

## **Blended Learning Technique: Rethinking pedagogical Approaches in Sandwich/B.Ed Part-Time Degree Programmes in Nigerian Universities**

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### **Abstract**

*Sandwich programmes in Nigerian Universities otherwise called B.Ed Part-time programmes has been largely applauded for having pointedly addressed the chunk of the problems of accessibility to higher education in Nigeria especially to the working class and on- the job teachers whose work schedules would not permit them to go for regular schooling. The operations of the sandwich programme overtime has thrown up apparent issues of time constraints and overloaded schedules that has culminated in poor content delivery and coverage. This requires a rethink and Re-strategizing for effective and efficient delivery and coverage in the programme, this paper prescribed Blended Learning Technique as a panacea to these perennial problems considering the fact that Technology has redefined the roles of today's teacher from been a 'font of knowledge' to instructional managers helping to guide students through their individual learning pathways. It posits that blended learning which is a mix of traditional mode of teaching and learning with technology mediated form if adopted could provide the leading edge for effective and efficient content delivery in the sandwich programmes. Furthermore, the paper recommends equipping the resource persons/ teachers with the necessary skills (through training and re-training) required for this change, also the classrooms must be made 'blended learning friendly'.*

**Keywords:** Sandwich programmes, B.Ed part-time programmes Blended learning strategies and Technology- mediated teaching and learning

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## **Introduction**

The growing interest in practical application of information and communication technology in education amidst growing challenges of providing quality, accessible and functional education to citizens of nations across the world suggests that diverse approaches and solutions are required to provide the required form of education to a large chunk of the society. Like most of its counterparts in the developing world, Nigeria is grappling with a rapidly growing population that requires access to quality and functional education for manpower development most especially at the highest level of the educational sector that will produce future leaders, and ensure socio-economic growth in science and technology among others. The National Policy on Education (2004) enunciated the broad objectives of Nigerian education policy to include:

- The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in his/her society.
- The acquisition of relevant and balanced knowledge of facts about local and world technology
- The production of highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of Nigerian education system.

Among the strategies put in place by successive governments to actualize these objectives include; establishment of universities across the geopolitical zones of the country, Open and Distant Education system, Otherwise called the “e-learning system” and The Sand-which programme popularly called the “*Part-time Degree Programme*”. The main focus of this paper is to highlight some observed inadequacies associated with the B.Ed part-time degree programme with particular concern and interest on the content delivery and coverage. The paper advance the imperative for ICT integration and transformation of the pedagogical approaches that entails blending and coordinating the activities of the sandwhich program for entrenchment of quality learning and achievement of set educational goals. It may be appropriate here to clarify concepts around the issues at hand.

## **Clarification of Concepts**

Sandwhich programmes are programmes that are run especially by Education Faculties, Departments or Units as the case may be, Such as Faculties of Education in Universities, Colleges of Education, and Education-based Institutions e.g. National Teachers Institute (NTI). According to some literatures the programme that emerged

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due to the growing demand for higher education and for working class individuals whose work commitments wouldn't allow for regular schooling. It is called by different names such as long vacation training (LVT) as with Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and B.Ed part-time programme as it is with Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, while the term sandwich which is commonly used was borrowed from similar programme from the British system of flexible education opportunities. Akomolafe (2008) asserts that sandwich programmes are designed to create opportunities for the working class to acquire higher educational qualifications. The cardinal objectives of the sandwich programme which usually run during vacation as spelt out in Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education's Sandwich Programme guide includes but not limited to the following:

- i. To provide in-service training for teachers in order to improve their professionalism.
- ii. To update practicing teachers knowledge on current development in their disciplines.
- iii. To accommodate candidates who are not privileged to pursue full time university education programme.
- iv. To produce graduates that would be able to teach competently and efficiently at the primary and secondary school levels.

Like the regular degree programmes, the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) is responsible for ensuring proper running of the sandwich programmes in Nigerian Universities. Presently out of the over 120 universities in Nigeria; both private and thirty- nine public universities run the part-time and sandwich programmes (NUC, 2015).

Pedagogical approaches refers to the different strategies, methods and techniques from which teachers structure instructional deliveries for effective and efficient teaching and learning process. Noordink (2010) in her blog opined that "every teacher develops his/ her own ways of teaching, he/she uses a personal pedagogy" she further defined pedagogy as the way teachers teach their learners. There are different kinds of pedagogies among which are; The pedagogy of Learning by listening, Discovery learning, Learning by doing, Learning through discussion and debates and ofcourse Blended learning, these pedagogical constructs are used in varying degrees and in different ways, in different disciplines and in varying amounts. This paper contemplates a rethink on teaching and learning strategies with focus on blended learning as a panacea to some of the manifesting and clearly defined problems that has overtime impeded the realisation of the full potentials and cardinal objectives of

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the part-time programmes in Nigerian universities.

The problems of running sandwich and part-time degree programmes

- a. Constraints of time: that is inadequacy of time to extensively and in-depthly cover the course contents leading to ineffective teaching and learning.
- b. Overloaded sessions/Lecture periods: The students are overloaded with courses considering the short period allocated to the programme; an average of 18units per week, this is so because the entire programme of six months in a regular degree programme on the average is set to run for an average of ten weeks, in most cases only six weeks of active lectures are possible due to administrative procedures of registration and logistical challenges which in most cases run through the course of the session. In the midst of this challenges in the sandwich programme lies possible solution, it is an incontestable belief that most of today's challenges in education could be solved through the deployment of technology. Yusuf (2012) succinctly captured it thus "when Information and communication tools are constructively and responsibly used they provide a leading edge that can transform any nations educational system" Hence to deal with the problems earlier stated the imperatives of rethinking and strategizing by integrating technology as a way of improving the traditional face-to face model in the sandwich programmes cannot be over emphasised.

Blended learning strategy: As the name implies, Blended Learning is an emerging concept that propagates the mixing of principles, models, theories, techniques in a teaching and learning environment to facilitate the attainment of the instructional objectives with special consideration for the learning needs and characteristics of the learner. In other words, it is a blend of learning theories and approaches combined to optimize teaching and learning opportunities. It must be stated that this concept may be defined variedly depending on the context of usage.

Blended learning evolved from the belief that humans are not "Single -Method Learners", the key proponent of this theory is e-learning expert Elliot Masie; who described human beings as "Blended learning species". It is believed that individuals perform better when there are a mix of modalities and learning methods.

Blended learning theories have been supported by a wide range of authors and educationists as the most pragmatic instructional learning theory that addresses the diverse needs of learners. It combines face to face classroom methods with

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computer-mediated activities to form an integrated instructional approach. Noordink (2012) states that blended learning is unique and most appropriate in a number of contexts as it combines different teaching approaches and learning styles.

### **Rethinking and re-strategizing with Blended pedagogical approaches in the sandwich programmes in Nigeria**

Experience with Information and communication technology tools has uncovered profound opportunities for improving the quality, convenience, effectiveness and efficiency of teaching and learning. Although there are few empirical evidence and literature on the problems associated with the sandwich programmes in Nigerian universities, it is a known fact that in solving the problem of accessibility to higher qualification for the working class and teachers alike, the problem of crowded schedules within the period of the programmes is glaring. Obasi & Nwakaire (2014) submits that the challenges the sandwich programmes was set to tackle include that of increasing demand for high level manpower in the educational sector and that of training and re-training of serving teachers. They observed that inadequacy of space particularly the learning environment and time for the programme are the major impediments. Furthermore Nsofor, Bello & Sani (2014) opined that rather than focused energy on the automation of traditional teaching models, it is most germane to focus on how to transform these opportunities provided by e-technologies into more effective and efficient teaching and learning process. In the same vein, Daniel (2000) and Young (2002) are of the view that e-learning technologies can effectively respond to accelerating global competition, remove situational barriers and be highly cost effective. Traditional face to face instruction involves direct interface between the resource person and the learners while technology mediated instruction which may be in a synchronous or asynchronous context uses technology as a teaching and learning medium as such, Driscoll (2003) as cited in Nsofor et al(2014) identified the following contextualized usage of Blended learning technique that may be adopted to improve the sandwich programmes in Nigeria:

- A combination or mixture of web-based technology such as live virtual classroom, self-paced instruction, collaborative learning, video streaming, audio and texting in order to accomplish an educational goal.
- Combination of diverse pedagogical approaches such as constructivism, behaviorism and cognitivism in order to produce an opportunity for optimal learning outcome with or without instructional technology.

- A combination or blend of any form of Instructional Technology such as video tape, CD-ROM, web-based training with face- to-face instructor led training.
- Combining Instructional Technology with actual job tasks in order to create a harmonious effect of learning and working, Any of these blended learning context may be used to improve the sandwich programmes in our universities if properly harnessed and responsibly structured.

Every day, institutions are developing models that apply emerging technologies to their unique needs, therefore the nature of the challenges determines what blend to use. Accordingly, Carmen (2002) asserts that the type of blend is subject of the situation and the instructional theory or design that is adopted since different theories apply to different situation. Again, Mindflash (2012) enumerated three primary components of blended learning thus:

- In-person classroom activities facilitated by a trained educator
- Online learning materials often including pre-recorded lectures given by that same instructor.
- Structured independent study time guided by the materials in the lectures and skills developed during the classroom experience.

It follows then that in re-thinking and re-strategising for improved quality and efficient instructional delivery in the sandwich/B.ed Part-time degree programmes, these components have to be looked at critically to select the most viable context that suits our peculiar settings. In another breath, Carmen(2002) listed five key ingredients as important elements of blended learning technique based on the three components these are:

1. Live Events: Synchronous, instructor-led learning events in which all learners participate at the same time, such as in a live “virtual classroom.”
2. Self-Paced Learning: Learning experiences that the learner completes individually, at his own speed and on his own time, such as interactive, Internet-based or CD-ROM training.
3. Collaboration: Environments in which learners communicate with others, for example, e-mail, threaded discussions or online chat.
4. Assessment: A measure of learners’ knowledge. Pre-assessments can come before live or self-paced events, to determine prior knowledge, and post-assessments can occur following live or self-paced learning events, to measure learning transfer.

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5. Performance Support Materials: On-the-job reference materials that enhance learning retention and transfer, including PDA downloads, and printable references, summaries, and job aids.

### **Challenges to Blended learning in Sandwich programmes in Nigeria**

In the traditional model of teaching and learning, which is the present model adopted by the sandwich programmes, teachers/resource persons uses varieties of task specific techniques such as writing on the blackboard, demonstration, display of audio-visual materials and group discussions. This has inherent limitations such as physical presence of the learner at predetermined time, place and space and does not take cognizance of the individual differences of the learners, in terms of pace of learning and not on one on one basis. Eventhough these limitations could be addressed by the use of a blend of techniques with technology at the center of it, according to Sampath, Panneerselvam and Santhanam (2012), 'The internet is transforming the way things are done in educational system across the world, it is used to support regular schooling and continuing education' This does not come easy, as the following obstacles must be surmounted. On the part of the learner these are:

The requisite skills and knowledge of Computer, today smartphones are being equipped with educational software, and ofcourse personnel with the requisite skills to manipulate the technology devices in order to get the right blend for the sandwich programmes which constitute the other challenge. In another vein Fomsi, Nwosu and Ochuba (2014), Identified the following challenges to the incorporation of blended learning in Nigerian Universities:

- Basic computer skills; such as Navigating and searching the internet
- The use of e-mailing platform.
- Ability to locate, download and save files
- Ability to use electronic bulletin boards.
- Ability to use media sharing sites such as YouTube and vimeo
- Ability to communicate online using social media such as Facebook, Twitter, linked in Google Plus, Instagramm etc.
- Use of Application software (Microsoftword, Excel and Powerpoint ).
- Absence of staff development programmes to equip teachers and personnel with necessary skills required for a blended learning environment.
- Absence of media friendly classrooms, most lecture rooms lack even electricity which is fundamental for operating technology devices.

- Absence of budget for technology based equipment.

## **Conclusion**

The imperative of rethinking the sandwich or B.Ed part-time degree programmes was made very stronger with increased volume of Nigerians keying in to universal migration to the use of technology in doing business, education and general interactions. The Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC) submitted recently that over 97million Nigerians uses the internet, this is 57 percent of our population which has about 60percent literate class. On the mobile telephony system, Nigeria has over one hundred and forty-eight million(148) subscribers across the different mobile networks this translate to 87percent of the entire population, This meant that with the right political will and focus, Technology resources could be deployed to rejig the sandwich programmes with the required blend of technology tools to give it the leading edge for efficient and effective teaching and learning, with minimal time loss and fatigue. Leveraging on technology in a blend offers the benefits of prompt course content coverage, promotion of knowledge through individualized learning, enhancement of communication amongst the learners and resource persons and themselves and facilitation of collaborative learning within and outside the classroom. These advantages are far more reaching than the limitations of blended learning techniques, which is fast becoming an imperative not an option.

## **Recommendations**

1. The universities running sandwich programmes must have a rethinking strategy towards adopting a particular blended learning technique to suit their environment with a view to increase productivity, better content coverage and efficiency of the programmes.
2. Resource persons should be equipped through training and re-training to fit in to the Blended learning environment
3. Classrooms should be upgraded and fitted to suit the diverse options of technology mediated teaching and learning, also to address the epileptic power issue the blended platform could be made more asynchronous.
4. Blended learning techniques bring forth the need for review of the sandwich programmes curriculum to align with the trends.



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