An Assessment of Teachers' Perception on Blended Learning and its Effectiveness in Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe

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Abstract
Following the global COVID-19 outbreak, blended learning (BL) has received increasing attention from educators. Hinged on Bandura's Social learning theory, this study determined the perception of teachers in teacher education system in Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe, Anambra State as well as evaluate the effectiveness of blended learning for the teaching and learning undergraduate English language students' achievement in the College. A validated questionnaire titled the Perception of Teachers on the Use of Blended Learning Approach (PTUBLA) designed by the researcher, and constructed in a 4-point Likert scale format was used for this study. Findings from the study demonstrate how effective blended learning is in determining successful learning outcomes among undergraduate English language students in the College. Findings from this study can be generalized to the entire state.
Key words: Blended learning, teacher education, teaching and learning

Introduction
The delivery mode in many colleges of education has remained a traditional one, involving face-to-face with little or none at all to integrate modern technologies such as the usage of online technologies to supplement the educational system. Blended learning (BL) has become an integral part of modern education. This has seen many institutions of higher learning providing a new perspective in education delivery and attainment through the use of blended learning mode. With this mode, a new phrase "the world is flat" was coined (Friedman, 2005), meaning attainment of education has become accessible to everyone everywhere globally. Blended learning is an integration of the online mode with the traditional mode of face-to-face to offer class activities in a pedagogically valuable planned manner (Nagel, 2009). The mode involves certain portions of the activities of face-to-face being replaced through the usage of online activities This diverse mode gives institutions a variety of educational approaches to use. With many institutions moving to this mode, the traditional way of face to face has seen its decline in institutions which are techno-savvy and oriented. The growth and impact of blended learning is currently undisputable in the educational field Therefore, educational institutions in Nigeria and specifically Anambra State need to rethink on the inclusion of the blended learning mode. These institutions ought to embrace BL trends for reform, or face decline in their educational goals due to the use of the outdated approach only.

In spite of the paradigm shift in education and the need to embrace technology in teaching and learning, many educators are still operating the traditional delivery mode of teaching and learning in spite of the need to incorporate technology in the teaching learning process. What is the perception of these educators about blended learning that could be affecting its use? What also is the effectiveness of blended learning on the performance achievement of students to guarantee its employment in the teaching learning process? It is important therefore, that these issues be investigated. This study is an investigation into the effectiveness of blended learning in the teaching learning process and the perception of teachers on the approach.

While blended learning is acknowledged to be a compelling and effectual means of delivery mode that can be incorporated into the teaching learning process, the philosophy is lacking in empirical validation especially in our country Nigeria. Currently, a great deal has been forwarded with regard to theory, with a decided gap in the literature regarding the use and effectiveness of the blended learning in practice here in the Nigerian educational system and particularly, in Anambra State. The delivery mode does however, draw a great deal of support, proof of which can be found in the plethora of testimonials, anecdotes and classroom examples available through a multitude of websites and publications dealing with blended learning. All reports echo promising outcomes; yet, teachers in Nigeria, and in particular, Anambra State have not restructured their teaching, being cognisant of this wealth of information presented on blended learning.

While strengthening the knowledge base in this field, this study would assist educators, curriculum planners, policy makers, text book writers, and indeed, all stakeholders in education, to re-examine instructional practices, curriculum and policies in south eastern Nigerian.

Research Questions
The following research questions guided the study:
1. To what extent do teachers in Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe use the blended learning approach?
2. What are the factors affecting the use of the blended learning approach in Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe?
3. What is the effectiveness of the blended learning approach in teaching and learning process in the College?

Conceptual Review
In addressing the problem of this study, the following concepts would be considered:
- Blended learning
- Teacher education
- Teaching and learning process

Blended learning (BL)
Blended learning is referred to as "hybrid," "flexible," "mixed," "flipped" or "inverted" learning. The BL concept was first proposed in the late 20 century against the backdrop of growing technological innovation (Keogh et al., 2017). The general definition of BL is that it integrates traditional face-to-face teaching with a web-based approach.

However, this description has been hotly debated by researchers in recent years. Oliver and Trigwell (2005) posits that blended learning may have different attributions in relation to various theories, meaning that the concept should be revised. Others attempted to clarify the significance of BL by classifying the proportion of online learning in blended learning and the different models that come under the BL umbrella. Allen and Seaman (2010) propose that blended learning should include 30–70% online-in person learning (otherwise, it would be considered online learning (more than 70%) or traditional face-to-face learning (less than 30%)).

This study views blended learning as an instructional approach that provides both synchronous and asynchronous modes of delivery through which students construct their own understandings and interact with others (Liliana, 2018; Bayyat et al., 2021). Blended learning therefore, is an integration of the online mode with the traditional mode of face-to-face to offer class activities in a pedagogically valuable planned manner. The mode involves certain portions of the activities of face-to-face being replaced through the usage of online activities. This diverse mode gives institutions a variety of educational approaches to use.

Teacher Education
Teacher education refers to the policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school and wider community. Kumar (2010) posits that teacher education refers to the policies and programmes designed to equip teachers with the knowledge, behaviours and skills required to perform their task effectively in the school and classroom. Teacher education is a component of the educational system which involves the training of teachers in order to acquire competencies and skills of teaching for the improvement of teachers for the school system. Teacher education has been identified world over, as the bedrock of quality and relevance of education at all levels.

As no country can rise above the level of its educational system, the role of the teacher in the educational system is indispensable. It is along this line that Agulanna (2007) opines that the place of the teacher in any educational system cannot be over emphasised. This is because, there can be no meaningful discourse about quality education without first discussing the quality of teachers. Olseni (2005) is of the opinion that teacher education makes a difference on the standard of Education. Griffths and Houston (2007), stress the importance of highly qualified teachers in the education system. The potentials of an educational organization are directly related to the ability of the teachers. That is to say that, the more trained and qualified the teachers are, the easier it is to effect curriculum development. Without qualified teachers, no matter the quality of curriculum and other components of education system, the implementation of curriculum content might come to naught.

Perceiving the role of teachers in the educational sector as critical and imperative, The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) stipulates the objectives of teacher Education thus;
1) To produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the education system;
2) To encourage further, the spirit of inquiry and creativity in teachers;

3) To help teachers to fit into social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals;
4) To provide teachers with intellectual and professional background adequate for assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations and;
5) To enhance teachers' commitment to teaching profession.

Quality in education relates to the quality of the work undertaken by a teacher, which has significant effects upon his or her pupils or students. Further, those who pay teachers' salaries, whether through taxes or through school fees, wish to be assured that they are receiving value for money. Ways to measure the quality of work of individual teachers, of schools, or of education systems as a whole, are therefore often sought Given the paramount role of the teacher in building a formidable economy through education, professionalization of the teaching profession should not be in contest. Hence, government should make considerable effort to professionalize teaching in Nigeria. This could be achieved through constant evaluation of institutions and programmes to ensure the maintenance of standards in our colleges of education.

Teaching and Learning Process
Teaching and learning process can be defined as a transformation process of knowledge from teachers to students. It is referred as thecombination of various elements within the process where an educator identifies and establishes the learning objectives and develop teaching resources and implement the teaching and learning strategy. On the other hand, learning is a cardinal factor that a teacher must consider while teaching students.
Teaching learning process consists of four basic elements (a) Assessment. (b) Planning. (c) Implementation. (d)evaluation. It is a method for monitoring and judging the overall quality of learning or teaching based on objective, data and scientific criteria.

Theoretical Framework
Albert Bandura's (1977) social learning cognitive theory provides the theoretical framework for this study. The theory focuses on observation as an important aspect of learning. It proposes that new behaviour can be acquired by observing and imitating others; stating that learning is a cognitive process that takes place in a social context and can occur purely through observation or direct instruction, even in the absence of motor reproduction or direct reinforcement (Smith, 2012). The theory departs from the understanding that learning is not purely behavioural but rather a cognitive process that takes place in a social context. In this sense learning involves observation, extraction of information from those observations, and making decisions about the performance of the behaviour (observational learning or modeling). The learner is not a passive recipient of information. Cognition, environment, and behaviour all mutually influence each other to enhance the learning process (Smith and Smith, 2008).

Methodology
A validated questionnaire titled the Perception of Teachers on the Use of Blended Learning Approach (PTUBLA) designed by the researcher, and constructed in a 4-point Likert scale format was administered. The instrument was subjected to both face and content validity by experts in Measurement and Evaluation and Educational Technology before use. The questionnaire was also subjected to a reliability testing on SPSS 23 in order to ascertain the coefficient for a Cronbach Alpha. The coefficient gotten from the Cronbach Alpha method was 0.89, and this was considered excellent, making the instrument satisfactorily fit for the study.

The direct retrieval method of instrument for data collection was adopted for the study to ensure effective and prompt data collection. A total of 54 copies of questionnaire were distributed and retrieved.
The reliability of the questionnaire was established at. All the teachers in the School of Languages in the College were used to elicit response on the perception of teachers on blended learning. The outputs of the 4 point Likert scale format used were presented and analysed using SSP Version 21, using mean and standard deviation. Mean cut off was 2.50. All items with the mean of 2.50 were regarded as agreement and accepted; while those less than 2.50 were regarded as disagreement and were accordingly rejected.
Data will be presented in line with the research questions.

Findings and Discussions

Findings from the study will be discussed in line with the research questions

Table 1

Extent teachers in the College use the blended learning approach

SN	Variables	VHE	HE	VLE	LE	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	I understand what blended learning is	21	15	10	8	2.91	1.07	**Accepted**
2	There is a balanced schedule between online and physical teaching for my course	1	2	36	15	1.80	0.67	**Rejected**
3	I rarely use online teaching	22	16	10	6	3.0	1.02	**Accepted**
4	I only use the face to face physical traditional method for my course	29	17	5	3	3.33	0.87	**Accepted**

Source: Field Study on Blended Learning, 2024

In Table 1 above, item 1 yielded a mean score of 2.91 and thus is accepted; item 2 yielded a mean score of 1.80 below 2.50 and is thus rejected. Item 3 yielded a mean score of 3.0 and is accepted, while item 4 yielded a mean score of 3.33 and is therefore accepted. The implication is that although teachers understand what blended learning means, the rarely use it and some use only the traditional face to face method in teaching.

Table 2

Factors affecting the use of blended learning approach in the College

SN	Variables	VHE	HE	VLE	LE	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Lack of technical knowledge to use online teaching platforms	25	15	8	6	3.09	1.07	**Accepted**
2	Lack of online learning devices for most student	22	19	7	6	3.06	0.96	**Accepted**
3	Unavailability of data	18	26	6	4	3.07	0.97	**Accepted**
4	Poor electricity supply	29	22	1	2	3.44	0.73	**Accepted**

Source: Field Study on Blended Learning, 2024

In Table 2 above, all items are accepted yielding mean scores above 2.50. Respondents agree that lack of technical knowledge on the use of online teaching platforms, lack of online learning devices for most students, unavailability of data and poor electricity supply are among the factors affecting use of blended learning in the College.

Table 3

The effectiveness of blended learning approach in the teaching and learning process

SN	Variables	VHE	HE	VLE	LE	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	It ensures individualised learning	12	14	17	11	2.5	1.01	**Accepted**
2	It captures only the theoretical aspects of courses	21	18	8	7	2.98	1.03	**Accepted**
3	Students understand online lessons better	8	9	23	14	2.20	0.996	**Rejected**
4	It ensures continuity of learning in dire and insecure times	22	20	6	6	3.07	0.991	**Accepted**

Source: Field Study on Blended Learning, 2024

In Table 3 above, item 1 yielded a mean score of 2.5; while item 2 yielded a mean score of 2.98 and both of them are accepted. Item 3 yielded a mean score 2.20 and was rejected while item 4 yielded a mean score of 3,07 and was accepted. On the effectiveness of blended learning approach, the responses show that it ensures individualised learning, it captures only the theoretical aspects of the courses; students do not understand online teaching more than traditional teaching; and it ensures continuity of learning in dire and insecure times.

Conclusion

This study has examined the perception of teachers on blended learning and its effectiveness as an approach to teaching and learning. While teachers in Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe understand what blended learning is as well as its effectiveness, they however do not employ it owing to certain factors like lack of technical know-how, unavailability of data, poor power supply among others.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby made:

- Teachers should be trained and retrained on the use of blended learning.
- Computer devices should be made available to both teachers and students for blended learning
- There should be subsidy on data procurement as well as provision of centralized wifi at strategic places in the School.
- The College should explore alternative means of power supply to ensure student keep leaning offshore and onshore.

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