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DETERMINING POST-GRADUATE STUDENTS' PREFERENCE BETWEEN BLENDED AND FACE-TO-FACE LEARNING MODES

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Abstract

As tertiary education shifts sporadically from traditional methods and practices to the digital equivalents, new learning technologies are optimising and innovating teaching and learning at a great extent. This study is aimed at determining the preference of Post-Graduate (PG) students between face-to-face learning (FTFL) and blended learning (BL) and the determinants of their preference. Exploratory and descriptive survey designs, and mixed methods were adopted. Questionnaire, focus group discussion, observation, library, and the internet were relied on for primary and secondary data. Using purposive and cluster sampling techniques, 40 PG students of five departments in Ebonyi State University (EBSU), Abakaliki, Nigeria were selected for the questionnaire and focus group discussion data. The data were analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively, using tables, figures, percentage, Likert 4-scale coding, interpretive devices, and thematic and content analyses. The results show that only FTFL mode obtains at EBSU PG studies

Keywords:
Determining, Post-Graduate students, Preference, Blended, Face-to-Face

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and the PG students prefer FTFL mode to BL mode. The factors determining their preference of the FTFL mode constitute its comparative advantage over BL and online learning (OL) modes. The study concludes that the comparative advantage of the FTFL mode makes it more preferred to the BL. Among other recommendations, apart from imbibing, sustaining and encouraging FTFL mode, it should be strengthened, digitalised, optimised and innovated by stakeholders in tertiary education systems, policy-makers across relevant sectors, and political leaders.

Introduction

Formal learning in contemporary time has become digitalised. There are different modes and styles of teaching, which as Mbah (2023) rightly notes depend on "the curriculum and the specific objectives of the teacher" (p. 9). Erstwhile, the traditional teaching method involving physical or face-to-face teaching (FTFT) classroom and learning was the only one in vogue. The FTF teaching method involves a designated setting or place. The teaching pattern involving the use of digital means alone is known as online teaching (OT) mode. This mode of education is also known as electronic teaching and learning (e-teaching and e-learning). Blended learning is the teaching-learning mode involving the combination of FTF and OT modes (Obinna et al., 2025; Udeh et al., 2025; Obinna, 2025; Obinna et al., 2024). It is also known as hybrid or blended teaching/learning mode. Blended learning involves OT and FTF modes of teaching and learning, aimed at attaining betterment in learning outcomes.

During the Covid-19 difficult situation, blended (hybrid) learning mode made rotational teaching and learning possible, as some students met and had classes online using videoconferencing software, while the remaining others met and learnt face-to-face in the traditional classroom (Awaludin et al., 2023; Bubacz et al., 2021). Recently, the education sector has undergone a significant transformation, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic era (DeCoito & Estaiteyeh, 2022; Haleem et al., 2022; Tong et al., 2022; Aithal & Maiya, 2023; Bouayad et al., 2024). As institutions adapted to remote learning, hybrid (blended) teaching mode emerged as a viable alternative to traditional or face-to-face mode of instruction (Obinna et al., 2025; Ubi & Robert, 2025). To establish or weigh students' interest in hybrid versus face-to-face teaching modes, various studies and surveys have been conducted. While preferences can vary based on individual circumstances, several trends have emerged.

The transition from analogue teaching and learning to the digital forms has given students the ability to access information in more than one way without time and place constraints (Nwode, 2022; Nafis et al., 2024; Ubi et al., 2025). Users of new technologies easily gain access to information at any time. All events are easily publicised online, especially on

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social media. These media promote interactions among teachers and students. They serve as teaching and learning aids and supplements (Osuchukwu & Ugoji, 2019). Group membership and the sense of belongingness are some of the benefits of these media. These media have made away with barriers to intergroup and interpersonal relations and communication (Nwode, 2022).

The broad objective of the study is to determine the post-graduate students' preference between traditional and hybrid learning modes, drawing evidence from Ebonyi State University as a case study. One of its specific objectives is to ascertain the Post-Graduate (PG) students' preferred learning modes between face-to-face and blended teaching modes. The other objective is to identify the determinants of their preference between the two modes, face-to-face and blended modes. The determinants are the enablers or factors behind the students' preference between the two modes. That is, the factors that make students prefer face-to-face mode to blended mode or vice versa.

Conceptual Spadework

The face-to-face learning (FTFL) or traditional learning (TL) mode refers to the interpersonal in-person learning method or practice in which learners are taught in a classroom setting, emphasising live lessons or lectures, one-on-one discussions, and immediate feedback (Obinna, 2025; Ubi & Robert, 2025). It is usually referred to as traditional classroom instruction involving direct interaction between students and instructors in a physical setting, which fosters immediate feedback, social interaction, and a structured learning environment (Obinna et al., 2024; Obinna, 2025; Ubi & Robert, 2025). It is characterised by in-person education, direct interaction, and an organised classroom atmosphere. Instructors' physical presence in facilitating learning is very import and makes FTFL mode very valuable and impactful. Johnson et al. (2022) argue that traditional learning modes, like other traditional approaches to teaching and learning, may not cater for diverse learning needs and styles, which pose challenges to students who do not conform to standard academic expectations in making advancements.

In-person instruction is one of the main components of traditional teaching methodologies. In FTF learning, a qualitative assessment of a student's subjective perception of their educational experience, encompassing aspects of enjoyment, fulfilment, and the extent to which expectations are met (Lee & Johnson, 2021). Having this presence helps pupils to develop self-control and social skills. Instructors can quickly address behavioural issues and create an organised learning environment by seeing and interacting with students in real-time. The structure of the traditional education system helps to develop students' time-management abilities and awareness core associated rules and regulations. As a result, they are more equipped to work in future professional

settings where following rules and regulations are crucial. Notwithstanding the advantages of conventional methods, several drawbacks must be considered.

According to Johnson et al. (2022), there might be other methods to accommodate students' varied learning preferences. Such methods are online and blended learning modes. It is in view of the learning preferences that this study concerns itself with determining students' preference between FTFL and TL modes, leaving out the online learning (OL) mode. The face-to-face driver learning model obviously requires more instructor time and energy than some of the other models, but it can be extremely effective for learners who need more extrinsic motivation, or are earlier in their specific roles/career. As Rajmohan and Padmanabhan (2025) rightly observe, since the model mirrors a traditional classroom in many ways, it can also be a good option for those who are less technically adept.

Hybrid learning (HL), also regarded as bended learning (BL), is defined simply by Bubacz et al. (2021) as the mode of learning in which traditional and in-person attendance are combined. The definition is a pointer to the fact that BL involves the combination of two teaching and learning methods, which are FTF and OL. As Ayham and Araci (2022) note, blended learning combines both online and face-to-face course delivery methods. By mixing delivery modes, the blended mode aims to get the most efficient and productive educational experience possible. Blended learning mode is an educational practice that combines traditional face-to-face classroom methods with online activities, with a view to providing a complementary balance of teaching modes or styles. It encompasses a diverse array of instructional strategies, including online discussions, multimedia resources, virtual simulations, and face-to-face interactions (Rajaram, 2023).

Blended learning has become a well-known pedagogical model among the many ways to instructional delivery, providing a dynamic synthesis of traditional face-to-face education with online learning modalities (Megahed & Hassan, 2022). Bao and Yunus (2024) note that effective blended learning settings support a feeling of community and collaboration between students and teachers additional to catering for different learning styles. When designed well, blended learning environments create opportunities for meaningful interactions, collaborative knowledge construction, and shared inquiry among students and instructors (Cleveland-Innes, 2019; van Der Stap et al., 2024). It has the ability to improve learning effectiveness in prior study. Szeto and Cheng (2016) created a framework of interactions that take place in blended synchronous learning environments by qualitatively examining the pedagogic interactions between instructors and students. Also, Lakhal et al. (2020) discovered that key factors influencing students' success and perseverance in higher education programmes were instructional approaches that supported academic and social integration.

As affirmed by Lim et al. (2020), through structural equation modelling, factors such as peer learning are essential for enhancing students' self-regulation behaviour in blended learning contexts. It is known to be promoting lifelong learning through careful learning system design, which relates to the relationship between blended learning and sustainable development (Caird & Roy, 2019). Many tertiary institutions are utilising digital resources of modern technologies for online and in-person classes, because of the convenience, flexibility, and access to large data (Chris-Urom, 2026). Combining the in-person interactions of the traditional course setting with the online interactions of the online course setting has resulted in the hybrid mode with its unique attributes (Igwebuike, 2025; Obinna et al., 2025). The hybrid mode often incorporates a variety of multimedia resources that enhance the learning experience and cater for varied learning preferences and needs. Yet, it raises serious concern about students' extent of engagement in the learning process, as engagement is reduced. That is one of the reasons why many students prefer face-to-face instruction to the two other modes, as only FTFL provides immediate interaction (Chris-Urom, 2026). In-person classes foster a sense of community and belongingness, which allow students to build relationships with peers and instructors (Igwebuike, 2025).

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the Learning Styles Theory (LST), known as Index of Learning Styles. It is propounded by Felder and Silverman (1988). The theory avers that there are 32 different learning style combinations, which have the potentials for improving learning, and can be created by choosing one option or the other. It follows that since there are currently three learning modes (FTFL, BL, and OL modes), one or more can be chosen based on choice, preference, interest and other factors. The LST postulates that individuals exhibit distinct preferences in how they perceive, process, and assimilate information. The theory is adopted because it reflects the thematic concerns of the study. Learning modes can be considered learning styles. Being ways or modes of learning, FTFL and BL modes are styles of learning, likewise the online learning mode left out in this study for want of scope streamlining, precision and conciseness.

While the validity of learning styles theory remains subject to debate, educators acknowledge the importance of accommodating diverse learning preferences in instructional design (Pashler et al., 2008). Thus, it is apt to determine PG students' preference of learning modes, as in determining their preference between FTFL and BL modes. It is important to align instructional strategies with students' preferred learning styles, as doing so fosters a sense of efficacy and autonomy, and promote a positive learning experience (Felder & Brent, 2005). This assertion, which correlates students' preference and learning styles, underscores the importance of LST. As Feng et al. (2017)

note, teaching presence refers to the provision of design, facilitation, and guidance by the instructor to support and scaffold the learning process. The provision has bearing to learning styles. That is, well designed learning styles provide the aforementioned, leading to efficient and productive learning. In such settings, a participant's level of interpersonal connection as well as interaction within the learning community constitutes their social presence. Bao andYunus (2024) rightly note that a well-designed blended learning programme is one that seamlessly combines technology and pedagogy.

Social presence is undoubtedly one of the factors behind many students' preference of FTFL to BL mode. The reason is that in FTFL, social presence obtains significantly unlike in BL. Lakhal et al. (2020) demonstrate that the key factors influencing students' success and perseverance in higher education programmes are instructional approaches that supported academic and social integration. This means that be it FTFL or BL, the approaches adopted must be ones that allow for an integration between academics and social life. When the two obtain, learners aptly get integrated into the learning processes, participate significantly and make meaningful contributions. Among educators, there are concerns about the affordability, quality, and long-term educational impact of the BL. These make it almost impossible for stakeholders to guarantee the viability of BL in many institutions of learning, especially across those in developing nations like Nigeria. The implication is that FTFL mode is more effective, productive, result-oriented, problem-solving, and guaranteed than the BL mode.

While various concerns about FTFL abound and keep on surfacing or expanding, they are less comparable to those of the BL mode. One of the ways in which the FTFL mode outweighs the BL mode is the presence of peer learning, which improves student performance, teachers' lesson planning and giving of class work and assignments, and making contributions. So, students' preference among learning styles and modes should be investigated and determined so as to adopt the most preferred, favourable an suitable for students across settings and levels of education. It is to that end that the present study is concerned with determining the preference of post-graduate students between FTFL and BL modes, providing case study insights from among PG students of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria. Therefore, despite the debate on the learning styles theory, it aptly reflects the present study, highlighting the importance of different learning styles and modes in learning processes.

Related Studies

The study by Bao and Yunus (2024), entitled "A review on the impact of blended learning, learning styles, and the community of inquiry model on student interest in learning in higher education" relates to the research. It investigates the multifaceted interplay between blended learning, learning styles, and the "Community of Inquiry" (CoI) model

in higher education contexts and their collective impact on student interest in learning. The learning styles theory is adopted because it informs instructional design strategies aimed at accommodating visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners within blended learning environments. The analysis shows that the CoI model provides a framework for fostering meaningful interactions, collaborative inquiry, and a sense of community among students and instructors. By synthesising existing literatures, the study elucidates the theoretical underpinnings, empirical evidence, and practical implications of blended learning, learning styles considerations, and the CoI model in promoting student interest in learning. Insights gleaned from this study offer valuable guidance for educators and educational stakeholders seeking to optimise instructional practices and create engaging and inclusive learning environments in higher education. It is in view of the foregoing findings that this study looks at the preference of PG students between BL and FTFL modes, drawing empirical evidence from Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria.

The study by Bouayad's et al. (2024), entitled "Perceptions of university teachers and students on hybrid teaching in Morocco," relates to the present one. It examines Moroccan university students' and teachers' perception of hybrid teaching (HT) in the post-COVID-19 era. It also examines the challenges faced by both teachers and students in HT settings. The 439 responses from questionnaire respondents were analysed using simple statistical analysis, analytic description and mixed method. The findings show that HT became popular in Morocco after the pandemic and both teachers and students highly appreciate it, though students experience some difficulties using it. The study concludes that the perception of HT is positive among the surveyed teachers and students, because HT reduces students' over-crowdedness in Moroccan open-access universities. Clearly, the study established why Moroccan teachers and students are interested in HT. However, it does not determine the extent of their interest in HT (BL). Also, it is not concerned with determining the students' preference between BL and FTFL modes.

Fabian's et al. (2024) study, entitled "Being in two places at the same time: a future for hybrid learning based on student preferences," relates to the present study. It observes that the Covid-19 pandemic caused a shift from traditional teaching (TT) to hybrid teaching (HT), noting that HT involves synchronous and simultaneous learning activities. Its focus is on examining students' attitude towards the synchronous learning of HT alongside their experience in HT settings. The study reveals that although both HT and TT pose challenges to learners and students alike because of technological difficulties, most students prefer FTFL mode to BL (HL) mode, because of time convenience. Yet, students confirmed that BL mode offers fewer opportunities compared to FTFL mode and teachers said it makes delivery difficult. The study concludes that students are largely more interested in FTFL mode than BL mode. Thus, the study points out the extent of students'

interest in HT, but leaves out their preference between FTFL and BL modes. That gap in research is filled in by the present study.

The article, entitled "Is hybrid teaching delivering equivalent learning for students in higher education?," by Baker and Spencely (2023) is relevant to this study. The article indicates that teaching approaches differ among BL, OL, and FTFL modes respectively. The study reveals that BL does not offer satisfactory learning environment, as the collaboration platforms do not suit or allow for the groups of learners that are possible with the FTF mode. It also shows that regardless of the availability of alternative teaching and learning tools, BL, like OT, does not offer learners effective learning environment. The findings suggest that the BL mode is not as effective as the FTFL mode. The study concludes that a lot has to be done and put in place to tackle the deficiencies of the BL mode. Thus, the need for further investigation informed the present study, which seeks to determine students' preference between BL and FTFL modes, considering the shortcomings of BL and OL in the learning processes.

Iloabachie's (2023) PhD thesis entitled "Academic performance in paper-based test, computer-based test, and anxiety level of students in the use of English programme" is a recent empirical literature of concern to the present study. The aim of the thesis was to assess students' test performance and the anxiety level that influences them while undergoing paper-based (PB) and computer-based (CB) tests in the Use of English Programme at University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The expo-facto research design was employed. The analysis reveals five central findings. One, the male students performed higher than the females in the two tests. The study skills of both male and female students influenced their performance in PB and CB tests. Thirdly, the linguistic knowledge of students is found to influence students' performance in PB and CB tests. Fourthly, students having computer and other digital resources performed better than those who did not have them at home. Fifth, the study reveals that students exhibit high, moderate and low levels of test anxiety. The anxiety arose in them when they were anxious of achieving high scores, while those who felt they would not perform well in the tests were more anxious. The study concludes that students with low level of test anxiety are bound to outperform the others with high and higher anxiety levels. The study relates to the present one and presents valuable findings. However, it is not concerned with determining the preference of students between BL and FTFL modes.

The study entitled 'Advantages and disadvantages of hybrid learning for international students,' done by Shimkovich et al. (2021), is an empirical literature of concern to this present study. The study is aimed at analysing the advantages and disadvantages of using a hybrid learning format on the example of the contingent of international students in pre-university learning programs of the preparatory school for international students at Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University. The survey involved 144 students. Questionnaire

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was used to elicit data from them. The results of the survey show that the majority of foreign students considered distance learning in general and the hybrid format, including, not completely acceptable for education in the Russian Federation. Most of them prefer to return to the traditional education system. At the same time, students declared their satisfaction with the work of teachers and positively assess the quality of knowledge gained during learning in a hybrid format. The study concludes that the use of distance learning elements can diversify the learning process of foreign citizens, but personal communication and direct interaction with teachers and classmates, immersion in the language environment, individual and team work in the classroom and high-quality assessment of classroom activities make traditional teaching (TT) more preferable. Although the study directly relates to the present one, its focus is only on the advantages and disadvantages of BL. While the present study stretches to determining the preference of students between BL and FTFL mode among the PG students at Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria.

Methodology

The exploratory and descriptive survey designs, and mixed methods were adopted. The qualitative component of the adopted mixed methods suits exploring the students' preference. The designs were chosen because the study involves determining EBSU PG students' preference between FTFL and BL modes. The area of the study is Abakaliki, Ebonyi State in Southeast Nigeria. Using purposive sampling, a sample of 40 PG students of Ebonyi State University is designed for the study. Questionnaire, focus group discussion, and participant observation are the instruments for data collection involved in the study. Structured and unstructured, and open- and close-ended questionnaire formats are adopted. The questionnaire and focus group questions were derived from the research questions. In addition, conventional library and the internet were used to source secondary data. These include textbooks, journals, theses, and conference and seminar papers.

Sampling techniques used are simple percentage, purposive sampling, cluster sampling, Likert four-scale coding, questionnaire, and focus group discussion. The questionnaire response techniques for eliciting data are Agreed, Strongly Agreed, Disagreed, and Disagreed. Purposive random sampling is used for the selection of the five departments. The cluster sampling is adopted to identify effective strategies and understand learners' needs and preference, which reflect the tenets of the Learning Styles Theory. The advantages of this sampling technique include flexibility, comprehensiveness, and full valuable insights.

Five departments in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities were involved in the data collection exercise. These are Departments of Languages and Linguistics, French,

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English and Literary Studies, Philosophy, and Religious Studies. Across the department, 4 students of Masters and PhD each were selected from the PG students of the selected Departments, who gained admission since 2020. Thus, a total of 40 PG students made up the research population. Out of the 40, 20 each were to Masters and PhD respectively. These are the students, who served as the questionnaire respondents and focus group discussants. Only PG students running regular Master's and PhD programmes were involved in both focus group discussion and questionnaire data collation. Specialists in the concerned fields were consulted to validate the study. The calibre of the erudite senior level professionals involved in the validation of the study and their undertaken critical and objective assessments made the instruments reliable. These are all senior cadre lecturers that are very familiar with the nitty-gritty of research of this kind.

Besides, the instruments were also validated by the upheld ethical considerations. By avoiding the violation of research ethical standards, the study is reliable in terms of its instruments and content quality. The data were analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The qualitative method is descriptive, while the quantitative method involves the use of statistical approach and techniques for the analysis of the gathered data. The statistical techniques employed are figures, tables, percentage, scale coding, and interpretive devices. Additionally, descriptive instruments, and thematic and content analyses were employed for the analysis of the data.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Representation of Respondents by Departments

S/N	Departments	Masters	PhD
1	Languages & Linguistics	4	4
2	French	4	4
3	English and Literary Studies	4	4
4	Philosophy	4	4
5	Religious Studies	4	4
6	Total	20	20

Source: Authors, 2026

The table shows equal representation of the respondents across the selected departments. The number of the respondents involved in the research exercise is also shown in the Table 1. It is in order to get equal representation that only 4 were selected from across each of the departments. This is because some departments have more numbers of Master's students than PhD students and vice versa.

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Table 2: Both FTF and BL modes obtain for postgraduate studies at EBSU. Do you agree?

S/N	Variables	Resp.	%
1	SA	-	-
2	A	-	-
3	SD	36	90
4	D	4	10
5	Total	40	100

Source: Authors, 2026

It is evident from the data available in the above table that blended learning mode does not exist, which means that only the face-to-face learning mode currently obtains. In other words, the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively to the proposition that the two modes obtain concurrently at the Post-Graduate level of studies at EBSU. While 36 (90%) strongly disagreed, 4 (10%) disagreed to the proposition. The finding proves that only the FTFL mode obtains at EBSU PG Studies.

Table 3: The PG students prefer BL mode to FTFL mode. Do you agree?

S/N	Variables	Resp.	%
1	Strongly Agreed	-	-
2	Agreed	8	20
3	Strongly Disagreed	19	47.5
4	Disagreed	13	32.5
5	Total	40	100

Source: Authors, 2026

The data prove the students' preference to be face-to-face learning mode over the blended mode. Only 8 (20%) responses were obtained in favour of the blended mode. In contrast, 19 (47.5%) and 13 (32.5%) are against the proposition that EBSU Post-Graduate students prefer blended learning mode to face-to-face learning mode. Thus, the two sets of responses indicate that the students prefer the face-to-face learning (FTFL) mode to the blended learning (BL) mode.

Table 4: The following factors make the students prefer FTFL mode to BL mode.

S/N	Variables	Resp.	%
1	Stronger learning relationship and connectivity with teachers and fellow students Stronger and more committed academic engagement Immediate interaction and feedback Limited technological barriers	10	

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S/N	Variables	Resp.	%
	Higher level of collaboration and participation in the learning process		
2	Structured learning processes and environment Higher level of motivation and accountability Limited distractions Explanation and simplification of complex concepts foster increased comprehension and performance No technical-know-how constraints	9	
3	All of the above	21	
4	None of the above	-	-
5	Total	40	100

Source: Authors, 2026

The identified factors make the surveyed PG students prefer the FTFL mode to the BL, because they learn and perform better through the face-to-face mode. That is, the presence of the listed factors, which constitute the core characteristics and advantages of the face-to-face learning mode, are what make the students prefer the mode to the other two. Conversely, the absence of the factors in online learning (OL) and blended learning (BL) modes causes students' low preference for them, OL and BL. Therefore, FTFL mode is the most preferred among the three existing modes of learning in contemporary school systems. And, the identified factors are what make the FTFL mode the most preferred among the surveyed students and perhaps many students of other universities and tertiary institutions' across the globe.

Discussion of Findings

Only face-to-face learning mode currently obtains at EBSU Post-Graduate (PG) Studies. FTFL mode is the most preferred learning mode among the PG students. These findings likely apply to many tertiary institutions in Nigeria and other developing nations and their students. For empirical generalisation, further studies ought to be carried out to establish the possible application of the findings to other tertiary institutions in Nigeria and other nations. The aforementioned major findings are discussed hereafter.

As higher education shifts toward a teaching method of utilising both online and face-to-face interactions, learning technologies plays a larger role in the learning experience of students during their time at and away from the physical campus (Obinna et al., 2024). Yang (2019) reveals that blended teaching requires proper planning and research for it to be effective and useful to the students, as it entails connected skill development processes in communication through the preparation and support of teachers based on literature research. It follows that when these are absent, BL is ineffective and less useful

to students, leading to students' preference for FTFL mode over BL mode. Sullivan and Freishtat (2013) found that as hybrid education increases, so does the need to devise "strategies to optimise teaching and learning effectiveness in these technology-enhanced settings" (p. 13). Their study explored the changes occurring to student learning experiences within the hybrid setting due to the implementation of technological learning modalities (Sullivan & Freishtat, 2013).

According to Nava (2015), understanding the changes that occur to student hybrid learning experiences begins with an introduction to the unique qualities of blending the course features of both online and face-to-face teaching-learning modes. The traditional, online, and hybrid course structures are reviewed to allow for the integration of learning technologies into each setting (Nava, 2015). Central to the effectiveness of blended learning is its alignment with diverse learning styles and preferences. Teaching-learning challenges faced by teachers and learners are identified by Nyimbili and Mwanza (2021) to be: mismatch between the language of instruction and the learner's first language; rigid language policy upholding *monolingualism* all through; strict monolingual based assessment that only tested skills in the regional language; and inadequate teaching and learning materials.

Kazakov (2021) suggests that the problems can be addressed through evolving and enshrining efficacious methodology of language pedagogy into school curricula; increasing the use of audio-visual teaching aids; extensive reading; cultivating good reading habits; and consistently studying subjects of interest via the target language. The need to increase audio-visual teaching aids in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasised as far as BL teaching-learning is concerned. Jacob (2020) expresses the need to migrate from analogue teaching in Nigeria, in which English is usually the language of instruction, to digital teaching that involves using modern technologies, such as audio and video tapes, language laboratories, e-textbooks, flash cards, internet facilities, newspapers, etc. These technologies are largely lacking.

The above commonly identified problems have gained significant scholarly attention and appreciable remedies. Those affecting teachers in BL have also been lamented and addressed considerably. In contrast, the problems faced by students in learning through BL are still largely neglected or are yet to gain appreciable scholarly exploration (Obinna, 2025). For example, most students prefer face-to-face teaching to hybrid or online teaching (Bubacz et al., 2021). Yet, their preference is given little or no consideration by concerned authorities, with the case of postgraduate students being the worst (Chris-Urom, 2026). The assumption that these students are postgraduate students and so BL suits them, without considering the common challenges they face, is misleading and more problem-generating than problem-solving. In fact, blended learning is the least preferred by students, as most of them prefer full face-to-face first, followed by full online teaching

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(Bubacz et al., 2021). In addition, as noted above, BL has its disadvantages. These undoubtedly affect the performance of students in various regards. Although the issues with BL concern as well as affect students and teachers alike (Raes, 2021), the interest of the present study is in student affairs as regards learning modes. Investigating students' preference among existing learning modes proffers valuable insights on crucial student affairs that concern their performance, learning experiences, and learning satisfaction.

Also, most Nigerian universities exhibit negative attitude towards adapting to ICT in teaching. Incorporating technological advances into course curricula has given those within higher education the opportunity to teach through the technological learning modalities that expand the learning possibilities for students. The new technologies have the potential to change the learning experiences of students within hybrid courses or programmes in higher education. As higher education shifts toward a teaching method of utilising both online and face-to-face interactions, learning technologies play a larger role in the learning experience of students during their time at and away from the physical learning environment– campus. Thus, it is crucial to determine students' preference between FTFL and BL modes.

FTFL mode benefits learners and teachers more, because more participation and satisfaction obtain at a significant extent, and the negative impacts of technological issues associated with OL and BL modes are either absent or occur minimally. Audio difficulties, loss of internet connection and other technological challenges make most students to be unsatisfied with BL and OL modes (Abramova et al., 2020). Considering these factors does not suggest that pictures (e.g., video, animation, graphics, or illustrations) and words (e.g., printed or spoken words) can be integrated and used by teachers for instruction in the classroom. These supplementary resources help students to easily grasp fundamental ideas and engage in tasks more meaningfully.

Green et al. (2012) have noted that classroom time likely allows for application rather than data accumulation. The reason is that in the FTF classroom setting, students and teachers demonstrate practically what is being taught and learnt. In the same vein, Bubacz et al. (2021) are of the view that in-person (FTF) teaching is more active and offers better learning opportunities than distance modes. As such, a larger number of students would undoubtedly prefer the FTFL mode to the BL mode. Apart from facing technological challenges to effective learning, lazy students often take advantage of distance learning for truancy, procrastination, missing or postponing examinations, etc. (Chen et al., 2019; Chris-Urom, 2026). Interestingly, some previous studies confirmed students' high preference for face-to-face mode over others. Such studies include Hahessy et al. (2014), Rubio et al. (2018), Kaur and Pahuja (2019), Lee and Johnson (2021), Hotara et al. (2023), and Santoso (2023).

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On the other hand, the blended learning (BL) mode is proven by several studies to be more preferred to the other modes. Examples of studies with such findings include Uijl et al. (2017), Megahed and Hassan (2022), Kanwal et al. (2023), Rajaram (2023), and Bao and Yunus (2024). Yet, recent studies like Chris-Urom (2026), Igwebuike (2025), and Hotara et al. (2023), among others, reveal that a larger number of students prefer the FTFL mode to BL and OL modes. Their higher preference for the FTFL mode is informed by stronger learning environment, engagement, and relationship; interactive learning; getting and giving immediate feedback; limited distractions and technological bottlenecks; well-structured learning processes and environment; and more collaboration, motivation and accountability (Santoso, 2023; Igwebuike, 2025; Chris-Urom, 2026).

Conclusion

In contemporary times, various tertiary institutions have migrated from analogous teaching and learning to the digital forms, modes and styles. Online and blended learning and teaching modes have evolved with the rise of technological advancements in the education sector and became more used since the COvid-19 era. Nevertheless, there are many tertiary institutions in Nigeria and most other developing nations that still hold on to the face-to-face or traditional mode alone, as in Ebonyi State University Post-Graduate programmes. The FTFL mode is found to be the most preferred mode among EBSU PG students. There is no doubt that conscious of the comparative advantage of FTFL mode over the other modes, EBSU PG studies are still being undertaken face-to-face. The factors behind its preference over BL are established.

The overall implication of the findings is that there currently obtain a low level or an insignificant extent of technology integration into teaching and learning at Ebonyi State University (EBSU) as well as many other Nigerian tertiary institutions. Be it as it may, as the educational landscape continually evolves, it is important for institutions to consider students' preferences and needs, and thereby strive for a balanced approach that fosters effective learning among all students. By embracing the strengths of both teaching modes, educators and other stakeholders can create a more dynamic and inclusive educational experience that prepares students for academic and life successes in the digitalised world of increasingly complexities. Beyond sustaining the FTFL mode, it should be encouraged, strengthened, and innovated by stakeholders in tertiary education systems, policy-makers across relevant sectors, and political leaders.

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