Foreword

Technologies for Enhancing Pedagogy, Engagement and Empowerment in Education: Creating Learning-Friendly Environments edited by Thao Lê and Quynh Lê is a timely contribution to the fast-growing field of computer-supported education, which is useful for educators, school administrators, academics and students in this field, as well as the general public.

It is claimed that society as a whole is at the beginning of the information era and the digital age, characterized by the ability of global citizens to generate, transfer and access information and knowledge quickly using a range of technologies. Although there is broad agreement that preparing global citizens for this information era is going to an ongoing and core responsibility of educators and schools, there is debate and uncertainty about how best to prepare students for this future. This debate is not going to be resolved quickly, but this book reviews the issues and comments on how some of these uncertainties can be better addressed.

The book has a well-considered focus on creating learning-friendly environments by drawing together insights derived from applied theoretical knowledge, research and educational experiences in different educational contexts. The strong message inherent in various chapters of this book is that computer technologies can provide powerful tools and facilities for teaching and students’ learning. A core challenge that many of the authors are addressing is, how to make effective use of technology-based learning that enhances teachers’ pedagogy and students’ engagement, performance, motivation and empowerment in the educational process.

The three parts of this book reflect the major themes which are currently attracting the attention of researchers, educators and practitioners in computer-supported and computer-enhanced education. The first part reviews how to use the digital technologies to improve teaching and learning. It provides insights gained from educational programs, teaching practices, and theory-into-practice research. The second part places educational technologies appropriately in their social and cultural contexts. Ultimately, technologies are embedded in a social discourse and their impacts can be socially and culturally empowering to teachers and learners or negatively they can create a “digital divide” among users of different social and cultural backgrounds. The third part of the book deals with evaluative aspects and issues about the use of computer technologies in education.

Education is about providing opportunities for developing and sharing knowledge, and about making sense of knowledge and professional experiences through evaluative considerations. Thus, these three parts provide a logical review of the often complex and inter-related issues investigated across the 25 chapters of this book.

A special feature of this book is the cultural and academic diversity of chapter authors who have brought their scholarship, expertise, life experiences and cultural insights to this book, particularly in
relation to technologies for enhancing pedagogy, engagement and empowerment in education. Metaphorically the world is a global village and it is important for villages and citizens of different cultural backgrounds to share their knowledge and life experiences to enrich common humanity through educational technologies and web-based learning.

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Ian Hay is the Dean of the Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania, which he was appointed to in 2007. Before coming to UTAS, he was Professor and Head of the School of Education, University of New England. He has also held Associate Professor positions at the University of Queensland and Griffith University. Professor Hay has published more than 100 book chapters, refereed journal articles, reports, and other articles in a range of international and national peer review publications. As a chief investigator, he has been awarded competitive research funds in excess of 1.25 million dollars, and has supervised some 20 higher degree research students. His main research interests are in the domain of students with literacy and academic difficulties, the role of motivation in learning, and students’ cognitive development.