



IMPLEMENTATION OF BLENDED LEARNING PEDAGOGICAL MODELS FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING OF BUSINESS EDUCATION IN NEW NORMAL

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Abstract

Blended learning includes effective instructional strategies for teaching with technology in and out of the classroom. Teachers, especially business educators will benefit from using blended learning through improved classroom efficiency and increased teaching flexibility. Similarly, learning becomes more convenient for students, as well as better learning outcomes will be ensured through engagement and collaboration. This study, therefore, sought to determine lecturers' strategies for effective deployment of blended learning in the post covid era. Two research questions were raised and answered, and two hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. A total of 109 lecturers from five tertiary institutions in Anambra State participated in the study. Questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection while the analyses were done using mean and standard deviation for the research questions and t-test to test the hypotheses. The study found that lecturers agreed that the blended learning model was effective for teaching and learning of business education, and that technical knowledge, lack of students' readiness as well as poor internet facilities were challenges affecting the effective use of blended learning in teaching business education in tertiary institutions.

Keywords: *Blended learning, Effective Teaching, Business Education, New Normal*

Introduction

There is a need to make conscientious and holistic effort in the teaching and learning process aimed at bridging the educational gap created by the COVID-19 pandemic. One of such strategies to adopt in closing this gap is to employ a blended learning pedagogical model for effective teaching of contents, especially at the tertiary institutions. Blended learning (BL) as a pedagogy, is an instructional method that combines traditional face-to-face education with e-



learning (Horn & Staker, 2015). According to the authors, it is when students learn in both a brick-and-mortar environment and an online environment with control over the path, methods, pace, and utilization. Hilliard (2015) defined blended learning as a training modality that combines traditional instruction with digital technology to improve knowledge and skills that students can transfer to the workplace. Blended learning is envisioned as a model that will assist teachers in integrating technology and allow them to use face-to-face instructional classes to meet the different needs of the students (Kleber, 2015), especially in teaching business education curriculum contents. BL includes effective instructional strategies for teaching with technology in and out of the classroom. There is no gainsay that teachers, especially business educators will benefit from using blended learning through improved classroom efficiency and increased teaching flexibility. Thanks to the BL model that ensures that learning becomes more convenient for students, as well as better learning outcomes through engagement and collaboration (Owston, York, & Murtha, 2013). A primary objective of blended learning, according to Shibley (2014), is to enable higher learning and enhance learner-centered pedagogy. This has further cemented a transition from an individualistic learning environment to one that is supportive and collaborative. BL activities include but are not limited to students being able to access emails, e-books, e-journals, complete online assessments, and collaborate using discussion forums and chat rooms (Mohammadyari & Singh, 2015). As the move towards the use of digital technology in modern-day education continues to grow unabated, especially to bridge the lacuna created by COVID-19 pandemic, blended learning as a strategy for effective change in teaching and learning should be implemented by business educators. Strategies are plans of action designed to achieve a specific goal or series of goals within an organizational framework. According to Freedman (2013), strategy is a high-level plan to achieve one or more goals under conditions of certainty. In the context of this study, blended learning as a strategy is one of the teaching approaches that business educators can be adopted to improve the implementation blended learning pedagogical models in the new normal. Therefore, Benson and Kolsaker (2015), stressed the need to offer students opportunities to learn in an online setting, using a learning management system (LMS), for instance.

As a result, the COVID-19 crisis is considered as an opportunity for change. Crises can make innovations that seemed previously impossible suddenly inevitable. The BL model is no more an option but a necessity. According to University World News, (2020), there will be years of reckoning that tertiary institutions need reimagining, not just repairing. Change is not easy, and, in several cases, it may cause more problems than those supposed to solve. Moving from face-to-face to blended learning can be considered as a case of change management. Some commentators are of the view that ICTs can change education by providing distance education, modernizing education, reducing obstacles to learning for all and sundries. It is therefore compelling to say that inclusion of technology in the form of blended learning in the learning process is attractive, opening the possibility of more interesting and playful learning. However, its effectiveness depends on the skills of the lecturer and the attributes of the students. Although lecturers' contribution can, in principle, be ameliorated by training, the students' attributes cannot be taken for granted. Such factors as social relationships inherent to face-to-face teaching, play a pivotal role in accepting technology driven changes in education. Research has shown that lack of direct communication with lecturers and colleagues is the main pitfall of online teaching (Landrum et al. 2020; Martínez-Caro & Campuzano-Bolarín, 2011). ICTs in education, however, will play a central role in the new normal (UNICEF, 2020). In developing countries like Nigeria, the extent to which technology can be used to recover and narrow the digital divide is still vague.



According to the Digital 2020 Global Overview Report published in January 2020, about 60 percent of Nigerians are not connected to the internet. The statistics for mobile phones, which could also be used as a learning medium, are more hopeful. According to the report, around 169.2 million people (83 percent of Nigerians) have access to mobile phone connections. However, of these, 50 percent (around 84.5 million people), reside in urban areas. For the population with access, the proportion would be tilted towards high socio-economic households and urban households - an overwhelming majority of whom are children from wealthier backgrounds who already have a learning advantage over children from poor homes (Baum & Riley, 2019). In a state like Anambra where tertiary institutions are located both in the urban and rural areas, accessing these facilities becomes an uphill task. This reason may be that students who reside in rural areas, are more likely to experience limited access to internet connectivity, computers, and other devices for remote learning, (Obiakor & Adeniran, 2020). In line with the above, Jena (2020) that utilization of blended learning will depend greatly on access to internet and availability of technological devices. Participation of business education students in blended learning will be determined by accessibility to technological devices and internet facilities.

Business education students' skills acquisition is pivotal in the 21st century economy. Business education is that type of education that inculcates in its recipients' attitudes, knowledge, skills, values that is required in the business world. This is a means of producing a healthy, literate, self-reliant citizen that would create wealth for human development thereby resulting in sustainable nation's development at large. Business education like many other subjects in the school system has been defined in several ways by several scholars, to suit different situations and purposes. Bilyaminu (2011) views business education as an aspect of a total education programme that provides the knowledge, skills, attitudes and understanding needed to perform in the business world as a producer and/or consumer of goods and services. Professionally, according to USLegal.com in Ibrahim (2014), business education is described as a programme designed to provide students with the basic processes of educational training; decision making; the philosophy, theory, and psychology of management; practical applications; business start-up and operational procedures. In a nutshell, business education means education for business or training skills which is required in business offices, clerical occupation, and business policy analysis; or education about business aimed at preparing students how and when to buy goods for a profitable outcome, when to make best sales, and so on. To successfully achieve the objective of a business education programme in a COVID era, tertiary institutions should be able to integrate blended learning pedagogical models for effective teaching and learning.

Research Questions

1. What are the lecturers' strategies for effective use of blended learning pedagogical models in teaching and learning?
2. What are the factors affecting effective use of blended learning in tertiary institutions?

Hypotheses

1. Male and female business education lecturers do not differ significantly in the mean ratings on strategies for effective use of blended learning model
2. Lecturers in public and private tertiary institutions do not differ in their mean rating of factors affecting use of blended learning pedagogical models.



Literature Review

In recent years, with the continuous development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), blended instruction has emerged as probably the most prominent instruction method in education, especially in tertiary institutions. The pedagogy of a blended learning environment is “based on the assumption that there are inherent benefits in face-to-face interaction as well as the understanding that there are advantages to using online methods (Clark & James in Nikolaos et. al. 2012). Blended learning is a mix of the traditional face-to-face and the on-line learning so that instruction occurs both in the classroom and on-line. It is essential to point out that the online component becomes a natural extension of the traditional classroom learning (Falconer & Littlejohn, 2007).

More specifically, Bokolo et al. (2020) carried out a study on Blended learning adoption and implementation in higher education: A theoretical and systematic review. The authors presented the constructs and factors that influence students, lecturers, and administration towards adopting BL in higher education. The findings suggest that the BL practices to be implemented for students include face-to-face, activities, information, resources, assessment, and feedback. For the lecturers, the authors identified technology, pedagogy, content, and knowledge. Dziuban, et al. (2018) investigated a study on blended learning: the new normal and emerging technologies. The authors contend that BL coalesces around access, success, and students’ perception of their learning environments. The authors concluded that although blended learning preceded modern instructional technologies, its evolution will be inextricably bound to contemporary information communication technologies that are approximating some aspects of human thought processes.

Kintu and Zhu (2016) investigated the possibility of blended learning in a Ugandan University and examined whether student characteristics (such as self-regulation, attitudes towards blended learning, computer competence) and student background (such as family support, social support, and management of workload) were significant factors in learner outcomes (such as motivation, satisfaction, knowledge construction and performance). The findings from that study indicated that learner attitudes towards blended learning were significant factors to learner satisfaction and motivation while workload management was a significant factor to learner satisfaction and knowledge construction. Nikolaos, et al. (2012) researched on the impact of blended and traditional instruction in students’ performance. According to the authors, blended learning environment is a hybrid of classroom and online learning that includes some of the convenience of online courses without the complete loss of face-to-face advantages. The study found that blended instruction appears as an alternative teaching practice that should be embraced by teachers, to assist students to improve their performance. From this review, it is observed that blended learning is getting increasing attention and studied in different areas on different variables.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the social constructivist theory originated from Vygotsky (1978). Social constructivism is the learning environment where teachers and students work together to explore and create new knowledge (Paily, 2013). The social constructivist model focuses on personalized learning within the context of social learning and therefore sees knowledge as a human product that is socially and culturally constructed. According to this approach, which is also relevant to this study, teacher’s role is a facilitator who ensures that students are exposed to real-world experiences and are actively involved in the learning process



by having exposure to integrating technology in their learning (Aldoobie, 2015). Vygotsky recommended direct and guided teaching to assist in students' cognitive development and stressed the need for peer interaction and cooperative learning. This theory is related to this study because blended learning is a source of collaboration, interaction, and motivation to help teachers and students create a learning environment.

Methods

The study adopted descriptive survey design. The participants of the study were 109 lecturers randomly selected from five tertiary institutions in Anambra State, Nigeria. 41 lecturers were male representing (37.61%) while 68 were female representing (62.39%). Similarly, 25 lecturers were selected from private tertiary institutions while 84 were selected from the public tertiary institutions in Anambra state. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The instrument was tested for reliability using Cronbach alpha method and the coefficients were 0.83 and 0.76 for the two clusters. The instrument was also subjected to validations by experts in business education and measurement and evaluation. The instrument comprised two sections: one section was used to elicit demographic data while the second section contained items used to answer the research questions. Data collected were analyzed using the arithmetic mean and standard deviation for the research questions, while t-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1

What are the lecturers' strategies for effective use of blended learning pedagogical model in teaching and learning?

Table 1:

Mean responses on the lecturers' strategies for effective use of blended learning pedagogical model in tertiary institutions in COVID era.

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
1	Enriching educational experiences for students	4.28	0.70	Agreed
2	Acceptability and potential use of BL model in teaching	4.03	0.61	Agreed
3	Enhancing BL structure and development	4.01	0.80	Agreed
4	Positive attitude and intention to adopt BL model	3.91	0.69	Agreed
5	Providing supportive campus environment	4.00	0.75	Agreed
6.	Assessing students' perception and readiness	3.75	0.72	Agreed
Cluster Mean		4.00		Agreed

The item-by-item analysis in **Table 1** shows that all the items achieved mean scores ranging from 3.75 to 4.28, while the standard deviation scores show figures from 0.61 to 0.80. The cluster mean score of 4.00 indicates that overall, lecturers in tertiary institutions perceived the listed



strategies as very necessary to achieve the use of blended learning pedagogical model for effective teaching and learning especially in the post COVID-19 era. The standard deviations showed homogeneity of the respondents.

Research Question 2

What are the factors affecting effective use of blended learning in tertiary institutions?

Table 2:

Mean responses on the factors affecting use of BL model in teaching and learning by business education lecturers in COVID era.

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
6	Technical knowledge	4.10	1.05	Agreed
7	Curriculum design	4.17	0.95	Agreed
8	Perceived usefulness by students	3.36	0.81	Agreed
9	Poor internet facilities	4.32	0.97	Agreed
10	Epileptic power supply	3.52	1.03	Agreed
11	Inefficient delivery of practical courses	4.33	1.16	Agreed
12	Lack of interest	3.78	1.06	Agreed
Cluster Mean		3.93		Agreed

The item-by-item analysis in **Table 2** shows that all the items achieved mean scores ranging from 3.36 to 4.33, while the standard deviation scores show figures from 0.81 to 1.36. The cluster means score of 3.93 indicates that overall, most lecturers in tertiary institutions, agreed that the listed factors above affect their use of blended learning pedagogical model for effective teaching and learning in post COVID era. The standard deviations showed homogeneity of their responses.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

Male and female business education lecturers do not differ significantly in the mean ratings on strategies for effective use of blended learning model

Table 3:

The t-test summary of the difference between the mean ratings of lecturers on the strategies for effective use of blended learning model because of gender.

Gender	N	X	SD	t-cal	p-val	A	Df	Remark
Male	41	4.10	0.38	.825	.411	0.05	107	Not significant
Female	68	4.03	0.46					

Data in **Table 3** showed that the P-value of .411, is greater than the alpha level of 0.05 at 107 degree of freedom. The result indicates that male lecturers in tertiary institutions in Anambra State, with a mean score of 4.10, and female lecturers with a mean score of 4.03 do not differ on



their rating of strategies for effective use of BL model. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted. So, lecturers do not significantly differ on strategies for effective use of BL models in the post COVID era, because of gender.

Hypothesis 2

Lecturers in public and private tertiary institutions do not differ in their mean rating of factors affecting use of blended learning pedagogical model.

Table 4:
The t-test summary of the difference between the mean ratings of lecturers on factors affecting use of BL model as a result institutional type.

Institution type	N	X	SD	t-cal	p-val	A	Df	Remark
Private	25	3.92	0.43	.520	.231	0.05	107	Not significant
Public	84	3.97	0.39					

Data in Table 4 show that the P-value of .231, is greater than the alpha level of 0.05 at 107 degree of freedom. The result indicates that lecturers in private tertiary institutions in Anambra State, with a mean score of 3.92, and their counterparts in public tertiary institutions with a mean score of 3.97 do not differ significantly on factors affecting effective use of BL model in post COVID era. The null hypothesis is accepted, which implies that lecturers in private and public tertiary institutions in Anambra State do not significantly differ on factors affecting use of BL model in teaching and learning because of the type of institution.

Discussions of Findings

Findings of the study revealed that lecturers agreed that blended learning was useful to achieve greater efficiency in teaching and learning especially in the new normal. The lecturers believe that enriching educational experiences for students, having a positive attitude and intention to adopt BL model, enhancing BL structure and development, providing supportive campus environment, as well as assessing students' perception and readiness were strategies considered effective for using blended learning models in teaching and learning of business education in tertiary institutions. This finding corroborates Nikolaos, et al. (2012) who argued that blended learning appears as an alternative teaching practice that should be embraced by teachers, to assist students to improve their performance. It is therefore compelling to say that inclusion of technology in the form of blended learning in the learning process is attractive, opening the possibility of more interesting and playful learning. The effectiveness, however, will depend on the skills of the lecturer and the attributes of the students. Sarewitz and Nelson (2008) noted that lecturers' contribution can, in principle, be ameliorated by training, but the students' attributes should not be taken for granted.

The study also revealed that lecturers in tertiary institutions, despite these strategies aimed at effective use of blended learning models, face some challenges. Some of the challenges include but are not limited to technical knowledge, curriculum design, perceived usefulness by students, poor internet facilities, epileptic power supply, inefficient delivery of practical courses and lack of interest. This finding agrees with the submission of Obiakor and Adeniran (2020) who averred that students who reside in rural areas, are more likely to experience limited access to internet connectivity, computers, and other devices for remote learning. Similarly, Jena (2020) said that utilization of blended learning will depend greatly on



access to internet and availability of technological devices. Bokolo et al. (2020) also identified technology, pedagogy, content, and knowledge as part of constructs and factors that influence lecturers towards adopting BL in higher education. Still in line with the above, Dziuban, et al. (2018) contend that BL coalesces around access, success, and students' perception of their learning environments.

Generally, under the hypothesis testing, the result of hypotheses revealed that gender has no significant influence on the lecturers' strategies for effective use of blended learning models in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. It further revealed that institution type (private & public), does not have any significant influence on lecturers' views of factors affecting effective use of blended learning pedagogical model in tertiary institutions in Anambra State, especially in the new normal. The findings of the hypotheses above are in tandem with the study of Tinmaz and Lee (2020), who found out that gender does not have a significant effect on lecturers' usage of blended learning models.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that lecturers in tertiary institutions in Anambra State strongly perceive blended learning as effective pedagogy in teaching and learning. They also agreed that poor internet facilities, lack of interest, curriculum design, epileptic power supply, among others, were challenges delaying the effective use of blended learning in classrooms. When implemented in the tertiary institutions, blended learning will contribute to students' motivation and stimulates a feeling of autonomy and responsibility.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Lecturers should attempt to acquire the requisite skill and right attitude towards adoption and utilization of blended learning models for effective teaching and learning, especially in the new normal.
2. Management of tertiary institutions should adequately provide the resources and enabling environment to mitigate factors inhibiting effective use of BL models in teaching and learning.

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