Chapter 11
Blended Learning in Nigeria: Determining Students' Readiness and Faculty Role in Advancing Technology in a Globalized Educational Development

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ABSTRACT

Blended learning requirements are increasing, in part because of the population explosion and policies pertaining to the democratization of education. Yet, thousands of students and faculty remain deficient in the use of blended learning to advance technology in developing countries, especially sub-Saharan Africa. This research employed a quantitative assessment design aimed at improving best available practices, processes, and performance in terms of the blended learning offered in a university setting. A six-point Likert-type questionnaire was used to gather data. Multiple statistical procedures were employed in the subsequent analysis—percentage, mean point values, chi-square, and ANOVA. Majority of the respondents to the questionnaire agreed that the teaching of MIS to students is effective and has a positive impact on their academic achievements. This groundbreaking research presents a realistic resource for the practical application of blended learning in university education in Nigeria, as well as a comprehensive view of the benefits and problems of the applicability of blended learning.

INTRODUCTION

The global academic landscape is changing direction, from traditional face-to-face teaching and learning methods to more sophisticated and technologically-assisted methods. The introduction of Information Communication Technology (ICT) into educational settings and curriculum has significantly altered the tools and content of learning. Such blended learning has resulted in more proactive and higher quality methods of educating students.

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Blended learning is essential in allowing access to contemporary global mainstream education. As such, ICT remains an important asset in Nigeria's national and regional development (Ololube, 2011). Nigeria must thus integrate ICT into its education sectors, especially tertiary education, as this level of education is at the forefront of national and regional development, charged with the production of equipped and adept human capital. Presently Nigerian higher education institutions are not prepared for these new challenges and have been slow to respond to calls for the expansion of ICT services (Ifinido, 2005; Igwe, 2005; Iloanusi & Osuagwu, 2009).

Globally there is an increasing demand for more and better ICT competencies among students and faculty because of advances in technology and global educational development (UNESCO, 2008). The effectiveness of any educational system depends on the ICT expertise of its students and educators. In turn, the success of teachers or educators depends on how well they are prepared for their roles within a changing and challenging system.

Teachers direct and evaluate the educational progress of their students (Ololube & Egbezor, 2009) and this progress ultimately depends on the instructional strategies employed. Faculty must have specialized training and knowledge in the application of several different instructional delivery methods (which many academics call blended learning) and their methodological application to be able to cope with day-to-day pedagogical encounters with students. In this context, the notion of competence goes beyond skills to include attitudes and stamina needed to carry action (even) through difficult circumstances (Husu, 2006; Ololube, 2009).

Blended learning is the combination of online and face-to-face learning with the objective of providing the most resourceful and effective instructional experience. The blended learning concept is most often used to explain approaches that combine several different learning delivery methods. It is also used to describe learning that mixes various event-based activities, including face-to-face classrooms, e-learning, and self-paced instruction (Graham, 2005). Barriers to ICT use in Nigerian universities have been identified as including inadequate funding, limited computer/internet access, poor infrastructure, power supply shortages and in most cases complete black outs, a lack of trained faculty/personnel, and poverty, among others (Ifinedo & Ololube, 2007). Consequently, campaigning for a total shift to the technology-assisted classroom is arguably unrealistic in most Nigerian public universities (Aladejana, 2008).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This text records the findings of a research study that reviewed and codified what was already known about blended learning and student academic achievement. While we recognize the insensitive academic environment in Nigeria that researchers (Ifinedo & Ololube, 2007) have posited as being responsible for slow growth rates in Nigerian education system, however, blended learning is gradually taking shape in university education in Nigeria especially in the private universities.

Internet searches confirm that very little has been written about this domain of study in Nigeria. The enthusiasm to write this chapter arises from the desire to examine students readiness and faculty role in the use of blended learning methodologies (technology-based materials and face-to-face sessions) to present educational content. It also arises from a desire to assess students' readiness and faculty role in employing blended learning as a way of attaining teaching and learning effectiveness and, finally, a desire to determine success so far in terms of student academic achievements.

To address the above objectives, twenty one research hypotheses were formulated. The hypothesis statements are presented as follows:

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