

Preface

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Because students spend approximately 20,000 hours in classrooms by the time that they graduate from university, students' reactions to their teaching-learning experiences are of considerable importance. However, educators often rely exclusively on assessing achievement and pay scant attention to the quality of the learning environment. Teachers should not feel that it is a waste of valuable time to put energy into improving their learning environments because the research convincingly shows that attention to the learning environment is likely to pay off in terms of improving student outcomes (Fraser, 2001).

The field of learning environments has undergone remarkable growth, diversification and internationalisation during the past 30 years. A striking feature of this field is the availability of a variety of economical, valid and widely-applicable questionnaires that have been developed and used for assessing students' perceptions of learning environment. Although earlier work often used questionnaires to assess learning environments, the productive combination of qualitative and quantitative methods is a hallmark of the field today.

Not only has learning environments research expanded remarkably over the past few decades on the international scene, but also Asian researchers have made important and distinct contributions particularly over the previous decade. Asian researchers have cross-validated the main contemporary learning environment questionnaires that originated in the West and have undertaken careful translations and adaptations for use in the Chinese, Korean, Malay and Indonesian languages. Asian studies have replicated Western research in establishing consistent associations between the learning environment and student outcomes, in using learning environment assessments in evaluation education

programs, and in identifying determinants of learning environments. Goh and Khine's (2002) important book provides a unique focus on the distinctive contributions to the field of learning environments made by Asian researchers.

Currently, there is considerable optimism internationally that the integration of information communications technology (ICT) into the learning environment will provide teachers with the means to manage efficiently the diverse educational provisions needed to optimise each individual student's outcomes. In many educational settings, ICT is becoming more commonplace and, in some cases, the integration of ICT into the learning environment is becoming a major thrust. However, it is important that our optimism about the efficacy of technology-rich learning environments is accompanied by systematic research and evaluation.

Fortunately, past research on learning environments provides numerous research traditions, conceptual models and research methods that are relevant to the study of technology-rich learning environments. This book shows how we can draw on the rich resource of diverse, valid, economical and widely-applicable assessment instruments that are available in the field of learning environments as a starting point for developing questionnaires suited to technology-rich learning environments. Also, the book shows how we can draw on past evaluations of educational innovations from the field of learning environments to investigate success in creating effective ICT-rich learning environments. Hopefully this book will encourage and guide important future research into technology-rich learning environments.

References

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