Chapter 90
A Traditional African Perspective of Blended Learning

Mejai B. M. Avoseh
University of South Dakota, USA

Olugbenga Abimbola Fayomi
Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria

Bolanle Clara Simeon-Fayomi
Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Paradigm shifts in education have, in most cases, been linked to changes in the context and content of education. Most nouveau ideas in education in the 21ˢᵗ century have been linked directly or indirectly to globalization. One of such shifts is the re-invention and importance of lifelong learning. The dialogue on lifelong learning and its content-dependent characteristics have imposed the need for a diversity of perspectives beyond the traditional Western perspective. The purpose of this chapter is to present the theoretical framework for blended learning from the perspective of the holistic indigenous African education, which was in its entirety blended and lifelong. The chapter uses reference to the interconnectedness of lifelong education to all facets of life in traditional Africa. It analyzes the connection between formal, non-formal, and informal, the use of observation, initiation, and apprenticeship, the environment, and a host of other blending variables, to build and develop the arguments.

INTRODUCTION

The history of Western education is very clear on the relationship between the learner, content, and the educator/specialist. According to that history, the educator/specialist determines appropriate content, method and outcome of every education program. The learning and motivational preferences of the learner did not matter in those days because the learner was a passive recipient of knowledge. The relationship between the learner and the educator/specialist within that conscripted nature of education was that of master-servant with a vertical flow of orders. What we have described briefly above was a dictatorship of the educator/specialist that put all the power and

focuses in the learning process in the hands of the educator/specialist. However, with the emergence of men and women of fresh ideas and courage, those enslaving ideas of learning were challenged and different alternatives began to emerge. The introduction of new ideas in education therefore has almost always been ignited by the context. In such situations, voices of discontentment with the status quo are often laced in new ideas aimed at moving education forward with the learner as an important partner. A few examples will help drive our point.

Plato's ideas of education were influenced by two factors,

1. His teacher (Socrates) on the one hand, and
2. The decadent Athenian society of his time.

Plato believed that education was the greatest resource for rescuing Athens of his time from inept and corrupt leaders. Plato borrowed from Socrates' axiom that "virtue is knowledge" and "ignorance is vice," to argue for functional specialization in education that would allow leaders to be educated in the act of governance. For him, most leaders of his time were in a state of intellectual darkness and education was required to provide the needed light to knowledge. Plato insists that any education that is supposed to transform intellectual darkness into light cannot be one that feeds the mind with knowledge; a suitable education will be one that uses questions to elicit knowledge. Again, Plato was influenced by his teacher's method of dialogue which is referred to as the "Socratic Method of Midwifery." The paradigm shifts introduced by Plato were all in favor of the learner. Plato's efforts mentioned above have been credited for introducing fundamental changes into education, some of which still linger today. Akinpelu (1981) credits Plato with introducing the "principle of professionalism," and for being the first to "divide education into the formal levels…and to assign to them appropriate ages and curricular contents" (p. 29). The changes that Plato's philosophy envis-

aged and introduced were to make learners more knowledgeable in subjects most suited for the intellectual professional within which they fall in his process of stratification. His emphasis was thus more on the learner and productive learning.

There were several pre-twentieth and pre-twenty first century educators after Plato who all criticized the educational system of their context and offered alternatives. All alternatives offered by educational philosophers and reformers from Plato onwards aim at focusing more on learning by limiting the didactic aspect of education. Jean-Jacques Rousseau is one such educational reformer who criticized the rather too much societal influences on the individual and ipso facto on his/her education. Although Rousseau's focus was a general overhaul of the social system through *The Social Contract*, Rorty (1998) observed that he used *Emile* as the prototype of the individual in society and the learner who is "independent and active" (p. 248). The educator's task is to keep Emile within his natural abilities and help him learn from his experiences because "when he learns from experience, he remains free and active" (p. 248). Experiential learning and freedom are the surest avenues to achieving and maximizing 'self-determination.' Rousseau's ideas laid the foundation for "Progressivism" in education that emphasizes the needs, experiences, interests, and abilities of learners in the content and process of education.

John Dewey's (1961) introduction of pragmatism into education, Malcolm Knowles's (1980) use of *Andragogy* and Eduard Lindeman's (1961) emphasis on non-vocational and lifelong learning all criticized the American educational system of their times from their individual perspectives. However, they are unanimous in their insistence on making learning less of a ritual, of an ideology, and more a democratic process that connects to the learner's life experiences. Learning for them is a process of change that uses the learner's total existential chemistry to present and analyze content. Exploring various and best options to ensure

Related Content

Learning to Read Literature Amidst the Science of Reading
Geoffrey C. Kellogg (2024). *Cultivating Literate Citizenry Through Interdisciplinary Instruction (pp. 18-37).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/learning-to-read-literature-amidst-the-science-of-reading/343998

Introducing CLIL Modules to Primary School Learners: A Multi-Perspective Study
Karin Vogt (2021). *Teaching Practices and Equitable Learning in Children's Language Education (pp. 1-22).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/introducing-clil-modules-to-primary-school-learners/272877

Evaluating the Assessment Qualities of Teacher-Created Tests
Lauren M. Rein (2019). *Handbook of Research on Assessment Literacy and Teacher-Made Testing in the Language Classroom (pp. 263-282).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/evaluating-the-assessment-qualities-of-teacher-created-tests/217157

A Survey on the Acceptability of Equivalence-Based Translation Into Yorùbá Language in the Domain of Information and Communication Technology
Jethro Akinyemi Adejumo (2019). *International Journal of Translation, Interpretation, and Applied Linguistics (pp. 1-16).*
www.irma-international.org/article/a-survey-on-the-acceptability-of-equivalence-based-translation-into-yorb-language-in-the-domain-of-information-and-communication-technology/222823

Correct Pronunciation of Student Names: A Foundation for Language Learning
Anita Brightand Christopher L. Cardiel (2020). *Beyond Language Learning Instruction: Transformative Supports for Emergent Bilinguals and Educators (pp. 24-46).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/correct-pronunciation-of-student-names/241660