# COLLEGE LECTURERS' AWARENESS AND PERCEPTIONS OF USING OF BLENDED LEARNING

OLUSANJO Michael Oluwole[1],
BURAIMOH Oluwaseun Funmilola [2]
&
OMIDINA Olubunmi Adekola[1]

**Abstract**

*Blended learning, an innovative learning environment has been found useful in terms of opportunity to improve teaching and learning among other benefits. It is in the view of this; the reseachers carried out this study to find out the level of understanding, awareness and perception about the use of blended learning among the lecturers in a college of education in Osun State, Nigeria. In this study, the researchers explored the level of understanding of blended learning, awareness of blended learning for teaching and, the perception about the use of blended learning among the lecturers. Convenience random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 62 lecturers in the college. Frequency count, percentage, means and standard deviation were calculated for the analysis of data. The findings revealed that majority of the lecturers (72.59%) indicated a moderate understanding of blended learning for teaching, and as much as 87% of lecturers are aware of blended learning for teaching. The finding also revealed that lecturers had positive perception about the use of blended learning. The study recommends that seminar and workshop should be organised for the lecturers to further update their knowledge on the benefits of blended learning for teaching.*

**Keywords: Awareness, Perception and Blended Learning.**

## Introduction

The introduction of Information and Communication Technology to teaching and learning has led to improving the innovative 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, most especially 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 perception about the use of blended learning. 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 perception about the use of blended learning appropriately.

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 characterised 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 has no exact definition due to the context where it is performed. In view of different meanings given to the blended learning, the researchers observed different approaches to blended learning. There are six distinct models of blended learning include; Face-to-face driver, Rotation, Flex, Labs, Self-blend model, and Online driver (Freisen, 2012; DreamBox Learn, 2013; Connections Learning; Educational Technology and Mobile Learning, 2014; IdahoDigitalLearning, 2016).

Blended learning is more beneficial than the use of either online or traditional method of teaching. 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. In another word, blended learning limits the problems of geography and time and lack of interaction associated with the use of online method only.

Aside these benefits, the results of the empirical studies conducted revealed blended learning contributed positively towards entrepreneurial education than the traditional approach (Gachaja, Nganga, & Maina, 2016), reducing the dropout rate and at the same time improving examination scores (Lopez-Perez, Perez-Lopez, & Rodriguez-Ariza, 2011). Since online learning has been considered as an important alternative approach to overcome various limitations of both online and traditional methods. The needs to investigate its awareness and perception of using it among lecturers in college of education are necessary.

Purpose of the Study

The main aim of this study was to investigate college lecturers' awareness and perception of using blended learning for teaching and learning in a college of education. Specifically, the study: investigated lecturers' level of understanding of blended learning; examined whether or not lecturers are aware of blended learning for teaching; and found the lecturers' perception of using blended learning. Based on the purposes of the study, the following research questions were raised in the study.

1. What is the extent of lecturers understanding of blended learning?
2. Are the lecturers aware of blended learning for teaching?
3. What is the lecturers' perception of using blended learning?

**Review of Related Literature**

The literature review covers previous studies that have investigated factors affecting adoption of blended learning such as awareness and perception both within and outside Nigeria.

**Factors affecting adoption of Blended Learning**

Much research has been conducted to identify factors that determine technology adoption. Factors such as readiness (regarding preparedness); awareness; perception; technology readiness (that is a general belief about technology); self-efficacy; computer anxiety; performance expectancy; and effort expectancy have been found to influenced technology users' adoption of various technologies.These determinants vary depending on the technology in context and the scope of the study.

In the context of blended learning, several factors have been used in the study of adoption of blended learning. The factors include performance expectancy; effort expectancy; social influence (Gawande, 2016); perceived usefulness of the system; learning goals; and educational technology preference (Haron, Abbas, & Rahman, 2012); ease of use and usefulness (Ibrahim & Shalizad, 2015); awareness, preparedness and perception (Opoku & Kuranchie 2015; Alharthi, 2016). Results of the previous studies conducted on blended learning have revealed changing trends on the factors that determine the adoption of the blended learning. For instance, (Haron, Abbas, & Rahman, 2012) in their study discovered that perceived usefulness of the system, learning goals and educational technology preference influenced the adoption of blended learning while no significant relationship exists between perceived ease of use and adoption of blended learning. Also, the perception of blended learning has no marked effect on the adoption of blended learning. Further analysis of the result revealed low adoption rate (13%) of the blended learning.

In another study conducted by Ibrahim and Shalizad (2015), it was showed 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. This study supported the findings of Haron, Abbas and Rahman (2012), where it was discovered that usefulness influenced adoption of blended learning. Regarding the awareness and perception of other factors, Opoku and Kuranchie (2015) and Alhathi (2016) studies revealed that awareness and perception have significant roles in the adoption of

e-learning. The researchers, therefore, included the sources of awareness of blended learning in this study to explore its influence on the perception about the use of blended learning among lectures.

**Awareness**

Awareness is a relative term; there are different ways it can be defined and conceptualised 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), Alhathi (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. Since blended learning is a new technology in Nigeria education system and more especially in teacher education context, the researchers included awareness in this study to determine lecturers' level awareness and the sources of the awareness of blended learning.

**Perception**

Apart from the awareness, perception is one of the factors that influence technology adoption. Perception is an important construct in technology adoption. Perception according to the online dictionary is a way of regarding, understanding or interpreting something. The literature on perception has revealed factors like gender, learning style influencing the perception of blended learning (Torre, 2013). At the same time, the perception has been found to have different marked relationships with the adoption of blended learning. For instance, Haron et al. (2012) in their study found no significant correlation between perception and adoption of blended learning. While, Opoku and Kuranchie (2015) and Alhathi (2016) found in their studies that perception has a significant role in the adoption of blended learning. Therefore, perception about the use of blended learning was included in this study.

**Methodology**

This section deals with the sampling technique, design, validation and reliability of the instrument for the data collection and the procedure for the data collection. This research is a descriptive research of the survey type. The study involved the use of a structured questionnaire to collect data from the randomly selected respondents in the sampled institution while convenience random sampling technique was used to select the respondents.

The research instrument for this study is Lecturers' Awareness and Perception of Using Blended Learning Questionnaire designed by the researchers. The instrument comprised of 19 items, items 1-3 deal with demographic information covering gender, the understanding of blended learning and the sources of awareness of the blended learning. Items 4-19 (16 questions) elicited responses on the perception about the use of the blended learning. The 16 questions include eleven positive questions and five negative questions. All the 16 questions were measured using 4-point Likert scales from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Initially, the questionnaire was given to expert in educational technology and test and measurement through an online method using SurveyMonkey for content and face validity. A pilot test was conducted on ten lecturers through online method to determine the reliability of the questions. The result of the reliability using SPSS v22 revealed the Cronbach's alpha to be .746 which shows that the questions were reliable and were properly tailored to measure the purposes of the study. A total of 80 copies of the questionnaire was distributed to the lecturers across the five schools in the college, and only 62 (77.5%) copies were returned which shows a good return rate. According to (Babbie, 1990), a return rate equal or above 60% is considered good.

**Results**

The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentage, mean score and standard deviation. To determine whether lecturers' mean scores on the statements were significant, the decision point was put at $\bar{X} = 2.84$, this implies that a mean rating equal or more than 2.84

is agree. The descriptive statistics of the lecturers' demographics are presented in Table 1. Results from Table 1 show the male lecturers in this study consist of 40 (64.52%) of the sample while female lecturers involved were 22 (35.48%).

Table 1:
Lecturer Demographics

| Demographic Variables | Categories | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 40 | 62.52 |
| | Female | 22 | 35.48 |
| Understanding of Blended Learning | Low | 5 | 8.06 |
| | Moderate | 45 | 72.59 |
| | High | 12 | 19.35 |
| Sources of Awareness of Blended Learning | Lecture | 5 | 8.1 |
| | Internet/Online | 30 | 48.4 |
| | Seminar/Conference/Workshop | 6 | 9.7 |
| | Print/Electronic Media | 10 | 16.1 |
| | Colleagues | 5 | 8.1 |
| | Others | 6 | 9.7 |

Research Question 1:
What is the extent of lecturers' understanding of blended learning?

A look at the lecturers' responses on the understanding of blended learning revealed 5(8.06%) indicated a low level, 45 (72.59%) indicated moderate level and 12 (19.35%) indicated a highdegree of understanding. This shows that the lecturers have a moderate understanding of blended learning, so this answered the research question 1.

Research Question 2:
Are the lecturers aware of blended learning for teaching?

A look at item 3 on Table 2 revealed that a total of 54 (87%) lecturers agree that they are aware of blended learning for teaching. Further analysis of the lecturers' responses showed that the mean score for the item (M = 3.10, SD = .783) is significant. This finding indicates that lecturers are aware of the use of blended learning for teaching. This answered research question 2.

Research Question3:
What is the lecturers' perception of using blended learning?

Table 2:
Lecturers' responses on the perception towards using blended learning

| Constructs | Measurement Instruments | SA | A | D | SD | M | STD. D |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PBL 1 | Blended learning offers theopportunity to improve teaching. | 23 | 35 | 3 | 1 | 3.26 | .723 |
| PBL 2 | Blended learning improves thequality of teaching. | 24 | 34 | 1 | 3 | 3.26 | .642 |
| PBL 3 | Blended learning makes teaching easier. | 18 | 36 | 4 | 4 | 3.10 | .783 |
| PBL 4 | Blended learning reduces dropout rates. | 16 | 18 | 11 | 17 | 2.63 | 1.059 |
| PBL 5 | Blended learning improves learning outcomes/examination scores. | 20 | 30 | 5 | 6 | 3.08 | .874 |
| PBL 6 | Blended Learning provides learning anywhere and anytime | 20 | 30 | 8 | 4 | 3.00 | .958 |
| PBL 7 | Blended learning provides access to a variety of tools for communication. | 19 | 28 | 8 | 7 | 2.94 | .973 |
| PBL 8 | Blended learning makes posting and sharing of course materials easy. | 21 | 23 | 10 | 8 | 2.89 | 1.057 |
| PBL 9 | Blended learning enhances monitoring and grading of students. | 7 | 39 | 10 | 6 | 2.69 | .879 |
| PBL 10 | I am interested in using blended learning for teaching | 17 | 29 | 7 | 9 | 2.90 | .936 |
| PBL 11 | Blended learning will make teachers lose control over the teaching and learning process. | 26 | 25 | 2 | 9 | 3.21 | .813 |
| PBL 12 | Providing feedback in ablended learning environment is more time-consuming. | 2 | 21 | 20 | 19 | 2.92 | .893 |
| PBL 13 | Blended learning can be more time consuming than thetraditional method. | 12 | 20 | 19 | 11 | 2.60 | 1.123 |
| PBL 14 | Lack of Internet connectivity will affect blended learning platform. | 28 | 16 | 8 | 10 | 1.97 | 1.071 |
| PBL 15 | Blended learning requires IT training. | 23 | 31 | 6 | 2 | 1.85 | .884 |
| PBL 16 | Blended learning will make lecturers lose control over teaching and learning process. | 4 | 8 | 21 | 28 | 3.10 | .862 |

Average mean =2.84 $\bar{X} \geq 2.84$ is significant

**Discussion**

In measuring the lecturers' perception about the use of blended learning, they were asked to say whether or not they agree with different statements. In their responses, close to 94% agree that blended learning offers the opportunity to improve teaching; as much as 93% agree blended learning enhances the quality of instruction. A look at the Table 2 revealed that 54% agree blended learning reduces dropout rates; 80% agree blended learning improves learning outcomes/examination score and provides learning anywhere and anytime. On blended learning provides access to a variety of tools for communication lecturers responses indicated 75% positive response, at the same time, 70% of the lecturers agree that

blended learning makes posting and sharing of course materials easy. As much as 74% of lecturers agree on items 9 and ten while 82% agree blended learning makes teaching easier.

In order to examine lecturers negative perception of blended learning, about 37% agree feedback mechanism in blended learning is more time consuming; 51% agree blended learning can be more time consuming than the traditional method; 70% agree that lack of Internet connectivity will affect blended learning platform; 87% agree blended learning requires IT training; and as low as 19% agree blended learning will make them lose control over the teaching and learning.

A look at items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11 on positive perception on the use of blended learning revealed that lecturers' responses on these items were significant. In other words, nine out 11 positive perception items have their mean scores greater than the weighted mean. While the response to blended learning reduces, dropout rates were found to be insignificant. Likewise, lecturers' response on blended learning enhances monitoring and grading of students wereconsidered to be insignificant as their mean score was below the weighted mean.

The responses of the lecturers on negative perception items (12 and 16) have mean scores greater than the weighted mean, while lecturer responses on items 13, 14 and 15 mean scores are less than the weighted mean. This shows lecturers responses on items 13, 14 and 15 are insignificant. The summary of this discussion indicates that the lecturers' perception about the use of blended learning is high. A critical look at table 2 revealed that lecturers voted thirteen out sixteen statements significant. This does answer research question 4.

In this study, the researchers have sought to respond to some research questions related to awareness and perception of using blended learning, We have asked in particular what are the levels of understanding of blended learning, lecturers awareness of blended learning for teaching, and lecturers' perception of using blended learning. In summary, we observed that majority of the lecturers show moderate understanding of blended learning. Moreover, the study indicates that lecturers are aware of blended learning and their perception about using blended learning is positive. Given this, we presented some of the implications for this study and the direction for future research that stem from this study.

**Conclusions**

Accordingly, the first major practical contribution of the present study is that it provides much needed relevant information on blended learning. The results of the survey revealed that lecturers are aware of blended learning for teaching and have positive perception about the use blended learning for teaching. This information is necessary since blended learning is very new in Nigeria.

A second important implication of our study derived from our findings points to the fact that lecturers lack knowledge about the use of blended learning to reduce the dropout rate and to enhance monitoring and grading of students. This information is valuable in the sense that despite the lectures positive perception of using blended learning, they lack information on the use of blended learning to reduce the dropout rate and enhance monitoring and grading of students. This suggests the need to equip lecturers with the knowledge about the relevance blended learning for teaching. The importance of blended learning goes beyond improving teaching-learning process and students' score.

**Recommendations**

Although our study falls short of using a college of education and small sample size as the results of this study may not be generalizable. This study, therefore, raises some opportunities for future research both within and outside the teacher education context. This study could thus be extended to other levels of teacher training institutions. Equally, this study could be extended to explore factors that determine adoption of blended learning in the context of teacher training institutions. Another area this study could also be extended is by studying differences in the perception of using blended learning among lecturers at different levels of higher education institutions. Last, we suggest this study should be extended by exploring the influence of demographic variables like gender, age, qualification, year of experience and so on.

Our findings,therefore, suggest that workshop and seminar should be organised for the lecturers of teacher education institutions and other institutions of higher learning. It is hoped that when lecturers of

teacher training institutions embrace and integrate blended learning, their products will be able to use blended learning after the training. Also, we suggest technology and infrastructures needed for the integration and adoption of blended learning should be provided in the teacher education institutions. Also, we suggest that lecturers should select and use a model of blended learning applicable in their institutions and the subject/course they teach.

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