EDITORIALE

We introduce the fifth issue of Je-LKS (the second of the second year), which includes selected papers presented at the Florence SIe-L Conference (9-11 November 2005).

There are two kinds of journal issue: monothematic (or special) and general.

Unlike the special issues, a general issue does not depend on a predefined structure and topic: it is composed as the various contributions arrive at the editorial board, following the referees' approval.

In spite of this «bottom up» approach, the contributions in this «general» issue are denoted by a kind of latent «logic», to a certain extent reflecting meaningful and typical trends active inside the Italian e-learning community.

I will briefly focus on a number of basic dimensions and questions which the following contributions investigate or try to answer.

First the «Methodologies and scenarios» section:

a) *Cultural dimension*

When we speak about e-learning we should never forget the different meanings of this term within different cultural contexts. In a previous issue (2, 2005) Michael Moore highlighted how a set of western cultural models is normally involved in the «e-learning globalization». Since developing a sensitivity towards cultural differences would seem to be very important it is also necessary to understand how different e-learning communication tools are commonly used in different cultural contexts. Desmond Keegan, invited guest in this number, focuses his contribution on a comparison between different modalities of perceiving and using e-learning technologies in the U.S.A. and Europe.

b) *Technological dimension*

As is well-known, interoperability, with other related topics (e.g. learning object, platform, reusability), has catalyzed the e-learning inquiry during recent years. Are we now going towards a new «need» for interoperability, shifting from a «learning object interoperability» towards a «tools interoperability»? Brodnik et al. speculate about this stimulating question, aiming at relating interoperability to a semiotic framework.

c) *Epistemological dimension*

When we deal with a virtual learning environment we need theoretical references. Which theories can we assume if we have to favour the construction of scientific

knowledge? Answering this question Natale et al. provide a framework based on three theoretical models (called by the authors «convergent», «multi-convergent», and «by propagation»).

Coming to the «Applications» section:

a) *Statistical applications*

Some statistical techniques (methodology and software) look appealing, chiefly if they are able to show how a meaning developed inside a community of learning can be graphically represented (see Giani & Brascio, in Italian) or if they are able to integrate different instruments and methodologies like *Multidimensional Textual Data Analysis* and *Social Network Analysis* (see Giordano & Vitale).

b) *Instructional design*

Instructional design is still important in the e-learning community, both as regards the design of an e-learning course (methodology, process, phases, competencies, time and costs), as well as the choice of methodological models, strategies and kind of interaction.

Two works are selected: the first (Ronsivalle et al., in Italian) exploring the management and the microdesign of storyboarding, the second (Beltrami et al.) analysing the role of feedback in a decisional process inside a scenario-based e-learning model applied to the healthcare sector.

c) *Teacher training*

CRUI (The Conference of the Rectors of the Italian Universities) has recently declared that more than ¾ of the Italian Universities use e-learning technologies, especially in the blended mode. Two meaningful Italian cases about pre- and in-service teacher training, coordinated by universities (Falcinelli & Laici; Russo et al.) are presented here: in both a constructivist approach, with cooperative, web forum-based activities etc. and an Open Source technology, is chosen.

d) *Platform, accessibility and usability*

How can one study usability from the student's point of view? What does a student actually think when he or she is using a technological environment?

Ligorio & Fuiano apply a qualitative methodology (thinking aloud) aiming at understanding the students' position while operating in a technological environment.

e) *Resources and networking*

To conclude, the area of resources, evaluation instruments, repository and networking remains no less important. An interesting European Research producing an instrument for evaluating software is illustrated (Plantamura et al.). The issue ends with a communication about a promising e-learning network for Teacher Training (Elene-TT, Arnold et al.).

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