Chapter 15
Assessment of Opportunities and Implementation of Blended Learning Strategies in Nigeria Higher Education:
A Case Study of Obafemi Awolowo University

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ABSTRACT

The chapter investigated the facilities available, extent of usage, and the various methods, perspectives, and strategies of blended learning used as well as possible challenges in Nigeria higher education using Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife as a case study. The descriptive survey research design was adopted. An instrument titled "Questionnaire on Opportunities and Implementation of Blended Learning" was administered on 216 lecturers selected by simple random sampling technique. Data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and simple percentages. The results showed that facilities are fairly available and there is moderate extent of usage of the available facilities for incorporating blended learning strategy. Lecturers used 21 different methods, the five blended learning perspectives, and four different strategies. Various challenges were identified. The study concluded that opportunities were available for lecturers to implement blended learning strategy into the classroom instruction delivery if the major challenges faced are properly addressed.

INTRODUCTION

The quality of graduates of higher education largely determines the quality of the workforce of a nation; hence success in education is highly contributory to the development of any nation. Therefore, major concerns in higher education have included poor performance especially in courses with large classes and getting courses across to distance learners as well as the need for internationalization of higher education. The general consensus now is that the standard of education in Nigeria has fallen; this may not be unconnected with the general poor performance of students (Bamidele & Bamidele, 2013). Crosnoe, Johnson and Elder (2004) identified various factors that could affect students' performance to include: social factors (peer group; family background; religion; home problems; break ups of parent and economic issues); infrastructure for learning; learning environment (class size; environmental condition e.tc); teaching and training methods, students' personal factors (reading habit and reading plan; playing and wasteful time spending; lack of self-discipline; bad attitude towards school; lack of initiative and use of imagination; poor literacy skills and inadequate or poor examination preparation); academic factors (lack of provision of a bridge between theory and practical and heavy course workload). Internationalization of higher education has been largely affected by various factors amongst which are teaching methods that do not take care of distance learners and inadequate policy provisions (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan, 2012).

The National Policy of Education (2014) clearly states that no educational system may rise beyond the quality of its teachers. According to Najimi, Sharifirad, Aminu and Meftagh (2013), the most important factors affecting educational failure from students' point of view were the curriculum, factors related to educator, learning environment, family factors and socioeconomic factors. According to Olatunji, Aghimien, Ayodeji and Oke (2016), parents and lecturers are of much relevance and can highly influence the performance of construction related undergraduate students in Nigeria. Olajide and Aladejana, (2016) reiterated that of all the various factors, the teacher is the most singular important factor that determines the success of a school as it is widely acclaimed that the best educational policy can be made or marred by the teacher. Aladejana (2015) has however identified teacher's pedagogy as a very important parameter that can affect students' performance.

In spite of the importance of pedagogy, teaching is still largely done using the old conservative approach of lecture method with the teacher in most cases acting as the repertoire of knowledge and the students the dormant recipients in Nigerian higher education. There is over-reliance on textbooks with only occasional demonstrations and experimental classes with classrooms often times a cycle of memorization and note coping. This traditional teacher-centered learning approach often favours passive reception of knowledge as against interactive technology which encourages active learning. Obviously, the educational practices of the traditional classroom are no longer effective and this method of teaching does not seem to be meeting the needs of the present generation recognizing the technological development to which these students are exposed to all around. A pedagogical shift is therefore the answer where teaching can incorporate technology to make learning active and teaching student-centered, (Aladejana, 2018).

Education and learning are dynamic fields which have always been associated with the physical presence of schools, classrooms, teachers, textbooks and examinations (Eddy, Nor-Aziah & Jasmine, 2014). However, innovations in technology have resulted in new trends of learning environments and introduced more modern conceptions of learning. From the traditional face-to-face learning, technology has transformed our education positively and brought us to the e-learning and web-based programmes. According to Aladejana (2007), there have been very little efforts in the integration of ICT into the Ni-

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