

Blended Learning

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for Quality Higher Education:

Selected Case Studies on
Implementation
from Asia-Pacific

Co-Editors: Lim, Cher Ping and Wang, Libing

Blended Learning for Quality Higher Education:

*Selected Case Studies on
Implementation from Asia-Pacific*

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Table of Contents

Foreword	xiii
Foreword	xvi
Preface	xviii
1. A Framework and Self-Assessment Tool for Building the Capacity of Higher Education Institutions for Blended Learning	1
<i>Lim, Cher Ping and Wang, Tianchong</i>	
Abstract	2
1. Introduction	2
2. The Framework	4
3. The Self-assessment tool	19
4. Concluding remarks	22
References	23
Appendix	28
2. Blended Learning at East China Normal University: Promising Practices and Challenges	39
<i>Gu, Xiaoqing</i>	
Abstract	40
1. Introduction	40
2. Policies and strategies	43
3. Promising practices	45
4. Issues and challenges	58
5. Future plans and directions	60
References	64
3. From Diffusion to Explosion: Accelerating Blended Learning at the University of Western Australia	67
<i>Oakley, Grace</i>	
Abstract	68
1. Introduction	68
2. The University of Western Australia: history and background	76
3. Adoption of blended learning through diffusion	77
4. Envisioning and launching education futures	82
5. Setting the scene for education futures	83
6. Implementation of education futures	84
7. Building teaching staff capacity and readiness	85

8. Student capacity and readiness	90
9. Material resources and infrastructure	91
10. Conclusion	93
References	95
Appendix	98
4. Blended Learning - Policies in Place at Universiti Sains Malaysia	103
<i>Ranjit Singh, Termit Kaurt</i>	
Abstract	104
1. Introduction	104
2. Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education). . 105	
3. Blended learning in higher education in Malaysia	107
4. Blended learning strategies – the case of Universiti Sains Malaysia	108
5. Centre for Development of Academic Excellence (CDAE) .	115
6. Issues and challenges of blended learning at USM	119
7. Future directions of blended learning at USM	121
References	123
Appendix I.	124
5. A Case Study of How the Technological Infrastructure of Chiang Mai University Supports Blended Learning Practices	127
<i>Laobajaratsang, Thanomporn</i>	
Abstract	128
1. Introduction	129
2. Blended learning and Chiang Mai Univeristy: from past to present	131
3. Technological-infrastructure-supported blended learning. . .	138
4. Lessons learned	147
5. Summary	149
References	151
6. Leading and Supporting Blended Learning: A Case Study of the Centre for Excellence For Learning and Teaching at Nanyang Technological University	153
<i>Tan, Daniel T. H.</i>	
Abstract	154
1. Introduction	155

2. Blended learning and a rethinking of organisational structure, culture and processes	156
3. The blended learning transformation hub: the centre for excellence for learning and teaching	157
4. Blended learning initiatives led and supported by CELT	160
5. Future plans and directions	181
6. Conclusion	183
References	185
7. Professional Development for Blended Learning in a Faculty: A Case Study of the Education University of Hong Kong	187
<i>Lim, Cher Ping and Wang, Tianchong</i>	
Abstract	188
1. Introduction	188
2. Background information	189
3. Institutional professional development: initial attempts	190
4. Key principles for blended learning professional development	192
5. Blended learning professional development at the FEHD	195
6. Building an environment and supporting a culture conducive to blended learning at EdUHK	200
7. Concluding remarks: challenges, plans and directions.	205
References	207
8. Partnerships and Innovation for Blended Learning at Seoul National University, Republic of Korea.	211
<i>Lim, Cheolil; Cho, Young Hoan and Kim, Sunyoung</i>	
Abstract	212
1. Introduction	213
2. Blended learning at SNU	215
3. Partnerships	219
4. Issues and challenges	225
5. Future plans and directions	229
References	232
9. Blended Learning in a Converged Model of University Transformation.	235
<i>Gibson, David; Broadley, Tania and Downie, Jill</i>	
Abstract	236
1. Introduction	236

2. Institution-wide blended learning policies, strategies and initiatives	239
3. Issues and challenges	258
4. Conclusion	259
References	261

10. Case Study of Institutional Implementation of Blended Learning at Five Universities In China. 265

Han, Xibin; Wang, Yuping; Li, Bin Feng and Cheng, Jiangan

Abstract	266
1. Introduction	266
2. Literature review	267
3. Methodology	269
4. Overview of blended learning implementation and its five stages at the five universities	274
5. Key elements affecting the implementation of blended learning at the five universities	287
6. Conclusion and the way forward	293
References	294

List of Tables

2. Blended Learning at East China Normal University: Promising Practices and Challenges

Table 1: Learning schedule template	56
Table 2: Calculation of final learning outcomes	57

3. From Diffusion to Explosion: Accelerating Blended Learning at the University of Western Australia

Table 1: Allen, Seaman and Garrett's (2007, p. 5) prototypical course classifications	73
Table 2: The Carpe Diem learning process	87

9. Blended Learning in a Converged Model of University Transformation

Table 1: Vision and mission	241
Table 2: Policies and organisational structure	242
Table 3: Curricula and assessment.	246
Table 4: Professional development.	249
Table 5: Infrastructure and resources	253
Table 6: Partnerships, research and evaluation.	254

10. Case Study of Institutional Implementation of Blended Learning at Five Universities In China

Table 1: Blended learning implementation stages summarised from the blended learning adoption framework	268
Table 2: Blended learning implementation categories and subthemes summarised from the blended learning adoption framework	268
Table 3: Demographic information of the five Chinese universities	271
Table 4: THEOL usage across the five universities between 2007 and 2015	278
Table 5: Blended learning courses on THEOL at the five universities during fall 2014 and spring 2015	278
Table 6: Strategy, structure and support implemented by the five universities at Stage 1	280
Table 7: Strategy, structure and support implemented by the five universities at Stage 2	283
Table 8: Strategy, structure and support implemented by the five universities at Stage 3	286

List of Figures

1. A Framework and Self-Assessment Tool for Building the Capacity of Higher Education Institutions for Blended Learning

Figure 1: A holistic framework for building the blended learning capacity of HEIs. 5

Figure 2: Stages of Institutional Strategies Supporting Blended Learning Practices. 20

Figure 3: An Example of the Spidergram of Blended Learning Practice (Institutional) Self-Assessment 21

2. Blended Learning at East China Normal University: Promising Practices and Challenges

No Figures

3. From Diffusion to Explosion: Accelerating Blended Learning at the University of Western Australia

Figure 1: Salmon’s 5-stage model of learning and teaching on-line. .70

4. Blended Learning - Policies in Place at Universiti Sains Malaysia

Figure 1: Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (higher education) 106

Figure 2: eLearn@USM portal and single sign-on 110

Figure 3: Khan’s octagonal blended learning framework. 112

Figure 4: Organisation and structure of eLearn@USM 114

Figure 5: E-learning training 117

5. A Case Study of How the Technological Infrastructure of Chiang Mai University Supports Blended Learning Practices

Figure 1: Number of blended learning courses 135

Figure 2: Number of teaching staff members offering blended learning courses 135

Figure 3: Developmental phases of blended learning at CMU . 136

Figure 4: ICT infrastructure architecture at CMU 139

Figure 5: Cloud server 142

Figure 6: CMU Online and digital learning media 143

Figure 7: CMU portal for digital learning resources. 144

Figure 8: ITSC corners: modern IT centres around the CMU campus 145

Figure 9: Smart classrooms at CMU 145

6. Leading and Supporting Blended Learning: A Case Study of the Centre for Excellence For Learning and Teaching at Nanyang Technological University

Figure 1: Holistic approach for supporting blended learning and teaching at NTU	157
Figure 3: Venn structure of CELT.	158
Figure 2: Organisational chart for CELT (2013)	159
Figure 4: Blended learning subsystems supported by CELT	159
Figure 5: edveNTUre eco-system	162
Figure 6: Usage of edveNTUre and the LAMS at NTU	163
Figure 7: Participation in edUtorium courses and programmes (internal and external participants) (2012).	165
Figure 8: Face-to-face interaction for learning and teaching	165
Figure 9: Effectiveness of interactive engagement versus traditional methods	167
Figure 10: Clicker device connected to a lanyard	169
Figure 11: Social learning management depending on poll outcomes (Mazur & Lasry, 2009).	170
Figure 12: Use of clickers by students based on schools (2013)	171
Figure 13: ‘Best seat in the house’ location for the tracking camera integrated with a large LED unit	174
Figure 14: Centralised command centre for lecture recording.	175
Figure 15 Data for video lecture usage by students	177
Figure 16: Traditional TR layout	178
Figure 17: New TR+ layout	178
Figure 18: Thinking outside the curve on the future of learning	181

7. Professional Development for Blended Learning in a Faculty: A Case Study of the Education University of Hong Kong

Figure 1: A pedagogically focused seminar conducted in the FEHD on innovative blended learning practices.	196
Figure 2: An example of an FEHD teaching staff member working with a BOLT team member	197
Figure 3: An example of a roundtable discussion conducted with FEHD teaching staff at EdUHK	198
Figure 4: President’s Award for Outstanding Performance (Teaching)	200

8. Partnerships and Innovation for Blended Learning at Seoul National University, Republic of Korea

Figure 1: Seoul National University Open Education (SNUON) . 223

9. Blended Learning in a Converged Model of University Transformation

Figure 1: Curtin Converged as a driver of policy and core services . 239

Figure 2: Criteria and context levels for student engagement in blended learning environments 244

Figure 3: Floor plan for Room 105.107 250

Figure 4: Details for Room 105.107. 251

10. Case Study of Institutional Implementation of Blended Learning at Five Universities In China

Figure 1: Number of THEOL visits each year between 2007 and 2015 at Nanchang University 275

Figure 2: Number of THEOL visits each year between 2007 and 2015 at Yangzhou University. 276

Figure 3: Number of THEOL visits each year between 2007 and 2015 at CTBU. 276

Figure 4: Number of THEOL visits each year between 2007 and 2015 at Nankai University 277

Figure 5: Number of THEOL visits each year between 2007 and 2015 at Nankai University 277

Foreword

Throughout Asia and the Pacific, there are growing demands for more flexible pathways to accessing quality higher education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. Technology offers unprecedented opportunities to meet the needs and expectations of the next generation of learners. Building on increased internet access and mobile platforms, blended learning – i.e. *the fusion of online and face-to-face contact time between teaching staff and students* provides a means to enhance quality, equity, and access to lifelong learning opportunities, which is a key goal for UNESCO and the scope of this new book.

Together with The Education University of Hong Kong, UNESCO Bangkok gathered experts from higher education institutions in the Asia-Pacific region to explore the potential of blended learning, including its impact on the role of teachers, the relationship between teachers and students, and the nature of educational institutions themselves. Issues about the quality of education are at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals, which were adopted during the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015.

Sustainable Development Goal four, known as Education 2030, aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities across all modes of formal and non-formal learning. In this way, blended learning is a valuable approach for UNESCO to help promote inclusive education, including reaching those who are marginalized or in vulnerable situations. This is especially important in Asia-Pacific – the world’s most populous and most disaster prone region – so that learners can continue to study without a physical classroom or campus.

In all settings, we need to address essential questions such as: Blending what? Learning what? In other words, how does

blended learning work in practice? And how can policymakers and institutional leaders promote effective governance and sustainability of these emerging systems to support lifelong learning? Despite promising practices, the sustainability and scalability of blended learning has been an enormous challenge. Therefore, this book aims to explore how leading institutions in Asia-Pacific build capacity through a holistic approach to drive, sustain and scale their blended learning practices. This new resource is a compilation of case studies from a range of experienced higher education institutions in the Asia-Pacific region where they showcase promising practices and lessons learned. It serves as a sounding board for institutional leaders and policymakers to drive and support blended learning based on current and future needs.

We learn that in the process of implementing blended learning strategies, that we need to pay more attention to learning inputs, processes and assessments and how to measure personal development overall. To implement this holistic approach, teachers and administrators should be well prepared, motivated, and given the resources and time required. To succeed, students need learning opportunities to be creative with guidance from well-supported faculty in dynamic learning environments. Institutional leadership must also be attuned to the needs of their staff, students, and the overall demands of a cross-cutting strategy to improve learning experiences both online and in person.

Since governments have the fundamental responsibility for promoting access to quality education and the Education 2030 agenda, UNESCO must also provide relevant policy advice and technical support. Building capacity for more transparent governance, upholding the right to participation of all stakeholders, efficient data collection mechanisms, and monitoring implementation of inclusive education policies remain at the forefront of UNESCO's vision and mandate.

UNESCO Bangkok would like to thank The Education University of Hong Kong and all contributing authors for their insights and detailed case studies. This collection illustrates what is possible when higher education institutions become the leaders of a blended learning movement, which can be a foundation for expanding access through mobile and other modes of learning to higher quality education. UNESCO will join you on this timely journey towards quality education.



Gwang-Jo Kim
Director
UNESCO Bangkok

Foreword

We are thrilled to work with UNESCO and the group of collaborating universities for this groundbreaking book on blended learning for higher education leaders, policymakers and practitioners. This book is important to us for three reasons.

First, its purpose flows directly from UNESCO's goal to promote and support the use of ICT to advocate quality access and life-long learning. This dovetails neatly with our own agenda to bring meaningful and productive educational experiences to all in East and Southeast Asia.

Second, this book pulls together exemplary practices from leading regional institutions about how and why they enact a holistic approach to drive and support blended learning within their own institutions. As we strive to improve our own practice and impact in this area, we can learn much from the experience of others. Too often, knowledge, experience and key lessons remain locked inside individual institutions. We believe the form of sharing exemplified in this book is a great way to showcase the values and power of ICT to make change happen in higher education – we applaud this.

Third, the fact that this book provides pragmatic guidance for institutions throughout the region and beyond to build their own capacity to drive and support blended learning is where its true value lies. The more we can help each other to find better ways to spread the wealth of knowledge around ICT in education, the sooner we can extend and enrich the educative and social experiences of young and adult learners alike. We believe the power of ICT will not only improve the learning experience of our own learners, but that it will also affect the communities our learners engage with. For this to happen, we need to know where we can improve, where we can go for assistance, and that our work is of the highest standards.

This book will help us and many others achieve this.

It has been our pleasure to partner with UNESCO on the development of this volume. We hope that the collected practices and the values underpinning them will help to impact both the practical capability and the mindsets around the region about the place and power of ICT for higher education. We look forward to witnessing this in our own work and that of others.



Allan Walker

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Preface

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was announced in 2015 for all countries and all stakeholders, acting in partnership, to align their development efforts to this agenda. The set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a universal, integrated, and transformative vision for a better world. SDG 4, known as Education 2030, is a single global goal for quality education, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Technology is a fundamental driver of that vision to create equitable, dynamic, accountable and sustainable learner-centred digital learning ecosystems that are relevant for the 21st Century. Rapid advances in technology are revolutionising the way in which teaching and learning is conceptualised, designed, and implemented in higher education. These developments play a key role in delivering quality education for all.

Blended learning, the deliberate synthesis of online and face-to-face contact time between teaching staff and students, has been particularly appealing to an increasing number of higher education institutions (HEIs) in recent years. While many of the advantages of blended learning are well established, its adoption in practice can pose enormous challenges for HEIs, especially in terms of sustainability and scalability. Although blended learning design and implementation may be context-dependent, an institution-wide systematic consideration and strategic planning of blended learning may be necessary for all HEIs to bring about transformations in teaching and learning practices. This book aims to build the capacity of HEIs for blended learning through providing a framework and a self-assessment tool developed by a team of blended learning experts and leaders. It incorporates case studies from selected leading HEIs in the Asia-Pacific region to demonstrate how the

framework and its dimensions are operationalised, and how the gaps identified in the self-assessment exercise may be addressed.

This book consists of ten chapters. In **Chapter 1**, Cher Ping Lim and Tianchong Wang present a framework developed from a holistic view of building institutional capacity to drive, sustain, and scale up blended learning. Eight strategic dimensions are included within the framework: *vision and philosophy; curriculum; professional development; learning support; infrastructure, facilities, resources and support; policy and institutional structure; partnerships; and research and evaluation*. The framework outlines a holistic approach to the implementation of blended learning, including a self-assessment tool to help guide HEIs in their reflection on the existing institutional blended learning strategies (if any), identify gaps and issues in these strategies, and plan how these gaps and issues could be addressed. As HEIs engage in this process of reflection and planning guided by the framework and supported by the self-assessment tool, they are then more likely to drive, sustain and scale up blended learning practices in their institution.

In **Chapter 2** Xiaoqing Gu presents a case study conducted at East China Normal University (ECNU) in Shanghai, China with a focus on examples of blended learning practices from the micro to macro levels. Three blended learning cases, representing the class, course and programme levels, are showcased as good exemplars. The associated strategies and common challenges found are also discussed.

In **Chapter 3**, Grace Oakley pays attention to institutional-level structures, strategies and supports that have been changed or initiated to enable and encourage transformation in teaching and learning and enhance the student experience at The University of Western Australia (UWA). The chapter also reveals how UWA has attempted to transition from implementing a diffusion model of pedagogical change to a more concentrated

institutional level strategy aimed at ‘exploding’ the traditional lecture and encouraging the rapid transformation of learning and teaching.

Chapter 4 examines the blended learning policies and strategies adopted by Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). By looking at Malaysia’s Education Blueprint and the e-learning policy in the country’s higher education institutions, Termit Kaur Ranjit Singh discusses the current blended learning situation at USM and explains how eLearn@USM has become the integration portal for teaching staff and students to access course information online. The chapter also explains the blended learning policies and strategies adopted by USM in relation to the other dimensions in Lim and Wang’s framework.

Taking a technological perspective, Thanomporn Laohajratsang introduces how the infrastructure, facilities and resources of Chiang Mai University (CMU) in Thailand have effectively supported blended learning practice in **Chapter 5**. Three initiatives of technological readiness development under the CMU’s ‘Digital University’ strategy are described in detail, and the university’s new model of investment in wireless network provision is highlighted. The chapter ends with the lessons learned, focusing on the formulation of a systemic approach to blended learning practices.

Chapter 6 by Daniel T.H. Tan discusses the outcomes of the various blended learning initiatives introduced by the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) at Nanyang Technological University (NTU) in Singapore from 2000 to 2013 and the role of organisational support in scaling and ensuring high and useful implementation and successful learning outcomes. The chapter concludes that an integrative campus-wide approach, wherein different systems and tools seamlessly complemented and supported one another, as well as the ‘professor-friendly’ philosophy, are key factors influencing the high adoption and usage rates of blended learning.

Cher Ping Lim and Tianchong Wang in **Chapter 7** examine how teaching staff professional development for blended learning has been driven and implemented in the Faculty of Education and Human Development (FEHD) at The Education University of Hong Kong (EdUHK). Besides equipping teaching staff with the technical know-how, they had a rethink of the existing technical-driven professional development approach, and introduced a new faculty-driven approach for professional development in FEHD. This approach included pedagogically-focused capacity building strategies that aimed to enhance learning engagement and outcomes, and to scale up blended learning practices in the faculty. The chapter also presents the concerted efforts that have been made at both the institutional and faculty levels for creating a conducive environment that support blended learning.

Cheolil Lim, Young Hoan Cho and Sunyoung Kim in their **Chapter 8** showcase how Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at Seoul National University (SNU) in Republic of Korea secured systematic and organic partnerships with internal and external institutions. These partnerships have enabled SNU to develop an infrastructure for online and blended learning, provide pedagogical and technical support to teaching staff and conduct research and development to build a smart campus. The chapter also describes the tensions between CTL and partners due to the differing motives and perspectives on blended learning. The authors point out that SNU must strive to decrease these tensions and develop sustainable partnerships that can lead to the growth and diffusion of blended learning across the campus.

Chapter 9 by David Gibson, Tania Broadley and Jill Downie describes how the vision of blended learning at Curtin University in Australia is empowered by an ecosystem involving three organised subsystems – a model of converged resources and

processes for global influence; policy entry points for advocating continuous improvement and change; and the core services of the university. The chapter explores the complexity of this model and presents the notion that blended learning within the university context must now be considered as an interrelated web of policies, practices and principles to successfully achieve whole-of-institution change.

In the final **Chapter 10**, Xibin Han, Yuping Wang, Binfeng Li and Jianguang Cheng report a longitudinal study investigating institutional roles in the adoption and implementation of blended learning at five universities in China. These roles are examined based on the key components of the framework proposed in Chapter 1. The chapter concludes that in the unique context of Chinese higher education and in view of the present blended learning development in Chinese universities, the institution is instrumental in the transition from awareness/exploration stage to adoption/early implementation and mature implementation/growth stages. It is pointed out that a clearer institutional vision, stronger support of teaching staff and students and increased research and evaluation may be the next step in preparing teaching staff and students for blended learning in Chinese universities.

We hope that this compilation of the framework, self-assessment tool and case studies would benefit HEIs and provide insights to institutional leaders, policymakers, scholars and teaching staff to realise the full potential of blended learning to promote quality higher education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Co-Editors:

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