Preface

‘But we don’t want to teach ‘em,’ replied the Badger. ‘We want to learn ’em—learn ’em, learn ’em! And what’s more, we’re going to do it, too!’

As said by the Badger in The Wind in the Willows, by Grahame Greene, 1908.

During my time as an Associate Professor at the University of Hong Kong (2007-2012), I conducted a research study to explore the practices and perceptions of university teachers internationally who had been recognized with awards for exemplary teaching. Those I interviewed taught at research-intensive universities, including institutions in Hong Kong, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, USA, and the UK. During our extended discussions, their stories inspired me, and I felt that their examples should be shared with a wider audience. The goal of this collection is to share some of these examples of learning-centred teaching from international award-winning teachers. The book is not intended to be a series of teaching tips or a guidebook on how to become an award-winner. Rather, it is intended to provide concrete examples from award-winners on their approaches, with a goal of helping others to enhance best practice in teaching and learning, both at the individual and at the institutional level. The book provides case study examples of individual approaches to teaching and the use of technology in teaching as well as institutional examples that describe how teaching award-winners may contribute to furthering good teaching within their institutions. The variety of discipline-diverse examples that can be shared across disciplines is a strength of this book.

Historically, teachers at research-intensive universities have had little need to pay attention to how they teach or to think about how students learn; career advancement, through promotion and tenure, was based almost entirely on research productivity. Academics in research-intensive universities are often required to teach without formal training, with teaching regarded in secondary importance to research activities. In the research project that was the catalyst for the creation of this book (see chapter
1), 65% of the participants stated that they had no formal teacher training prior to starting to teach at the university level. Academics quickly learn the importance of the phrase “publish or perish,” and in fact, some say that to focus on teaching is the kiss of death. However, consistent with a global shift in rethinking the importance of high quality university teaching, the introduction of teaching award schemes internationally has been widely implemented, ostensibly with several goals. These include the recognition of excellent teaching as well as development of leadership capacity for learning and teaching initiatives. In addition, the criteria for teaching awards may afford guidelines for the components of “good teaching.”

The issues in this book include best practices in teaching and learning, pedagogically sound use of technology, and implications around the research/teaching nexus—issues that universities are grappling with internationally. It is my hope that this book will be a valuable resource for those teaching further education and teacher training courses, as well as university professorial staff, faculty developers, and education students. It is suitable for use in both undergraduate and graduate level courses in education related to best practices in pedagogy, innovation in use of technology, and future directions of universities in the advancement of best practices in learning and teaching. The goal of the collection is not to provide a “one size fits all” approach to teaching and learning, but rather to share examples of approaches that exemplify a variety of methodologies consistent with student-centred learning and learning-centred teaching. Inclusion of authors was based on the decision to extract a range of international examples that showed both reflective, student-focused teaching as well as evidence of the evaluation of the impact through scholarly research.

**STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK**

The 33 contributors for this book include representatives from six countries: the USA, Canada, Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia.

The 22 chapters are compiled in three sections to include:

- **Section 1:** Introduction and Background (Chapters 1 and 2);
- **Section 2:** Case Studies from Award-Winning Teachers (Chapters 3-10);
- **Section 3:** Institutional Case Studies that Support Excellence in Teaching (Chapters 11-22).

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