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# BLENDING LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION: IMPLICATION AND STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC LIBRARY SUPPORT

O. Adebayo<sup>1</sup>, J. Iwu-James<sup>1</sup>, O. Olawoyin<sup>1</sup>, M. Fagbohun<sup>1</sup>, U. Esse<sup>1</sup>, F. Yusuf<sup>1</sup>, C. Segun-Adeniran<sup>1</sup>, R. Izuagbe<sup>1</sup>, S. Owolabi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Covenant University (NIGERIA)*

<sup>2</sup>*Landmark University (NIGERIA)*

## Abstract

Following advances and extensive use of information and communication technology (ICT) in education and the current tech savvy generation of learners in higher institutions of learning, blended learning is gaining popularity as it is adjudged effective in improving both teaching and learning process in higher institutions of learning. It has the potential to expand access to quality education and break learning barriers in developing countries. Blended learning has created a paradigm shift in library services, however, not all academic libraries in developing countries have understood their roles in blended learning environment. Academic library can play significant roles in collaboration with faculty. The paper examined innovative strategies that academic libraries can adopt to make effective use of blended. The paper examined the state of academic libraries in developing countries with emphasis on their ability to participate in an embedded learning environment, it revealed that traditional learning methods is still prevalent in many developing countries, the paper considered factors that enhance and hinder academic libraries intervention in a blended learning environment. Competencies and skills required by academic librarians to be relevant in an embedded learning environment were discussed. The paper proffered workable recommendation for implementing a blended learning environment. In conclusion, the paper recommends that librarians in developing countries must be intentional about skills acquisition so as to be well equipped to join their counterparts in other developed climes to play a significant and principal role in the ever dynamic sophisticated learning environment.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The academic library is popular for its role in acquiring, organizing, preserving, and creating access to information. The integral function of the academic library is to support teaching and research in higher education. With evolution of technology globally, academic libraries are also seeking for innovative pathways to serve faculty and students more effectively. They are often expected to adopt digital technologies for service functions. They are mandated to provide leadership and training in instructional technology. (Spante, Hashemi, Lundin, & Algers, 2018).

With advancement in ICT leading to e-learning technologies, blended learning has evolved and can effectively combine the traditional face-to-face learning and e-learning. Blended learning is gaining popularity in literature. Many definitions abound in literature, it has been defined from different angles by different authors. To give a broad definition, it is a pedagogical approach which combines several learning methods and styles especially with the aid of ICT tools to promote efficiency and effectiveness in teaching and learning.

Blended learning can be instrumental in reducing Inequality within countries and among nations. Oliver (2004) suggest that quality education is tantamount to economic growth, better health care and many advantages too numerous to count. The mission of higher education (HE) revolves around the generation of new knowledge and preparation of graduates for ability to function in an ever evolving and competitive society. Findings by Barro and Lee (2013) reveal that the level of education around the world the globe is on the rising at an impressive rate. Similarly, Ganimian and Murnane (2016) observed that there has been a remarkable increase of higher institutions of learning in developing countries. This is also corroborated by Mahajan (2016) and Warning and Duerrenberger (2018) who posits that most developing countries especially Africa are witnessing a substantial rise in higher education enrollment. Many scholars have reported that the traditional approach to teaching and learning is still the norm in many regions in the developing countries. (Nawaz & Ahmad 2011). Blended learning has been described by Hogan (2011) as being much more than just a teaching method but a basis of economic survival for developing countries.