

EVALUATION OF BLENDED LEARNING READINESS AMONG NEWLY ADMITTED LEARNERS AT DISTANCE LEARNING INSTITUTE (DLI) UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS, NIGERIA

(Penilaian Kesiediaan Pembelajaran Teradun Dalam Kalangan Pelajar Baharu di Institut Pembelajaran Jarak Jauh (DLI) University Lagos, Nigeria)

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Abstrak

Blended learning is an alternative for providing quality education to learners at the tertiary level of education. As a result, the study aims to assess the blended learning readiness among newly admitted learners of 2017/2018 session of Distance Learning Institute (DLI), University of Lagos. Stratified random sampling was adopted to select 318 (155 male and 163 female) learners from the population. The instrument used for data collection was a 4-point Likert scale structured questionnaire titled Blended Learning Readiness Questionnaire (BLRQ) to elicit information from the learners. The instrument was adapted from St. Andrew's College Online Learning Readiness Assessment. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.79 was obtained. 300 copies of properly filled questionnaire were used for the analysis. Mean score answered the research questions and the criterion mean was taken as 2.50. While the t-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 significance level. Analysis of research questions revealed that most of the newly admitted learners have self-direction towards their learning. Findings showed that learners possess good study habit and are ready for this mode of learning. The result from the hypothesis revealed a significant difference in the perception of students on the use of blended learning approach based on gender. Findings of this study will benefit the Management of Distance Learning Institute as well as learners; that are actually not ready for the blended or online mode of learning which could lead to frustrations and eventually to failures or high attrition rates.

Keywords: Distance Learners, Evaluation, Blended learning, Readiness, On-line learning.

Abstract

Pembelajaran campuran adalah alternatif untuk menyediakan pendidikan berkualiti kepada pelajar dan peringkat pengajian tinggi. Hasilnya, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menilai kesiediaan pembelajaran teradun dalam kalangan pelajar baharu pada sesi pengajian 2017/2018 di Institut Pembelajaran Jarak Jauh (DLI), Universiti Lagos. Persampelan rawak berkelompok telah diguna pakai untuk memilih 318 pelajar (155 pelajar lelaki dan 163 pelajar perempuan) dari keseluruhan populasi. Instrumen yang digunakan untuk pengumpulan data adalah soal selidik berstruktur dengan 4-mata skala Likert bertajuk Soal Selidik Kesiediaan Pembelajaran Teradun (BLRQ) untuk mendapatkan maklumat daripada para pelajar. Instrumen ini diadaptasi daripada Penilaian Kesiediaan Pembelajaran Dalam Talian, Kolej St. Andrew. Untuk memastikan kebolehpercayaan instrumen, nilai Cronbach Alpha 0.79 diperolehi. 300 salinan borang soal selidik yang diisi dengan sempurna telah digunakan untuk tujuan analisis. Skor min menjawab soalan kajian dan min kriteria diambil pada nilai 2.50. Manakala Ujian-t digunakan untuk menguji hipotesis pada tahap signifikan 0.05. Analisis persoalan kajian mendedahkan bahawa kebanyakan pelajar baharu

mempunyai hala tuju di dalam pembelajaran mereka. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa pelajar mempunyai tabiat belajar yang baik dan bersedia untuk mod pembelajaran ini. Hasil hipotesis mendedahkan perbezaan ketara dalam persepsi pelajar terhadap penggunaan pendekatan pembelajaran teradun berdasarkan jantina. Dapatan kajian ini akan memberi manfaat kepada pihak Pengurusan di Institut Pembelajaran Jarak Jauh serta para pelajar; yang sebenarnya tidak bersedia untuk mod pembelajaran teradun atau mod pengajian dalam talian yang boleh membawa kepada kekecewaan dan akhirnya kadar kegagalan yang tinggi dalam pengajian.

Kata kunci: Pelajar jarak jauh, Penilaian, Pembelajaran teradun, Kesediaan, Pembelajaran dalam talian

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, Distance Education has brought great advancement to the field of learning and teaching which brings learners and facilitators together with the focus on distance teaching and learning though separated in time and space (Oladele and Adeniyi 2020). However, in developing countries, Nigeria inclusive, the mode of distance Education is still blended mode due to internet connectivity, incessant electric power supply and other challenges facing developing countries, has made it impossible to practice full online learning.

The distance Learning Institute, University of Lagos was established as a correspondent open studies unit of the University in 1973. The Unit was later transformed into correspondence and open studies Institute in 1983. However, with the current fast spate of development in technology and the University's quest to provide quality education to people of different status and career paths who would have been denied access to education, the University restructured the Institute to become Distance Learning Institute, (DLI). The Distance Learning Institute, DLI, offers education to learners through the blended mode of learning.

2.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Blended learning as an alternative to face-to-face conventional learning is the form of learning that is heavily driven by technology. Learners are expected to have good technological devices that would enable them to participate fully in this mode of learning. Also, a distance learner who engages in blended learning mode should be computer literate, be self-directed in his learning as well as have good study habit. Most often than not however, most distance learners in developing countries, Nigeria inclusive, lack these necessary prerequisites for blended learning.

In other words, often time, most learners who found themselves in distance learning institutions may not be actually ready for the blended mode or online mode of learning and this, sometimes may lead to frustrations and challenges which may eventually lead to failures or high attrition rates. It is therefore against this backdrop that this study is aimed at evaluating blended learning readiness among the newly admitted learners of the Distance Learning Institute-DLI, University of Lagos.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Blended mode of Learning is the approach of teaching and learning whereby the traditional classroom teaching, popularly known as 'face to face' is combine with online educational strategies of providing teaching and learning content using digital technologies. Adewole-Odesi, (2014), revealed that there has been general

research in students' attitude to E- and blended learning. Dar (2016) is of the opinion that blended learning can be successfully incorporated in the field of education especially at the High Institution level.

Dar also noted that blended mode of learning is well suited for university students when the possibility of experiencing self-directed learning is the ultimate. The Distance learning Institute currently uses Moodle Learning Management System (LMS) for online delivery of learning materials and content to its teeming learners. This means that a learner must be computer literate, have access to a computer or at least an internet friendly smart phone or device such as i-pad, be able and willing to access internet at home or work to be able to learn effectively as a learner in the Institute.

According to Watson, (2008), blended learning brings together the online delivery of educational content along with the best of classroom interactions and live-in structure in such a way as to personalize learning, thus allow thoughtful reflection, and differentiate instruction from student to student across a diverse group of learners. Blended learning mode provides opportunities for learners to learn at their own pace most of the time. They only need to attend the study centre meetings mostly to share knowledge and to clarify issues in grey areas of their studies materials.

Garrison and Kanuka (2004), were of the view that using blended mode of learning enhances teaching instruction at Higher Institutions. Redefine the role of higher education instruction as the move towards more learner centred and self-directed mode of teaching and learning. Owesi (2018) is of the opinion that blended learning combines both direct and indirect online learning and usually involves the internet and intranet, Owesi, (2018) further noted that blended learning deals with interactive learning, which result to a blend of virtual classroom and the role a teacher plays in a traditional classroom.

Kintu, Zhu and Kagambe, (2016) say that blended learning is being advocated mainly due to its ability to enable face-to-face interactions, which in turn foster social cognition. In essence, blended learning helps to reduce the challenge of social isolation experience in solely online learning where a learner does not have the opportunity to meet with his instructors and follow learners physically.

Dzuiban, Moskal, and Hartman (2005) opined that blended learning can be seen as mixture of some part of face-to-face instruction with Web components to allow for the use of Web resources and allow face-to-face interaction". In essence, blended learning gives the opportunity to learners to assess part of their learning and instruction through the internet, thereby reducing the number of face-to-face contacts with instructors.

Chew, Jones, and Turner (2008), see blended learning as involving the combination of two fields of concern; education and educational technology. Staker and Horn, (2016) noted that blended learning is a formal education programme in which a student learns through an online delivery of content and instruction, in which the student has control over time, place, path and pace of learning add such student is been supervised far away from home. Krasnova and Ananjev (2015) sees blended learning as a teaching method that combines the most effective face-to-face techniques and online interaction.

Stacey and Gerbic (2008) say that blended learning is a combination of virtual and physical learning environment. There are many benefits of blended learning for a learner. Blended learning benefits both learners and instructors, (Poon, 2013). It creates flexible learning for learner (Adams et al., 2018), it combines both online and face-to-face instruction, (Graham, 2013).

Kintu, Zhu and Kagambe, (2017) worked on the effectiveness of blended learning as well as its relationship between student characteristics, defines features and outcomes, the study revealed that some of the students' characteristics and

backgrounds as well as design feature are significant predictors for student learning outcomes in blended learning.

As blended learning is the mode of teaching and learning in the Distance Learning Institute, University of Lagos, therefore the readiness of newly admitted learners need to be ascertained. Readiness can be said to be a state of being ready or willing to achieve something. Readiness can also be said to be a process and an action. So and Swatman, (2006) defined readiness as ability to be prepared physically or mentally in practice and various learning involvement.

Nuraan (2014) is of the view that learners' readiness is the general ability of the learners to achieve fundamental requirements for higher education without extra tutorial and be able to complete their programmes within the set time. Org and Lai (2006) in a study of gender difference in perceptions and relationships among dominants of e-learning acceptance, perceived ease of use was more salient to the female than male and this could indicate that the females could be more open to blended learning due to their attitude motivated by self-efficacy and perceived ease of use.

Chen and Jones (2007) assessed students' perception of blended learning and traditional classroom among MBA accounting course students... and found out that learners' perception was positive and they were willing to take another course using the blended mode. Yulia (2016) studied readiness for blended learning viewed from students' attitude towards learning aspects. The findings of his study revealed that the students in his study were ready for the implementation of blended learning.

The study also discovered that students in the group blended learning mode perceived learning to be more efficient than the traditional mode. Kintu, Zhu and Kagambe (2016) in their study of learner attitude as a factor in blended learning effectiveness discovered that learners had positive attitude towards blended learning, no attitudinal difference based on gender, no, significant difference in the learners' attitude based on location of school. They also revealed that blended learning is a venture worth undertaking by educational institutions.

Wichadee (2018) studied significant predictors for effectiveness of blended learning in a language course. The result of the study revealed that students were satisfied with instructors interactively and course design, and the mean score of performance was higher than criterion. It was also discovered that attitude towards blended learning, face-to-face support and digital literacy were three variables predicting learning performance.

Adams *et al.*, (2018) studied e-learning readiness among students of diverse background in a leading Malaysian Higher education institution. The finding of the study revealed that the students were ready for blended learning. It was also discovered that there were differences in students' readiness for blended learning based on gender, age, ethnicity, field of study and level of education. Blended learning requires a lot from the learner, so as to achieve the desired success.

No study, to the best of the researchers' knowledge has tried to investigate blended learning readiness among newly admitted learners in the University of Lagos, hence, the present study. There are a lot of pre-requisites for blended learning for potential learner. For a learner mode, such a learner must be self-directed, have a full study habit and acceptable level of technology and computer skills and must possess relevant computer or internet compliant gadgets and equipment.

4.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Theory of Readiness

This study was guided by the theory of readiness by Conley, (2011). Conley in this theory, presented the view that several factors are required for determining career and college readiness among students in higher institution. This theory of readiness, considers personal student's capabilities, goals and interest in higher institutions rather than generalization as observed by other establishments. The theory of readiness suggests that learners need to be prepared for entry-level requirements for their courses. This theory is made up of four key dimensions needed for successful academic pursuit.

The four keys are Key Cognitive Strategies, Key Content Knowledge, Academic Behaviours and Contextual skills. The key cognitive skills include; having research skills, ability to interpret reading materials and communicate effectively in his learning environment. Key content knowledge also includes: ability to comprehend and be able to applied knowledge learnt from various educational resources in the course of his programme.

Key learning skills and techniques involve ability to manage time very well, develop effective study skills and habits, be able to set achievable goals, be in possession of technology and internet enabled devices and be technology savvy. Lastly, the fourth key dimension of the theory of readiness; Key Transition Knowledge & Skills, deals with learners being able to meet admissions requirement, have financial support and career pathway.

5.0 PURPOSE OF STUDY

The study purpose to assess the blended learning readiness among newly admitted learners of 2017/2018 of Distance Learning Institute (DLI), University of Lagos, specifically, the study is aimed to:

- a) Assess the self-directedness of learners
- b) Ascertain the study habits and readiness of the learners
- c) Determine the technology/computer skills of the learners
- d) Find out the computer/gadgets available to the learners for their learning

6.0 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following are the research questions to guide the study;

- a) To what extend are the newly admitted learners self-directed towards their learning
- b) What is the study habit and readiness of the newly admitted learners?
- c) Do the newly admitted learners have the technology and computer skills for blended learning?
- d) What are the computer/gadgets available to the learners?

7.0 RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The following research hypothesis was stated and tested at 0.05 level of significance
There is no significant difference in the blended learning readiness of the newly admitted learner based on gender.

8.0 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted survey research design. The population of the study was 2,184 registered 100 level learners of the Distance Learning Institute of the University of Lagos for 2017/2018 session. Stratified random sampling was adopted to select 318 (155 male and 163 female) learners from the population. The instrument used for data collection was adapted from St. Andrew's College Online Learning Readiness Assessment. 25 females and 15 males distance learners were involved in the pilot test from another distance learning institute.

To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.79 was obtained. The data obtained were analysed using mean, standard deviation and also presented in percentages. A 4-point Likert scale structured questionnaire titled Blended Learning Readiness Questionnaire (BLRQ) was designed to elicit information from the students.

Mean score was used to answer the research questions stated, the criterion mean was taken as 2.50, therefore any mean score below 2.50 was taken as disagreement, while mean score of 2.50 and above was taken as agreement. While the t-test was used to test the hypothesis stated at 0.05 level of significance. Only 300 copies of questionnaire that were properly filled and returned were used in the analysis.

9.0 RESULTS

9.1 Research Question 1

To what extent are the newly admitted learners self-directed towards their learning?

Table 1.0 Mean Score of the extent the newly admitted learners are self-directed in their learning.

S/N	To what extent are the newly admitted learners self-directed towards their learning?	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	STD	Remarks
1.	I set goals and deadlines for myself always	50 (16.7%)	144 (48.0)	68 (22.7%)	38 (12.7%)	2.69	1.000	Agree
2.	I have a good reason for enrolling into this programme instead of the regular programme.	62 (20.7%)	146 (48.3%)	66 (22.0%)	26 (8.7%)	2.81	0.955	Agreed
3.	I always finish any project or task I start	46 (15.3%)	150 (50.0%)	74 (24.7%)	30 (10.0%)	2.71	0.993	Agreed
4.	When things get difficult, I do not quit what I am doing.	52 (17.3%)	148 (49.3%)	72 (24.0%)	28 (9.3%)	2.75	0.978	Agreed
5.	I can keep myself on track and accomplish my tasks on set time.	48 (16.0%)	72 24.0	156 52.0	24 8.0	2.48	1.083	Disagreed
	Grand mean					2.69	1.202	

Modebelu & Oladele (2021)

Note: Mean ≥ 2.5 implies 'Agreement'

As seen from table 1, the mean responses were in agreement with four (4) of the items on newly admitted learners' self-direction towards their learning. The mean ranged from 2.48 to 2.75 and 2.69 was the overall mean. While 1.002 was the standard deviation of shows that newly admitted learners have self-direction towards their

learning. This implies that most of the newly admitted distance learners have self-direction towards their learning.

9.2 Research Question 2

What is the study habit and readiness of the newly admitted learners?

Table 2: Mean Score of the study habit and readiness of the newly admitted students.

	What is the study habit of the newly admitted learners?	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	STD	Remarks
6.	I work in a place that will give me the opportunity to work and study	10 (3.3%)	44 (14.7%)	162 (54.0%)	84 (28.0%)	1.02	0.591	Disagree
7.	I am good at ignoring distractions while I study	66 (22.0%)	174 (54.0%)	32 (10.7%)	28 (9.3%)	2.93	0.828	Agree
8.	I am willing to put in 10-12 hours of study each week on my own on my study.	56 (18.7%)	130 (43.3%)	98 (32.7%)	16 (5.3%)	2.75	0.881	Agree
9.	I can read and understand whatever I read on my own.	54 (18.0%)	152 (50.7%)	76 (25.3%)	18 (6.0%)	2.81	0.864	Agree
10.	I keep a record of my assignments and projects not to forget them.	82 (27.3%)	152 (50.7%)	48 (16.0%)	18 (6.0%)	2.99	0.810	Agree
Grand Mean						2.50	0.795	

Modebelu & Oladele (2021)

Note: Mean ≥ 2.5 implies 'Agreement'

From table 2, it can be observed that the respondents agree that they can ignore distractions with mean score of 2., they equally agree (2.75) that they can put in 10-12 hours of study per day, they also agree (2.81) that they can read and understand whatever they read on their own, and that they can keep records of their assignments (2.99). They respondents disagree that they work in places that allows them to work and study (1.02). However, the grand mean of 2.50 and standard deviation of 0.795, indicate that the respondents have good study habits.

9.3 Research Question 3

Do the newly admitted learners have the skills in technology and computer for blended learning?

Table 3: Technology and computer skills for blended learning of the students

	Do the newly admitted learners have the skills in technology and computer for blended learning?	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	STD	Remarks
13.	I am computer literate.	64 (21.3%)	152 (50.7%)	56 (18.7%)	28 (9.3%)	2.84	1.018	Agree
14.	I can comfortably work on Microsoft office and Excel	64 (21.3%)	164 (54.7%)	50 (16.7%)	22 (7.3%)	2.90	0.997	Agree
15.	I can surf the internet very well.	74 (24.7%)	148 (49.3%)	52 (17.3%)	26 (8.7%)	2.90	0.997	Agree
16.	I know how to use search engines such as google to find information on the	42 (14.0%)	22 (7.3%)	78 (26.0%)	158 (52.7%)	1.97	0.672	Disagree

	internet and do assignments							
17.	I do not know how to use the search engines in downloading information from the internet.	62 (20.7%)	34 (11.3%)	42 (14.0%)	162 (54.0%)	2.84	1.018	Agree
Grand mean						2.69	0.741	

Modebelu & Oladele (2021)

Note: Mean ≥ 2.5 implies 'Agreement'

In table 3, with mean score ranging from 2.84 to 2.90, the respondents agree that they are computer literate, they can work comfortably with Microsoft office, they can surf the net however, with a mean score of 1.97, they disagree that they can use the different search engines in finding materials on line. This also is indicated in their response that they do not know how to use the search engines to download materials from the internet. The grand mean of 2.69 and standard deviation of 0.741 is an indication of agreement that the respondents have technology and computer skills needed for their studies.

9.4 Research Question 4

What are the computer/gadgets available to the learners?

Table 4: Computer/Gadgets available to the learners

	What are the computer/gadgets available to the learners?	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	STD	Remarks
18	I have a personal laptop	52 (17.3%)	76 (25.3%)	152 (50.7%)	18 (6.0%)	2.09	0.605	Disagree
19	I have an internet friendly hand set	54 (18.0%)	28 (9.0%)	68 (22.7%)	28 (9.0%)	2.07	0.715	Disagree
20	I have access to a printer in my home/office	64 (21.3%)	70 (23.3)	164 (54.7%)	2 (0.7%)	2.17	0.947	Disagree
21	I have a table top computer at home or in my office I can always use for my assignments	58 (19.3%)	26 (8.7%)	62 (20.7%)	154 (51.3%)	2.01	0.698	Disagree
22	I know somebody who has a computer I can use when I need it.	50 (16.7%)	144 (48.0%)	72 (24.0%)	34 (11.3%)	2.70	1.040	Agree
Grand mean						2.21	0.801	

Modebelu & Oladele (2021)

Note: Mean ≥ 2.5 implies 'Agreement'

In table 4, with mean score ranging from 2.01 to 2.17, the respondents disagree that they have personal laptops, internet friendly phones, printers in the home or offices and a table top computer in their homes and offices which they can use for their studies. They however agree that they know someone who has a computer they can use when they need it. The grand mean of 2.21 and standard deviation of 0.80 is an indication of disagreement this shows that the respondents do not have the computer and gadgets needed for their studies.

9.5 Test of Hypothesis

Table 5: Independent Samples t-test on the mean responses of the perception of the respondents on the use of blended learning approach based on gender

Variable	group	N	\bar{X}	Std Dev	Std Error	DF	T	P	Remark
Blended learning	male	135	1.6772	1.1943	.17505	298	-0.7053	0.0000	S
Readiness	female	165	1.4947	1.1619	.11649				

S= Significant ($p < 0.05$)

The result on Table 5 shows a significant difference in the blended learning readiness of the newly admitted students. T-test value of -0.7053 was obtained, $P = 0.000$ which was significant at 0.05 level of probability. Hence, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the perception of students on the use of blended learning approach based on gender was rejected.

10.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study was designed to investigate the blended learning readiness among newly admitted learners in Distance Learning Institute (DLI) the University of Lagos. Analysis of research question one revealed that most of the newly admitted learners have self-direction towards their learning. This is one of the qualities of adult learners. This is quite understandable as majority of the learners are mature, employed and already know why they enrolled in the programme.

From research question two, it was observed that the learners possess good study habit and are ready for this mode of learning. This finding is therefore in agreement with Conley's position on study skills and academic behaviour. Also, the findings agree with that of Yulia (2016) and Adams *et al.*, (2018) who in their separate studies, found out that their respondents were ready for blended learning. The respondents have skills needed to use the computers and other electronic tools in their learning.

This finding also corroborates Conley's postulation on Key learning skills and techniques which include ownership of technology and internet empowered devices and be technology savvy. However, answers to research question five reveal that the respondents lack these gadgets. Nigeria as a nation is grappling with poverty and high cost of education. Many learners cannot afford to purchase the needed gadgets and computers they need for their studies.

This becomes a setback for them, because as learners in the blended mode, most of their assignments like the Computer Marked Assessment (CMA) and the Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA) are posted online for the learners. So, learners who do not have access to computers may find it difficult to cope with the demands of this mode of learning. The result from the hypothesis tested revealed a significant difference in the perception of students on the use of blended learning approach based on gender.

This shows that male students perceived blended learning differently from the female students. This finding is in line with Org and Lai (2006) who discovered in their study that perceived ease of use were more prominent with the female than male. This could indicate that the females could be more open to blended learning because their attitude is motivated by self-efficacy and perceived ease of use. This study has been guided by the theory of readiness postulated by Conley (2011), and has therefore guided the analysis and discussion of findings.

11.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- a) Orientation programme for new students should incorporate training on study habit and self-directed learning.
- b) Applicant induction course for the newly admitted students should be extended to really drill students on the skills needed to succeed using blended learning mode.
- c) The Institute should devise a modality to provide the learners with laptops and other internet compliant gadgets that would assist them in their learning using the blended mode.
- d) Students should be encouraged to embrace the blended mode of learning and should be assisted through academic counselling and learner support mechanisms to adjust to learning using the blended learning mode irrespective of their gender.

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