

PREFACE TO THE PROCEEDINGS

Görg Mallia
Chair, ICICTE 2017 Communications Committee

Dependence on technology in all walks of life has now got to the point where it is no longer a visible phenomenon. Technology's very invisibility in our lives means that it has integrated itself so seamlessly with the everyday workings of society, that it has become indivisible from our lifestyles.

The technological change started slowly a few decades ago, then picked up wildfire speed till it became a veritable tidal wave, inundating us with changes so fast that they passed us by without us noticing, but not without us using the fruits of those changes. Technology infiltrated our pockets and minds with smartphones. It created a network that tied us together, and that worked with speeds so fast as to render our lives a race against keeping up. We buy the new technology as soon as it comes out and fill our homes with it. And our children absorb it with the facility of natural, intuitive users. They have gone well beyond Prensky's *digital native* terminology, which is now rendered useless in the face of our students having almost symbiotically adopted technology, in the process becoming virtual cyborgs, well beyond the imaginings of science fiction writers of old. A case of reality being much stranger than fiction -- or at least very different, because there is nothing strange in all of this. We have accepted it as the normal way of all things.

These children and young people populate our schools and universities. They are the product of a society that is driven by technology. They learn on the go, independent of their instructors and the institutions that civilisation has insisted they frequent. Their learning is individual and mobile. Information is at their fingertips, and they absorb it, not necessarily discriminately. Not necessarily with all the tools at hand for synoptic recall or intellectual synthesis, but with an ease that has become automatic for them. We, the education professionals, need to understand just how fundamental the change is that has happened within the institutions (physical and virtual) where we work to provide educational facilitation to these students. We need to work with the technologies that are bread and butter to their lives (and ours) and understand how to utilise them to organise, inform, instruct and guide our students, both cognitively and affectively, in substantive and procedural ways.

That is why conferences like the International Conference on Information, Communication Technologies in Education are so important. They bring together cutting edge experimentation that acknowledges the importance of technological innovation in educational settings. They engage participants in deep, scientific discussion and create physical networks that promote the understanding of change and how that can be utilised to productive ends. Just because technology has become invisible in our lives does not mean it is not there, and that makes it doubly more important that it be studied and harnessed to move society forward in ways that are sustainable and organised.

Now in its seventeenth edition, ICICTE has proved itself in this regard, and these proceedings are a clear indication of the variety of experimentation and depth of understanding that our participants have undertaken. This collection of papers should prove to be stimulating reading for all education professionals who go beyond the curricular routine and are willing to push the envelope in favour of innovation.

On behalf of the Steering Committee, it is my great pleasure to welcome all those attending this annual conference, be they presenters, workshop leaders, or participants. I would like to say that you are now part of the ICICTE tradition. This is a “family” conference, in which the mixture of the scientific and social have proved to be a very successful base on which to build a friendship-based scholarship. It is also wonderful to be back on Rhodes, where we had very successful conference meetings in 2011, 2012 and 2016. The backdrop provided by wonderful Greek islands like Rhodes creates the atmosphere necessary for disseminating knowledge in both plenary and social settings, creating a real community spirit that is at the heart of what this conference is to all its participants past and present. This is a “Greek” conference in that sense, though the community in it is vastly international, both on the organisational and on the participant sides.

ICICTE would not be even remotely feasible without the tireless work of the Conference Director, Nancy Pyrini, who deals not only with the indispensable logistics, but also is the face of the conference to our many delegates. Nancy is both the mind and heart of ICICTE. There would not be this annual get-together of friends without her.

These *Proceedings* are the result of a synergistic process that involves the members of the Scientific Committee, ably led for many years by Dr Greg Anderson, and the editing work of Dr Linda Morris, aided by Dr Costas Tsolakidis of the University of the Aegean. The members of the Scientific Committee two-way blind review papers (though there are times when the review process goes through multiple phases), and Dr Morris scrupulously edits and formats the papers that are then produced by myself to form this assembled volume.

But there are a lot of people involved in the success story that ICICTE has become. As in past many years, this conference has been successfully organised by Southampton Solent University of the United Kingdom, represented by Dr. Chris Barlow, who chairs the Steering Committee. This is done in collaboration with the Justice Institute of British Columbia, Canada, represented by Dr Anderson. We are very happy this year to welcome new co-organisers, the South Aegean Region, Greece. And would like to also thank the Municipality of Rhodes for their wonderful hosting and kindness. We are also aided greatly by Matt Hickling, George Sarrigeorgiou, and Marie Louise Kold, among others.

We sincerely hope you find these *Proceedings* illuminating, and if they are of use to you in ways that make you use what you read here in your own professional capacity, then we have succeeded. Please do contact any of the authors with whose work you find you share an affinity and make sure that you join us in the annual sojourn of creative, innovative scholarship that is ICICTE.