# THE HANDBOOK OF BLENDED LEARNING:
Global Perspectives, Local Designs

Curtis J. Bonk (ed.) and Charles R. Graham (ed.), Jay Cross (Foreword), Micheal G. Moore Foreword) ISBN: 978-0-7879-7758-0 Publisher: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Pfeiffer Pages: 624 March 2006.

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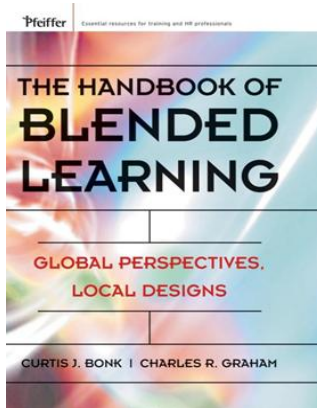
Blended learning or blended e-learning sounds like a confusing term at first since it is relatively a new term for today's instructors. However, Moore reports that it can be traced as far back as the 1920s which was called "supervised correspondence study". For clarification of the term "blended learning" and informing the instructors about its common practices worldwide, the book provides readers a comprehensive resource about blended learning. It aims to raise awareness of adopting BL from institutional perspectives of many chapter authors from Australia, Korea, Malaysia, the UK, Canada and South Africa who are distinguished people mostly in instructional technology era. With this book, I guess the editors aim at both showing the big picture at macro level and present micro level examples which provide details of blended learning applications among their strengths and weaknesses. As introduced in the book, one of the editors Curtis J. Bonk, a former corporate controller and CPA, is now professor of educational psychology as well as instructional systems technology at Indiana University; the other editor Charles R. Graham is an assistant professor of instructional psychology and technology at Brigham Young University with a focus on technology-mediated teaching and learning.

The book is of eight parts including 39 chapters besides two forewords. Therefore, the organization of this review is considered to take a holistic view for each parts while emphasizing the original and/or impressive aspects that chapter authors provided and it concludes with a summary paragraph including personal comments about the book and the blended learning itself.

The book starts with discussing the importance of blended learning (BL). The authors implied that in 2003, ASTD (American Society for Training and Development) identified blended learning as one of the top ten trends to emerge in the knowledge industry. Also, the prediction of increase in the use of BL for delivering training at companies and higher education institutes is common worldwide.

218

Originally, this book contains two forewords. In the first forewords section written by Jay Cross who is introduced as a thought leader in learning technology, performance improvement and organizational culture and coined the terms e-learning and work flow learning. He reflected the corporate training aspects of the book and implied that he could not imagine unblended learning since it is foolish to think that delegating the entire training role to the computer can work. He reported that BL is not something like 40 percent online, 60 percent classroom or face to face instruction. As Ellen Wagner described "..BL models provide essential methodological scaffolding needed to effectively combine face-to-face instruction and arrays of content objects..". The ingredients of the blend must accommodate learning needs and instructional design should be considered accordingly. BL is claimed to be a stepping-stone for the future which reminds us to look at learning challenges from many directions.

The second forewords section is written by Micheal G. Moore, introduces as a piooner in distance education and founder and editor of the American Journal of Distance Education. The editors mention that this section is written from a higher education perspective. Micheal G. Moore states that BL is a long-neglected idea and the advantages of combining classroom and home or work place are being discovered by educators and policy makers recently.

In Part One: Introduction to Blended Learning, Charles R. Graham introduces readers with emergence of blended learning, and defines blended learning as "BL systems combine face-to-face instruction with computer mediated instruction". He claims that; generally, people chose BL for three reasons:

> ➢ improved pedagogy,
> ➢ increased access and flexibility,
> ➢ increased cost-effectiveness.

He presents existing blended learning models using by many sectors and organizations and discusses the importance and usefulness of BL for now and in the future. Elliott Masie also provides reasons for creating blended learning and claims that it is an imperative which reflects the blended nature of our world and learning process. On the other hand, Jennifer Hofmann mentions the chronology of learning delivery technologies before identifying the need for a blended solution. She presents many headings starting with "How do we..?" which provide practical solutions and explanations for the instructors who wish to try blended learning designs but uncertain about it. Ellen D. Wagner welcomes the readers to "a world of occasionally connected, fully interactive digital experiences" and asks them "what instructional paradigm could be better suited for exploiting the potential of education unplugged than blended learning". She discusses the importance of interaction comprehensively and reviewed various models of instructional interaction.

In Part Two: Corporate blended learning models and perspectives, the authors provide blended learning models and frameworks of six major corporations which are IBM, Sun Microsystems, Microsoft, Avaya, Cisco, and Oracle and discusses many issues regarding various BL experiences. In Part Three: Higher education blended learning models and perspectives, higher education (HE) models for BL from universities in New Zealand, Wales and UK are presented besides BL examples and institutional strategies from WebCT officers.

Barbara Ross and Karen Gage imply that although hybrid (or blended) courses do not fit easily into HE administration structure and require rethinking of the ways for teaching, they provide the best way to improve student learning outcomes. Examples from New Zealand (the Massey University and the Open Polytechnic), Wales (The University of Glamorgan), USA (California-National University in teacher education, In Part Four: For-profit and online university perspectives, the University of Phoenix, Capella University and Jones International University) provide different histories and programs of BL practices in local designs besides its impact on students with various demographics. Several practices and cases are able to stimulate higher educators to review the aspects and discuss issues in applying BL models in their own institutions.

In Part Five: Cases of blended learning in higher education from around the world, specific case situations from twelve different countries which are Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, Canada, the United States, Mexico, Israel, the United Kingdom and South Africa are highlighted. These cases can provide readers a great understanding for implementation of BL according to diverse learning needs and cultures. However, I have also expected to see cases from Anadolu University in Turkey, since it is the fourth largest university in the world by enrollment and the national provider of open education since 1982 with over 1.500.000 enrollments (AU, 2009). This valuable contribution could have helped to complete the global picture of distance and blended learning practices in higher education.

In Part Six: Multinational blended learning perspectives, the integration of learning technologies into Europe's education besides BL in Africa and the Middle East and in the context of international development are highlighted. In Part Seven: Workplace, on demand, and authentic learning, emerging trends in workplace, work flow and on-demand learning are provided. The opportunities for mentoring and apprenticeship in learning in the workplace are discussed.

In Part Eight: Future trends in blended learning, emerging technologies such as simulations, mobile technologies, augmented reality and reusable content objects which will affect BL opportunities are presented. The chapters in this part, provide interesting examples regarding BL in military training, mixed and virtual reality technologies and future trends besides predictions.

Finally, the authors concluded that BL can provide adults numerous learning options "without ever showing up on campus" and they mention that most of what has been introduced as learning options in this book would outdate in ten or twenty years. When considering the fact that different economic conditions and situations of developed and developing countries and digital divide, I disagree with this notion. Those learning options might be outdated for some developed countries while still in-use for the others.

In conclusion, "The Handbook of Blended Learning: Global Perspectives, Local Designs" is a quite comprehensive reference with the contributions of prominent experts in instructional technology and a helpful handbook for those who wish to learn more about blended learning, BL design models and example case studies of worldwide implementations in local higher education institutes and also in organizations.

As one of our studies' about the pre-service teachers' views on blended learning (Ateş, Turalı and Güneyce, 2008) indicates, traditional face to face learning environment is indispensable for social aspect of teaching and learning however Internet based asynchronous technologies such as e-mail, forum, listserv, blog, e-portfolio, webfolio..etc. can provide learners more flexible and interactive learning environments independent from time and space. Also, synchronous technologies such as chat, videoconferencing, instant messaging tools. etc. can enhance interaction between instructors and learners which may provide motivation for learning.

Thus, it is rationale to take advantage of both Internet and other technologies such as mobile devices, simulations and face to face learning. The point is that as Lefoe and Hedberg suggest in Chapter Twenty-Three, "time needs to be provided for knowledge generation and planning activities, not just the servicing of students' immediate learning needs." Personally, I am convinced that the future requires blended learning since with the infusion of various technologies and communication modes into our lives; we are surrounded by a blending world which will be more blended in the future. And surely, this effects and will keep on affecting the way we teach and learn now and in the future.

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