



# Departmental PLC and Implementation of Blended Instruction in Selected Ugandan Public and Private Universities

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**Abstract:** *This study examines how departmental Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) influence the implementation of blended instruction in Ugandan higher education. Since the pandemic forced everyone online, universities in Uganda have been trying to mix traditional classes with digital learning. However, the rollout has been uneven. Public universities such as Busitema and Muni are moving at a different pace than private universities such as Uganda Christian University (UCU) and Uganda Martyrs (UMU). Using a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design, the research surveyed 240 faculty members across these four institutions and conducted 24 semi-structured interviews to understand the link between departmental collaboration and digital pedagogy. The data show a clear link ( $r = 0.68, p < 0.01$ ) between active departmental PLCs and the extent to which blended learning is implemented. This is especially true when those communities focus heavily on designing courses together and promoting open, reflective dialogue among staff. Interestingly, while private universities benefit from superior technological infrastructure, faculty in public universities demonstrate stronger informal peer-mentoring networks. Despite these efforts, widespread challenges persist, including unstable internet connectivity, high data costs, and institutional workload policies that fail to recognize the time required for blended teaching. This study concludes that technology alone cannot sustain digital transformation; instead, successful blended learning relies on an Ubuntu Bulamu framework for PLCs that prioritizes collective, relational, and community-led capacity building. Consequently, universities should formally integrate blended instruction into faculty workload models and establish structured, peer-led co-design teams within academic departments.*

**Keywords:** *Blended Learning, Professional Learning Communities, Uganda Higher Education, Digital Pedagogy, Ubuntu Bulamu*

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## 1. Introduction

Higher education across Africa is undergoing a significant transition as institutions increasingly complement traditional face-to-face teaching with digital and blended

learning models (Borsetto & Bier, 2021). In Uganda, the post-pandemic era forced a rapid pivot toward flexible delivery systems to accommodate an expanding student population that now exceeds 200,000 across both public and private universities. Yet simply deploying Learning Management Systems (LMS) and digital repositories does