

Chapter 13

Supervisors' Perceptions of Blended Approach for Graduate Thesis Supervision: The Case of Kenyatta University

Marguerite Khakasa Miheso-O'Connor

Kenyatta University, Kenya

Adelheid Marie Bwire

Kenyatta University, Kenya

Isaac Minae Mwangis

Kenyatta University, Kenya

ABSTRACT

The uptake of blended supervision remains low in most developing nations. This chapter presents findings from a mini study on the perceptions of Kenyatta University graduate student supervisors and their uptake of blended supervision approach. The study adopted a mixed research design using eight supervisors purposively sampled. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data which were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings show that several challenges impede a positive orientation of supervisors towards a blended approach to graduate supervision. Findings indicated levels of reluctance in adapting the blended approach to supervision. The authors aver that lack of consistent efforts towards capacity building for supervisors' self-efficacy to enhanced use of the blended approach needs to be addressed. The results of this study will be used to inform supervisors' professional development initiatives in order to foster postgraduate student completion rates and for the university to develop a policy to mainstream blended supervision in its institutional structures.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-0242-6.ch013

INTRODUCTION

Thesis writing at postgraduate level is fundamental and its quality is central. Quality can be compromised when the supervision exercise becomes taxing due to handling the ever-increasing numbers of graduate students that has become the norm for many universities. Students are increasingly taking up learning at a distance option which is increasingly being preferred with the advent of Technology (Roumell and Bolliger,2017).

Blended learning in education is a strategy that combines both online and face to face instruction. This strategy has been introduced at tertiary level to include supervising graduate students' thesis writing. Blended supervision provides elements of relative advantage in terms of time, costs, effectiveness, convenience, quality, results and even social prestige (Rogers 2003)over face to face supervision. Varying degrees of using blended approach exist and the depth of involvement is usually an indicator of supervisors' compatibility with technology that is embedded in their perceptions of the innovation. This chapter presents the results of a study of supervisors' perceptions of the blended thesis supervision process in an environment of technology scarcity. It explores the feasibility of using a blended approach to graduate research supervision. The study was motivated by the possibility of using blended supervision to support improvement of the quality and success of Masters and Doctoral students' research output. The chapter presents the perspectives of Kenyatta University graduate student supervisors in the context of their uptake of blended (face-face and online) supervision.

Blended supervision was introduced at the institution without much regulation and guidance on what blended learning/research activities are. No research had been carried out to determine the status of the practise and its impact on student supervision experience. The findings show that a blended approach to graduate supervision would catalyze the supervision process, increase efficiency with the workload of the supervisor, and create a more vibrant supervision process conditionally. The results imply that traditional supervision practice is still dominant with blended supervision picking up gradually as the supervisors become more tech-competent. Recommendations from the study emphasizes the need for more structured training sessions on blended supervision. The findings provide empirical evidence that can be used to inform supervisors' professional development initiatives to foster graduate student completion rates and to institutionalize blended supervision.

In this chapter we share results of this survey whose aim is to provide the university with the status of blended supervision among faculty and provide evidence for expected institutionalization of blended supervision.

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Blending the use of technology with face-to-face graduate supervision has been growing slowly in recent years. Technologies are also regularly used to support both on and off-campus research students. According to Manathunga, 2007, there is an expanding literature on advising off-campus students. He further asserts that the key issues facing such remote students can be summarized as social isolation, difficulties in accessing the research culture (intellectual isolation), lack of access to resources, lack of face-to-face interaction with supervisors, and difficulties in maintaining a balance between work, study and family. These specific challenges can be addressed with the use of available technology blended

20 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/supervisors-perceptions-of-blended-approach-for-graduate-thesis-supervision/242225

Related Content

U-Learning and Virtual Classrooms in Social Sciences Education: Virtual Learning Environments and Participation

(2020). *ICTs and Innovation for Didactics of Social Sciences* (pp. 246-267).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/u-learning-and-virtual-classrooms-in-social-sciences-education/250924

A Study in Developing a Mobile Learning System based on Human-Computer Interaction Design Principles

Kuo-Wei Su, Cheng-Li Liu and Meng-Fang Kuo (2009). *International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning* (pp. 17-40).

www.irma-international.org/article/study-developing-mobile-learning-system/34063

The Impact of Experiencing a Mobile Game on Teachers' Attitudes Towards Mobile Learning

Hagit Meishar-Taland Miky Ronen (2017). *International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning* (pp. 21-32).

www.irma-international.org/article/the-impact-of-experiencing-a-mobile-game-on-teachers-attitudes-towards-mobile-learning/188410

Wildfire Activities: New Patterns of Mobility and Learning

Yrjö Engeström (2009). *International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning* (pp. 1-18).

www.irma-international.org/article/wildfire-activities-new-patterns-mobility/4055

iTeach Literacy with iPad Devices: Preparing Teachers for Effective Classroom Integration

Diane Santori, Carol Smith and Heather Schugar (2014). *Mobile Pedagogy and Perspectives on Teaching and Learning* (pp. 205-220).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/iteach-literacy-with-ipad-devices/78669