The end of the last millennium was marked by rapid technological advancement and profound changes in many aspects of human activities, often referred to as indicative of the world moving into the knowledge age. Such changes have stimulated much discussion about the role and processes of education as well as the role of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning in the new era. Many policy documents on these themes have been published by international and regional organizations (e.g., the European Commission, 1995; the European Roundtable of Industrialists [ECT], 1997; the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 1999; UNESCO, 2003; the World Bank, 1998) and numerous master-plans on education reform and ICT in education launched by various governments since the mid-1990s. (e.g., Education Network Australia, 2000; the Education and Manpower Bureau of Hong Kong [EMB], 1998, 2004; the Educational Testing Service, 2002; the Finnish Ministry of Education, 1999; the Singapore Ministry of Education, 1997, 2002). Many of these policy initiatives brought with them a variety of strategic implementation priorities that differ from country to country depending on the specific socioeconomic and political contexts involved. Such educational strategies may involve, amongst others, changes in curricular and/or assessment practices at the system level, provision for ICT-infrastructure, teacher professional development, and technical and pedagogical support for teachers.

Given the profound technological, economic, and policy changes that took place over the last decade, are there indications that
pedagogical practices also changed during this period? What impacts, if any, are the pedagogical uses of ICT making in schools around the world? Is there any indication that the education policies and specific strategic implementations have made an impact on pedagogy and on ICT-use in classrooms? These are the questions that this book addresses through an analysis of the findings from SITES 2006, an international comparative study of pedagogy and ICT-use conducted under the auspices of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA).

IEA decided in the late 1990s to conduct the Second Information Technology in Education Study (SITES), which is an international comparative research program exploring the use of ICT in education. SITES consists of several projects or modules. Its central theme is to foster our understanding of how ICT affects the learning and teaching taking place in schools. The study began in 1997 with a survey of the availability of ICT and its integration and use in schools. This study came to be known as SITES Module 1 (abbreviated as SITES-M1). This was followed by SITES Module 2 (abbreviated as SITES-M2), which was a comparative study of case studies of innovative pedagogical practices supported by ICT. SITES 2006—the study reported in this book—is the third module in this program, and its aim is to provide a comprehensive understanding of how teachers teach, both generally and in situations when ICT is used, as well as how school- and system-level factors affect teachers’ pedagogical adoption of ICT.

This chapter summarizes the previous SITES modules and provides a short overview of SITES 2006 and the education systems that participated in the study. It also provides an outline of the rest of this book.

1.1 Previous SITES modules

1.1.1 SITES Module 1

The Second Information Technology in Education Study Module 1 (SITES-M1) was an international comparative study designed to help countries estimate their current positions, relative to other countries, in terms of their use of ICT in education. The study established baselines against which developments could be judged in subsequent years. Moreover, the