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Navigating the transition to blended learning: Faculty experiences, challenges, and coping strategies at Makerere University

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ABSTRACT

As universities increasingly adopt flexible learning options, the shift from traditional face-to-face instruction to blended learning environments presents both opportunities and challenges. This study explored the experiences of faculty at Makerere University as they adapted to this transition, focusing on their training process and the obstacles they encountered. Utilizing a qualitative case study design, the research involved detailed observations and interviews with 11 faculty members from the School of Women and Gender Studies. The findings indicated that faculty with prior experience in Learning Management Systems (LMS) adjusted more smoothly to the blended learning format, while those unfamiliar with these tools faced significant challenges. Issues such as balancing demanding schedules and managing workloads highlighted the need for more structured and manageable training programs. Institutional support, including Internet data and transport refunds, played a crucial role in boosting faculty productivity and confidence. Furthermore, team-based development was found to be a particularly effective strategy, fostering collaboration and improving productivity, compared to individual efforts. The study also emphasized the importance of simplified instructional design processes and ongoing technical support in maintaining faculty motivation and engagement. Ultimately, the research recommends that institutions provide comprehensive technical support, promote collaborative course development, and streamline instructional design processes to ensure successful transitions to blended learning environments. These insights offer valuable guidance for other higher education institutions undergoing similar transformations, providing a framework for addressing challenges and enhancing the effectiveness of blended learning initiatives.

Keywords: *Blended Learning, Faculty Development, Learning Management Systems (LMS), Digital Transition, Educational Technology, Institutional Support, Team-Based Development, Instructional Design*

INTRODUCTION

The global shift towards blended learning has accelerated, driven in part by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has reshaped educational delivery methods across the globe (Moodley et al., 2022). This shift is particularly relevant in higher education, where the blend of traditional face-to-face instruction with digital components is seen as a key strategy for enhancing accessibility and flexibility (Bernard et al., 2022). On the continental level, African universities, including those in Uganda, have been responding to this trend by adopting blended learning models to improve educational outcomes and cater to diverse student needs. However, the transition has presented significant challenges, especially for faculty accustomed to traditional teaching methods (Mtebe & Raisamo, 2014).

At Makerere University, the Gender and Digitalization across Context (GENDIG) Project exemplifies an effort to adapt and digitize courses within the School of Women and Gender Studies to meet these evolving demands (Fulgence, 2020). This initiative aimed to enhance course accessibility and completion rates by integrating blended learning approaches. Transforming

traditional face-to-face courses into blended formats necessitates new pedagogical skills and knowledge for faculty, grounded in methodologies such as Nicholls' paradigm for curriculum development, which emphasizes alignment between learning outcomes, content, and assessments (Nicholls, 2002).

Despite these efforts, existing studies on similar transformations have often overlooked specific challenges faced by faculty during the transition process and the effectiveness of the support provided (Illera & Escofet, 2009). For instance, while previous research has documented general aspects of course conversion, it has frequently failed to capture the nuanced experiences and adaptive strategies of faculty members. This study addressed these gaps by providing an in-depth analysis of faculty experiences at Makerere University during their transition to blended learning, focusing on the practical challenges encountered and the strategies employed to overcome them.

The GENDIG project, by incorporating extensive training and support for faculty, offers a unique case for exploring these issues. This study aimed to fill the knowledge gaps identified in prior research by documenting the specific experiences of faculty during their course transformation process and evaluating the effectiveness of the support mechanisms in place. The insights gained will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how to support faculty through similar transitions and inform future initiatives in blended learning environments

.RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1) How were the faculty members supported in transforming their face-to-face courses into a blended learning format?
2) What specific challenges did faculty face during the training?
3) How did faculty members cope with these challenges?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The transition from traditional face-to-face instruction to blended learning environments necessitates substantial support for faculty to manage the complexities involved. Studies have emphasized that effective support mechanisms typically include professional development programs, technological training, and institutional resources (Bower et al., 2015). Professional development initiatives, such as workshops and training sessions, are crucial in equipping faculty with the skills needed to design and implement blended learning courses. These programs have focused on pedagogical strategies, technological tools, and course design principles essential for a successful transition (Garrison & Vaughan, 2013). Technological training has further aided faculty in becoming proficient with Learning Management Systems (LMS) and other digital tools, ensuring effective integration into their teaching practices (Ellis, 2009). Institutional resources, including technical support and access to digital infrastructure, have also been critical in enhancing faculty capacity to adapt to blended learning environments (Means et al., 2013).

Despite these support mechanisms, challenges have persisted, often influenced by the level of institutional commitment and faculty's prior technology experience (Hew & Cheung, 2014). Baran et al., (2011) highlighted that while initial training is beneficial, ongoing support and professional development are essential for maintaining faculty engagement and addressing technical issues. Studies have also revealed that varying levels of digital literacy among faculty can affect their ability to fully utilize blended learning tools (Tondeur et al., 2012). Thus, a comprehensive support system, encompassing initial training, continuous professional development, and robust technical support,

has been found as necessary for facilitating a smooth transition to blended learning formats and meeting the diverse needs of faculty members (Anderson & Dron, 2011).

The challenges faced by faculty during the transition to blended learning are well-documented. One primary issue is the need for substantial upskilling in digital pedagogy and technology use. Berge & Mrozowski (2001) noted that the transition requires faculty to acquire new competencies in using LMS and digital tools, which can be overwhelming, especially for those with limited prior experience. The learning curve associated with these technologies has often lead to frustration and resistance (Cox, 2008). Additionally, Kahn & Tinker (2014) identified inadequate initial training and limited technical support as factors that exacerbate these difficulties, leaving faculty feeling unsupported and poorly prepared for implementing blended learning strategies.

Workload and time management challenges are also significant for faculty adapting to blended learning. As noted by Palloff & Pratt (2007), redesigning courses for blended formats is time-consuming and adds to faculty's already heavy workloads. Further, Keengwe & Kidd (2010) found that faculty struggle to balance course development with existing teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities. This issue was found to be compounded by the lack of structured support and institutional incentives for faculty engaged in course transformation (Graham et al., 2013). As a result, faculty may experience increased stress and burnout, which negatively affects course design quality and job satisfaction. As noted by Rovai & Jordan (2004), addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including adequate training, ongoing technical support, and recognition for the additional efforts involved.

To cope with these challenges, faculty have employed various strategies, including participation in specialized professional development programs for blended learning. Kimmons & Hall (2016) emphasized the importance of targeted training that addresses both new technologies and pedagogical strategies tailored to blended environments. Faculty involved in comprehensive professional development reported increased confidence and competence in using digital tools and designing blended courses (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). Collaborative efforts, such as forming communities of practice, have further enhanced faculty support networks. Cox (2008) noted that peer support groups and collaborative learning environments help mitigate feelings of isolation and overwhelm during the transition by providing shared experiences and collective problem-solving.

Institutional support mechanisms also play a crucial role in managing the increased workload associated with course redesign. Various forms of institutional support, such as dedicated time for course development, technical assistance, and recognition for faculty efforts, were found to be vital (Graham et al., 2013). Keengwe & Kidd (2010) highlighted that faculty receiving structured support, such as access to instructional designers and additional release time, are better equipped to handle blended learning demands. Incremental implementation approaches, where faculty gradually integrate blended elements into their courses, allowed for a more manageable adaptation process (Palloff & Pratt, 2007). By employing these coping strategies, faculty can more effectively navigate the complexities of blended learning transitions and achieve successful outcomes in their course redesign efforts.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study utilized the Nicholls' paradigm for curriculum development as its guiding framework. The model outlines a structured and iterative process with five key stages: identifying learning outcomes, selecting learning experiences, organizing content, developing assessments, and evaluating the curriculum (Nicholls, 2002). This approach ensures a systematic development of curriculum by building sequentially upon each stage. The process begins with faculty defining the desired learning outcomes, which establish the foundation for the entire curriculum and inform the

subsequent stages. Following this, faculty select or design learning experiences that are both engaging and relevant to support the achievement of these outcomes (Krathwohl, 2002).

Once the learning experiences and content are determined, assessments are created to gauge progress toward the learning outcomes. These assessments provide critical feedback to both students and faculty on the effectiveness of the instruction and the progress being made (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). The final stage involves evaluating the curriculum design to gather feedback and implement necessary revisions for continuous improvement. Figure 1 below visually represents the curriculum development process and its interdependencies, highlighting the iterative nature of this structured approach.

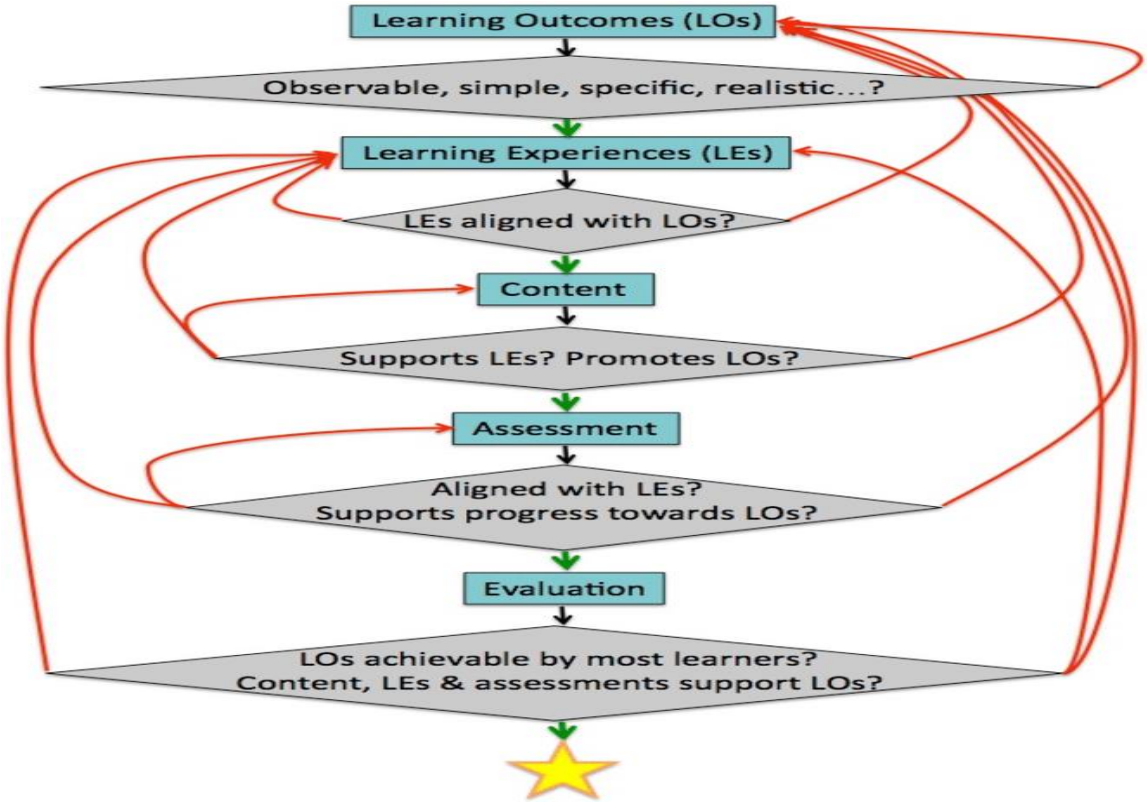

Figure 1: 'Nicholls' five phases of curriculum design and their dependencies (adapted from Nicholls, 2002)

Figure 1 illustrates Nicholls' five phases of curriculum design and their interdependencies, as adapted from Nicholls (2002). The figure visually represents the sequential and interconnected stages of curriculum development: identifying learning outcomes, selecting learning experiences, organizing content, developing assessments, and evaluating the curriculum. Each phase builds upon the previous one, demonstrating how each step relies on the outcomes and decisions made in the preceding phases. This visual depiction highlights the iterative nature of the process, emphasizing how each stage contributes to creating a cohesive and effective curriculum.

In the context of this study, the Nicholls' paradigm was employed to guide faculty in transitioning from face-to-face to blended learning formats. This application of the paradigm is detailed in the methodology section, illustrating how each stage was adapted to support the transformation process and address specific challenges faced by the faculty. This approach ensured a systematic

and comprehensive framework for developing blended learning courses, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the curriculum transformation.

RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA ANALYSIS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore faculty members' experiences as they transitioned from face-to-face to blended learning formats. This approach was chosen for its ability to provide a deep, contextual understanding of complex phenomena through detailed observation and interviews. As Yin (2018) asserts, qualitative case studies are effective in uncovering the nuanced experiences of participants within their specific contexts. This design allowed for a comprehensive examination of individual and collective experiences, aligning with Creswell & Poth's (2018) emphasis on the importance of depth and context in qualitative research.

The study used a purposive sampling strategy to select 11 faculty members from Makerere University's School of Women and Gender Studies who were actively involved in postgraduate courses and open to adopting blended learning methods. This targeted approach was instrumental in forming a cohesive group that could collaborate and support each other throughout the transformation process. As Patton (2015) highlighted, purposive sampling is essential for identifying participants who are well-suited to provide insights into the specific phenomenon under investigation, thereby fostering a community of practice among the faculty.

Data collection was carried out through participant observation during face-to-face sessions and semi-structured interviews, which were ideal for capturing the detailed experiences and perceptions of faculty members during their transition to blended learning (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study's design documents, assessments, and content selections were guided by Nicholls' paradigm for curriculum development, ensuring that the process was aligned with the intended learning outcomes (Nicholls, 2002). This methodological rigor facilitated a structured approach to course transformation.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data from observations and interviews, focusing on identifying and coding themes related to faculty experiences and challenges (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Ethical considerations were meticulously addressed, including obtaining approval from Makerere University's Research Ethics Committee, ensuring participant confidentiality through pseudonyms, and securing consent for the use of images (Bryman, 2016). Additionally, member checking was employed to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings by validating them with participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The implementation of Nicholls' paradigm for curriculum development was a key component of the study. This model guided the faculty through five stages: identifying learning outcomes, selecting learning experiences, organizing content, developing assessments, and evaluating the curriculum. Initial sessions focused on defining clear, measurable learning outcomes, with faculty then selecting relevant learning experiences and organizing them into a coherent sequence. Assessment methods were integrated to track learner progress, and feedback was collected to refine the courses. Facilitators supported faculty throughout each stage, ensuring that the curriculum was both effective and aligned with course objectives.

This structured and iterative approach, rooted in Nicholls' paradigm, ensured a thorough and well-supported transition to blended learning. By meticulously planning, implementing, and evaluating each stage, the study provided a comprehensive understanding of faculty experiences and the effectiveness of the support mechanisms. The findings from this research, detailed in the subsequent section, offer valuable insights into the faculty's experiences, the challenges they faced, and the impact of the facilitation process on their course redevelopment efforts.

FINDINGS

Research Question 1: How were the faculty supported in transforming their face-to-face courses into a blended learning format?

The faculty members reported a range of experiences regarding the support they received while transitioning their courses from a face-to-face format to a blended learning format. Many had prior experience with Learning Management Systems (LMS) and course development training, which significantly facilitated their adaptation to blended learning. As one faculty member observed,

> "*I have been using Moodle for a long time, so I was familiar with most of the features. I even traveled to Finland some time back and talked about online learning at Makerere University, but with the lack of practice, I have forgotten most of the things*" (C - Female Faculty, comment during Face-to-Face Session).

This prior exposure to LMS, whether through international studies or local e-learning initiatives at Makerere University, generally eased the adaptation process. The familiarity with LMS features provided a solid foundation for these faculty members to build upon, making their transition smoother and more effective.

However, the degree of familiarity with LMS varied among the participants, highlighting the disparity in their previous exposure and experience. Some faculty members had extensive backgrounds in using LMS tools, which positively influenced their ability to adapt to blended learning environments. Conversely, others faced a steeper learning curve, as they had less prior experience or exposure to similar technologies. For example, another faculty member noted,

> "*I was excited to learn new techniques that I could use to make my course more engaging"* (Interview with D - Male Faculty).

This enthusiasm reflects a positive attitude towards the integration of new techniques, yet it also underscores the varying levels of preparedness and the importance of tailored support and training.

Despite the advantages that prior experience offered, many faculty members encountered challenges, particularly in balancing their schedules and completing assignments. One participant revealed,

> *"I had good intentions to work on my homework, but I got caught up in other things and never got around to it"* (Interview with A - Female Faculty).

This statement highlights the difficulties faced in managing workload and maintaining momentum amidst other commitments. The need for more structured and manageable workloads during training sessions became evident, suggesting that improved workload management and support could enhance faculty members' ability to keep pace with the demands of course transformation.

Figure 2: Photographs taken from one of the face-to-face team-based course development.

Note*: Permission was obtained from the participants to take and use their photos in the study*

The images in Figure 2 illustrate the importance of specific support mechanisms, namely availability of Internet data and transport refunds, on faculty productivity and confidence during the course development process. According to the observations and interviews, these incentives played a crucial role in enhancing faculty performance. The provision of Internet data and transport refunds alleviated external pressures, allowing faculty members to focus more effectively on their tasks. This is supported by one of the female faculty members, who highlighted how these incentives boosted her confidence in her ability to develop a quality course. By reducing logistical and financial barriers, these support mechanisms created a more conducive environment for faculty to engage deeply with the course development process.

Additionally, the focused presence of the faculty members in the figure emphasizes the benefits of team-based course development compared to individual efforts. The collaborative approach was found to be more productive, as evidenced by one of the participants *(V - female faculty member*). Working in teams allowed faculty to exchange ideas, offer mutual support, and maintain focus, which collectively enhanced productivity. *V's* experience underscores the challenges of working alone, such as increased susceptibility to distractions and procrastination. The team-based approach not only improved efficiency but also fostered a sense of community and shared purpose among the faculty members. This collaborative spirit contributed to a more effective and successful course transformation process, highlighting the value of teamwork in achieving educational objectives.

Research Question 2: What specific challenges did the faculty face during the training?

Faculty members reported several challenges while transforming their face-to-face courses into blended learning formats. A significant issue was the complexity and length of the instructional design process. Many faculty members preferred shorter, more streamlined procedures and templates, as one faculty member observed,

> "*I think it's important to have a streamlined process that is easy to follow. If it's too complicated, people won't want to do it*" (D - Male Faculty, remark during a face-to-face session).

This preference underscores the need for designing training programs that are accessible and manageable, particularly for those new to instructional design.

Another major challenge was the disparity in digital literacy among faculty. While some participants were adept with digital tools, others struggled with technical aspects of course development, which disrupted the uniform pace of the training sessions and impacted the morale of those less confident in their technical skills. One faculty member noted,

> "*I had some trouble with the technical aspects of the course development process, and I needed extra help to understand it*" (Interview with R - Female Faculty).

This variation in digital proficiency highlighted the necessity for comprehensive technical support and tailored training to ensure all faculty members are well-equipped to participate effectively.

The differences in technical proficiency also created difficulties in maintaining a central instruction point, as participants progressed at varying speeds. This resulted in a fragmented learning experience, with facilitators needing to address individual needs rather than focusing on collective progress. As one faculty member remarked,

> "*It was difficult to keep everyone on the same page because we were all moving at different speeds*."

This challenge emphasizes the need for more personalized and adaptive training methods to accommodate varying levels of digital literacy.

Despite these challenges, there were valuable insights gained. Faculty members were notably more motivated when they saw their content uploaded online compared to when they were still working on instructional design in Word documents. One faculty member shared,

> "*When I saw my course come to life online, it gave me a real sense of accomplishment*" (Interview with F - Female Faculty).

This finding suggests that integrating practical, hands-on activities and providing immediate digital outputs can significantly sustain motivation and productivity, highlighting the importance of incorporating such elements throughout the training process. This finding suggests that a concurrent approach to design and digitization, where faculty see immediate digital outputs, can sustain motivation and productivity. Figure 3 below is the screenshot of the welcome page communication from a staff member who converted a face-to-face course to a blended format.

Figure 3: A screenshot captured from the welcome page of one of the courses digitized

Note*: Permission was obtained from the participants to take and use their photos in the study*

Research Question 3: How did faculty members cope with these challenges?

Participants in the study utilized a range of effective strategies to navigate the challenges encountered during the transition from face-to-face courses to blended learning formats. A notable approach was the provision of tangible support and incentives, such aslinternet data and transport refunds, which significantly boosted faculty motivation and productivity. As one faculty member reflected,

> "*I appreciated the support that was given to us during the course development process in terms of Internet data and transport refunds. It made me feel more confident in my ability to create a good course*" (Interview with D - Female Faculty).

Additionally, consistent technical support was essential throughout the course development process, helping faculty members effectively manage the complexities of digital tools and platforms.

Another crucial strategy involved simplifying the instructional design process by utilizing easy-to-follow templates. Faculty participants preferred streamlined processes, which lessened their burden and encouraged greater participation. One faculty member emphasized,

> "*I think it's important to have a streamlined process that is easy to follow. If it's too complicated, people won't want to do it*" (D - Male Faculty, remark during a face-to-face session).

Facilitators aimed to develop a workflow that integrated digitization and instructional design concurrently, making the process more manageable and less overwhelming for participants.

Encouraging team-based course development emerged as a best practice, allowing faculty members to collaborate and support each other, thereby enhancing productivity and focus. As one faculty member noted,

> "*Working with a team helped me to concentrate and get things done faster. When I am alone, I get distracted and postpone the course design tasks*" (Interview with V - Female Faculty).

This collaborative approach not only alleviated feelings of isolation but also fostered a supportive environment where faculty could share ideas and tackle challenges together.

Continuous digital literacy training and technical support were also vital for addressing the varying levels of digital proficiency among faculty members. Ongoing training ensured that all participants, regardless of their initial skill levels, could effectively engage in the course transformation process. As one participant shared,

> *"I had some trouble with the technical aspects of the course development process, and I needed extra help to understand it*" (Interview with R - Female Faculty).

Implementing a phased approach, which allowed faculty to observe their progress and the digital outputs of their work, was instrumental in maintaining motivation and providing a sense of accomplishment.

> *"When I saw my course come to life online, it gave me a real sense of accomplishment*" (Interview with F - Female Faculty).

This strategy of concurrent design and digitization not only sustained momentum but also underscored the importance of practical, hands-on activities throughout the training process.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study reveal that faculty at Makerere University encountered a range of support levels while transitioning their face-to-face courses to blended learning formats. Most faculty had prior experience with Learning Management Systems (LMS) and course development training, which facilitated this transition. This observation aligns with earlier research by Fidalgo et al., (2020), which underscores the value of previous LMS experience in easing the shift to blended learning. Institutional support, including internet data and transport refunds, was significant in this process and echoes the conclusions of Adedoyin & Soykan (2020), who emphasized how such incentives enhance faculty productivity and confidence. However, challenges such as balancing schedules and completing assignments amidst competing demands indicate a need for more structured support systems, as noted by Trust & Whalen (2020), who reported similar difficulties among faculty members.

In contrast to the findings of Al-Fraihat et al., (2020), which suggested that individualized course development could be as effective as team-based efforts, this study found that team-based course development was more productive and fostered a sense of community. This supports the collaborative approach suggested by Alammary et al., (2014). The difference in findings may stem from context-specific factors, such as varying levels of LMS familiarity and local institutional initiatives, which can influence the effectiveness of different support strategies. Moreover, the motivational benefits of peer collaboration noted in this study align with social constructivist theory, which posits that learning is enhanced through social interaction and community support (Vygotsky,

1978). Thus, while individualized efforts may be effective in certain contexts, a collaborative approach may be more beneficial in environments where faculty face significant external pressures and competing demands.

The study also identified several challenges faced by faculty during their transition to blended learning formats. One major issue was the complexity and length of the instructional design process. Participants favored shorter, more streamlined processes and templates. As one faculty member remarked,

> *"I think it's important to have a streamlined process that is easy to follow. If it's too complicated, people won't want to do it"* (D - Male Faculty, remark during a face-to-face session).

This preference for simplicity aligns with Alammary et al., (2014), who emphasized the importance of clear, concise training materials. Conversely, Trust & Whalen (2020) reported that some faculty thrive in more detailed and rigorous training environments, suggesting that preferences for complexity may vary based on individual learning styles.

Another significant challenge was the disparity in digital literacy among faculty members. While some participants were adept with digital tools, others struggled with technical aspects of course development, which created difficulties in maintaining a uniform pace and affected the morale of less tech-savvy colleagues. As one participant shared,

> *"I had some trouble with the technical aspects of the course development process, and I needed extra help to understand it"* (Interview with R - Female Faculty).

This finding mirrors Adedoyin & Soykan (2020), who highlighted the necessity of comprehensive technical support to address varying levels of digital literacy. Baran et al., (2011) suggested that such disparities can be mitigated through peer mentoring and collaborative learning approaches, indicating that a supportive learning community could help address some of the challenges observed.

Furthermore, faculty members were notably more motivated when they saw their content online compared to when they were still working with instructional design documents. One participant observed,

> *"When I saw my course come to life online, it gave me a real sense of accomplishment*" (Interview with F - Female Faculty).

This finding supports the work of Fidalgo et al., (2020), which emphasizes the motivational impact of practical, hands-on activities in maintaining engagement during training. Effective coping strategies employed by faculty included tangible support and incentives, such as internet data and transport refunds, which significantly enhanced their motivation and productivity. As noted by one faculty member,

> *"I appreciated the support that was given to us during the course development process in terms of internet data and transport refunds. It made me feel more confident in my ability to create a good course"* (Interview with D - Female Faculty).

This aligns with Adedoyin & Soykan (2020), who highlighted the critical role of institutional support in facilitating online learning transitions.

Consistent technical support throughout the course development process was also crucial, allowing faculty to effectively navigate digital tools and platforms. This finding echoes Hodges et al., (2020), who emphasized the need for technical assistance in overcoming barriers to online education. Simplifying the instructional design process and using easy-to-follow templates was another vital strategy. Faculty expressed a preference for streamlined processes that reduced their burden and encouraged participation. This preference supports Alammary et al., (2014), who found that clear, concise training materials promote effective learning.

Additionally, team-based course development was highlighted as a best practice, enhancing productivity and focus through collaboration. One faculty member noted,

> *"Working with a team helped me to concentrate and get things done faster. When I am alone, I get distracted and postpone the course design tasks"* (Interview with V - Female Faculty).

This finding aligns with Baran et al., (2011), who identified peer collaboration as crucial for overcoming digital literacy disparities. Continuous digital literacy training and technical support were essential for addressing varying levels of digital proficiency, helping to maintain engagement and motivation through practical, hands-on activities and visible progress, as noted by Fidalgo et al., (2020).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study reveals that faculty at Makerere University experienced varying levels of support while transitioning their face-to-face courses to blended learning formats. Prior experience with Learning Management Systems (LMS) and course development training significantly facilitated this shift. Institutional support, including Internet data and transport refunds, played a crucial role in enhancing faculty productivity and confidence. Nonetheless, challenges related to balancing schedules and completing assignments underscore the need for more structured support systems. The study found that team-based course development was more effective and fostered a stronger sense of community compared to individualized efforts. Additionally, disparities in digital literacy among faculty members highlighted the necessity for comprehensive technical support. These challenges could be alleviated through peer mentoring and collaborative learning approaches.

Motivational strategies, such as tangible support and the ability to see content online, were essential for maintaining engagement. Simplifying the instructional design process and using easy-to-follow templates alleviated the burden on faculty and encouraged greater participation. Based on these findings, it is recommended that institutions offer ongoing technical support, streamline instructional design processes, and promote team-based course development. Furthermore, fostering a supportive learning community through peer collaboration and continuous digital literacy training can address disparities in digital proficiency and ensure a more effective transition to blended learning environments.

While this study focused on faculty at a single institution, its findings have broader implications for other higher education institutions aiming to transform face-to-face courses into blended learning formats. By addressing the challenges and opportunities identified in this study, institutions can better support their faculty, leading to improved learning outcomes and successful transitions to blended learning. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on blended learning,

highlighting the strategic importance of effective facilitation, incentives, team-based development, digital literacy, and continuous evaluation in the transformation of educational courses.

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