

# Learners' Perception on the Use of Blended Learning in Teaching Biblical Greek at the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), Lagos

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this paper is to examine the perceptions of learners on the use of blended learning in teaching Biblical Greek at NOUN. A total of 9 students of Lagos Study Center were involved in the study. As a cross-sectional survey, a questionnaire was administered to the students after being taught Biblical Greek through blended learning for a semester. The results revealed significant shifts from popular traditional conceptions: though middle age students were in the majority, they were all computer literate, showing that they were at home with the online contents of blended learning. It was further revealed that using blended learning for a traditionally difficult and frustrating course made the students to learn effectively. Psychomotor skills and academic performance were enhanced and interests were stimulated. Consequently, the researcher recommended that NOUN should shift to blended learning in handling students' facilitation, since traditional facilitation has become financially burdensome and unsustainable.*

## INTRODUCTION

This study, "Learners' Perception on the use of Blended Learning in teaching Biblical Greek" aims at determining the perception of students on the use of blended learning for one of the courses that was deemed difficult. This is necessary because it will serve as a pilot for the evolution of blended learning as a mode of course delivery at NOUN.

At the inception of NOUN, the idea was to have facilitation exercise for all students. Thus, when the University took off, even in courses where the enrollment was low, facilitation took place for everybody. By the time the university clocked six years, the facilitation bill was running into hundreds of millions of naira per semester and it was becoming a problem for the university to pay the facilitation bills, more so, when the Federal Government is not giving the university any funds specifically for the exercise.

This experience made the university begin toying with the idea of rationalizing courses it deemed unprofitable. However, with rationalization, the democratization of education that should have taken place with the establishment of the University would be defeated. This situation led to the conclusion that the solution would be the use of blended learning, whereby the facilitators would only be present for the first and the final meetings with the students while the remaining hours of facilitation would be transferred online. With this system, it is expected that the bills accruing from the facilitation exercise would be considerably reduced. However, before this idea can be discussed openly, there is a need to test run the use of blended learning with some students to determine their perception and readiness. CTH215-Greek Grammar I was selected for the exercise because of its peculiarity among all the courses and because the researcher has been involved in the search for a non-traditional mode of handling the course.

## OBJECTIVE OF PAPER

The teaching of Biblical Greek to students of Christian Religious Studies and Christian Theology in Nigeria had been one fraught with serious difficulties. This is because as a foreign language, it proved difficult for the students. Apart from this, the face-to-face method has not been helpful as students are just forced to cram materials to just obtain a pass score needed to graduate. As a result, Nigeria has very few specialists in the area of biblical languages as students' inability to master Biblical Greek makes them to specialize in other fields of theological studies. In order to stall this trend, and make the study of Biblical Greek a worthwhile experience, the researcher decided to use blended learning in teaching the course. The objectives of this research are therefore to:

1. Obtain students' perceptions on the use of blended learning to facilitate a course.
2. Discover if the use of blended learning would stimulate students' interest in a course

## Research Questions

In order to achieve the objectives listed above, two research questions were formulated and they are:

Research Question 1: Did blended learning facilitate the learning of biblical Greek among the students?

Research Question 2: Did the use of blended learning stimulate students' interest to further education in the area of study?

## Blended Learning

Rooney (2003) said that the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) identified blended learning as one of the top ten trends emerging in the knowledge delivery industry. Blended learning has been accepted as the "combination of multiple approaches to learning, combining several different delivery methods such as collaboration software, web-based courses or computer communication practices and traditional face-to-face institutions" (Ugur, Akkoyunlu and Kurbanoglu, 2011). Specifically, Kerres and DeWitt (2003) defined blended learning as arrangements to "combine technology based learning with face-to-face learning" (p. 101). Fox (2002)

also define blended learning as “the ability to combine elements of classroom training, live and self-paced learning, and advanced supportive learning services in a manner that provides a tailored learning” (p. 26). Duhaney, in a bit technical manner, defines blended learning as “the use of synchronous and asynchronous technologies and traditional face-to-face instruction, in different forms or combinations so as to facilitate teaching and learning” (Duhaney, 2004:35).

From all the above, it is clear that blended learning, as the term implies, has blended or combined two methods of teaching and learning, namely, the electronic learning tools on the one hand and the traditional face-to-face learning on the other hand. The combination of the ancient and modern as in blended learning is bound to create varieties, especially in the manner in which the blending takes place. These variety ranges shows that the percentile mixes between the traditional face-to-face and the modern electronic modes begins from 30% and end at 79%. Driscoll (2002) however, in a rigorous survey of literature on blended learning came up with four different classifications of blended learning as follows:

- (a) The combination or mixture of modes of web-based technology with traditional face-to-face to accomplish an educational goal.
- (b) The combination of various pedagogical approaches such as constructivism with behaviorism to produce an optimal learning outcome with or without instructional technology.
- (c) Combining any form of instructional technology such as CD ROMs with web-based technology and face-to-face instructor-led training, and
- (d) The mixture or combination of instructional technology with specific tasks to create a harmonious effect of learning and working.

However, only three modes of blended learning which are stated as follows have been identified:

- Mode 1: Technology is used to facilitate course management and resources for learner support. For example, to provide information and resources to students (e.g., lecture notes or recordings, assessment guidelines), and to perform basic administrative functions (e.g., announcements or course emails).
- Mode 2: Technology is used to enrich the quality of the students’ learning experience through interactive learning activities beyond those attainable through face-to-face classroom interactions. An example is the utilization of technology to support communication and collaboration, assessment and the management of courses.
- Mode 3: Technology is used to support learning that is largely self-directed but also involves the use of interactive and collaborative learning activities. In this mode courses are delivered fully online.

It is important to note however that for Griffith University that Barth and Bourke writes about, mode 2 is what their understanding of blended learning is all about.

In whatever form blended learning comes however, it has the ability and the unique feature of redefining and enriching the teaching and learning experience. As

Osguthorpe and Graham (2003) opine that blended learning is beginning to blur the distinction between the traditional face-to-face and the more recent electronic learning environment. Ward and LaBranche (2003) also identify blended learning as a powerful strategy that has not only expanded but has also enhanced the teaching and the learning experience.

### **The Need for Blended Learning at NOUN**

Though the term 'blended learning' was not mentioned in any of the literature of NOUN, it is clear from the statements therein that blended learning was part of the vision of the founding fathers of the university. For example, on the mode of programme delivery, NOUN (2004) states that:

*The instructional materials for distance learning will be delivered through printed materials, audiotapes, videotapes, CD ROMs and non-interactive presentations. Variety of delivery channels will be employed and these include courier and postal services, radio and television broadcast, electronic transmission in voice, data, graphics, terrestrial and VSAT wireless communication systems, internet, and face-to-face interactions at the network of Study Centres (p. 58).*

From all these, it is clear that blended learning has been the choice of learning instruction for NOUN. However, since the take-off of instructions at NOUN, the only delivery mode that has worked at full capacity has been the face-to-face facilitations. Instructional materials have also stopped short at the production of the printed course materials and the uploading of same to the university's website or burning the course materials into CD-ROMs as a text only format. This thus means that the blended learning vision has not been attained.

As of today, the cost to maintain the face-to-face facilitation has become a burden to the university that the continuation of the same has become threatened. It is because of this that I propose that a return to the blended learning vision would help the university to reduce the cost of facilitation and keep running their programmes along global standards.

### **Teaching Biblical Greek at the National Open University of Nigeria**

The teaching of Biblical Greek at NOUN had indeed been at a loss to the university and has been capital intensive. This is because the total number of students taking the course has just grown to 260 all over the country. In fact, in some study centers, there may be only 1 or 2 students registered for the course. Only the Lagos study center has the luxury of having 15 students currently registered for the course.

Apart from the low enrollment, the limited number of lecturers who are specialists in this area gives rise to the lack of facilitators in such areas and thus the students have to go through the course on their own. This has led to poor grades as well as inability to master the course as desired hence making no difference in the experience of students with students in the conventional universities; a result that is unacceptable to the open and distance learning philosophy.

## Research Design

Since the study is designed to determine the learners' perception on the use of blended learning in handling a course perceived to be difficult, the survey methodology, (specifically, the cross-sectional survey) that collects information from a sample drawn from a population at one point in time is the actual method used. The cross-sectional survey is particularly suitable because this study is designed to present the perceptions of the target population as at the time the instrument is administered.

## Sample

The total number of students taking the course CTH215-Greek Grammar I at the National Open University of Nigeria is 51 and it is distributed as follows:

Center	No. of Students	Center	No. of Students
Abuja	4	Jos	1
Akure	2	Kano	2
Awka	2	Lagos	9
Bauchi	1	Minna	4
Benin	3	Ogori Community	3
Enugu	2	Owerri	5
Gombe	2	Port Harcourt	4
Ibadan	2	Uyo	4
Jalingo	1	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>51</b>

Since the total population of the learners is just 51, it would have been desirable to administer the instrument on all of them. However, because of the geographical spread (despite the small population of the students, they are resident in almost all the six geo-political zones of the country) and the fact that the population of learners in some of the centers is as low as 1 or 2, it would be a financial waste to attempt contacting all the learners for this study. Therefore, there is the need to use the sample.

For the purpose of sampling, the purposive sampling is used. Though, usually criticized for its possibility of being biased as it is based on the researcher's judgment, it is also the most acceptable in some circumstances as is the case in this study. Taking a very close look at the above table, Lagos Study Center is the only center with the highest number of students. Apart from this, the researcher works at the Lagos Study Center and thus has the edge of ensuring that the methods to be used are actually used. For example, for blended learning, there is the need for some face-to-face contact between the students and the tutorial facilitator and since the students of the other study centers cannot come to Lagos as a result of distance and financial issues and neither would it be financially advisable to have facilitators for the centers with low number of students, it would be most appropriate to use Lagos Study Center students as the sample for the population. The purposive sampling is grouped under the non-probability sampling methods.

Adopting Lagos Study Center students as the sample for this research would then give a sample size of 9 out of a population of 51. This sample is thus 17.6% of the total

population and can be said to be representative. It is important to know that the sample is not just representative in terms of percentage alone but also in terms of other characteristics of the population. For example, only 1 student out of the 9 is not a clergyman and only 4 out of the 9 have not had a class in Greek language before.

### **Instrument**

The research instrument was designed by the researcher drawing from the experiences gathered from the literature review as well as the researcher's experience in the field. A questionnaire having three sections is the only instrument used for this research and it is designed to address the two research questions that have been identified. The first section is designed to harvest data on the personal and background information of the learners ranging from their age to gender and entry level (if any) at the biblical Greek course including any prior experience of blended learning. The second section deals with the current research. It contains 20 5-point Likert items designed to harvest data on the users' perception on blended learning and the possibility of the learner being stimulated to continue with the biblical Greek at the graduate level. The 5-point Likert scale is scheduled as follows: 5-Strongly Agree; 4-Agree; 3-Moderately Agree; 2-Disagree and 1-Strongly Disagree. The third section contains two open-ended items so that the students would be given a free-hand to express themselves about their experiences using the blended learning to teach biblical Greek.

Finally, the reliability of the questionnaire was carried out through a pilot-test. Using the Cronbach Alpha, the test gave a result of .834 which is considered good level of reliability. Since 0.7 has been generally seen as an acceptable reliability coefficient, having .834 could be considered a very strong reliability.

### **Data Collection**

Since the students to be used as samples for the collection of data are students of the course, the questionnaire was administered after the end of the CTH215-Greek Grammar course that has been taught using the blended learning method. All the nine students were present in class for the last day of the class and the questionnaire was administered at the end of the class.

### **Data Analysis**

After the collection of the questionnaire, the responses of the students were coded and SPSS for Windows was used for the analysis.

### **Background Data**

#### **Age**

It is fascinating to discover that despite the high level of computer illiteracy among the older generation of Nigerians, the age ranges represented in the class are computer literate. Table 1 below shows the age range distribution of the respondents.

**Table 1: Age Range of Participants**

<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants</b>
<b>31 – 40</b>	3	33.3%
<b>41 – 50</b>	5	55.6%
<b>51 and above</b>	1	11.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100%</b>

Those between ages 41 to 50 are the most numerous taking 55.6%, followed by ages 31-40 which takes 33.3% and then ages 51 and above which takes 11.1%. Under normal conditions, many people from the age 40 upwards falls into the category of the computer illiterates in Nigeria, hence this is interesting. This fact may be a plus for policy formulation favoring the development and acceptability of interactive e-learning in NOUN in particular and Nigeria in general. This data on age also shows that a larger percentage of the students of Christian Theology in NOUN are within the age range of 40 and above and this may also be used to gauge the age range of clergymen in the country since 88.9% of Christian Theology students are clergymen as revealed in another questionnaire given to the same set of students for another research entirely. In others words, there has been a demographical shift in the national population of clergymen: the shift which is generational in focus is occasioned by the influx of the middle aged people into the clergy rather than the older generation that it used to be. This however may be a subject to future research.

*Gender*

The gender distribution aligns with the general trend in theological education in Nigeria. The number of men in formal theological education, whether in theological schools or seminaries, usually outnumbers the women by great margin. This may have to do with the fact that formal theological education is only favored among orthodox or mainline protestant churches where there has always been high gender disparity in the clergy because of the high degree of conservativeness among the policy makers. This may be seriously threatened if the clergy among the Neo-Pentecostal and the African Indigenous Churches have been taken into consideration. This also may be a subject of future research.

**Table 2: Gender of Participants**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants</b>
<b>Male</b>	8	88.9%
<b>Female</b>	1	11.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100%</b>

As shown in the table above, in a class of 9 students, there is only 1 female representing 11.1% of the total respondents.

**Table 3:** Participants' Knowledge of Blended Learning

<b>Participants' Knowledge of Blended Learning</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants</b>
<b>Agree</b>	1	11.1%
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	8	88.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100%</b>

As reflected in table 6 above, all the 9 respondents, making 100% indicated that they are aware of blended learning as a pedagogical method though as indicated earlier, none of them has ever been taught using the method. It is also significant to know that 1 person, representing 11.1% indicated his or her awareness on the agree level while the other 88.9% are on the strongly agree level.

In conclusion, this is the demographic data of the respondents: they are mainly male and above 41 years old. Only very few had a prior knowledge of the Biblical Greek, and those who did went through the course at the Diploma level, and thus would have a very shallow exposure. Finally, because of their presence at the NOUN, they all have idea of what blended learning is supposed to be. As things are, they are suitable for the research purpose and are also actually representative of the main population. This thus means that whatever the results of the research would be, it would be valid for the purpose for which it was conducted.

**Research Question 1: Did blended learning facilitate the learning of biblical Greek among the students?**

The first research question is to determine if the use of blended learning in the teaching of biblical Greek helped in the students' learning process from the students' perspective. To answer this question, there is the need to ascertain if the use of blended learning created a conducive environment for learning as environment has to be conducive for learning to be enhanced.

**Interaction**

One of the first issues in the creation of a conducive learning environment is that of interaction with the instructor and with peers in the learning process. Since one of the major complaints about online learning is the absence of social interaction among the learners, it is therefore important to know if blended learning gave room for interaction. Items 2 and 3 in section B is directed towards this end. It is important to note that in their responses, all of the respondents agree that blended learning enhanced their interaction with both the instructor and their peers. However, while 33.3% indicate just the agree point, the remaining 66.7% strongly agree that there is interaction between them and their instructor and peers. This is shown in the tables 4 and 5 below.



**Table 4:** Blended Learning's Ability to Enhance Interaction with Instructor

<b>Blended Learning can Enhance Interaction with Instructor</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants</b>
<b>Agree</b>	3	33.3%
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	6	66.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 5:** Blended Learning's Ability to Enhance Interaction with Course Mates

<b>Blended Learning can Enhance Interaction with Course Mates</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants</b>
<b>Agree</b>	3	33.3%
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	6	66.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Motivation and Encouragement to Learn**

Another major issue in the area of learning environment is the motivation and encouragement to learn. As Svinicki (2005) opines, "of the factors that influence student learning, motivation is surely one of the most potent. Teachers can affect student motivation in ways that either facilitate or impede learning" (p. 1) and the way and manner this is done is the handling of the pedagogy. Items 5, 7, 9 and 12 are directly related to students' motivation to learn and the response is as follows:

It is important to note that the findings in these items are contrary to the findings when students were taught Biblical Greek using the traditional method. When blended learning was used, all the students indicated that blended learning encouraged them to learn more efficiently (though 22.2% indicated agree, a higher percentage of 77.8% indicated strongly agree). Contrary to the frustrations and worries encountered when the traditional method is used, 100% strongly agree that blended learning made their learning experience of Biblical Greek exciting. Close to 89% strongly agree that blended learning made them learn Biblical Greek better while the remaining 11% agree that their learning of Biblical Greek was better with blended learning. Finally, contrary to the situation when traditional method is used and larger percentage of the students would come out hating the course and not making anything out of it, 100% strongly indicated that they liked Biblical Greek more.

**Learning Organization**

One advantage in online learning that suits most learners is the flexibility in learning organization. The presence of this in blended learning also promotes learning. As one of the respondents stated in their response, they prefer blended learning because unlike the classroom that is structured for learning, they can always go back to access their materials online and still have fresh learning encounter. Items 13, 14 and 15 of the questionnaire deal with this issue.

Though all respondents agree that blended learning allows flexibility of learning and helped them to control their learning pace. However in time organization, the gap between

'agree' and 'strongly agree' is very close and this has to do with individual differences that may be a variable in this case. It is important to know that 11.1% disagree with this though the percentage is negligible.

### **Achievement of Learning**

A substantial aspect of the measurement of learning has to do with learning outcome. Items 4, 8, 19 and 20 have to do with the issue of learning outcome. From the data gathered, close to 67% strongly agree that they were able to write the Greek alphabets very well while the remaining 33% indicated that they agree. There is no one who disagreed with this fact. Also, close to 89% strongly agree that they were able to achieve the course objectives. Though the remaining 11% indicated moderately agree, none of the students indicated that they were not able to achieve the course objectives. On the improvement in computer and internet skills, 66.7% strongly agree that their skills have improved through the use of blended learning though the remaining 33.3% indicated moderately agree. Thus there is a strong relationship between the use of blended learning and improvement in computer and internet navigation skills. Finally in this section, 100% indicated strongly agree that through the use of blended learning they were happy with their achievements.

All the statements in this section are indicators of learning achievement and the responses can be said to unanimously agree that blended learning would give learning achievements. It is also important to know that the open-ended responses also confirmed these responses as all the students opine that blended learning enhanced their academic performance.

Research Question 2: Did the use of blended learning stimulate students' interest to further education in the area of study?

The second research question is directly related only to item 18 on the questionnaire. Coincidentally, all the respondents agreed strongly that blended learning has made them wish to further their education in biblical learning, thus giving 100% response.

Contrary to the period in which the traditional method was used and most of the students would not take Biblical Greek beyond the compulsory level and forever drop it, 100% of the students taught using blended learning has indicated interest to go further in Biblical Greek. This is also confirmed by the open ended responses as the respondents agree that learner interest has been stimulated as a result of the use of blended learning.

### **The Open-Ended Questions**

After the questionnaire had been returned, all the 9 nine responses to the two open-ended questions were read. From the responses, for the open-ended question 1, the recurring theme was that their interest in Biblical Greek has been stimulated and for the open-ended question 2, the recurring theme was that their academic performance has been enhanced. Thus, the two statements were coded for responses on the SPSS sheet.

As indicated in the result, there is a strong relationship between interest and academic performance. Once learner interest is stimulated, the learner would have high academic performance.

## Summary of Findings

The following are the findings and discussions from the research study:

### Middle age students are mostly computer literate

As discovered in section A of the questionnaire, those in the middle age range, that is, ages 41 to 50 carries the highest in the population with 55.6% and 51 and above taking 11.1% making a total of 66.7% for students in the middle ages and above. This points out that the commonly held misconception that the middle aged people in Nigeria are not as computer literate as expected is no longer true. Discussing the state of use of computer in Nigeria, Ivowi (2008) regretted that in this age of Information Communication Technology (ICT), computers and associated gadgets are commonly found in school, and if at all there are some, they are found in the principal's offices serving more as objects of decoration than tools for facilitating communication and data processing. Also, Jegede (2009) asserted that "in Nigeria, for example, about 60% of the population does not know what a computer is, let alone the means to acquire and use it".

It is important to note that conducting a research on the level of computer literacy among higher education students in Nigeria, Osuji (2010) concludes thus:

*... there are differences in the computer literacy of the students in relation to the age ranges. The age range of 20 - 30 has the highest percentage of 98.36% which is equivalent of 13.99% of the total respondents. As the age increases the percentage level decreases. 31- 40 has 68.42%, 41- 50 has 32.58% and 51 and above has 18.94%.*

As revealed in the above quotation, the ages 41 to 50 has the third highest population of computer literate students while in this research, the same age range is taking the lead with 55.6%. It is important to indicate that there is the possibility that within the last three years, there has been a tremendous increase in computer literacy and use in Nigeria and this may be the focus of another research work.

However, for the purpose of this research, the high rate use of computer and associated tools is a positive sign for the need for the country to have a policy putting blended learning or computer associated learning as a mode of preferred pedagogy in the nation without fear of cutting off any student regardless their age range. For NOUN, it is also important for the university can move in the direction of forming a solid online pedagogy without fear of sidelining students of the older ages.

### Blended learning encourages social interaction

One of the salient issues that scholars have with online course delivery is that of social presence. Most critics of online based courses have always cited the lack of face-to-face interaction as a factor that would not make any online based course delivery as effective as the traditional classroom (Ward and Newlands (1998); Bullen (1998)). However, scholars have demonstrated through several studies that "the very elements critics refer to as lacking are compensated for or even paralleled by paralanguage activities that occur in successful, interactive learning environments" (Richardson and Swan, 2003:69). This research thus joins other research work that agree that there are enough elements of social presence as to facilitate learning

through interaction with peers and instructor as all the respondents agree that they have enough interaction with the instructor and their peers.

### **Blended learning has the ability to motivate learning**

Motivation is an important factor in learning. For example, Sankaran and Bui (2001) opine that there is a significant relationship between motivation and learning outcome as students with higher learning motivation tends to perform very well and vice versa. In their assessment of online learning motivation, Lim and Kim (2003) listed a typology of six learning motivation variables, namely: reinforcement, course relevance, interest, self-efficacy, affect and learner control. Though this typology was originally developed to assess online learning motivation, it can be taken as standard by which blended learning environments can be measured. The fact is that a standard blended learning environment must have all these elements and thus successfully motivate students to learn. It is not surprising therefore that all the students agreed that they were motivated by the blended learning method.

### **Blended learning increases learning**

As had been stated above, when students are motivated to learn, then it results in good learning outcome and learner satisfaction. The fact that learners can also go back to the materials that are online and taking control of their learning has the potential to increase learning opportunities of the students. The fact that various media are used in the construction of the blended learning environment also increases its learning facilitation ability. It is therefore not surprising that all the students agree that blended learning helped them to learn better.

### **Blended learning increases psychomotor skills**

Unlike the traditional face-to-face classroom where constant practice between instructor and learners may not be available all the time due to time limitation and presence of both instructor and learning constraint, it is possible with the presence of modern technology to teach via video technology which the learners can use repeatedly until they are perfect. Video streaming is one of the options of blended learning that can make this possible. For example, performing tasks on the computer can be taught through the recording of the activities on the computer screen and streaming same to the blended learning environment. It is not surprising therefore that all the students agree that their skill in the writing of Greek alphabets was greatly improved through the use of the blended learning materials.

### **Blended learning can stimulate learner interest to further education in difficult areas**

As far as research question two has showed us, blended learning can stimulate learner interest to further education in subject areas that are considered difficult or abstract as the use of multimedia learning objects in the blended learning environment can make learning such courses interesting and exciting thereby stimulating interest instead of frustrating the learners. This is reflected in the responses of the students after they have been taught biblical Greek using blended learning method.

## Implications and Recommendations

The implications of the findings of this research work are not farfetched. Since the results has proven that NOUN students can learn better using the blended learning and that a good number of the students, their age range notwithstanding are computer literate and active (as they all have e-mail addresses and have internet connectivity), the university can begin to plan to move in the direction of online facilitation using the blended learning mode. For example, as indicated in the research, close to 79% of the students agree that they would readily agree to take other courses of theirs using the blended learning mode.

This means that the university can then use the academic staff for facilitation and thus reduce the bill that goes to external staff in the name of course facilitation. Apart from this, even in the areas where there is the need to use external staff for facilitation, the rate of contact would have been reduced to 2 hours instead of 8 to 12 hours and thus reduce the rate of payment by 6 to 10 hours.

The major argument against the use of online facilitation (a genre to which blended learning belongs) is that the hours that would be spent in class would be more rewarding than the hours the students would spend online and that it would be an additional burden on the students. However, this research has proved this notion wrong. As indicated in Table 6 below:

**Table 6:** Comparing time Spent in Class and Online

<b>Time spent in class is more valuable than the time spent online for Biblical Greek course</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	3	33.3%
<b>Disagree</b>	3	33.3%
<b>Moderately Agree</b>	2	22.2%
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	1	11.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the above table, it is clear that 66.5% of the students disagree that the time spent in class is more valuable than the time spent online using their experience of blended learning as a yardstick.

Again, another data revealed contrary to general opinion, such mode of learning cannot be a burden to the Nigerian students.

**Table 7:** Blended Learning is Burdensome

<b>Blended Learning is Burdensome</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	5	55.6%
<b>Disagree</b>	3	33.3%
<b>Moderately Agree</b>	1	11.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100%</b>

As indicated in the table above, close to 90% readily disagree that with the statement that "blended learning is burdensome". This means that most of the fears being exercised by people about online learning or blended learning may not be true.

Apart from this, the current downward trend of education in Nigeria can also be arrested using this mode of delivery. For example, in the last three years, there has been high rate of failure in the Senior Secondary School examinations in the last three years. A summary of the 2011 WAEC results, as given by Mr. Alozie, N. U. revealed that out of a total of 310,000 students that sat for the WAEC examinations, those who had the requisite credits for admission to the university, that is, credit (and above) passes in Mathematics, English and three other courses is just 62,295 representing only 20.04% of the total candidates. The scenario is similar at the NECO SSCE examinations where the 2011 June/July examinations reveals that only 22% got credit (and above) passes in Mathematics, English and three other courses. For the year 2012, the pass rate is 32% and it is rated the best in three years by the news media. This downward trend can be reserved through the use of blended learning even in the primary as the secondary schools as is now happening in most advanced countries and even in other developing countries.

Finally, if the blended learning method is to be adopted, there is the need to make the teaching staff undergo necessary staff development awareness on the use of blended learning. This is because the place of the subject matter expert cannot be ruled out in the development of the blended learning environment.

## CONCLUSION

Contrary to the fear of many of the academic staff that the rate of computer illiteracy among students would hamper the use of blended learning or any form of online learning, this research work has revealed that the students of NOUN would be happy to use blended learning even for other courses they are to undergo in the university as the method has made them learn better. Consequently, it would be just right for the university to begin to work towards both blended and online learning.

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