The wide use of web-based communication is changing tools and modalities of transmission/acquisition of information and knowledge in the everyday life. Online learning provides an open and flexible environment, without space and time limits contributing to spread knowledge and competencies.

Social Networks are increasingly being used in different professional contexts, formal and informal learning, supporting also the process of lifelong learning. Social Networks can facilitate communication, interaction, sharing and collaborative learning, and they allow synchronous interactions. The learning of the future will be characterized by a growing need among learners to access local contents and services, and to develop both personal and global knowledge in different social contexts and environments. For this reason, the scientific community and companies are very interested in discussing and developing theories, methods, models and tools.

Our purpose, in organising the special issue on Social Learning for Education and Business, was to bring together interdisciplinary researches dealing with the design and analysis of social networks supporting both formal and informal education and business learning related to technological, pedagogical and social implications.

The submitted papers have been selected after an evaluation process that involved at least three reviewers for each paper. Four papers have been accepted for the special issue according to these reviews. These papers address various issues connected with social networks communication platform, social bookmarking pedagogies, cognitive diagnosis and a practical experience on collaborative innovation e-learning.
Online social networking has basically transformed the ways in which people interact with each other and how they experience the world. Many scholars have investigated the emerging trend of using online social network to enhance, or negatively affect, learning outcome. It is very important to study the impact of online social networks for educational purposes and the first paper, titled “Using Social Networks Communication Platform for Promoting Student-Initiated Holistic Development among Students” focuses on the potential of Facebook on enhancing self-initiated and interactive learning in holistic development. It shows that instant interaction between participants and student coaches can lead to information circulation in a much faster and effective manner compared with traditional communication channels such as email or bulletins.

From the use of social networks to Web 2.0 approaches, an active role can be increasingly played by each student as well as teachers; in fact these technologies allow users to become producers of contents for the Internet by enabling them to generate, display and share contents with other users. Some educators have suggested social bookmarking as a method for internet users to store, manage, share and search resources on the web, supporting students’ learning. The second paper of this special issue, titled “Social Bookmarking Pedagogies in Higher Education: A Comparative Study” compares two projects that adopted social bookmarking technology with different aims in different educational contexts. It includes a description of the pedagogic approaches adopted in them, developments in the pedagogy over time and collected data.

Social networks and web 2.0 allow to share and create new contents, but modelling knowledge of courses remains a central topic of e-learning. In Intelligent Tutoring Systems (ITS) cognitive diagnosis is often used to model the student’s knowledge from the evidence provided by student inputs to solve problems. The third paper of this issue, titled “Cognitive Diagnosis of Students’ Test Performance Based on Probability Inference” introduces a model-based cognitive diagnosis. It runs on a model of students’ courses in terms of knowledge items, tests and helps them to understand their faults in cognition, improving the students learning performance in an e-learning environment.

E-learning can also contribute to facilitating and stimulating socio-cultural exchanges and debates in order to improve knowledge, stimulate creativity, introduce and teach methodologies for creativity, design, business and innovation. The focus of the last paper, titled “Design for Business & Business for Design. An E-learning Platform for Collaborative Innovation E-learning”, is on the question of what role design should play in innovation, e-learning and long life learning. The paper provides a practical experience of an e-learning platform; it demonstrates that design is neither a sole interest nor an exclusive prerogative of large companies or those operating in design oriented. Design-driven education and innovation is a basic lever for competitiveness and internationalization that is available in every sector.

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