

Education in the Asia-Pacific Region:  
Issues, Concerns and Prospects 40

Angela Murphy  
Helen Farley  
Laurel Evelyn Dyson  
Hazel Jones *Editors*

# Mobile Learning in Higher Education in the Asia-Pacific Region

Harnessing Trends and  
Challenging Orthodoxies



ASIA-PACIFIC EDUCATIONAL  
RESEARCH ASSOCIATION



Springer

# EDUCATION IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION: ISSUES, CONCERNS AND PROSPECTS

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Volume 40

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Editors

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Orthodoxies

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## Series Editors' Introduction

This edited volume by Angela Murphy, Helen Farley, Laurel Evelyn Dyson and Hazel Jones, on *Mobile Learning in Higher Education in the Asia-Pacific Region: Harnessing Trends and Challenging Orthodoxies*, is the latest volume to be published in the long-standing Springer book series “Education in the Asia-Pacific Region: Issues, Concerns and Prospects”. The first book in this Springer series was published in 2002, with this volume by Angela Murphy et al. being the 40th volume to be published to date.

Mobile devices have rapidly become a key part of social media. As such, they have become an indispensable part of life with regard to enabling individuals and groups to keep in touch with family and friends, listen to music, watch videos, read newspapers and engage in Internet banking. In fact, mobile devices have become an indispensable part of the economic, social and political life of billions of people worldwide, in developed, developing and transition countries.

Mobile devices have important applications that go well beyond the area of social media, and if utilised effectively, they can have major applications in the areas of education and schooling. The use of mobile technologies, including mobile phones, is also an indispensable part of lifelong learning.

This volume provides a comprehensive overview, based on the latest available research evidence, of how best to achieve affordable and sustainable implementation of mobile learning for higher education in the Asia-Pacific region. It addresses important considerations such as shifting attitudes towards mobile devices as indispensable tools for teaching and learning; changes in teaching practices to support young people as self-managed learners; problems faced concerning the inappropriate use of technologies including how mobile technologies can be disruptive technologies, depending upon how they are used; and the use of mobile technologies in support of group learning.

In terms of this Springer book series, in which this volume is published, the various topics dealt with in the series are wide ranging and varied in coverage, with an emphasis on cutting-edge developments, best practices and education innovations for development. Topics examined include environmental education and education for sustainable development; the interaction between technology and education; the

reform of primary, secondary and teacher education; innovative approaches to education assessment; alternative education; most effective ways to achieve quality and highly relevant education for all; active ageing through active learning; case studies of education and schooling systems in various countries in the region; cross-country and cross-cultural studies of education and schooling; and the sociology of teachers as an occupational group, to mention just a few. More information about this series is available at <http://www.springer.com/series/6969>.

All volumes in this book series aim to meet the interests and priorities of a diverse education audience including researchers, policy makers and practitioners, tertiary students, teachers at all levels within education systems and members of the public who are interested in better understanding cutting-edge developments in education and schooling in the Asia-Pacific.

The reason why this book series has been devoted exclusively to examining various aspects of education and schooling in the Asia-Pacific region is that this is a particularly challenging region which is renowned for its size, diversity and complexity, whether it be geographical, socio-economic, cultural, political or developmental. Education and schooling in countries throughout the region impact on every aspect of people's lives, including employment, labour force considerations, education and training, cultural orientation and attitudes and values. The Asia-Pacific is home to some 63 % of the world's population of seven billion. Countries with the largest populations (China, 1.4 billion; India, 1.3 billion) and the most rapidly growing megacities are to be found in the region, as are countries with relatively small populations (Bhutan, 755,000; the island of Niue, 1,600).

Levels of economic and socio-political development vary widely, with some of the richest countries (such as Japan) and some of the poorest countries on Earth (such as Bangladesh). Asia contains the largest number of poor of any region in the world, the incidence of those living below the poverty line remaining as high as 40 % in some countries in Asia. At the same time, many countries in Asia are experiencing a period of great economic growth and social development. However, inclusive growth remains elusive, as does growth that is sustainable and does not destroy the quality of the environment. The growing prominence of Asian economies and corporations, together with globalisation and technological innovation, is leading to long-term changes in trade, business and labour markets, to the sociology of populations within (and between) countries. There is a rebalancing of power, centred on the Asia-Pacific region, with the Asian Development Bank in Manila declaring that the twenty-first century will be "the century of the Asia-Pacific".

We believe that this book series makes a useful contribution to knowledge sharing about education and schooling in the Asia-Pacific. Any readers of this or other volumes in the series who have an idea for writing their own book (or editing a book) on any aspect of education and/or schooling, which is relevant to the region, are enthusiastically encouraged to approach the series editors either direct or through Springer to publish their own volume in the series, since we are always willing to assist prospective authors shape their manuscripts in ways that make them suitable for publication in this series.

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March 2017

Rupert Maclean

Lorraine Symaco



# Foreword

In 1999, a team of students at the University of Birmingham in the UK that I supervised strapped a Kodak digital camera to an early tablet computer, added a mobile phone card, wrote software to tie all the devices together and demonstrated on BBC television what was the world's first multimedia smartphone.<sup>1</sup> Today, there are an estimated 2.3 billion smartphone users worldwide.<sup>2</sup> That staggering number is still small compared to the total number of mobile phone users, estimated at 4.8 billion<sup>3</sup> out of a world population of 7.4 billion.

For many, the mobile phone is an indispensable tool to communicate with friends and family, organise a social life, listen to music and watch videos. The WeChat mobile app has over one billion accounts and has become the ubiquitous platform in China for messaging, talking by voice and video, sending money to friends, reading news, ordering taxis and paying for goods in stores. Yet the mobile phone has still not become the universal means of lifelong learning envisaged in that student project 20 years ago (Sharples 2000). What more is needed for the mobile phone to become an indispensable tool for learning?

First, phones and other personal mobile devices need to be accepted into classrooms. In technologically developed countries, the arguments of cost have disappeared – tablet computers are cheaper than pocket calculators were when those became widely adopted in the 1980s. The main problem is that tablets and smartphones are disruptive technologies. They break out of the carefully regulated environment of the classroom and allow students to connect to a world of information and distracting entertainment. They can send offensive messages and take unflattering photos. But the solution to inappropriate use of personal devices is not to ban the technologies but manage their use. Schools and colleges are starting to adopt acceptable use policies for students bringing their own technologies (TeachThought 2014),

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<sup>1</sup>Phones with email capabilities were available in 1999, but the first commercial camera phones were introduced in Japan in 2000: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/20/technology/20cell.html>.

<sup>2</sup><https://www.statista.com/statistics/330695/number-of-smartphone-users-worldwide/>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.statista.com/statistics/274774/forecast-of-mobile-phone-users-worldwide/>

and some large school districts have adopted a successful Bring Your Own Device strategy (Ullman 2016).

That requires a shift in attitude to see mobile devices as tools for learning and changes in teaching practice to support young people as self-managed learners, carrying out group projects, researching online and connecting with educational resources at home or outdoors. Research evidence for the benefits of mobile devices as tools for learning is still scarce but promising. A meta-analysis by Sung, Chang and Liu (2016) of 110 published journal articles on integrating mobile devices with teaching and learning showed a moderate positive effect (an effect size of 0.5). Greater effects were found for learning in informal settings and for inquiry-led learning. The analysis indicated an urgent need to improve teachers' professional development to help them cope with mobile hardware and software and develop new methods for teaching and assessment with mobile devices.

Second, as well as developing apps that exploit the latest generation of smartphones, there is a need to offer effective education for the more than 2.5 billion people with older non-Internet phones. One successful example is English in Action (EIA), a 9-year project that started in May 2008 and has provided professional development to 51,000 teachers in Bangladesh. The project is a partnership between the Bangladesh government and the UK Department for International Development (DFID). It also involves the Open University, Cambridge Education and the BBC. Teachers are sent multimedia learning materials on micro-SD cards for their low-cost mobile phones, so they can watch demonstrations of good classroom practice and try out communicative methods of teaching English (English in Action, n.d.a). An early evaluation of the project found that teachers' competence in English language improved, they used English most of the time for classroom conversation and they preferred the new communicative classroom activities to traditional English teaching through grammar lessons (Walsh et al. 2012).

Another part of English in Action, BBC Janala, provides adults with daily 3-min audio lessons to improve their English language skills. Anyone with a standard mobile phone can call a short code to hear the lesson, for the cost of 50 paisa (half a penny) a minute. More than seven million Bangladeshis have accessed the audio teaching media on their phones (English in Action, n.d.b).

This project shows it is possible to provide effective teaching on standard non-Internet mobile phones. But it takes a coordinated effort to achieve such success. In Bangladesh, the team had active support from the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education and also negotiated with mobile phone companies for low-cost access to the audio lesson service. As more people gain access to smartphones and fast mobile Internet, they will be able to engage with massive open online courses (MOOCs). The FutureLearn platform<sup>4</sup>, based on a pedagogy of learning through conversation, has over 5.6 million learners registered worldwide, with 25 % of them accessing the free courses on mobile devices. There is a wealth of learning available online but only for those who know where to find it, can understand English, and have unrestricted access to the Internet. For others, the journey has not yet begun.

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<sup>4</sup><https://www.futurelearn.com/>

Third, technology and pedagogy are developing rapidly. New mobile devices include virtual reality headsets and mixed reality glasses (that overlay information on the visual world around), wearable body monitors and devices that sit in the ear and can translate spoken languages. New forms of mobile pedagogy include spaced repetition (where content such as foreign language vocabulary is delivered at timed intervals to reinforce learning), flipped classrooms (with students accessing content online then engaging in problem solving in the classroom), adaptive tutoring (with content matched to the learner's needs and activity), conversational learning (where learners worldwide engage in constructive discussion and facilitated debate), geo-learning about landscape and surroundings (for students on field trips) and citizen inquiry that combines citizen science and inquiry-led learning by exploiting the sensors and media tools in mobile phones.<sup>5</sup>

The author William Gibson is quoted as saying “The future is already here – it’s just not very evenly distributed”. That is especially true for mobile learning. Those labs that are developing the latest mobile technologies do not necessarily understand how best to use them to support effective learning; conversely, schools and universities that pioneer new modes of teaching have little influence on the design of technologies in research centres and companies. Yet, these technologies will disrupt education.

Consider the emerging technology of in-ear devices. Already, the Waverly Labs Company is developing a “smart earpiece” that will translate between users speaking different languages.<sup>6</sup> Similar technologies could offer a personal audio assistant that adapts to the preferences, behaviour and location of the user. It could whisper information about who or what a person is looking at (by detecting the user’s location and head position), enhance a conversation by offering relevant up-to-date information or track head gestures such as nodding to provide feedback to a teacher. Yet, a company (which I shall not name) is marketing similar technology in the form of a tiny invisible earpiece which it claims is “designed to cheat on tests and exams ... Go to your exam and once there, call the person that’ll give you a helping hand with your test. You’ll follow the conversation through the earpiece hidden in your ear, and speak into the microphone in a quiet whisper”.

Every mobile device can be used to enhance learning or upset it. Just because mobile phones can now track when, where and how students learn outside class does not mean it is appropriate to do so. Just because students could wear “smart earpieces” that feed them information and detect whether they are nodding or shaking their heads in response does not imply they should be used in that way. As more countries in the Asia-Pacific region gain widespread Internet access, so there is a growing cottage industry of entrepreneurs producing mobile software. Many thousands of educational apps are being developed worldwide for mobile devices, most by people with no expertise in the science of learning or knowledge of effective methods of teaching.

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<sup>5</sup> See [www.open.ac.uk/innovating](http://www.open.ac.uk/innovating)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.waverlylabs.com/pilot-translation-kit/>

As educators, learning scientists and educational technologists, we have a responsibility to influence the development of mobile learning. We should show the evidence that engaging in active learning is more effective than watching lectures (Freeman et al. 2014), that working together is better than working alone (Johnson and Johnson 2009), that timely feedback can assist learning (Shute 2008) and that all these can be delivered on mobile devices. We should take a stance on the benefits of bringing personally owned devices to connect learning between informal and formal settings. We should engage with leaders in schools, colleges and universities and in government to develop digital learning strategies that are informed by the best evidence of how new technologies can benefit learning. We should propose professional development of teachers and lecturers in how mobile technology can support the future-oriented skills of problem solving, critical thinking, teamwork, global awareness and social responsibility. Most of all, we should work with developers of mobile technology to design new and effective tools for learning, based on deep insights into how people learn in different cultures and settings.

Smartphones and tablets combine computation and connectivity in a powerful portable package. New pedagogies emphasise active, personalised and cooperative learning. Mobile learning has the potential to bring these together for lifelong education. Research has shown that students do not want a “mobile learning organiser” separate from their familiar social and productivity tools (Corlett et al. 2005; see also Chap. 29). How can we enable learning that blends seamlessly into everyday life? The first generation of mobile learning was about exploring what is possible, in delivering content to mobile devices and exploring context-sensitive learning experiences. The second generation has shown how personal devices can support a continuity of learning in classrooms, homes, museums and outdoors. The opportunity now is to offer mobile learning at scale, for millions of people in ways that match their needs, lifestyles, cultures and national resources.

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# Preface

Higher education in the Asia-Pacific region is experiencing exciting change and unprecedented growth due to the pressures of internationalisation and ambitious targets set by governments in the region to succeed in the global, digital economy. Students are increasingly mobile within and outside Asia-Pacific borders with more than half of cross-border students originating from Asian countries. Innovation in mobile learning has the potential to support student access to quality learning experiences anywhere and anytime. The aim of this handbook is to support educators and policy makers who are investing in innovations in digital education to develop effective and sustainable mobile learning solutions for higher education environments. Authors from 16 countries across the Asia-Pacific region have collaborated to share their experiences with developing and implementing mobile learning initiatives. These projects focus on a variety of aspects of mobile learning innovation from the trial adoption of existing social media platforms on mobile devices and development of specialised applications or mobile learning systems to large-scale cross-university implementation of technologies and pedagogies to support mobile learning. Each chapter addresses challenges and solutions at one or more levels of mobile learning innovation within the education system: the student perspective, the educator perspective, technical processes and policies and organisational strategy or leadership. The book also offers a unique perspective on the integration of mobile learning innovations within the educational, political and cultural environments of Asia-Pacific countries.

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Toowoomba, Australia

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# Contents

## Part I Asia-Pacific Regional Perspectives

- 1 Introduction: Supporting the Sustainable Implementation of Mobile Learning for Higher Education in the Asia-Pacific Region.....** 3  
Angela Murphy and Helen Farley
- 2 A Framework for Designing Transformative Mobile Learning.....** 25  
Thomas Cochrane, Laurent Antonczak, Matthew Guinibert, Danni Mulrennan, Vernon Rive, and Andrew Withell
- 3 Ethical Issues Surrounding the Adoption of Mobile Learning in the Asia-Pacific Region.....** 45  
Laurel Evelyn Dyson, Jocelyn Wishart, and Trish Andrews

## Part II East Asia

- 4 Electronic Schoolbag and Mobile Learning in China: Design Principles and Educational Innovations.....** 69  
Xiang Ren
- 5 Implementing Sustainable Mobile Learning Initiatives for Ubiquitous Learning Log System Called SCROLL.....** 89  
Noriko Uosaki, Hiroaki Ogata, Kousuke Mouri, and Mahdi Choyekh
- 6 Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) for Intercultural Communication: A Qualitative Study of International Students in the Republic of Korea.....** 115  
Aaron W. Pooley

**Part III South-East Asia**

**7 A Historical Review of Mobile Learning Research in Malaysia and Its Implications for Malaysia and the Asia-Pacific Region..... 137**  
 Norazah Mohd Nordin, Mohamed Amin Embi, Helmi Norman, and Ebrahim Panah

**8 Investigating Mobile Learning in Higher Education in Lao PDR and Cambodia ..... 151**  
 Ann Starasts, Maiyer Xiong, and Tyneth Ly

**9 The State of Practice of Mobile Learning in Universitas Terbuka Indonesia ..... 173**  
 Dewi Padmo, Tian Belawati, Olivia Idrus, and Lidwina Sri Ardiasih

**10 Analysing Mobile Learning Acceptance in the World Heritage Town of Luang Prabang, Lao PDR ..... 191**  
 Yew Siang Poong, Shinobu Yume Yamaguchi, and Jun-ichi Takada

**11 Creating Apps: A Non-IT Educator’s Journey Within a Higher Education Landscape..... 213**  
 Emelyn Sue Qing Tan and Yuen Jien Soo

**12 Facebook on Mobile Phones: A Match Made in the Cloud?..... 239**  
 Serge Gabarre, Cécile Gabarre, and Rosseni Din

**13 Authentic Mobile Application for Enhancing the Value of Mobile Learning in Organic Chemistry and Its Pedagogical Implications..... 255**  
 Othman Talib, Tenku Putri Norishah Tenku Shariman, and Azraai Othman

**14 The Use of Structured Academic Controversy in a Mobile Environment to Broaden Student Perspectives and Understanding in the Social Sciences ..... 279**  
 Kenneth Y. T. Lim and Horn Mun Cheah

**15 Enhancing Oral Communication Skills Using Mobile Phones Among Undergraduate English Language Learners in Malaysia ..... 297**  
 Ramiza Darmi and Peter Albion

**16 Mobile Learning Student-Generated Activities from Students’ Perspectives: Malaysian Context..... 315**  
 Shamsul Arrieya Ariffin

**17 Personalising Mobile Learning Spaces in Higher Education: A Case Study of a Malaysian Student with Learning Difficulties ..... 341**  
 Helena Song



<b>18 Teachers' Use of Facebook Motivating Vietnamese Students to Improve Their English Language Learning</b> .....	359
Henriette van Rensburg and Triet La Thanh	
<b>Part IV North and South-West Asia</b>	
<b>19 Mobile Learning Implementation in University Environments: Implications on Practice for University Leadership Stakeholders</b> .....	379
Umera Imtinan	
<b>20 Mobile Voting Tools for Creating a New Educational Design of the Traditional University Lecture in Russia</b> .....	401
Titova Svetlana	
<b>Part V Australia and New Zealand</b>	
<b>21 Mobile Learning Policy Formulation and Enactment in New Zealand</b> .....	423
David Parsons	
<b>22 Growing a Mobile Learning Ecology: A Systemic University-Wide Strategy</b> .....	443
Carol Russell	
<b>23 Rethinking BYOD Models and Student's Control</b> .....	473
Boris Handal, David Marcovitz, Robert Ritter, and Daniel Madigan	
<b>24 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pre-service Teachers' Views on Using Mobile Devices for Tertiary Study in Very Remote Communities</b> .....	495
Philip Townsend	
<b>25 Enabling Effective Mobile Language Learning: Students' Perspectives, Wants and Needs</b> .....	523
Caroline H. Steel	
<b>26 Improving Student Language Learning in Adult Education Through the Use of Mobile Learning: Barriers, Challenges and Ways to Move Forward</b> .....	541
Chris Campbell and Martie Geertsema	
<b>Part VI Oceania and Pacific Islands</b>	
<b>27 A Pilot Study of Mobile Learning in Higher Education in Samoa</b> .....	557
Satoru Ozawa and Edna Temese Ualesi	

**28 A Mobile Learning Journey in Pacific Education..... 581**  
Bibhya Sharma, Raneel Kumar, Varunesh Rao, Rona Finiasi,  
Sanjeet Chand, Vineet Singh, and Ravishel Naicker

**29 Usability Study of Mobile Learning Application in Higher  
Education Context: An Example from Fiji National University ..... 607**  
Bimal Aklesh Kumar and Priya Mohite

**30 SMS Story: A Case Study of a Controlled Trial in Papua  
New Guinea..... 623**  
Nasiib Kaleebu, Alison Gee, Amanda H.A. Watson, Richard Jones,  
and Marshall Jauk

**Index..... 647**

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## Editors

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**Helen Farley** is an associate professor within the Digital Life Lab at the University of Southern Queensland. Her research interests include investigating the affordances of emerging digital technologies, including virtual worlds, augmented reality and mobile technologies, in formal and informal learning. She led the CRN-funded project to develop a Mobile Learning Evaluation Framework, working with Dr. Angela Murphy. She is passionate about digital inclusion and leads the \$4.4 million *Making the Connection* project which recently received an Australian Award for University Teaching for Programs that Enhance Learning. Associate Professor Farley has published extensively and is a featured speaker at both educational technology and corrections conferences. She is also on the ASCILITE executive committee and chairs the community mentoring portfolio.

**Laurel Evelyn Dyson** is an honorary associate in information technology at the University of Technology, Sydney, and founding president of anzMLearn (the Australian and New Zealand Mobile Learning Group), established in 2009. She has published over 75 papers and books, which include research into the innovative use of mobile technology to enhance student learning and the adoption of mobile technologies by Indigenous people. She has three decades of experience teaching in the university and adult education sector and is the recipient of five faculty, university

and national teaching awards, three best paper awards and two Reconciliation awards. Her most recent book is *Indigenous People and Mobile Technologies*.

**Hazel Jones** is currently an educational designer and a PhD candidate at the University of Southern Queensland, Australia. Her research interests are in higher education and learning analytics, with an emphasis on support for online learning and teaching and for working with academics to provide quality learning environments for their students. She has worked in educational design and development roles at universities around Australia for over 15 years.

## Contributors

**Peter Albion** is professor of educational technology in the School of Teacher Education and Early Childhood within the Faculty of Business, Education, Law and Arts at the University of Southern Queensland, Australia. His teaching and research is in areas related to online learning and the integration of ICT in teacher education. His doctoral work investigated the development of interactive multimedia with a problem-based learning design using materials built around simulated school contexts and delivered in a web browser. More recently, he has worked in online and mobile learning, virtual worlds and technology education. Prior to joining USQ in 1991, he was a teacher and principal in secondary schools for 17 years.

**Trish Andrews** is the director of Emerging Learning Environments, an educational consultancy based in Brisbane, Australia, and formerly a senior lecturer in higher education (eLearning) and manager of the Technology-Enhanced Learning Group in the Teaching and Educational Development Institute (TEDI) at the University of Queensland. Trish has extensive experience in leading and supporting the innovative use of technology for teaching and learning in higher education. This work includes curriculum development, learning spaces, research, evaluation and capacity building. Trish has been awarded two ALTC awards for programmes that enhance learning. Trish has successfully completed a number of national teaching projects and has a particular interest in the adoption and use of mobile technologies to support everyday teaching and learning activities.

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**Tian Belawati** holds a doctor of philosophy in adult education (University of British Columbia, Canada) and a master of education in management of distance education (Simon Fraser University, Canada). She has served lifetime professional contributions to open and distance learning (ODL) and is currently serving her second term of office as the rector of UT. Her professional achievements have led to her appointments as secretary general (2007–2009) and then president (2009–2010) of the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) and as president (2010–2015) and then member of the board of trustees of the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) starting in 2017.

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**Matthew Guinibert** has been an educator for 8 years working in various roles as a lecturer, supervisor, consultant, curriculum writer and course supervisor. Presently Matt is exploring the potential of mobile HUDs such as Google Glass as an augmented reality mLearning tool for learning visual literacy competencies.

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Coordinators. Her latest projects with the ministry include the development of a prototype of massive online open courses (MOOCs) and its guidelines, development of the blended learning standard and rubrics and review of the National e-Learning Policy. She is also one of the co-founders and the honorary secretary of the Mobile Learning Association of Malaysia. At the university level, she is one of the UKM ICT Council members, who are responsible for promoting mobile learning, blended learning and flipped classroom at the university. Her current projects are iTunesU and iBook initiatives with Apple Education Development, Malaysia.

**Helmi Norman** is a senior lecturer at the Department of Teaching and Learning Innovations, Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). He is also an associate research fellow at the Centre for Teaching and Learning Technologies, UKM. He is currently on the board of directors of the International Association for Blended Learning, where the association aspires to transform global education through blended learning. He was previously appointed as a visiting scholar at the Swartz Center for Computational Neuroscience, University of California, San Diego, and has been awarded a visiting postdoctoral fellowship by Erasmus Mundus at the Faculty of Science and Technology, Bournemouth University. During his PhD, he was also awarded the Global Student Mobility Partnerships programme for a research attachment at the e-Learning Lab, Center for User Driven Innovation, Learning and Design (eLL), Aalborg University, Denmark. His latest projects include cross-continental projects such as learning spaces with Australia's Innovative Research Universities and national projects such as the Malaysia Massive Open Online Courses Initiative. He is also an educational technology consultant for Apple where he is involved in projects for higher and secondary education in promoting 1:1 pedagogical and learning approaches using the Apple ecosystem.

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