A considerable body of recent literature describes the profound changes occurring as societies move from agricultural and industrial economies to a highly interconnected global knowledge economy (see, for example, Dertouzos, 1997; Tapscott & Williams, 2006). In the industrial age, the pace at which new knowledge evolved was relatively slow and a major role of schooling was to ensure that students mastered a well-defined set of knowledge and skills. However, with the advent of the 21st century, people are finding such abilities no longer sufficient when facing the everyday realities of the workplace. These realities demand making rapid decisions based on incomplete information when tackling novel situations, an aptitude for working through a plethora of information of varying levels of accuracy when tackling ill-defined problems, and the capacity to collaborate with a diverse team that may be distributed globally when endeavoring to accomplish personal and organizational goals (Peters, 1997).

Citizens in the 21st century must also be prepared for lifelong learning because learning is no longer confined to the young or to institutional contexts (Young, 1999). Hence, there are strong arguments that the educational outcomes core to wellbeing in the knowledge economy are different from those in the industrial age and should encompass higher-order cognitive, affective, and social skills (Drucker, 1988). Given such a context, it is not surprising that a number of high-profile regional, national, and supra-national projects have been
conducted to develop descriptions and frameworks for 21st-century student success in the knowledge economy. Examples include the European Commission’s proposal for a 21st century e-skills agenda (http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/1286&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en), the enGauge 21st Century Skills project (http://www.ncrel.org/engauge/skills/skill21.htm) of the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, and the Partnership for 21st Century Skills project in the United States (http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/). These projects not only have identified the crucial characteristics desired of learners in the knowledge economy but also emphasized the importance of ICT-skills and information literacy in the context of 21st-century learning outcomes.

A strong theme running through these projects is that curricular and pedagogical changes need to take place if schools are to successfully help students develop these learning outcomes. The role of ICT is envisaged not simply as a technical skill or as a means of improving learning effectiveness but also as a way of transforming the goals and processes of education. In fact, there is increasing evidence that young people who have always been surrounded by and interacted continuously with ICT develop a different approach to learning and knowledge management from students who have not had this opportunity (Pedró, 2006). The OECD is conducting a study on these “new millennium learners” to examine the challenges they pose and the extent to which their emergence will contest prevailing views of interpersonal communications, knowledge management, and learning within schools.

It is within this context of change and desire for change in education that the three SITES projects have been designed and conducted. As Pelgrum and Anderson (1999, p. 3) explain, the SITES program is motivated by the desire to provide empirically based answers to the following questions:

1. To what extent have education systems adopted and implemented objectives that are considered important cornerstones of education in the Information Society?
2. To what extent is ICT facilitating implementation of objectives that schools intend to achieve?
3. What differences in ICT-related practices exist within and between systems and how can these differences be explained?