Chapter 52
Adoption of Blended Learning Technologies in Selected Secondary Schools in Cameroon and Nigeria: Challenges in Disability Inclusion

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ABSTRACT

Blended learning could be seen as the solution to learning resource accessibility, especially when the indicators of measure are limited to distance and time. Distance and time could be said to be the generic indicators for the measure of blended learning. However, these do not solve the problem for everyone in society. For Inclusive Blended Learning (IBL), different types of users in society should be considered in its design. This is exactly what has provoked the focus of this chapter, to investigate the position of blended learning with respect to people with disabilities. The chapter's investigation is centered on selected secondary schools in Cameroon and Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Due to increasing development and employment of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in various sectors of society, this age could be described as that of an information revolution. This age has facilitated teaching and learning, and with the development of e-learning means students can access learning materials from anywhere and at anytime when they have access to the required technologies. This, by design should improve the learning ability of students since accessibility of learning resources is high. In its much wider implementation, access to such resources could

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also be made available on mobile devices. This does not necessarily have to come in the form of a mobile app (application) which may be restricted to a particular device but in the form of mobile Web pages since most popular mobile devices have browsers.

Also, the perpetual development and integration of ICT in various facets of society has meant individuals and organizations are forced to continually adjust to newer approaches of teaching and learning. It is expected that such newer approaches will also be found in institutions of learning. Africa, and in particular Sub-Saharan Africa, has been found to be among the least digital (Heeks, 2009) due to the effects of the digital divide (ITU, 2005). This implies less use of such technologies even in the educational sector. In such societies, the rural areas tend to be most disadvantaged.

However, Africa was identified as one of the fastest growing continents in terms of adoption and use of mobile phones (ITU, 2004). There is great potential therefore to utilize such technologies in education. In fact, it has been reported that farmers and those in the healthcare sector are positively using these technologies for their benefits (Mutume, 2009). Such use of technology could be emulated in the education sector to improve teaching and learning. However, the increasing uptake of technology by sub-Saharan African countries, and their eventual utilization in education (Nganji, Kwemain & Taku, 2010), has been discriminatory in that students with disabilities are often excluded (Nganji, 2008). This might be due to the fact that such technology has not been designed for accessibility (Brophy & Craven, 2007; Sheldon, 2001). Also, in most sub-Saharan African societies, there is the tendency to neglect the needs of people with disabilities. This includes education as the society has not adapted to including the needs of disabled students within mainstream education. This calls for measures to improve accessibility to blended learning technology for disabled students.

Aims and Objectives of Chapter

This chapter will investigate the integration and level of blended learning in some selected secondary schools in Cameroon and Nigeria particularly focusing on how blended learning is employed for the benefit of students with disabilities. A brief review of the adoption of blended learning technologies in Africa will be discussed, including the effects of the digital divide.

Thus, this chapter will assess the level of disability inclusion in the adoption of blended learning technology (mainly computers and associated technologies) in the selected secondary schools. The results of a survey in these schools will be presented, analyzed and discussed, and some recommendations will be made on improving access to blended learning technologies for everyone, particularly those with disabilities who are often neglected in the society. The chapter will also present the challenges of adopting blended learning technologies in Cameroon and Nigeria.

By examining these issues, this chapter will be going a step further to address an issue that is not normally the focus of researchers in the region. Addressing such issue will help stimulate thought and discussion on inclusion of disabled students in the use of blended learning technology in resource poor areas.

BLENDED LEARNING

According to Cohere (2011), blended learning (BL) has emerged in response to the increasing need and demand to respond to diverse students' needs, to provide engaging and meaningful learning experiences, and to optimize increasingly scarce resources. Hence it appeared that BL's scope of implementation is user inclusive. Blended learning simply refers to the combination of the traditional face-to-face approach and the use of technology in learning (Graham et al, 2012). The traditional face-to-face aspect of learning is the