Shodh Sari-An International Multidisciplinary Journal

2023, Vol. 02, Issue 03, 396-412
ISSN: 2959-1376
DOI: https://doi.org/10.59231/SARI7615

Lecturers' Perception Towards Blended Learning in the Post Covid-19 Era in Tertiary Institutions in Sokoto State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examined lecturers' perceptions and issues/challenges of incorporating blended learning in tertiary institutions in Sokoto, State-Nigeria. The paper used a quantitative research method. Two research objectives were set with two corresponding research questions. The population of the study was 58 lecturers from the School of General Education, Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto-Nigeria in which the total population was selected. Multi-stage sampling technique was used in selecting the sample. The study however used the questionnaire "Lecturers' Perceptions on Blended Learning in Educational Courses in SSCOE, Sokoto". The finding showed that SSCOE lecturers demonstrated highly positive feedback towards the incorporation of blended learning. Although the findings revealed further that lecturers understand different issues and challenges in incorporating blended learning in SSCOE. To highlight a few of the issues and challenges that obtained low mean scores from the findings are the lack of sufficient technical training to implement blended learning in educational classes and the high cost of blended learning tools and equipment. The study, however, suggested Ministry of higher education help the lecturers by providing technical training on the use of e-learning material in addition to the provision of blended learning material for lecturers as they are cost-effective.

Keywords: *Blended, Learning, Teaching, Tertiary institution, Covid-19*

@2023 International Council for Education Research and Training
ISSN: 2959-1376
2023, Vol. 02, Issue 03, 396-412
DOI: https://doi.org/10.59231/SARI7615

Introduction

The present world of post Covid-19 era has changed the mind-sets of the people about the entire global educational system; teaching, learning, and assessment alike. Institutions that are often more comfortable with interactive technologies are now embracing online participatory learning technologies in support of active, passion-based learning by students who live and will work in a digital world.

With the manifestation of the novel Coronavirus pandemic, many schools around the globe embraced the use of online way of delivery and with little control over the pandemic, many institutions understand the need to merge the two modes-traditional and online methods of delivery in order to interact with the teeming learners within their mist.

The covid-19 pandemic has created challenges and caused disruption across the Higher Education sector; university campuses closed, and face-to-face teaching and assessment shifted to an online format. Learning from our students' experiences during this period will help us shape future hybrid delivery so that it best fits Bioscience students (Bashir, et al., 2021).

The covid-19 pandemic has already reshaped how people do business from now on. Institutions of higher learning are now strategizing on how they will carry out their business after the pandemic. It is important to argue that whatever initiatives they have already started such as the digitalization of learning should continue, in fact with more intensity and faster. Some of the strategies that the universities have used during this pandemic should be modified in a more radical way (Kofi, 2020).

As Simiyu (2021) points out, the most recommended post-Covid-19 teaching methodology (will be the application of blended learning. He sees blended learning as the post-Covid-19 solution to teaching and learning in higher education. It is also called "hybrid learning" it represents a learning model that combines non-formal (online courses) and formal (traditional classroom) methodologies. It is the model that integrates technology to boost learning and delivery of other services.

One teaching approach that incorporates technology and online tools within a

@2023 International Council for Education Research and Training 2023, Vol. 02, Issue 03, 396-412
ISSN: 2959-1376 DOI: https://doi.org/10.59231/SARI7615

traditional physical classroom is blended learning (Zulkflee, et al., 2022). According to (Hajan & Padagas, 2021), this relatively new trending teaching approach is able to encourage both student-student and teacher-student interactions as well as lower communication anxiety and foster students to become self-directed and independent learners. Furthermore, the combination of physical lessons with online lessons in blended learning is also perceived to be able to make classroom interactions effective and therefore is able to meet the needs of current shifts in the role of teachers wherein teachers serve as a co-partner in knowledge transfer instead of merely serving the role of a content deliverer (Tan, Zakwan & Aziz, 2022).

There is no unique definition that can cover all aspects of the concept of blended learning because it is an ongoing process that develops with every teacher or trainer who applies it. To blend means to combine or mix so that the component parts are indistinguishable from one another. Whatever the blend or combination, the goal is to empower the learners to understand specified instruction, improve academic performance, drive results that support learning objectives and become self-reliant. Blended learning grows the traditional role of training beyond its usual scope of formal training by providing a strong set of tools that allow learners to obtain the information and instruction they need.

For Blended learning to take place effectively, there is a need for human and material resources which include the technical expertise of the e-learning gadget by both teachers and students and the availability of the gadgets in addition to the physical infrastructure.

According to Druva, (2021), the concept of blended learning implies a combination of factors that are used together so that we can obtain harmonious results which can be seen in our students' professional training. It transforms traditional face-to-face classroom interaction into social online interaction, taking advantage of the technology used by most students. He however stated that the definition of blended learning has changed, from a simple blend of classroom training and e-learning courses to more complex programmes that incorporate an array of synchronous and asynchronous learning modalities. Ntim, et al., (2021) explained that, blended learning can be seen as an eclectic

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ISSN: 2959-1376 DOI: https://doi.org/10.59231/SARI7615

approach, in which there is an attempt to maximize the better of the two approaches-online and traditional face-to-face. According to (Cobo, et al., 2022, as cited in Gómez, 2020; Kuklinski & Cobo, 2020), future learning environments should combine traditional face-to-face teaching with technological tools and online learning, with the appropriate institutional support to ensure a high-quality process. Hybrid or blended forms may help improve the quality of face-to-face teaching by moving content delivery online and focusing in-person sessions on active learning (Murphy, 2020).

This study of lecturers' perceptions and issues/challenges of incorporating blended learning in tertiary institutions in Sokoto, state-Nigeria was conducted based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). TAM was developed by Davis (1989). According to (Zulkflee, et al., 2022), the model consisted of two specific variables, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use which were hypothesised as important factors in determining the user acceptance of technology. Therefore, TAM was used in this study to investigate how tertiary institution lecturers perceived blended learning and the issues/challenges connected with its application in SSCOE, Sokoto.

Literature Review

Much literature reviewed revealed that blended learning is the best mode of learning that institutions should adopt to evade future threats of any pandemic. In a study conducted by Saboowala and Mishra (2021) "Readiness of in-service teachers toward a blended earning approach as a learning pedagogy in the post-Covid-19 era". The study adopted a descriptive survey method for collecting data. The sample of 313 was selected by a simple random technique. The findings revealed that in-service teachers who have a positive attitude toward online learning, study management, online interaction, and learning flexibility are more likely to adapt to Blended learning. The more positive the attitude, the more adaptable the teachers will be and the more ready they are for using a Blended learning approach in the post-pandemic era for their professional growth where face-to-face learning and classroom interaction would be done only, when necessary, in order to maintain precautionary measures at least for a few months. In a related study conducted by (Zulkflee, et al., 2022) "Issues and challenges

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ISSN: 2959-1376 DOI: https://doi.org/10.59231/SARI7615

of Malaysian primary school teachers in incorporating blended learning in ESL classroom". A quantitative study was adopted. A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire survey was used for data collection. The Participants were 30 ESL primary school teachers from Tanjong Malim, Perak. The findings indicated that primary school teachers reported a positive attitude towards blended learning (M = 4.34, SD = 0.599). However, findings indicated that there are issues and challenges with the incorporation of blended learning in ESL classrooms (M = 2.72, SD = 0.939).

On the issues and challenges of implementing blending learning. However, Huong and Le (2019) in their research "An investigation into teachers' attitudes towards blended learning application at a University in Hanoi". The study is based on the methodology of a small scale mainly quantitative analysis by means of a questionnaire delivered to 50 teachers currently teaching blended courses.

Moreover, the results were supported by follow-up qualitative thematic analysis by interview findings of 10 teachers, who were selected randomly and voluntarily for objective purposes. The study revealed that English for Foreign Language (EFL) teachers generally have positive attitudes towards blended learning and they show their willingness to apply blended learning in their teaching. Furthermore, Nolaila (2015) investigated the competencies of designing and implementing blended learning among the lecturers and students at Mzumbe University in Tanzania. The study found that most teachers and students lack competency in using the blended learning method because there was no adequate training experience.

In another related study by Saboowala and Mishra (2021) "Readiness of in-service teachers toward a blended earning approach as a learning pedagogy in the post-Covid-19 era". The study adopted a descriptive survey method for collecting data. The sample of 313 was selected by a simple random technique. The findings revealed that in-service teachers who have a positive attitude toward online learning, study management, online interaction, and learning flexibility are more likely to adapt to Blended learning. The more positive the attitude, the more adaptable the teachers will be and the more ready they are for using a Blended learning approach in the post-pandemic era for their professional

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growth where face-to-face learning and classroom interaction would be done only, when necessary, in order to maintain precautionary measures at least for a few months.

On the issues and challenges of implementing blended learning, Garcia-Ponce and Mora-Pablo (2020) in their study "Challenges in the implementation of blended learning in ESL Classrooms" stated that the advantages of a blended learning classroom are not without possible downsides. However, their study on pre-service teachers in Mexico highlighted that a lack of familiarity with blended learning made the participants lose motivation to involve in blended learning activities.

Moreover, their study was supported by a study by (Jerry & Yunus, 2021) on Malaysian primary school teachers "Blended learning in rural primary ESL classroom: Do or don't" which revealed that teachers' limited exposure and knowledge of blended learning was the major challenge in the successful implementation of blended learning in the ESL classrooms. Another challenge in blended learning implementation in ESL classrooms is highlighted by (Rachman et al., 2021) in a study "the blended learning implementation of ELT Based on Teachers' and Students' perspective in new normal condition of Covid-19" in which they revealed that teachers had to spend more time to create more materials for both the offline and online classroom sessions. They also reported that teachers faced difficulties in selecting the appropriate online material to match the student's level of proficiency.

Similarly, in a study by Saeed (2020) "Teachers' perceptions on the use of the blended learning". The findings suggested teachers agreed that blended learning influences teaching and learning. Incorporating technology with the curriculum increases student-centered learning to create a personalized classroom. However, Sorbie (2015) in a study "Exploring teacher perceptions of blended learning". The findings from the study have shown a correlation between student engagement and achievement. However, the study explained that blended learning has its weakness. It calls for institutions to be tech-enhanced which called for added budget for technology and physical upgrade, training of staff and resources. Besides, staff and faculty must support

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ISSN: 2959-1376
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upgrades and change because by adopting and adapting new teaching methodologies in their strategies.

Based on the review of related literature, it is evident that studies on the lecturers' perception of blended learning in tertiary institutions' context were very scarce in the developing world, especially in Nigeria. Furthermore, the lecturers' perceptions towards the implementation of blended learning might have changed after they experienced the Covid-19 pandemic. It is however pertinent to mention the issues and challenges in implementing it. Thus, it is important to investigate the current belief in blended learning implementation among the lecturers, particularly in the SSCOE, Sokoto.

Research Objectives

The study addresses the following research objectives:

1. To identify how SSCOE lecturers perceive the incorporation of blended learning in teaching

2. To identify the issues and challenges faced by SSCOE lecturers through the incorporation of blended learning.

Research Questions

Based on the research objectives, the research questions this study intends to answer are:

1. How do SSCOE lecturers perceive blended learning in their schools?

2. What are the issues and challenges SSCOE lecturers face in the incorporation of blended learning in their schools?

Methodology

A quantitative research method was employed for the study. The survey research design was used to collect the data. According to Torrentira (2020), a survey research design is the most common data collection technique in quantitative research. To Dangal (2021), survey design as a means of gathering information about the characteristics, actions, or opinions of a large group of people and later uses a selected portion of the population from which the findings can later be generalized back to the population. The choice of this method was because it is familiar and will guide the researchers to collect and analyse relevant data for the study. The study employed a multistage sampling technique because of the nature of the population.

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According to (Bichi 2004), the multistage sampling technique is a modified form of cluster sampling used in Educational surveys, in this approach the target population is divided into the cluster, and then further sampling takes place within the clusters and so on until the candidates are finally sampled. In the first stage, six schools in the SSCOE were randomly chosen using a simple random sampling technique. In the second stage, a proportionate sampling technique was used to select the Departments from each selected school. In the third and final stage, a systematic simple technique was used using an Excel random number generator to select the 235 units of analysis that participated in this study.

Population and Sample

The population of the study was 58 out of which all the participants were selected and participated in this study. The participants were lecturers from the School of General Education, Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto, Nigeria (SSCOE).

Instrumentation

The study used the questionnaire "Lecturers' Perceptions on Blended Learning in Educational Courses in SSCOE, Sokoto". The instrument included items adapted from (Zulkflee, et al., 2022). The instrument has three sections; part one is the respondent's personal information while part two was designed to investigate the factors that affect School of Education lecturer's attitudes toward the adoption of blended learning in SSCOE, Sokoto. Part three was items on issues and challenges on the incorporation of blended learning in education courses in Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto. Pilot testing was done with 10 non-participating lecturers with Cronbach's alpha coefficients for sections two and three at 0.972 and 0.965 respectively, indicating a very high level of reliability.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics software version 25. All 58 participants completed the questionnaire without any missing items. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data. The data were presented using mean scores and standard deviations.

Discussion of the Results

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ISSN: 2959-1376 DOI: https://doi.org/10.59231/SARI7615

The results of the findings below are aimed to answer the first research question on how SSCOE lecturers perceive the incorporation of blended learning in teaching. The results are discussed based on the highest mean score of the items to the lowest mean score.

Table 1: Items on the lecturers' perceptions on the integration of blended learning in educational courses in Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto

Items	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Blended learning is important in tertiary institution classes.	58	1.00	3.00	1.8276	.53436
Blended learning supports collaborative learning in the tertiary institution classes.	58	1.00	2.00	1.7931	.40862
Blended learning helps students to learn in a more convenient way.	58	1.00	2.00	1.8276	.38104
I am interested in implementing blended learning in my classes.	58	1.00	2.00	1.7241	.45085
Blended learning increases students' academic achievement.	58	1.00	2.00	1.8276	.38104
Blended learning considers the differences in learning styles of students.	58	1.00	3.00	2.2069	.71962
Blended learning facilitates the tracking of students' performance.	58	1.00	2.00	1.5517	.50166
Blended learning makes better use of class time.	58	1.00	4.00	2.4138	.89901

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Blended learning gives students access to lecture materials at any time.	58	2.00	2.00	2.0000	.00000
Blended learning gives students more media resources (E.g., audio, videos, etc.).	58	1.00	3.00	2.3448	.76208
Blended learning helps in evaluating students' achievement.	58	2.00	4.00	3.2069	.93205
Blended learning provides better communication for students and instructors.	58	1.00	4.00	2.1724	.92030
Blended learning improves student's and instructors' technological skills.	58	1.00	3.00	2.2759	.64327
In the last two years, my perceptions toward blended learning have become more positive.	58	1.00	4.00	1.9310	.95260
I prefer teaching educational courses using a blended learning approach in my classes.	58	1.00	3.00	1.7414	.51505
Valid N	**58**				

Table 1 shows the mean scores and standard deviations for each item listed. It shows that Item 1 has a mean score of (M = 1.8276, SD= .53436) which shows the lecturers agreed that blended learning is important in tertiary institution classes. Item 2 shows (M = 1.7931, SD= .40862), the lecturers also agreed that blended learning can support collaborative learning in tertiary institution classes. Item 3 shows (M= 1.8276, SD = .38104) when lecturers agreed that blended learning helps students to learn more conveniently. Moreover, in Item 4 (M= 1.7241, SD= .45085), this also indicated that lecturers agreed that they are interested in implementing blended learning in their classes. Item 5 shows (M= 1.8276, SD = .38104), which means that lecturers agreed

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that blended learning increases students' academic achievement.

Item 6 shows (M= 2.2069, SD = .71962), which indicated that lecturers strongly agreed that blended learning considers the differences in learning styles of students. The results from Item 7 show (M= 1.5517, SD = .50166), which indicated that lecturers agreed that blended learning facilitates the tracking of students' performance. The results from Item 8 show (M=2.4138, SD=.89901), which means lecturers agreed that blended learning makes better use of class time. Item 9 results show a score (M=2.0000, SD =.00000), this more over shows that lecturers agreed that blended learning gives students access to lecture materials at any time. Item 10 indicated (M=2.3448, SD=.76208), this implies that blended learning gives students more media resources.

Item 11 shows a high mean score (M=3.2069, SD=.93205), this indicated that lecturers in SSCOE strongly agreed that blended learning helps in evaluating students' achievement. From Item 12 the results show (M= 2.1724, SD = .92030), this means lecturers agreed that blended learning provides better communication for students and instructors. The lecturers also show their agreement to Item 13 in which they agreed that blended learning improves student's and instructors' technological skills, (M=2.2759, SD=.64327). From the results of Item 14, (M=1.9310, SD=.95260), this implies that lecturers agreed that in the last two years, their perceptions toward blended learning have become more positive. Item 15 shows (M=1.7414, SD=.51505), which indicated that lecturers agreed that they prefer teaching educational courses using a blended learning approach in their classes.

Lecturers' perceptions on the integration of blended learning in educational courses at Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto

The results of the findings below are aimed to answer research question two on the issues and challenges faced by SSCOE lecturers by the incorporation of blended learning. The results are discussed based on the highest mean score of the items to the lowest mean score.

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ISSN: 2959-1376 DOI: https://doi.org/10.59231/SARI7615

Table 2: Items on issues and challenges on the incorporating of blended learning in education courses in Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto

Items	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
I have enough technology experience to implement blended learning in my education classes.	58	1.00	5.00	3.1379	1.33046
I have enough technical support for blended learning implementation in my education classes.	58	1.00	5.00	3.2414	1.14417
I receive sufficient technical training to implement blended learning in my educational classes.	58	1.00	5.00	2.8621	1.41976
Technological infrastructure at my school is ready for the implementation of blended learning.	58	1.00	5.00	2.9828	1.33102
Internet access is available at my school for the lecturers and students.	58	1.00	5.00	3.2069	1.49571
Technological devices (computers/ notebooks/ tablets) are available in my school.	58	1.00	4.00	2.1379	1.05045
Implementing blended learning does not increase my workload.	58	1.00	4.00	2.1552	1.15168

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Using blended learning does not make education courses more demanding to teach	58	1.00	4.00	2.3793	.85486
Blended learning enables me to manage classroom activities more efficiently.	58	1.00	5.00	2.5690	1.24410
My school uses a good learning management system.	58	1.00	5.00	4.1552	1.46061
My students have enough technology experience to participate in blended learning.	58	1.00	5.00	3.2586	1.42115
My students have technological devices (computers/ notebooks/ tablets/ smartphones) at home.	58	2.00	5.00	3.2586	1.43344
My students have the internet at home	58	1.00	5.00	3.2241	1.37704
Using blended learning in tertiary institution classes is time-effective.	58	1.00	5.00	2.5000	1.08012
Using blended learning in tertiary institution classes is cost-effective.	58	1.00	5.00	2.4310	1.21557
Valid N	58				

Table 2 presents the results on the issues and challenges of incorporating blended learning in education courses at Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto. It is presented through

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ISSN: 2959-1376 DOI: https://doi.org/10.59231/SARI7615

the mean scores and standard deviations for each item listed. The results indicated that Item 10 has the highest mean score of (4.1552 & SD = 1.46061) which indicated that the school (SSCOE) uses a good learning management system. Items 1, 2, 5, 11, 12 and 13 have moderate mean 3.1379, 3.2414, 3.2069, 3.2586, 3.2586 and 3.2241 respectively. Their SD are 1.33046, 1.14417, 1.49571, 1.42115, 1.43344, and 1.37704 respectively.

Items 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 14 and 15 recorded low mean scores which indicated that the lecturers disagreed with the questions presented to them in the questionnaire.

Conclusion

The study conducted identified how lecturers perceive blended learning in the post-Covid-19 era in tertiary institutions in Sokoto state, Nigeria. The findings revealed that lecturers in SSCOE demonstrated highly positive feedback towards the incorporation of blended learning. Although the findings revealed such highly positive feedback, it also indicated that the lecturers understand different issues and challenges in incorporating blended learning in SSCOE. To highlight a few of the issues and challenges that obtained low mean scores from the findings are the lack of sufficient technical training to implement blended learning in educational classes and the high cost of blended learning tools and equipment.

Recommendations

Based on the results from this study, the paper is recommending the Ministry of higher education help the lecturers by providing technical training on the use of e-learning material in addition to providing the enabling environment for blended learning to take effect as it is clear from the literature reviewed that blending learning has come to stay, especially in this era of post-Covid-19. The paper also recommends the provision of blended learning material for lecturers as they are cost-effective.

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Received on March 25, 2023

Accepted on June 23, 2023

Published on July 20, 2023