Foreword

We are living, working and educating in a defining era of human history. The impact of technology on our lives and on learning is unfolding with each fresh breakthrough and with each attempt by teachers and learners alike to integrate these changes into the repertoire of modalities labeled as pedagogy. Thanks to technology, we are learning how to educate in new ways, but with our “eyes on the prize,” the effective preparation of the next generations of intellectuals and problem solvers, the business elites, professors and teachers alike, and the world’s growing population who understand more fully with each passing day the vital importance of education to them and their families. We may be approaching a moment when there is broad consensus on the necessity for educating all in our national societies in order to achieve national and transnational economic and social goals.

We are also in a position to learn from one another as never before. The challenges we face leap across national borders and defy oceans. The global nature of the issues of our time requires global perspectives and solutions. We need each other. Pierre Teihard de Chardin was clairvoyant in the early twentieth century, at the apex of nation-state supremacy when he counseled that “The age of nations is passed. If we are not to perish, we must set aside our ancient prejudices, and build the earth.”

Technology in multiple expressions makes it possible to connect far more efficiently and effectively than the occasional conference. We share the potential benefits of connection that technology facilitates. Technology invites collaboration if we fully understand the benefits of such relationships, not only to inform our individual projects, but to create a cadre of effective analysts and practitioners who can, like no time before, work in close association at what used to be considered great distances. We now work in virtual proximity.

Technology and collaboration are twin prisms through which to approach this work. While technology enables us to pursue our issues and interests with unprecedented autonomy, collaboration tempers the penchant to “go it alone” with the reminder that enhanced benefit can be reaped via partnerships in pursuit of answers to our queries. Collaboration is becoming more valued within and across societies as a successful strategy to address issues. Technology is not only facilitating collaboration, it is directly assisting in making collaboration a contemporary, preferred strategy. We learn separately and together, and utilize the power of technological connections to bolster the acceptability of this approach.

In many ways, this collaborative work by Professors Mukerji and Tripathi highlights the changing dynamic of education today. The focus of the selected cases contributed by their colleagues from across the planet is the presentation of learning scenarios rooted in technology. Not many years ago, such a perspective would have been limited and the process of change evolutionary. But the rate and pace of technological change have escalated exponentially in a surprisingly short time. Blackboards no longer signify a hard surface for writing with chalk, but a tech product designed to enhance teaching. Teaching was a relatively insular process with instructors creating their own pedagogical fiefdoms which they ruled often with impunity. There were extended periods of time when faculty would discuss the issues of their respective disciplines, but not usually the reality of teaching and learning in their classroom domains.
This eclectic work demonstrates just how significantly the milieu has changed. Technologies, rapidly changing and easily shared, are re-defining teaching and learning on a global scale. This volume offers the reader a broad view of work in this area which is global in perspective yet local in application. By engaging their colleagues to contribute and aggregating their latest research in one volume, Drs. Mukerji and Tripathi have methodically advanced the reader’s awareness of the current confluence of educational technology and its collaborative use. They effectively demonstrate the salience of sharing best practices in the efficient and effective use of technology to enhance and advance learning.

The work presents a considerable list of education issues with global resonance and relevance. Within these carefully selected cases one discovers approaches to innovative learning supported by technologies that liberate rather than limit the learner. The authors encourage us to think and create not just “outside the box,” but beyond national borders to discover and connect others equally devoted to the advancement of learning. Learning is rightly understood as an essential human right and as a transformer of people and societies. Access to learning, especially enhanced by technology, creates opportunities for personal and systemic growth, development and independence.

Importantly, the selected cases address real problems and advance our awareness of issues and encourage us to upgrade our knowledge and join the global conversation on the advancement of teaching and learning. The issues tackled run the full spectrum from the salience of faculty development to learning for children with serious communication challenges, from using e-learning in West Africa to personality profiles which adapt most readily to online learning, from teaching styles in Norway to learning management in Malaysia. A clear strength of this compendium is the variety of examples drawn from colleagues on almost every continent, and the applicability of most of the cases to other global regions.

What is apparent from this well conceptualized work is the global, transformational prowess of access to learning. Personal and national goals are being re-framed by the myriad use of ever-changing technology as a powerful democratizing agent. As a species, we will only become more connected and more collaborative but, hopefully, more appreciative that we all face the challenges of accelerated change.

We should collaborate in this way to nurture the creative learning environments we will require in order to thrive in this intertwined, global century. Our authors have offered their readers a useful, diverse collection of relevant studies from across the world.

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Don Betz, Ph. D. in International Studies from University of Denver, is presently the President of Northeastern State University and is a veteran educationist and administrator with more than 37 years of experience in higher education. Earlier, Prof. Betz was the Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. Prof. Betz’s career began in higher education in 1971 as Assistant Professor of Political Science at Northeastern University where he served in various capacities, including Vice President for University Relations, Dean of Continuing Studies, Director of the Sequoyah Institute, Executive Director of the Educational Foundation, and Professor of Political Science. For five years he held the positions of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Palmer College, Davenport and Chief Academic Officer for the Palmer Chiropractic University System. In 1999, he took the post of Vice President for Academic Affairs and Professor of Political Science at the University of Central Oklahoma where he also served as Provost. Prof. Betz also has had long association with the United Nations where he held important positions and has served as an important connection between the United Nations and NGO's worldwide active on Middle East peace issues. He has been the Chairman of the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ICCP) from 1985-2002 and of the United Nations-sponsored International NGO Meetings on the Question of Palestine for the past fifteen years. He has also been a chair, and/or speaker at more than 50 United Nations conferences, seminars and symposiums around the globe. He has been the recipient of numerous awards and authored articles and papers on the topics of international affairs, higher education, and leadership.