Editorial Preface

The Evaluation of Learning Situations

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One of the most prominent questions for us, as many other kinds of workers — is to evaluate to what extent we are able to reach our working objectives. As actors of the learning process, whether it is as teachers, trainers, tutors, IT specialists, program managers, training managers, responsible of Institutions, or whatever kind of decision maker, we are more specifically interested in evidencing the value of different learning situations.

Let us first consider what we consider as “learning situations.”

As is now commonly agreed in a great part of the educational community, learning takes place in a network context. The Learning Network (Figure 1) is built not only by the relationship between the actors of the learning process, but also by the relationship of these actors with different classes of actants, such as classical “tools” (books) or multimedia tools (computers, networks, mobile phones, TV, LMSs, LCMSs, CD-ROMS, software applications, hardware specialized devices, etc.), other less material objects as models, frameworks, processes, theories, and the assessment tools for all these actors/actants.

A learning situation can then be considered as an instantiation of the Learning Network within the context of a given set of learning objectives, a given pedagogical scenario, and a given set of learning activities (see Figure 2).

The question of evaluation has to be considered in coherence with this representation (see Figure 3).

The first paper, Evaluating Learning Management Systems: Leveraging Experiences Learned from Interactive Multimedia, by Katia Passerini, presents an approach for evaluating Web-based multimedia learning environments (LMSs or Learning Management Systems) as a full actant of the learning network. The evalu-
Figure 2. A given learning situation

Figure 3. The question of evaluation
ation process takes into account both the built-in (“objective”) qualities of the tools and the interaction process through the learning network. This approach is applied to a given LMS, the Prometheus environment at George Washington University.

The second paper, **E-Learning and New Teaching Scenarios: The Mediation of Technology Between Methodologies and Teaching Objectives**, by Cecilia Mari, Sara Genone, and Luca Mari, evaluates the coherence between the learning objectives, the design methodology, the attitudes of different actors, and the choice of technical tools, within the context of a broad e-learning program at the Cattaneo - LIUC University.

The third paper, **Behaviour Analysis for Web-Mediated Active Learning**, by Claus Pahl, studies the behavior of the different when dealing with an interactive tutorial situation. It analyzes four aspects: motivation, acceptance, organization, and usage, both through surveys and Web mining techniques.

The fourth paper, **Facilitating Students with Special Needs in Mainstream Schools: An Exploratory Study of Assistive Learning Technologies (ALT)**, by Claire Khek, John Lim, and Yingqin Zhong, presents the situation when part of the actors of the learning network — here mainly learners — have special needs due to different disabilities. Better integration of these learners in the general mainstream learning activities has to be thought at the scenario design level. The use of assistive technology is analyzed in coherence with the desire of students to improve their social competency. The paper also stresses the needs for enhanced technologies that could be tuned to better fit the individual needs of these students. ITC, though seemingly various and complex, still do not provide enough specialized devices or applications.

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