IABL DUBAI DECLARATION

BLENDED LEARNING 2025

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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
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Panel of Experts

The session was hosted by Zayed University in Dubai and the panel of experts include representatives from:

1. Canada, (Academia, North America) – Session Co-Moderator
Dr Mohamed Ally

2. Malaysia (Academia, South East Asia) - Session Co-Moderator
Dr Helmi Norman

3. International Association for Blended Learning
Dr Agnieszka Palalas

4. United States of America (Academia, North America)
Dr Gwendolyn Willis-Darpoh

5. Poland (Academia, Europe)
Dr Elzbieta Gajek

6. United Arab Emirates (Academia, Middle East)
Dr Christina Gitsaki

7. Saudi Arabia (Academia, Middle East)
Dr Hend Merza

8. Malaysia (Academia, South East Asia)
Dr Norazah Nordin

9. Canada (Government, North America)
Mr Phil Cowcill

10. United States of America (Industry, North America)
Mr Joe Ganci

11. Apple Consultant (Industry, South East Asia)
Dr Nor Hafizah Adnan

IABL together with global experts of academia, governmental offices, industry, and NGOs representing each continent (North America, Europe, Middle East, and South East Asia) organized the First IABL Blended Learning Policy Forum, hosted by IABL and Zayed University, on 26 April 2019 at Dubai, United Arab Emirates, outlined a new vision for blended learning for the next five years. The International Association for Blended Learning is focused on the transformation of global education through its on-going contributions to the field of blended learning.

Preamble

1.

We, representatives from academia, industry and NGOs representing each continent (North America, Europe, Middle East, and South East Asia) have gathered in April 2019 at the invitation of the President of the International Association for Blended Learning (IABL) and Zayed University, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, for the 4th World Conference on Blended Learning (WCBL 2019). We thank the university for having hosted this important event. We express sincere gratitude to IABL for initiating and leading this milestone event.

2.

On this historic event, we reaffirm the vision of the IABL to transform global education through its on-going contributions to the field of blended learning as well as its mission to promote excellence in teaching, training, and research in blended learning through the engagement of international scholars and practitioners to meet the needs of today's global learners.

3.

Based on the research, practices and experiences of blended learning presented in our previous conferences at the First World Conference on Blended Learning (IABL 2016) held in Kavala, Greece; Second World Conference on Blended Learning (IABL 2017) held in Toronto, Canada, and Third World Conference on Blended Learning (IABL 2018) held in Warsaw, Poland, as well as this year's conference, WCBL 2019, held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, the paper focuses on the theme of the "Vision 2025 for Blended Learning."

Current Blended Learning Scenario and Implementing Our Common Agenda

4.

We note that across continents, the state of blended learning and technological adoption in teaching and learning in lower education is still in a worrying state. In the North American region, Canada has implemented a new policy for K12 education in which a minimum of four courses must be online for high schools. The initiative is aimed to equip high school students for their future studies. This has received resistance from teachers' unions. A similar situation is also seen in the United States (USA) where there is also resistance from teachers' unions involving legal battles around technology which is seen to be time consuming in terms of content creation at the beginning. In addition, in the US, there is also a lack of consistency on blended learning implementation across states. There are leading states championing this, which include Connecticut, Texas, Maryland, Arizona, Rhode Island and Pennsylvania, yet other states are still in an infancy state. Furthermore, although, K-12 schools are implementing blended learning with the aim of personalizing instruction and improving academic outcomes, there is the challenge of multilingualism, diverse background levels of education, as well as lack of training in terms of content and use of blended learning in respective fields. In the Middle East, there is a resistance of blended learning stems from the heavy emphasis on face-to-face activities and physical attendance of students in schools. Schools there have issues in moving from traditional learning approaches to blended education. In South East Asia, Malaysia restricts K-12 schools from usage of smartphones in schools. Smartphones are believed to cause levels of academic performances to drop. Although tablets are allowed in schools, some schools have enforced strict regulations on their usage with regards to device usage time, online time and app usage. Thus, we highlight the concerns of teachers and learning organization administrators in K-12 education with regards to challenges and perceptions of blended education as well lack of professional development training and technology support for blended learning.

We, as experts with the help of IABL, commit to assist in developing more holistic, inclusive and consistent blended learning ecosystems to meet the needs of teachers and learners in K-12 education and beyond, to ensure that no one is left behind.

5.

We also note that across continents, higher education has a relatively better rate of blended learning and technology adoption across continents. In Europe, according the European Union, every country can have its own regulations and policies in education as diversification is considered crucial in Europe. As diversity is high, there is a huge gap in terms of countries that are in support of new technology adoption. The European Barometer 2020 shows that Europeans are aware of possibilities of new technologies, yet they also want a higher level of control over their digital identities and how their data is used. Studies have concluded that the more a country is interested in digital technologies, the more digital activities it is involved in, and thus, this increases their satisfaction level and their digital competence is much higher. Zooming into Poland, the country introduced The Law of Higher Education in 2005 with regards to universities, in which universities are allowed to have online and blended courses. Another related policy was also introduced by Poland's Ministry of Science and Higher Education in 2007 in terms of teaching with ICT. The policy highlights that higher ranked university can offer up to 80% via blended or online learning while lower ones can offer up to 40%. In Asia, Malaysia has introduced a higher education blueprint that outlines technological adoption across the span of ten years (2015 to 2025). The blueprint touches on blended learning in its ninth aspiration, where it touches on "globalized online learning" using massive open online courses and open educational resources. In 2014, Malaysia also introduced a national e-learning policy that requires all universities implement blended learning for all offered courses. The implementation involves three phases of blended learning adoption, where a minimum of 30 percent of all courses in universities should be blended for the first phase, 50 percent for the second one, and 70 percent for the last phase. In the Middle East, there is a similar situation with its lower education, strong emphasis on campus-based learning activities. This is due to lack of recognition in online degrees, where the marketplace prefers graduates from traditional universities as compared to online ones. Hence, we recognize the implementation of blended learning in higher education is diverse across continents and is governed by educational policies of each nation. We also highlight that although policies have been set in place in higher educational settings, it is diverse and is relatively context-based suited to the needs of respective countries. We further highlight that there is an issue of online degree graduates as compared to traditional ones in terms of acceptance in the current work market.

We, as experts with the help of IABL, commit to assist in developing quality blended education frameworks to implement blended learning practices across regions and continents in K-12 and higher education. We will promote blended learning so that countries can see the benefits of blended learning to provide flexible education for education for all.

6.

We highlight that a relativity slow increase in blended learning is seen in government agencies as well as industrial sectors across continents. In North America, the Canadian Department of National Defence is slowly making inroads to online learning, with less face-to-face classes, in the aim to move towards more cost-effective teaching methods. As special forces require more field and outdoor activities, there is a challenge in adoption of blended education. In Asia, although the Education Ministries have developed policies regarding blended education and online learning for lower and higher education, the agencies themselves are still slowly adopting blended education in their learning and professional development trainings. With regards to the industry, blended learning in the US industry has majorly been implemented in organizations to cut down on costs. Rather than having a more formalized approach in blended learning, organizations implementations have been accidental as there is a lack of policies and frameworks governing its implementation in this sector. For Asia, the Malaysian industry too, is slowly moving towards blended learning. Although the smartphone ownership has been reported to be double Malaysia's population, blended learning integration in organizations is still relatively new in the industry.

We commit in developing blended learning frameworks to assist in elevating blended learning practices in governmental agencies and industries as well as provide beneficial links of blended education across government and industry. This will stimulate sharing of resources and encourage research collaboration between education, industry, and government.

Towards Year 2025: A New Vision for Blended Learning

7.

We recognize that mobile technologies can potentially bridge the blended learning gap. As mobile technologies are growing and being accessed to all levels of people across levels of education and backgrounds, these technologies are becoming critical to move blended learning forward. As the knowledge gap is widening, mobile technologies have the potential to bridge the gap of disparity in terms of race, culture and language in blended education. Moving vertically down the socio-economic ladder, most of the people nowadays have a least access to one mobile device. We reaffirm that by having access to mobile technologies and internet access, blended education can assist students who are left behind to be decreased so that there is education for all. Examples of a successful application is the "Aptus Classroom Without Wall" device by Commonwealth of Learning, where it provides an off-grid offline virtual classroom by using a combination of a mini PC with a wireless router to create a mini network of learning using mobile technologies in areas with no internet connection.

> ***We call for nations, regions, and continents to work together in providing access to blended education in ensuring no one is deprived of their rights to education.***

8.

We also recognize the advancement of future technologies in the fourth industrial revolution has a major impact on blended learning. Technologies in the three worlds – physical, digital, and biological – are going to play key roles to widen the affordance of blended education. Technologies from the physical worlds such as drones and robots, artificial intelligence, and cryptocurrencies in the digital world, and synthetic biology are currently being use in ways that were not possible before. For example, drones via "dronagogy" (drone-based pedagogy) is providing learners with opportunities to explore difficult geographical learning sites with an aerial view using small autonomous drones. Aerial technology, which was only conceivable with helicopters before, are now available as cost-effective solutions for blended learning. Another example is integration of artificial intelligence into blended learning environments. Using Experience API (xAPI) technology servers, educators are allowed to build a curriculum using many technologies, and xAPI can securely communicate capturing learners stream of activities and wide range of online and offline experiences in centralized databases. The fourth industrial revolution is moving us to an age where things are becoming more smarter and becoming more "cognified." With everything around the blended educator and learner being smarter than before, there is a need for proper models, frameworks, approaches and practices for effective implementation of blended education.

We call for, nations, regions, and continents to develop ecosystems and solutions for fourth industrial revolution blended education. This will require education, industry, and governments working together to integrate fourth industrial technologies for blended learning. Researchers are encouraged to conduct research on the use of emerging technologies for blended learning.

9.

We further recognize that implementation of blended learning does not solely lie on the integration of technology, yet is linked heavily with people – educators, trainers, teachers, learners, administration, and support teams – as a complete ecosystem that has crucial roles in ensuring blended education is made possible. We also recognize that not all technologies would work in blended learning settings, rather is highly dependent on learning contexts, and technological availability, as well as cultural, socio-economic and geographical aspects. We reaffirm that blended education should be designed and re-designed well and be aimed to induce passion in learning and re-learning meaningfully.

> ***We further reaffirm that it is essential to balance the theoretical part of blended learning as well as its practicality is of equal importance, to obtain the maximum benefit of blended learning. Models and frameworks should be developed on how education, industry, and governments can work together to benefit from blended learning.***

10.

Noting the importance of the diverse blended learning across nations, regions, and continents, we provide a broad and universal definition of blended learning, which is:

> ***"Blended learning is an educational approach, which integrates face-to-face classroom practices with online and mobile delivery methods. It aims to provide the learner with a well-planned, managed, and well-structured teacher-facilitated interactive learning environment, where high quality content, activities, and experiences can be customized to learner needs and preferences, unrestricted by time and location."***