PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Curtis J. Bonk, Charles R. Graham

Institutions of higher education as well as corporate and nonprofit training settings are increasingly embracing online education, especially blended learning (Allen & Seaman, 2003; Bonk, 2004). It is clear from the chapters in this handbook that the number of learners enrolled in distance programs are rapidly rising not only in colleges and universities within the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003), but in higher education and corporate training settings around the globe. Given this enrollment explosion, many states, countries, organizations, and institutions are working on strategic plans for implementing online education (see, for example, NGA Center for Best Practices, 2001).

Purpose

This book highlights issues and trends within blended learning from a global point of view and then provides more specific information on individual blended learning situations. Basically, this is a book about adult learning in the twenty-first century, illustrating dozens of learning options that combine aspects of face-to-face (FTF) instruction with online learning in formal academic settings and the workplace. Roughly half of the chapters focus on blended learning in higher education settings, and most of the rest address workplace learning. Consequently, the chapter authors include professors, provosts, presidents of for-profit

universities, distance learning center directors, learning and strategy evangelists, general managers of learning, chief executive officers, chancellors, deans, and directors of global talent and organizational development. These individuals are in key leadership roles in higher education, corporate training, military training, government, and nonprofit settings.

This book clarifies where blended learning may find significant and effective application given the vastly different opinions about the current status of online education in higher education and corporate as well as military training. It ranges from excitement to disappointment, as noted in a recent issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Detweiler, 2004; Zemsky & Massy, 2004). Accordingly, questions arise about where blended learning is headed. For instance, what will the blended learning scenarios and events look like in the next five or ten years? Clearly, a better understanding of the current state and the future direction of blended learning is warranted.

There are many other goals for this handbook. For instance, it is the first book to cover blended learning situations and scenarios around the globe. Second, it is likely that it is the first blended learning book to provide a broad picture of the applications of blended learning in both higher education and workplace settings. Our goal is to get those involved in the adult learning arena, across a range of settings, to grasp their respective commonalities and differences, as well as the potential for innovative partnerships. Too often, instead of focusing on similarities, connections, and relationships, the emphasis is on the differences in the learning goals and associated delivery mechanisms within higher education and corporate training. This book therefore is meant to provide a connection between the providers of adult learning by using blended learning commonalities as the bridging mechanism. Third, the book is meant to start a conversation about what blended learning is. As is apparent throughout the book, there are a plethora of definitions related to blended learning. Typically, however, blended learning environments combine traditional face-to-face instruction with computer-mediated instruction. Fourth, we hope that this book will inspire others to create innovative and wildly successful blended learning courses, programs, and training events, as well as graduate courses, conference symposia, presentations, institutes, and panels that discuss and debate findings and ideas reflected in this book and extend beyond them.

The stories, models, and examples found here should provide a means to reflect on learning options and help foster intelligent decisions regarding blended learning. We hope that the many personal stories and reflections included in this book can serve as guideposts to others making similar journeys into blended learning environments. At the same time, we hope that those reading this book will reach out to the chapter contributors for advice, ideas, and feedback. We truly hope you enjoy the book. In addition, we welcome your suggestions regarding follow-up volumes or themes.

Audience

This book can provide valuable information to corporate executives, higher education administrators, educators, researchers, trainers, instructional designers, and anyone else interested in how to blend traditional face-to-face and online learning environments. In particular, this handbook will be valuable to corporate executives seeking examples of how to blend their training as well as insights into where such blending might be financially attractive, efficient, and strategically beneficial. Training managers might take advantage of examples from the book to help justify e-learning initiatives and strategic plans. This book should appeal to higher education administrators struggling with issues of where to place valued resources. Clarification of the range of blended learning models can help administrators and staff from learning and teaching centers on college campuses to train faculty members for a wealth of online teaching possibilities. Teaching in a blended fashion is a new experience for most college faculty, so having a range of examples is vital. Readers will see that in some instances, it may involve the creation of an elaborate online mentoring program; in other cases, it might simply be establishing online office hours or embedding online exams or review materials in one's course. Along these same lines, in order for instructional designers to be effective, they will also need information about blended learning options. Those conducting research in blended learning environments will benefit from reading chapters on the state of blended learning in both corporate and higher education settings. Finally, and perhaps most important, politicians reading or accessing this book will discover that online learning is not an either-or decision. Instead, most of the time, online learning is blended or mixed. Hence, governmental spending for online learning needs to reflect this fact, as should policies that governments establish related to student financial aid, institutional accreditation, and university budgets. We live in an age of university budget crises that are often resolved with part-time and clinical instructors. Corporate training budgets are also among the first to be slashed in tough economic times. Increasingly, blended learning is playing a significant role in such situations.

Handbook Overview

The chapter authors were selected because of their leadership roles within blended learning as well as the unique stories that they had to tell. With the mix of corporate and military training, nonprofit organizations, and higher education institutions, a wide range of perspectives is covered in this book. The chapters are not necessarily organized by industry type. Instead, they are divided into eight key sections or themes: introductory and overview information as well as sections on

for-profit universities, blended learning models (in both higher education and corporate training), case examples of blended learning from around the world, workplace and authentic learning, and future trends in blended learning. The chapters discuss topics such as access, flexibility, e-learning partnerships, enrollment demands, return on investment, online interaction, and strategic planning for blended learning. At the start of each part, we provide a brief introduction of the theme for that section, along with chapter synopses.

The chapter authors share specifics about what is happening in blended learning in their respective organization, institution, state, province, region, or country. They provide interesting data regarding trends in enrollments, new programs, technologies, and pedagogies. Some chapters discuss the unique or powerful aspects of a particular blended learning approach, including specific information on what is being blended and how successful that blend is. Others put forth models of blended learning that might be compared, adopted, and critiqued. And still others summarize the benefits, success stories, and return on investment from the blended strategies that they adopted, as well as the problems, challenges, and dilemmas still faced. In the end, this book contains a wide range of ideas, examples, guidelines, success stories, models, and solutions.

Acknowledgments

We thank the people at Pfeiffer Publishing for their help and support on this project, including Lisa Shannon, Laura Reizman, and Kathleen Dolan Davies. They were truly fantastic to work with. We thank the book reviewers for their insightful and informative suggestions. In addition, we deeply thank Mary, Alex, and Nicki Bonk and Dawn, Bobbe, Julie, William, Bethany, and Daniel Graham for their love, understanding, and encouragement during this project. As is usual with a project like this, there were countless late nights and several missed events. The first author would especially like to thank Robert Clasen, who, twenty years ago, roused his interest in distance learning as his teacher in two correspondence courses that qualified him for graduate school at the University of Wisconsin. Serendipity occurred when Bob and his wonderful wife, Donna Rae Clasen, later employed him in the production of a television-based correspondence course, *Teachers Tackle Thinking*, during his first couple of years in graduate school. Given the trends of the past two decades in distance learning, the mentoring and modeling that Bob provided within this field were extremely timely and fortuitous. You are the best, Bob! Finally, we thank all the chapter authors who each shed some light on the world of blended learning and show us opportunities that we may not have previously been aware of. It was truly a joy to work with each of you.

References

Allen, E. I., & Seaman, J. (2003). *Sizing the opportunity: The quality and extent of online education in the United States, 2002 and 2003*. Needham and Wellesley, MA: Sloan Consortium. Retrieved August 21, 2005, from http://www.sloan-c.org/resources/sizing_opportunity.pdf

Bonk, C. J. (2004). *The perfect e-storm: Emerging technologies, enhanced pedagogy, enormous learner demand, and erased budgets.* London: Observatory on Borderless Higher Education.

Detweiler, R. (2004, July 9). At last, we can replace the lecture. *Chronicle of Higher Education, 50*(44), B8.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2003). *Distance education at degree-granting postsecondary institutions: 2000–2001.* Washington, DC: Department of Education.

NGA Center for Best Practices. (2001). *The state of e-learning in the states.* Washington, DC: National Governor's Association.

Zemsky, R., & Massy, W. F. (2004, July 9). Why the e-learning boom went bust. *Chronicle of Higher Education, 50*(44), B6.

Bloomington, Indiana   *Curtis J. Bonk*
Provo, Utah   *Charles R. Graham*
                                                        October 2005