CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF BLENDED LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND WORKPLACE LEARNING SETTINGS

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As is clear from reading this book, blended learning is more than fashionable; it is the training and educational delivery method of choice. Blended learning is dominating news in higher education, corporate America, and governmental training settings. It is now a standard part of the education and training lexicon. Organizations and institutions of learning must now account for blended learning in all its various disguises. Blended learning is seen in the linkages between instructors, learners, and classrooms located in two or more states, provinces, regions, countries, or continents. Blended learning occurs in those exciting opportunities where students debate and discuss scholarly ideas in an asynchronous forum and then bring in the authors for a synchronous chat or videoconference. Blended learning happens when some course meetings or training events are conducted virtually rather than face-to-face. Such classes or training experiences can blend students located at various remote regions or perhaps instructors collaboratively teaching a class at two or more locations. Blended learning might simply supplement course readings and activities with online articles, simulations, events, and other resources. Indeed, the forms and functions of blended learning, as detailed throughout this book, are simultaneously mind-boggling and inspiring.

Perhaps that is the take-away from this book: blended learning surrounds us. In this handbook, there are societal and governmental needs for blended approaches such as when the SARS crisis forced entire cities and countries to consider how learners and workers might best acquire access to knowledge without physical contact.

It might fill an education or training need in countries facing political turmoil, corruption, or poverty. There are also blended learning initiatives created by institutional or governmental policies that seek to individualize learning opportunities, such as seen in the chapters from Korea (Lee and Im, Chapter Twenty, this volume) and Malaysia (Kaur and Ahmed, Chapter Twenty-Two, this volume).

In addition to societal needs for blended learning, there are institutional and organizational ones. For instance, there are blends that dramatically reduce the travel time required for learning, such as those discussed by Lewis and Orton (Chapter Five, this volume) concerning management training at IBM. And there are blends that simply push out corporate-developed materials and resources to instructors located around the globe, as in the Cisco Networking Academy (see Chapter Nine, this volume, by Alan Dennis and his colleagues). At the same time, there are naturally occurring blended events, as seen in the field experience components of the teacher education program at National University. National University's live field experiences blend with online courses in teacher education to help the largest teacher education program in the United States expand its enrollments and activities throughout California and beyond (Reynolds and Greiner, Chapter Fifteen, this volume).

The promises (and, we hope, the benefits) of blended learning are extensive: increased learning, a reduction in the need for brick and mortar, engagement, collaboration, success, ownership, and higher-quality learning. Further research and innovation in the blended learning arena will help sort out the key contributions, benefits, and impact areas.

During the coming decade, crucial decisions related to blended learning will continue to face all of us. Accelerating growth in blended learning has been documented in this book at Microsoft, IBM, the University of Pretoria, the University of Glamorgan, Beijing Normal University, National University in California, and the Open University of Malaysia. In fact, each of the organizations and institutions featured in this handbook has had to wrestle with new strategic directions, agendas, and visions brought about by the blending of learning opportunities. In addition to strategic planning, many have entered into unique online learning partnerships (see, for instance, the chapters by Ziob and Mosher, Chapter Seven; Selinger, Chapter Thirty-One; Pease Chapter Eighteen; Jagannathan, Chapter Thirty-One; and Lee and Im, Chapter Twenty).

Studies on the Future of Online Teaching and Learning

In response to these trends and issues, instructors and administrators in postsecondary institutions in North America (primarily) were surveyed to explore the current status and future directions of online education in higher education settings.

We then conducted a second survey of those involved in e-learning in corporate training environments. Brief descriptions of our survey procedures and some of the key findings from those surveys are presented below. Then we provide our own predictions of the future of blended learning.

The higher education survey targeted college instructors who are members of MERLOT, a higher education association of more than fourteen thousand college professors, instructional designers, and administrators who share and peer-evaluate their Web resources and materials (note that less than a year later, MERLOT has more than twenty-six thousand members and over twelve thousand contributed materials). Also surveyed were approximately two thousand members of the World Lecture Hall (WLH) and five hundred to six hundred members of the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications (WCET). The first author had previously surveyed MERLOT and WLH members on the state of online learning (Bonk, 2001). This follow-up survey took place in SurveyShare, a Web-based survey tool, from late November 2003 to early January 2004.

The higher education survey consisted of forty-two questions primarily related to the future of online learning in higher education. Out of more than twelve thousand survey requests, there were 562 completed surveys. Unlike the previous higher education study, which was dominated by males (Bonk, 2001), in this study, more than 53 percent of the respondents were females, a sign that perhaps females have growing interest and experience in online teaching environments. In addition, 65 percent of the respondents in the higher education survey were professors or lecturers, while another 28 percent were administrators or technical support personnel. The rest were in educational consulting or other areas. Half of these respondents came from public colleges (26 percent of which were comprehensive universities—those with a significant amount of research activity and a wide range of programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels) and another 17 percent were from private colleges (only 5 percent of which were comprehensive universities). In addition, 23 percent worked in community colleges and 3 percent in online institutions.

A second survey was conducted of training professionals (for example, chief learning officers, training managers, trainers and instructors, and e-learning developers) on the current status and future trends of e-learning in workplace learning settings. These survey participants belonged to various types of organizations in the United States, including government, business, and nonprofit organizations. This forty-nine-item survey was completed by 239 individuals who were part of an e-learning conference distribution list.

Extensive demographic information was collected. For instance, in terms of e-learning backgrounds, most respondents were optimistic about the field of e-learning, possessed considerable knowledge in the field, and were involved in

e-learning strategic decision making within their respective organizations. In contrast to the higher education survey, 67 percent of the respondents to the corporate training survey were males. The respondents were employed in organizations of various sizes; for instance, 25 percent worked in organizations employing fewer than one hundred people. In terms of the respondent's job function, about 20 percent were executives (CEO, chief technology officer, or president) and about 22 percent were at the management level (e-learning manager, human resource manager, or training manager). In addition, 15 percent of the respondents were instructional designers, performance technologists, or trainers or instructors, while the balance were in some type of administrative support positions.

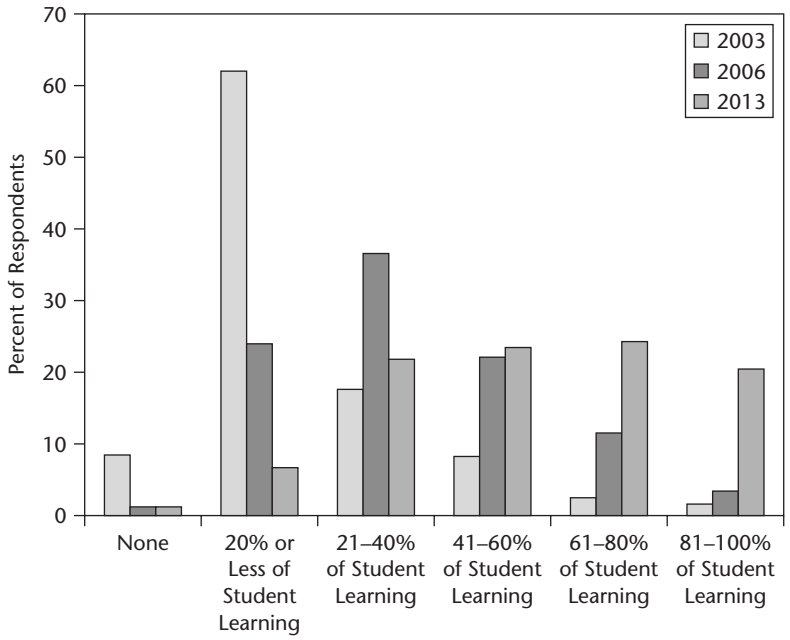
Future Growth of Blended Learning

Respondents of the higher education survey, a majority of whom had experience using Web technologies in their teaching, not surprisingly, indicated that they were using blended learning in their teaching. In fact, 93 percent of the respondents were already using blended learning in some way (see Figure 39.1). However, the use of blended learning was still modest for most of these individuals. More specifically, more than six in ten participants were using blended learning for 20 percent or less of their campus courses.

What about future projections of blended learning? A quick scan of Figure 39.1 clearly shows that respondents expected a dramatic rise in their use of blended learning approaches in the coming years. For instance, 40 percent predicted that 21 to 40 percent of their courses would be blended by the year 2006, and another 37 percent expected this to be higher than 40 percent. And by 2013, more than seven in ten respondents anticipated that they would offer more than 40 percent of their courses in a blended format. Such findings indicate that blended learning is proliferating across college and university campuses, and this trend will increase.

Blended learning is now a prevalent delivery method in workplace learning settings as well. The majority of our respondents from the corporate world were already using blended learning in some format. Such findings correspond with those from a recent survey by The eLearning Guild (2003). In fact, 86 percent of our workplace participants were currently implementing blended learning. However, as was seen in the higher education survey, a majority of respondent organizations (58 percent) were using blended learning only in 20 percent or less of their courses (see Figure 39.2). The corporate survey respondents also projected a considerable increase in their use of blended learning approaches in coming years. More specifically, more than four in ten respondents predicted that 21 to

FIGURE 39.1. EXPECTED FUTURE GROWTH OF BLENDED LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION SETTINGS.

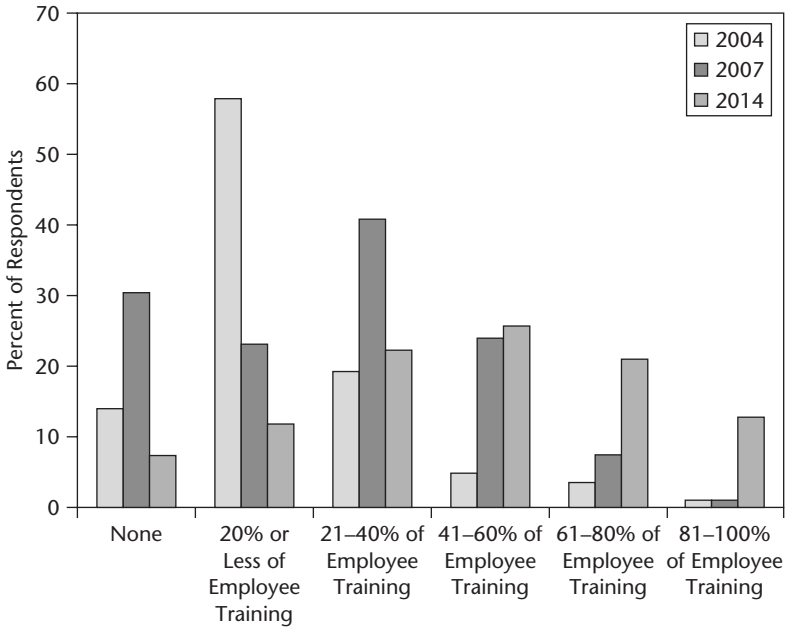


Note: The question asked was, "What percentage of student learning in your college, university, or organization is blended (i.e., courses having online as well as face-to-face components) today and how might this change in 3 years and in a decade?"

40 percent of the courses offered in their organization would be blended by 2007, and another 32 percent indicated that it would be more than 40 percent. And by 2013 this latter number nearly doubles, with roughly 60 percent of the respondents anticipating that they would offer 40 percent or more of their courses in a blended format.

Such findings indicate that blended learning is a permanent trend rather than a passing fad in both higher education and workplace learning settings. Given this significant adoption of blended learning in both higher education and corporate training settings, it is vital to create strategic plans and directions for it. When asked, 60 percent of the corporate survey respondents indicated that they had a strategic plan for e-learning; however, only slightly more than half of those indicated that their plan was working effectively, and even fewer (37 percent) calculated the return on investment from e-learning courses, programs, and other initiatives.

FIGURE 39.2. EXPECTED FUTURE GROWTH OF BLENDED LEARNING IN WORKPLACE LEARNING SETTINGS.



Note: The question asked was, "What percentage of employee training in organization is blended (i.e., courses having online as well as face-to-face components) today and how might this change in 3 years and in a decade?"

Pedagogical Techniques in E-Learning

In addition to such general blended learning trends, there is a need to focus on the pedagogy and technology that will be used in these blended environments. Although course management systems have increased rapidly in use in higher education settings and are likely the foundation for the rapid increase in online learning enrollments during the past decade, some researchers argue that course management systems are simply ways to "manage" learners (by emphasizing administrative tasks) rather than a means to promote rich, interactive learning experiences (Bonk, Wisher, & Lee, 2003; Stephenson, 2001). Despite these primitive e-learning tools and systems, a variety of pedagogical techniques can be embedded within e-learning, and those techniques could have serious implications for the design and implementation of blended learning.

TABLE 39.1. FUTURE PREDICTIONS OF MOST WIDELY USED PEDAGOGICAL TECHNIQUES FOR E-LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION SETTINGS.

Response Options		Number of Respondents	Response Ratio (%)
1	Group problem-solving and collaborative tasks	356	65.4
2	Problem-based learning	316	58.1
3	Discussion	237	43.6
4	Case-based strategies	228	41.2
5	Simulations or role play	198	36.4
6	Student-generated content	190	34.9
7	Coaching or mentoring	162	29.8
8	Guided learning	155	28.5
9	Exploratory or discovery	147	27.0
10	Lecturing or teacher-directed activities	60	11.0
11	Modeling of the solution process	49	9.0
12	Socratic questioning	47	8.6
	Total	544	

Our higher education survey found that online collaboration, case learning, and problem-based learning were the preferred instructional methods during the coming decade for online instructors in colleges and universities. When asked to select four pedagogical techniques that would be used most widely online during the next few years from a list of twelve instructional methods, over 65 percent selected group problem-solving and collaborative tasks, while 58 percent chose problem-based learning. In contrast, only about one in ten thought they might use lectures, modeling, or Socratic instruction (see Table 39.1). In addition, most respondents saw the potential of the Web in the coming years as a tool for virtual teaming or collaboration, critical thinking, and enhanced student engagement instead of as an opportunity for student idea generation and expression of creativity.

Although the list of pedagogical techniques given in our corporate survey was slightly different and had one more item, similar responses were received in the corporate training survey. As shown in Table 39.2, the survey respondents predicted that authentic cases and scenario learning would be the most widely used method in the coming decade (63 percent), followed by simulations or gaming (50 percent), virtual team collaboration (47 percent), problem-based learning (42 percent), and coaching or mentoring (39 percent). Once again, few expected wide use of teacher-centered or didactic activities (for example, lecturing, Socratic questioning) when training employees in coming years. However, modeling was selected by twice as

TABLE 39.2. FUTURE PREDICTIONS OF MOST WIDELY USED PEDAGOGICAL TECHNIQUES FOR E-LEARNING IN WORKPLACE LEARNING SETTINGS.

Response Options		Number of Respondents	Response Ratio (%)
1	Authentic cases and scenario learning	145	63.0
2	Simulations or gaming	115	50.0
3	Virtual team collaboration	107	46.5
4	Problem-based learning	97	42.2
5	Coaching or mentoring	90	39.1
6	Guided learning	86	37.4
7	Self-paced learning	79	34.4
8	Exploration or discovery	45	19.6
9	Modeling of the solution process	44	19.1
10	Discussion	41	17.8
11	Debates and role play	36	15.7
12	Lecturing or instructor-directed activities	31	13.5
13	Socratic questioning	5	2.2
	Total	230	

many respondents as in the higher education survey. In addition to modeling, simulations and gaming, as is emphasized in the military training chapter by Wisher (Chapter Thirty-Seven, this volume), were also a more popular technique in the corporate training survey than in the higher education one.

In both cases, the methods of choice seemed to center on active learning, problem solving, authentic learning, and collaboration. In fact, when asked what learning styles or preferences e-learning courses address today and might target a decade from now, the answers from both the higher education and the corporate respondents revealed an upcoming surge in hands-on learning activities as opposed to additional auditory, visual, or reflective ones. In fact, hands-on learning was deemed the weakest area today in online higher education courses, but during the coming decade, it is anticipated to become the most salient aspect of e-learning courses in both formal higher education settings as well as corporate training ones.

Emerging Technologies

The technologies that can be used in blended learning environments today will only increase in the coming years. Therefore, an understanding of emerging technologies that will have an impact on the delivery of e-learning will help in predicting promising technologies for blended learning.

Those participating in the higher education study were asked to choose one technology that would have the most impact on the delivery of online education during the next few years. Out of fourteen technologies listed, the respondents predicted that reusable content objects would have the most significant impact, followed by wireless technologies, peer-to-peer collaboration tools, digital libraries, simulations and games, assistive technologies, and digital portfolios (see Figure 39.3). These findings underscore the importance of sharing content in online teaching and learning (see Wisher, Chapter Thirty-Seven, this volume). In contrast, less than 5 percent of the respondents predicted that e-books, intelligent agents, tablet PCs, virtual worlds, language support, or wearable technologies would have a significant impact on the delivery of online learning in higher education settings. Of course, given the discussion in Chapter Thirty-Eight by Kirkley and Kirkley, those involved in online learning within higher education may be in for a surprise in the area of wearable and augmented reality technology. Perhaps these areas are simply too new or perhaps college instructors are overwhelmed with the technology choices they already have.

FIGURE 39.3. EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES FOR E-LEARNING THAT WILL HAVE THE GREATEST IMPACT ON THE DELIVERY OF E-LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION DURING THE NEXT FEW YEARS.

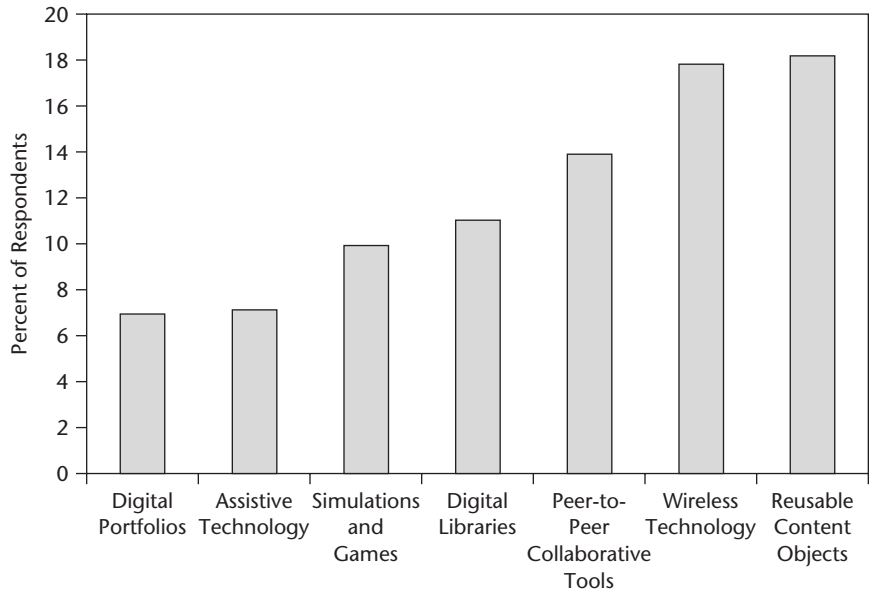
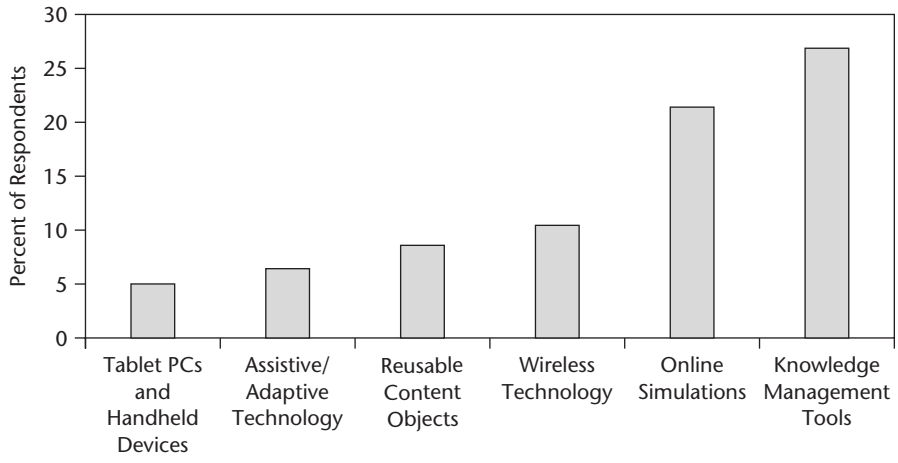


FIGURE 39.4. EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES FOR E-LEARNING THAT WILL HAVE THE GREATEST IMPACT ON THE DELIVERY OF E-LEARNING IN WORKPLACE LEARNING SETTINGS DURING THE NEXT FEW YEARS.



The corporate survey respondents were also asked to choose a technology that would have the greatest impact on the delivery of e-learning in their organization in coming years. The respondents predicted that knowledge management tools would have the most significant impact, followed by online simulations, wireless technologies, reusable content objects, adaptive technologies, tablet PCs, and handheld devices (see Figure 39.4). In contrast, less than 5 percent of the respondents thought that digital libraries, e-books, intelligent agents, Weblogs or Web diaries, and massive multiplayer online gaming would have a significant impact on the delivery of e-learning during the next few years.

Across these findings, it is clear that learning environments are changing, especially blended ones. They are changing in terms of student needs, technological opportunities, and pedagogical preferences. We now elaborate on ten key trends in which blended learning will play a significant role in workplace and higher education learning environments during the coming decade.

Future Trends in Blended Learning

Today blended learning primarily functions as a replacement for or extension of face-to-face environments. For instance, it might be used to foster learning communities (see Hanson and Clem, Chapter Ten, this volume), extend training events,

offer follow-up resources in a community of practice, access guest experts, provide timely mentoring or coaching, present online lab or simulation activities, and deliver prework or supplemental course materials. While such uses may be unique and engaging, they are not exactly novel. As online environments push into their second decade of extensive use in higher education and corporate training, the forms and formats of blended learning will be extended as well. We predict ten trends linked to this expansion, which are summarized in Table 39.3.

TABLE 39.3. TRENDS AND PREDICTIONS RELATED TO BLENDED LEARNING.

1. Mobile blended learning	Increasing use of mobile and handheld devices will create rich and exciting new avenues for blended learning
2. Greater visualization, individualization, and hands-on learning	Blended learning environments will increasingly become individualized, in particular, emphasizing visual and hands-on activities.
3. Self-determined blended learning	Blended learning will foster greater student responsibility for learning. Decisions about the type and format of blended learning will be made by students instead of instructors or instructional designers. Learners will be designing their own programs and degrees.
4. Increased connectedness, community, and collaboration	Blended learning will open new avenues for collaboration, community building, and global connectedness. It will be used as a tool for global understanding and appreciation.
5. Increased authenticity and on-demand learning	Blended learning will focus on authenticity and real-world experiences to supplement, extend, enhance, and replace formal learning. As this occurs, blended learning will fuel advancements in the creation and use of online case learning, scenarios, simulations and role play, and problem-based learning.
6. Linking work and learning	As blended learning proliferates, the lines between workplace learning and formal learning will increasingly blur. Higher education degrees will have credits from the workplace and even credit for work performed.
7. Changed calendaring	The calendar system or time scheduling of learning will be less appropriate and predefinable.
8. Blended learning course designations	Courses and programs will be increasingly designated as blended learning paths or options.
9. Changed instructor roles	The role of an instructor or trainer in a blended environment will shift to one of mentor, coach, and counselor.
10. The emergence of blended learning specialists	There will emerge specialist teaching certificates, degree programs, and resources or portals related to blended learning courses and programs.

Trend 1: Mobile Blended Learning

It is not too difficult to predict that blended learning will increasingly involve handheld devices, especially cell phones, where one can call up the learning that is needed or demanded (see in this volume, Wagner, Chapter Four; DeViney and Lewis, Chapter Thirty-Five; and Kirkley and Kirkley, Chapter Thirty-Eight). With the increasing use of mobile and wireless technologies, the time and the place for learning, working, and socializing will blur even more. It is possible that such technologies will also be able to make learning more easily accessible for a wider range of individuals, thereby creating greater opportunities for lifelong learning (Ahonen, 2003; Keegan, 2002).

Trend 2: Greater Visualization, Individualization, and Hands-on Learning

As part of this added mobility, learning will be increasingly individualized, visual, and hands-on. This prediction is backed up in part by our survey data, which revealed that online learning will soon support a greater range of learning styles and individual differences in learning. For instance, blended environments will bring pictures, charts, graphs, animations, simulations, and video clips that the learner can call up and manipulate. The blending of delivery mechanisms, instructional approaches, technologies, and learning situations will evolve to support learning that is individualized yet collaborative and interactive (see Wagner, Chapter Four, this volume), timely and directed toward a specific need yet part of a lifelong learning journey, and complex and yet ubiquitous and seamlessly integrated into the learning landscape. As Wenger and Ferguson (Chapter Six, this volume) point out, there is a need to consider and appreciate the learning ecology for studying, practicing, teaching, and coaching that e-learning presents.

Trend 3: Self-Determined Blended Learning

As the options for blended learning proliferate, blended learning will increasingly address individual needs while becoming a highly complex decision-making process. A key result of this trend will be that the percentage of one's program that is blended as well as the forms of blended learning employed will increasingly fall to the learner. It is not just the complexity and individuality of learning that will fuel this trend, but greater use of exploratory and self-paced learning will demand that the learners self-regulate their own learning. When learners take more responsibility for their own learning, there will emerge entirely new possibilities to promote and monitor or research self-determined learning (Deci & Ryan, 1985). For instance, researchers might ask whether such self-determined learners choose courses based primarily on convenience, access, and flexibility, or decide

on those that offer rich pedagogy fostering learner engagement, collaboration, and interaction. As the need for the blending of learning becomes a decision primarily made by learners, they will assume greater control over the choice and labeling of their courses and degree programs. Complicating such decisions in the coming decade, adult learning environments will have multiple modes of delivery—fully online, blended, face-to-face, and others—depending on learner needs. Already the University of Illinois at Springfield is retooling all of its face-to-face courses and programs for parallel online versions (Carnevale, 2004). Options such as these will proliferate in the coming decades.

Trend 4: Increased Connectedness, Community, and Collaboration

In addition to greater individualization, blended learning will foster increased connectedness, collaboration, and global awareness. Among its many strengths, blended learning connects people, activities, and events. It will soon be a key tool for building shared cultural understanding on a global basis. Instead of, or in addition to, huge investments in military arsenals, government officials should be building online communities and learning practices in which knowledge, ideas, and learning products are exchanged and valued. If there is a need for an expert opinion or knowledgeable guest to evaluate or respond to student work, one can be called up on demand. If you need an online simulation, you might find one in a site like MERLOT and provide the appropriate linkages for students. If you want to incorporate peer evaluation or exchanges of student work in a class or program, you might apply at the appropriate student exchange or mentoring sites. No longer are classes one-dimensional. With the blending of learning, there are now intraplanetary cafés, cross-cultural projects, and global work teams that push the envelope of learning (Bonk, Hara, Dennen, Malikowski, & Supplee, 2001) while expanding the need for shared knowledge, communities of practice, and collaborative learning (Bonk & Cunningham, 1998). With shared knowledge comes greater opportunity to negotiate meaning and form communities of learning (Bonk, Wisher, & Nigrelli, 2004).

Trend 5: Increased Authenticity and On-Demand Learning

As DeViney and Lewis (Chapter Thirty-Five, this volume) make apparent, on-demand learning is a requirement of a global workforce with fast-changing expectations and job requirements. Authentic and hands-on learning is needed when demanded. In partial response to this trend, Oliver, Herrington, and Reeves (Chapter Thirty-Six, this volume) indicate that increased authenticity during blended learning will occur through real-world scenarios and cases. In effect, the Web will be called on to provide access to timely information that can help solve case problems as well

as situate problems in real-life events and places. As this occurs, blended learning will add fuel to the trend toward online case learning, scenario learning, simulations and role play, and problem-based learning. As alluded to by Hanson and Clem (Chapter Ten, this volume), it is the pedagogy employed and the learning results that ultimately matter, not the form of the technology actually employed.

Trend 6: Linking Work and Learning

As these pedagogical innovations are deployed (as discussed in trend #5), the differences between workplace training and formalized learning environments will continue to shrink. This graying of the lines between training and formalized learning will be caused by blended learning as much as it will cause new avenues for it. In business, for instance, it will be common for students to be embedded or situated in a company or other type of work setting and then report back daily or weekly through Webcams, asynchronous discussions, desktop videoconferencing, instant messaging, and wearable computing devices such as those detailed in Chapter Thirty-Eight by Kirkley and Kirkley (Botelho, 2004). In addition, degrees one may obtain will increasingly take place in the workplace, both in terms of credits received and credit for work performed.

Trend 7: Changed Calendaring

The expansion of learning avenues will begin to reform notions of when learning occurs. As a result of this trend, learners will be less tied to traditional calendars for learning. Such movements from normal semester constraints and calendars will occur in part for learners to take advantage of unique learning blends when they become available and in part for them to complete courses, degrees, and learning experiences when their schedules permit. Given the multiple versions of learning that will be available, there will fewer prescriptions for learning. As learning time is less predefined, instructors and trainers as well as instructional designers and administrators will have to deal with increased ambiguity when designing distance learning courses and programs. Learning will occur when the learner feels the need and has the time, not when the institution or organization has prearranged it. For instance, grabbing a learning object when walking on to a plane or bus will become a common and widely accepted activity by the end of the decade.

Trend 8: Blended Learning Course Designations

Courses with reduced classroom meetings or seat time will grow as universities and corporations find that blended learning not only reduces brick-and-mortar needs but simultaneously can increase learning outcomes. Courses may be designated as

traditional, reduced seat time, or fully online. For instance, Chuck Dziuban and his colleagues (Chapter Fourteen, this volume) note that the University of Central Florida was among the first to give courses a special designation for reduced seat time. This begs many questions, however, including whether blended courses and associated degree programs will be more respected and accepted than either traditional or fully online ones. And will this differ according to the type and amount of the blend? For instance, courses that have one-third of their course meetings online might become more respected in the near term than those that meet live only once or twice. Naturally, what a "live" meeting is will continue to change and evolve as synchronous conferencing or virtual classroom tools become more cost-effective, stable, and widely accepted.

Trend 9: Changed Instructor Roles

The role of the instructor or trainer will continue to shift and change in these rich online learning environments. Blended learning highlights the need for instructional skills in multiple teaching and learning environments. Instead of reducing the importance of the instructor, access to an instructor is more essential. In effect, as blended learning nurtures greater choices and learning opportunities, various instructional skills will become more prominent, including coaching, mentoring, and counseling. Such skills are increasingly vital as learners seek someone to turn to for support and guidance in their various learning quests (see trend 3).

Trend 10: The Emergence of Blended Learning Specialists

Blended learning is typically more complicated and multifaceted than either fully online or face-to-face learning. For example, blended learning instructors must know when to shift gears and add new tasks or resources and when to let the learners wander off and explore their own interests. Within the next few years, there will be specialist certificates and perhaps even master's degrees for blended learning instructors. Such instructors will be sought out since they will have skills for both traditional classroom instruction and virtual environments. Coinciding with such trends will be portals or Web sites to support the sharing of best practices among blended learning instructors as well as freelance instructor exchange portals for sharing and receiving interesting job opportunities (Bonk, 2001).

Final Reflections

This book is about expanding the options for adult learners around the planet. With blended learning, adults can stay in the workplace while grooming themselves for new positions or simply updating their skills. And in many programs, they can decide

to go back to school without ever showing up on campus. Without a doubt, adult learners will continue to have more exciting learning options and avenues in the coming decades. Most of the adult learning opportunities outlined in this handbook would not have been possible or even conceivable ten or twenty years ago. The authors of this book have pushed the envelope of the possible in adult learning. They are succeeding in making life a lifelong blended learning event.

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