

LECTURERS' AWARENESS AND UTILIZATION OF BLENDED LEARNING FOR TEACHING EDUCATIONAL COURSES IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN SOKOTO STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The study focused on the lecturers' awareness and utilization of blended learning for teaching educational courses in colleges of education in Sokoto State, Nigeria. This paper adopted a survey research design. The population of the study consisted of all lecturers in the Department of Education in two colleges of education in Sokoto State. One hundred and eight lecturers were used as the sample for this study. Two research questions guided the study. The instrument for this study was a questionnaire constructed based on a 4- point Likert scale called College Lecturers' Assessment Questionnaire (CLAQ) which was validated, and the reliability index was found to be 0.71 using Cronbach alpha. The data obtained was analyzed using frequency descriptive statistics to answer the research questions. The result shows that almost all the lecturers are Blended learning model. The study recommends that seminar and workshop should be organized for the lecturers to further update their knowledge on the benefits of blended learning for teaching.

Keywords: Awareness, Utilization, Blended Learning.

Introduction

We live in a fast changing world that is becoming more scientific and more technological. As this transformation occurs, education in all forms and in all subjects is not left out. The introduction of Information and Communication Technology to teaching and learning process has given rise to improving the learning environment and the process of knowledge acquisition and dissemination at all levels of education. In some

countries of the world, blended learning has been adopted; however, in the views of the researchers, blended learning has not been fully instituted in most of the public tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Even if it is fully instituted, practice is one of the major problems most especially in teacher education institutions. The low integration of blended learning at the teacher education level might have been unconnected with the low or lack of

awareness and the use of blended learning. Awareness is a relative term; there are different ways it can be defined and conceptualized according to the field of study and scholars. In general, awareness is having knowledge about the environment. In this context, awareness is having knowledge of the existence and usefulness of blended learning. Awareness is one of the determinants of technology adoption. Recent studies conducted by Opoku and Kuranchie (2015), Alharthi (2016) and (Ziemba, 2016) revealed that awareness plays a critical role in the adoption and usage of ICT. Slow adoption of technology can be due to lack of knowledge about the existence and usefulness of that technology.

Therefore, before teacher educators can embark on the adoption of this innovative learning environment, there is a need to ascertain and address their level of awareness and the use of blended learning appropriately (Oluwale, Funmilola & Adekola, 2017).

The concept of blended learning has been around for a long time, but its terminology was not firmly established until around the beginning of the 21st century. Blended learning is an educational programme (formal or informal) that combines online digital media with traditional classroom methods (Wikipedia, 2017). Unlike the traditional classroom setting, Blended learning is characterized by students control over time, place, path or pace. It also involves students receiving lesson or instruction within the four walls of the classroom with a teacher present face-to-

face combined with computer-mediated activities.

Blended learning can be defined as learning systems that combine face-to-face instruction with computer mediated instruction (Graham, Henrie, & Gibbos, 2014). It involves a combination of conventional face-to-face and online technology-based learning (Graham, 2014). The combination may involve mixing various event-based activities such as face-to-face classroom, live e-learning, self-paced learning, synchronous online conference and training, or asynchronous self-pace learning (Graham, 2014). In this study, blended learning involves combining internet and face-face physical co-presence of teacher and students. It motivates students to learn on their own at their own pace and in their own time.

However, (Halili & Zainuddin, 2015) stated that blended learning is the integration of both conventional and modern teaching- learning processes, and has shifted the culture of teaching-learning from being lecturer-centred, to becoming student-centred. This learning activity is more active compared to lecturing in the classroom, and students are facilitated by the lecturer to be more active in solving problems independently.

Blended learning is more beneficial than the use of either online or traditional method of teaching (Oluwale, 2017). The reason for this is that in blended learning, the overall benefits of blended learning are more than the best of either constituent. For instance, the traditional methods facilitate physical human interaction between the teachers and their students,

but learning is restricted to the four-walls of a classroom. In the online method, learning can take place anywhere and anytime, at the same time; physical human interaction is lacking between the teacher and his students. With the two methods (online and traditional) combined, blended learning affords the opportunity to teach/learn without being restricted to the four-walls of a classroom or keep students in the classroom for a long time. At the same time, blended learning gives an opportunity for physical interaction between the teachers and learners as the situation demands.

Despite the beneficial role that blended learning plays, there are some other challenges for using blended learning in teaching, such as designing the content based on video, animation or simulations, and the lack of time in developing the content (Halili, 2015). Another challenge is the limited access to videoconferences and content because of low bandwidth on the network. Furthermore, not all students and lecturers are aware that the utilization of technology media is important in the teaching and learning processes. To facilitate and motivate students to learn independently while outside the class also becomes another obstacle for teachers. Some lecturers are unable to boost students' motivation to use technology as instructions. Some studies have reported that, in the use of blended learning for learning activities, not all students are able to study independently (Halili, 2015).

In another study conducted by Ibrahim and Shalizad (2015), it was observed that ease of use, usefulness and intention to use

influenced the adoption of e-learning in the blended learning platform, while perceived enjoyment was found not to influence adoption of blended learning.

It is in line of the above that the study sought to investigate the lecturer's awareness and utilization of blended learning in colleges of education in Sokoto State.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate lecturers' awareness and use of blended learning for teaching educational courses in colleges of education in Sokoto State. Based on this, the objectives of the study terms are:

1. To examine the level of college lecturers' awareness of blended learning in colleges of education in Sokoto State.
2. To find out the extent to which college lecturers use blended learning.

Research questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. What are the levels of lecturers' awareness of blended learning?
2. To what extent do the lecturers use blended learning?

Research Design

The research design adopted for this study is descriptive survey research design.

Population

The population of this study consisted of all lectures in the School of Education in the two colleges of education in Sokoto State metropolis. There were 149 lecturers during the period of the study.

Sample

The sample drawn from the population was 108 lecturers. This sample size is adequate going by the postulation of Christy and Morgan 1970 on table of sampling.

Research Instrument for Data Collection

The researchers developed teacher's questionnaire, called College Lecturers Assessment Questionnaire in order to find out the lectures' awareness and utilization of blended learning in teaching educational courses. The instrument was built on a 4-point Likert scale rating of strongly agreed (SA), Agreed (A) Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD). The questionnaire consists of three sections,

i.e. sections A, B and C. Section A is on Introduction, Section B, is on Demographic information of the respondents while sections C takes lecturers' opinion.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Ten copies of the instrument were submitted to experts for validation. Based on their observations, the items were modified to 8. For the reliability of the instrument, 15 copies of the questionnaire were administered to some lecturers at Shehu Shagari College of Education Sokoto and their ratings were used to obtain the reliability using Cronbach alpha. The reliability index of 0.71 was obtained.

Result

The data collected was analyzed using simple descriptive statistics to answer the foregoing research questions as follows:

Table 1: I have heard of blended learning

| | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Agree | 80 | 74.1 |
| strongly agree | 11 | 10.2 |
| Disagree | 13 | 12.0 |
| strongly disagree | 4 | 3.7 |
| Total | 108 | 100.0 |

Source: *Field survey 2020.*

Table 1 shows that 84.3% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that they have heard of blended learning. Only 15.7% (17 out of 108) disagree or strongly disagree.

Table 2: Blended learning has been introduced in my college curriculum.

| | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Agree | 62 | 57.4 |
| strongly agree | 15 | 13.9 |
| Disagree | 27 | 25.5 |
| strongly disagree | 4 | 3.7 |
| Total | 108 | 100.0 |

Source: *Field survey 2020.*

Table 2 indicates that 71.3% strongly agreed and agreed that blended learning has been introduced in their college's curriculum while only 29.2% disagreed.

Table 3: My college gave me refresher training about blended learning.

| | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Agree | 17 | 15.7 |
| strongly agree | 19 | 17.6 |
| Disagree | 54 | 50.0 |
| strongly disagree | 18 | 16.7 |
| Total | 108 | 100.0 |

Source: *Field survey 2020.*

Table 3 shows that 33.3% agreed and strongly agreed that their college gave them refresher training about blended learning while about 66.7% disagreed.

Table 4: I have access to blended learning site.

| | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Agree | 59 | 54.6 |
| strongly agree | 7 | 6.5 |
| Disagree | 23 | 21.3 |
| strongly disagree | 19 | 17.6 |
| Total | 108 | 100.0 |

Table 4 shows that 61.1% (66 out of 108) agreed and strongly agreed that, they have access to blended learning site while 38.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Table .5: I'm presenting lecture via blended learning

| | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Agree | 21 | 19.4 |
| strongly agree | 4 | 3.7 |
| Disagree | 45 | 41.7 |
| strongly disagree | 38 | 35.2 |
| Total | 108 | 100.0 |

Source: *Field survey 2020.*

In presenting lecture via blended learning only 23.1% agreed and strongly agreed while 76.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Table .6: I'm using blended learning in some of my courses

| | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Agree | 11 | 10.2 |
| strongly agree | 11 | 10.2 |
| Disagree | 49 | 45.4 |
| strongly disagree | 37 | 34.3 |
| Total | 108 | 100.0 |

Source: *Field survey 2020.*

In using blended learning to teach some courses in colleges of education only 24.4% strongly agreed and agreed to this but the rest did not agreed.

Table .7: I'm using blended learning in all my courses

| | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Agree | 7 | 6.5 |
| strongly agree | 8 | 7.4 |
| Disagree | 72 | 66.7 |
| strongly disagree | 21 | 19.4 |
| Total | 108 | 100.0 |

Source: *Field survey 2020.*

Table 7 shows that 13.9 % (15 out of 108) agreed and strongly agreed that, they are using blended learning in all their courses during teaching while 86.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Table .8: Blended learning is more convenient than face to face learning during teaching

| | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Agree | 25 | 23.1 |
| strongly agree | 14 | 13.0 |
| Disagree | 53 | 49.1 |
| strongly disagree | 16 | 14.8 |
| Total | 108 | 100.0 |

Source: *Field survey 2020.*

Table 8 shows that 36.1% (39 out of 108) agreed and strongly agreed that, blended learning is more convenient than face to face learning during teaching while 63.9% are contrary to this view.

The 4-points scale was collapsed to the 2-point scale of agree – disagree and used to answer the research questions and discuss

the findings. The results from the tables have been used to answer the research questions below:

Research question 1: What are the levels of lecturers' awareness of blended learning?

The first step of implementing any instructional method is to be aware of it and ready to observe it. Lecturers in education are aware of blended learning in teaching and learning process, this is because table 1 shows that 84.3% (91 out of 108) agreed that they have heard of blended learning model. Lecturers in education are also aware of blended learning because table 2 shows that almost 71.3% agreed that blended learning has been introduced in their college curriculum; likewise in table 4 about 61.1% lecturers' agreed that they have access to blended learning site. This shows that almost all the lecturers are aware of blended learning in teaching and learning process.

Research question 2: To what extent do the lecturers use blended learning?

In using any instructional pedagogy for teaching, it requires a guide and training for proper utilization. According to table 3 it shows that only 33.3% (36 out of 108) agreed that their college gave them refresher training about blended learning while 66.7% (72 out of 108) disagreed that, they have not been trained. This shows that almost all the lectures are not properly been trained on how to use blended learning model during course of instruction. Likewise in table 5, it shows that 23.1% agreed that they are presenting lecture using blended learning while 76.9% disagreed that they are presenting lectures via blended learning. This shows that most of the lecturers are not using blended learning during course of instruction.

Discussion of the findings

The study was aimed at finding out lecturers' awareness and utilization of blended learning for teaching educational courses in colleges of education in Sokoto State, Nigeria. It was found out that most of the lecturers are aware of Blended learning but they have not been properly trained on how to use blended learning model during instructional period.

It shows from the findings that most of the lectures are aware of blended learning because table 1 shows that 84.3% (91 out of 108) agreed that they have heard of blended learning. Lecturers in education are also aware of blended learning because table 2 shows that almost 71.3% agreed that blended learning has been introduced in their college curriculum. On the other hand, the only problem is that of organizing workshops and seminars on how to use and apply blended learning model during instructional period. Table 3 shows that 33.3% (36 out of 108) agreed that their college gave them refresher training about blended learning while almost 66.7% (72 out of 108) disagreed that they have been trained. This shows that almost all the lectures have not properly been trained on how to use blended learning model during course of instruction, this is also confirmed from table 5, 6, 7 and 8. More over in line with the view of Oluwale (2017) blended learning has not been fully instituted in most of the public tertiary institutions in Nigeria, even where it has been instituted,

practice is one of the major problems most especially in teacher education institutions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the foregoing it shows that the respondents are aware of blended learning model but they are not using blended learning model in teaching their courses as a result of lack of guide and proper training. As such the following recommendations were made:

1. Workshops and seminars should be organized for the lecturers in colleges of education to guide and train properly on how to use blended learning model so as to bring their courses in to concrete rather than abstract nature.
2. Technological tools and other relevant infrastructures should be provided for the integration and adoption of blended learning model in the colleges of education in Sokoto State.
3. Lecturers should select and use a model of blended learning applicable in the courses they teach.

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