Foreword

Since at least the Industrial Revolution, the imperative for people, communities and nations to adapt
to technological change has been unceasing. Initially, some people could hide from the consequences
of technological change, others—notably the Luddites—criticised and resisted its consequences, and
some were outside of its reach. Indeed, even today there are some people who live their lives in rela-
tively isolated communities ‘free’ from the demands and resources of contemporary life. It is difficult,
however, to say that anyone or any place is ‘free’ of the consequences of post-industrial society. The
entire world is ‘governed’ in some form or another, even if in some places it is through weak or contested
governance. Also, we have known for decades that the consequences for the environment of industri-
alisation and some of its disasters know no boundaries. A damaged ozone layer affected the planet over
previous decades, and rising carbon dioxide levels are doing likewise now. It is difficult for anyone to
‘hide’ from these global consequences. For the majority of the world’s citizens the developments led
by scientific and intellectual innovation have been just that: developments. Notwithstanding the costs
and consequences, social and economic change has broadly benefited the world’s citizens. In particular,
the technical and technological advances in computing and communications have been so significant
and widespread that they have required a new term to be coined to conceptualise and understand their
consequences: globalisation.

The enormous development of electronic communications and, later, computer technology over the
past century has encased the globe in an invisible and untouchable atmosphere. An atmosphere that it is
crowded with signals and signs of human activity yet is unobservable and unknowable without the technical
means (radio, mobile phone, computers) to receive the signals. Most importantly in the context of this
book—_Cases on Technological Adaptability and Transnational Learning: Issues and Challenges_—it is
unknowable without the knowledge and skills to read and understand the signs. This requires sufficient
good education being provided to the world’s citizens so that they can read and understand the signals
and signs, and create and transmit their own in a purposeful and knowledgeable way. Many of these
same citizens are required for the creation and use of the next new technologies. So, although we tend
to think that we are the generation facing technological change here and now, we are merely the current
generation of a succession that extends back to late 18th Century England. Hence, technological change
isn’t new and it isn’t going away!

Education and its systems are themselves processes and products of technological change. As noted
above, without the knowledge and skills it is impossible for citizens to participate in contemporary so-
ciety, and without advanced specialist skills and knowledge it is impossible to create the ideas, conduct
the research and develop the products and systems that enable future social and economic developments.
For education to remain pertinent to the emerging world, it is necessary for it to continuously adapt and
reform. It is this context that this book—_Cases on Technological Adaptability and Transnational Learn-
ing: Issues and Challenges_—addresses. It provides cases of education adapting to, and adapting, new
technologies to provide learning conditions and opportunities for students from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances. In particular, it provides examples where the aforementioned educational practices and technological adaptations are addressed to transnational audiences and circumstances. Undertaking such developments requires, not just technical adaptability and technological understanding, but also social and cultural understanding and sensitivity.

The capacity of new computer and communications technologies to ‘deliver’ courses internationally and globally is well-recognised and underpins this book. In many respects, distances are irrelevant to the ‘delivery’ of course-materials in electronic form over the internet. Students ‘on-campus’ may receive their material or participate in online discussions simultaneously with students half a world away. However, transnational educational activities need to be built on mutual national understandings and respect otherwise they risk being forms of cultural invasion and colonization. These are part of the ‘issues and challenges’ reflected and/or addressed explicitly by Cases on Technological Adaptability and Transnational Learning: Issues and Challenges. There is an implicit invitation here for readers to reflect critically on the substance of the chapters and on the implications for their own practice. Which new computer and communications technologies are appropriate and efficacious for their own educational practices? What are the personal, social and cultural implications of their (intended) transnational educational practices? What can they identify and learn from the contributions to this book in these respects? There are many ‘gems’ to be ‘mined’ from the contributions to Cases on Technological Adaptability and Transnational Learning: Issues and Challenges. It is important, however, that readers bring their own perspectives and contexts to ‘cutting and polishing’ these gems to ‘set’ them into their own educational contexts. Good transnational education demands no less.

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