Foreword

The importance of transnational learning is evident both within institutions and in relation to partnership programs. Increasingly, institutions are seeking student applicants from other countries and expecting that globalization of the curriculum will occur. Similarly, despite the rise of the Internet and the globalization of culture, the differences embedded in home programs are not always immediately evident but can have a major impact on the success or failure of partnership programs. The use of e-learning technologies adds another layer of complexity.

The editors, Drs. Mukerji and Tripathi make a sincere attempt to provide an international platform through this book for sharing innovations in technology for the development of interactive and collaborative learning environments. It is creditable to have contributions on transnational learning from Rwanda, Austria with its partnership projects in Nepal, India, China, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Slovakia, Slovenia, Armenia, and Georgia, the Netherlands, and USA. The book also aggregates experiences of technology enabled environments such as ORIENT, self paced learning, personalized t-learning, and spatial ability training.

In this book, cases cluster into two major foci. Those with a focus on technology applications cover a variety of topics from tools for assessment and collaboration to professional development strategies to engender change. Some raise questions about assessment practices from doing marking on line versus on paper to the utility of self-assessment questions and the combination of online assessments and face-to-face examinations in Turkish universities. Others focus on online instruction for K-12 teachers or teacher education candidates. Immediacy and virtual presence is explored with language learners and through interactive television while the visual ability of the learner and the learner’s preference for collaboration versus personal learning are examined in two other papers. The result is a rich amalgam of viewpoints and ideas, valuable both to the newcomer to the area as well as to those already experienced in online learning.

The second cluster more directly foregrounds aspects of transnational education. The papers describe programs in different countries. Some focus on cross-cultural issues such as learners’ level of understanding and ability to speak the language of instruction or the particular rules for group work or teacher–student relations. Others examine the broader context and explore issues around the importance of policies, lack of training, and the impact of the digital divide on the use of ICT in transnational education.

The cases in this book raise several important questions for the reader. Many writers are in countries that are still examining ways to use the online environment for education. What have we learned? What can we share? For those of us with ready acceptance of online learning, what should we reconsider in light of the issues raised by those just beginning to explore these issues? In terms, of transnational education, how do we do more than just make space for the non-resident in the learning environment but recognize and include the knowledge and cultural understandings these newcomers bring to a program? In a partnership, how can the design of a program include not only the requirements of the offering institution but also the cultural context and social and economic requirements of the partnership institution?
A good book is one that helps raise at least as many questions as it answers; I hope you find yourself with many questions—and answers.

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_Margaret Haughey, presently the Vice President, Academic in Athabasca University, Canada, has a background in education administration and policy. She has rich and varied experience in distance education and online learning, having served as an instructor, instructional designer, course producer, administrator and researcher in various aspects of distance education and online learning. She has been a regular conference presenter and invited speaker and has published a number of books on aspects of distance education. Being the President of the Canadian Association for Distance Education and editor of its journal, JDE (1998-2006), she was closely associated with a network of practitioners and researchers in the world-wide distance education community and with provincial and federal government agencies for the growth and development of distance education. She has worked at a number of universities in Canada including as a Professor of Educational Policy Studies and as an Associate Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in University of Alberta._