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Summary

This special issue is devoted to the research project ENTICE and it is edited by Bruno Bonu and Chantal Charnet. ENTICE studies the birth and early evolution of a digital workspace (DW) in higher education seen as a process, including its design, development and implementation, while being able to foresee its uses, both from a pedagogical as well as from an administrative standpoint. The study of this process is just as complex as the process itself, taking place at various levels: informational, educational and administrative. Moreover the DW is targeted at different communities: students, teachers and faculty staff. The research goals pursued by the ENTICE project required a multi-disciplinary and original methodology. An ethnographic perspective was in fact combined with quantitative surveys.

The set of papers included into this special issue aim to provide accounts of this project from different points of view. The paper by Charnet brings perspectives on a methodology developed and used throughout the project, namely a video-based ethnographic study, supported by an analysis of practices and effective uses during public presentations. The paper by Mathieu reports on a close examination of pedagogical practices, exploiting newsgroups as a central element of the Digital Workspace. The remaining papers address issues related to the evaluation of the Digital Workspace. Innovative processes are actually subsumed to the stabilization of the opinions of all categories of users and to the adoption of innovation in the daily uses of potential users. This original point of view on innovation processes is addressed in two different manners. Monino, Melançon and Popova emphasize a statistical perspective and identify relevant dimensions linking a satisfaction index with the evaluated object (Workspace Uses). Bonu focuses more on the elaboration of the opinion of actors on the innovation process. Both articles thus contribute to a better understanding of how opinions form about technologies, adoption of new instruments and the stabilization of new professional, pedagogical or learning uses.

The research conducted in the context of ENTICE, characterized by its original ethnographic and multi-disciplinary methodology allowed us to clearly identify specific dimensions of innovation processes engaged in different phases, from decision taking to design and pioneer uses. Our results open perspectives on fundamental and applied research concerned with the development and implementation of Digital Workspaces. Through its scientific and multi-disciplinary point of view, this special issue contributes ideas on the intimate relationship between technology and teaching in universities.