Detailed Table of Contents

Foreword ................................................................. xvi

Preface .............................................................................. xix

Acknowledgment ............................................................. xxv

Section 1
Blended Learning Environments

Commercial, or tailored made learning management systems, are widely used as a learning portal to allow students to learn at anytime and anyplace, as long as they have access to an Internet connection. This section contains different issues and examples related to using different learning environments to enhance blended learning.

Chapter 1
Beyond Control: Will Blended Learning Subvert National Curricula? .......................................................... 1

Peter Williams, University of Hull, UK

Williams discusses blended learning by examining key issues of educational policy and the creation and implementation of policy at national levels. The nature and significance of Web 2.0 applications and open educational resources are also discussed with examples to illustrate the growing gap between traditional educational systems and the current digital cultures. Whether cultural threats can be turned to advantage depends crucially upon how national policies are formulated and how they are implemented at all levels.

Chapter 2
Perspectives on Blended Open Distance Education Learning and Teaching in a South African Context................................................................. 20

Shawren Singh, University of South Africa, South Africa
Hsuan Lorraine Liang, University of South Africa, South Africa

Singh and Liang present a micro-comparison of two different learning platforms, which facilitate open and distance learning at the University of South Africa. The authors had described myUnisa, the self-created learning platform, and Osprey, which is the custom-made Web site at the School of Computing
at the University of South Africa. They also discussed the future trends of the use of blended approaches in the context of open distance education and learning, which is informative for those who would like to adopt e-learning in developing countries.

Chapter 3
Enhancing Student Learning through Blending Varied Learning and Assessment Experiences.......................................................... 50

_Paula Hodgson, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong_

Hodgson gives a very good review and comparison between traditional learning, teaching, and assessment vs. online methods, which gives readers a good understanding of blended learning. Theories and good practices were shown clearly so that readers can select appropriate approaches for their undergraduate students. In particular, e-portfolio systems are neither well adopted nor documented, but the collected students’ competences should be able to portray a comprehensive university experience.

Chapter 4
Implementing and Promoting Blended Learning in Higher Education Institutions: Comparing Different Approaches .......................................................... 70

_Lixun Wang, The Hong Kong Institute of Education, Hong Kong_

Wang compares various forms and expressions of blended learning adopted by different parts of the world. The limitations of commercial LMS were discussed and the constraints lead to his discussion on subject-specific Web sites to supplement a commercial LMS to facilitate blended learning. How and what to use Wikibook projects to foster academic reading and writing in English for non-English native speakers were described in greater detail. Student teachers worked in groups to write an academic textbook collaboratively online and evidence showed that these projects were highly effective and the wiki technology also made peer editing much more efficient and effective.

Section 2
Blended Learning Practices

_There are numerous face-to-face learning and teaching methods and technology is only one of the factors that affect blended learning. From the different practices illustrated in this book (Chapter 7 to 13), I argue that pedagogy is the most important variables for quality blended learning, even though findings from Chapter 6 illustrate that the grades that students scored had no relationship to pedagogy. Perhaps the authors had not fully designed and created appropriate digital materials nor took full use of different features of learning platforms._

Chapter 5
Student Profile and Its Effects on Online and Hybrid Courses.......................................................... 89

_Seta Boghikian-Whitby, University of La Verne, California, USA
Yehia Mortagy, University of La Verne, California, USA_
Boghikian-Whitby and Mortagy took the effort to analyze the profile of students who were enrolled in a face-to-face and an online course of management information systems over 15 semesters at an American university. It was found that most online students were adult students who were of African American and Hispanic descent. Forty percent of the students enrolled in online delivery modality were of extravert type. It was recommended that short modules and using different exercises would be able to accommodate various learning styles.

Chapter 6
Using Action Research to Assess Student Performance in Traditional vs. E-Learning Formats........ 112
Retta Guy, Tennessee State University, USA
Craig Wishart, Fayetteville State University, USA

Action research is commonly used by many academics to reflect and to refine their teaching approaches. Guy and Wishart adopted different teaching approaches to students who took online courses in the United States who were mainly blacks. They changed the teaching strategy for e-learning class from student-centered to instructor-centered to even more instructor-centered for the three years. Students’ grades of face-to-face and online courses were compared, but it was found that neither the strategy nor the delivery method had any impact on student performances.

Chapter 7
Examining Individual Students’ Perceptions of Curiosity Utilizing a Blend of Online and Face-to-Face Discussions: A Case Study ................................................................. 125
Ronnie H. Shroff, The Hong Kong Institute of Education, Hong Kong

Shroff created a blended learning platform that allowed students to interact and collaborate in both online and face-to-face settings. Data were obtained through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with information systems undergraduate students. The interviewees appeared to derive pleasure from the online discussions, which also provided them with a level of surprise, conflicting discrepancy, and novelty. Results from the qualitative study showed that individuals’ perceptions of curiosity were strongly supported.

Chapter 8
Online Discussion and E-Mentoring Strategies in Blended Continuing Education Courses .......... 146
Lung-Hsiang Wong, National Institute of Education, Singapore
Chee-Kit Looi, National Institute of Education, Singapore

Wang and Looi analysed online discussions in a course portal that supplemented class discussion in three continuing master education courses in Singapore. The courses combined face-to-face and online approaches to instruction. Henri’s model was adopted to quantitatively and qualitatively analyse the online discussion. This chapter emphasizes the role of the e-mentors in promoting and mediating the discussions. Transcript content analyses showed that students’ messages were on-task, thoughtful, and indicative of student-initiated learning and a good amount of peer help.
Chapter 9
A Case Study of Infusing Web 2.0 Tools for Blended Learning: Virtual Presentations as an Alternative Means of Assessment
Yiu Chi Lai, The Hong Kong Institute of Education, Hong Kong
Eugenia M. W. Ng, The Hong Kong Institute of Education, Hong Kong

Lai and Ng describe an innovative practice of infusing Web 2.0 in assessment in Hong Kong. The participants were two groups of student teachers who created virtual presentations, which could either be videos or other digital formats for each group to learn from each other. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected, analyzed, and compared. It was found that most of the participants were positive about this new presentation approach and ready to accept it as a part in assessments but they gave more feedback to their class rather than the other class.

Chapter 10
Reflective Practice, Professional Learning, and Educational Partnerships: Effecting Change in Classroom Settings
Chris Brook, Curtin University of Technology, Australia
Graeme Lock, Edith Cowan University, Australia

Brook and Lock presented a model of professional learning that incorporated blended learning, reflective practice, performance management processes, authentic experiences, and tertiary learning to encourage change in classroom settings for practicing teachers. Teachers in this study found that a blended learning setting connect between theory and practice and collaborative learning provided a strong learning experience that translated to change in classroom practice. In particular, the use of video recording of their classroom teaching was seen by the participants as a powerful tool in reflecting on their teaching.

Chapter 11
Allegheny Women’s Biotechnology Workforce Collaborative: Investing in Disadvantaged Populations with Technology
Michelle Zuckerman-Parker, Allegheny-Singer Research Institute, USA
Christine Compliment, Allegheny-Singer Research Institute, USA
Megan Rodella, Allegheny-Singer Research Institute, USA
Garth Ehrlich, Allegheny-Singer Research Institute, USA
J. Christopher Post, Allegheny-Singer Research Institute, USA
Allysen Todd, Community College of Allegheny County, USA
James Schreiber, Duquesne University, USA

Zuckerman-Parker, Compliment, Hall-Stoutly, Rosella, Ehrlich, Post, and Todd describe a research based educational intervention designed to support participants in Pennsylvania with “lifelines” using blended learning so that they further their education and enter the biotechnology workforce. This holistic educational approach focuses on individualized learning using technology to foster personal skill development and mentoring from industry professionals. Quantitative data and qualitative data showed that those participants who had been using the technology to learn and to reflect were better than those who did not use the technology.
Chapter 12
Blending Classroom Activities with Multi-User Virtual Environment for At-Risk Primary School Students in an After-School Program: A Case Study

Lee Yong Tay, Beacon Primary School, Singapore
Cher Ping Lim, Edith Cowan University, Australia

Tay and Lim explored an uncommon way to adopt blended learning for primary education. A group of 14 academically low Primary 5 students were engaged in academic related tasks in an after-school program mediated by a game-like 3 dimensional multi-user virtual environment. Qualitative findings from the observation notes, interviews with the students, and students’ activities showed that the students were engaged with ‘play and fun’ and ‘recognition and affirmation of performance.’ The game played a significant role in attracting the students to attend the after-school program, as they were allowed to explore, discover, and satisfy their sense of curiosity, but non-ICT activities were also necessary to further enhance their learning.

Chapter 13
Comparing Face-to-Face with Blended Learning in the Context of Foreign Language Education

Kosmas Vlachos, Hellenic Open University, Greece

Vlachos also investigated the usefulness of blended learning for primary school children, but the study involved three classes from Finland, Spain, and Greece. He collated and explored the blended learning modes related to a number of critical language learning issues. Asynchronous online collaboration was regularly and systematically integrated into learning English as a foreign language. Findings showed that the blended learning group scored slightly higher than the face-to-face group even though the former scored lower than the latter before they conducted the experiment.

Section 3
Cultural Differences Studies

Different cultures have different believes, norms, and practices which could affect pedagogy, technology adoption, and access. Many research studies reported the benefits of using the technology to connect learners from diverse backgrounds and countries so as to enrich their learning experiences. Chapters 15 and 16 show that there are cultural differences regarding technology access and security awareness.

Chapter 14
When Cultures Meet in Blended Learning: What Literature Tells Us

Chun Hu, University of Sydney, Australia

Hu presents a summary of relevant research studies, their underpinning theoretical frameworks, methodologies used, and examples of the projects involving learners and teachers from culturally diverse backgrounds. The chapter specifically addresses the feasibility of cross-cultural blended learning and learner differences. It appears that successful cross-cultural blended learning programs require more than
technology. It was found that the committed teaching teams could make right decisions on curriculum choices, learning tasks and assessments, and types of technology.

Chapter 15
Online Literacy among Students and Faculty: A Comparative Study between the United States and Eastern European Countries

Plamen Miltenoff, St. Cloud State University, USA
John H. Hoover, St. Cloud State University, USA
Galin Tzokov, Paisii Khilendarski University, Bulgaria

Miltenoff, Hoover, and Tzokov conducted a survey to faculty members and students from the Midwest of the U.S. and three Eastern European countries. The results confirm findings from the literature about the existence of a digital divide between developed and emerging nations. The digital divide may be caused by rigid administration in Eastern countries as they had less access to computer labs due to fewer and less flexible hours. However, Eastern European students were satisfied and comfortable with technology.

Chapter 16
The Efficacy of Security Awareness Programs from a Cross-Cultural Perspective

B. Dawn Medlin, Appalachian State University, USA
Charlie C. Chen, Appalachian State University, USA

Medlin and Chen argue that different cultures have different technological capabilities and perhaps face different security challenges. They conducted an intercultural study to investigate if users from the U.S. and Taiwan engaged in the same situational awareness learning would have different performance in security awareness outcomes or not. Pre- and post-tests were conducted to assess both cultures’ receptivity to the use of technology-driven security awareness programs. It was found that that security awareness was not universal, that is, high individualists have a higher level of security awareness than low individualists after receiving situational training.

Section 4
Cross-Disciplinary Studies

It is logical and natural for IT professionals to take the lead to integrate IT in teaching and learning and the majority of the blended or e-learning studies are related students who took information technology or related courses. However, learning is no longer confined to a single discipline to cope with the real world situation. It was found that cross-disciplinary collaboration between authors, co-classification analysis, interdisciplinary nature of publication journals, and cross-disciplinary references are the most useful approaches to enhance learning.

Chapter 17
Cross Disciplinary Learning in Distance Higher Education: Empowerment for Sustainable Research Prowess among Professionals in the African Sub-Region

Jonathan O. Osiki, National University of Lesotho, Southern Africa
Osiki argues the benefits of inter-disciplinarily can enhance learning, especially when their emotions are understood. The author investigates the relative and differential effectiveness of three behavioural techniques in relieving learners’ emotional tension when they took research writing module. The distance students took part in a pre-test, post-test, control quasi-experimental research design. It was found that that the participants’ research capacity had improved tremendously.

Chapter 18
Comparing IT and Non-IT Faculty and Students’ Perceptions on Blended Learning ....................... 365
   Eugenia M. W. Ng, Hong Kong Institute of Education, Hong Kong

Ng conducted interviews and focus group meetings with both IT and non-IT academics in order to find out if there were any differences between their perceptions on e-learning. Their findings were also cross referenced with findings from students who participated in a questionnaire survey. These two groups of students also gave high ratings on most of the questionnaire items even though there were some minor differences between them.

Compilation of References .............................................................................................................. 389

About the Contributors ................................................................................................................... 425

Index ................................................................................................................................................... 433