities in their respective places of work and study areas.
3. It is recommended that henceforth, acquiring blended learning skills and its implementing in a classroom instruction should formed part of promotion criteria.

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