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Special issue
Collaborative Face-to-Face
and Computer Supported
Problem Solving in Classroom

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Summary

This special issue of *Qwerty* presents some educational experiences involving a new software CoFFEE (Collaborative Face-to-Face Educational Environment) and a new approach to collaborative problem solving in education. The four articles and the editorial of the issue provide several experiences and reflections, both theoretical and methodological, that emerged during years of experimentation with CoFFEE.

The editorial is written in the form of a dialogue between a psychologist and a computer scientist in an attempt to represent through the text the very dialogical and collaborative nature of working with CoFFEE. It also reflects the thinking that developed over several years of design and experimentation aimed at drawing new ideas and teaching practices.

In the first paper, "Guidelines for a computer-mediated discussion in the classroom" by the project LEAD authors, van Diggelen and Overdijk, the theoretical framework of the CoFFEE project that blends the design of tools and the pedagogical goals to

obtain actual improvements in classroom collaboration is discussed.

The article "Software appropriation: A teacher one year after" by Ligorio, Dell'Olio and Ritella describes the development of teacher competence in using CoFFEE, underlying how the process of appropriation of a powerful software like CoFFEE is an important resource for teaching.

In "A Framework to support web-based inquiry-learning activities with WebQuests" by Malandrino, Manno and Palmieri, the versatility of CoFFEE is discussed. The software is fully featured to support an inquiry-learning activity, the WebQuest. Even if it was not designed for this purpose, CoFFEE can support this activity from design to assessment.

Finally, Fornarelli and Ligorio's article "Gender and computer: Effects of the context in a computer-supported classroom activity" develops the idea of gender differences, using CoFFEE as a research tool. By analyzing the software logs, it describes how the virtual space of interaction can be used to study the group dynamics with respect to gender.