

THE LOGIC OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND E-LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

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Abstract: *In our article, we present some aspects of e-learning environments and networks evolution within the logic of social development, through the formalization of collected data from field research and through the participation modeling, in several counties in Romania, and also the results of a socio-cultural project developed in Ialomita county, ESD - KRAFTEDUCOM - Council of Europe. The concept of e-learning environment acquires additional connotations, resulting from the combination of electronic knowledge and network area defined in the social development, common to all types of learning. By using and exploring the different learning situations, personal, organized, social, informal, on the territorial network, the system provides thus the information technology and instrument status, but also the learning environment, with relevant attributes of a shared oral culture in learning communities or local communities.*

Keywords: *logic of social development, preconditions and variables, formalization, modeling participation, e-learning environments, network, learning tools.*

1. The logic of local development

At the end and the beginning of the third millennium, paradoxically, there were two schools of thought circulated with the development of universal virtues, one relating to the industrial revolution and the other from the Soviet model. They have in common the thinking related to the mechanistic linear and history repeating development, reducing entirely the history process to a sociological mechanics, pretending the universal law's choice mechanics. The logic however is beyond the mechanics historic: the *imitative patterns* that perpetuate the two universal paradigms would be translated in practice by acute and obvious failures. Even the concept of *third world* is becoming obsolete after 1955 and played in two aspects: in terms of international policy - non-aligned world, viewed from

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the perspective of globalization; in terms of ideology - the world in search of *third way* - hybrid between capitalism and socialism. Both issues are ambiguous, but gain relevance, since excessively treated at one pole or the other, circumscribe a social reality and the development can achieve a more realistic feature of continuity.

In this context, the social sciences, more than two decades trying to overcome three limitations:

- The tendency to see Europe as a reference only and, as such, to provide absolute values of certain historical experiences lived in this area. *The historic necessity of broadening the plan of action in time and space is taken up in the Lisbon and post Lisbon European Council documents, the strategic goals of Europe are foreshadowed.*

- The narrow approach to development, first, strictly in terms of economic growth, in which then the social and cultural development widens, with the outlet concepts of lifestyle and quality of life or even a very specific concept of civilization project. *The idea of synchronizing the elements of development is necessary, we believe, to be better dashed.*

- The existence of barriers between traditional "fiefs" of disciplines: the *interdisciplinarity* is therefore required by social practice, although it raised more than practiced in academic and school fields.

As far as the development is approached from a historical perspective (long-term design), it can clarify the orientation and rules of social action related to the implicit theory and projects - not in terms of imitative models. Undoubtedly, the development theory has heuristic virtues, and, currently, it needs to answer to two types of challenges: how to detect the good social practice in lived experience, without entering in a descriptive empirical area; and how to approach the breakdown totality, understood in terms of variety and diversity without being confronted with a particular grid unidisciplinarity, for example, only the virtual community - which would lead to the juxtaposition of processes and phenomena. At the same time, the short-term design with concrete results expected for the good social practices can be beneficial, as a contribution to the development theory, issued from the mechanistic paradigms, outlined above, and social fragmentation. This approach of good social practice allows: detecting the particularism of project experience ("good practice"); avoiding the empirical descriptivism; avoiding the segmentation of movement in the social development process.

2. Preconditions and variables in the logic of social development

The, which includes the e-learning environments and networks, meets the amount of local social development project preconditions and variables. The preconditions usually known are: the relevance of good results; the record of network for dissemination and sharing experience; delivering results with minimum investment and maximum operating variables of the project. The variables are related to the historical reality of social evolution, to the social process at national, European and global levels, and to the local reality too.

Our article aims at formalizing some aspects of regional research results and highlight some aspects of modeling participation in regional research results on e-environments, in Bihor, Prahova and Ialomita counties, as well as the sociocultural findings of a pilot project, funded by the Council of Europe, developed in Ialomita county, ESD - KRAFTEDUCOM - *L'École apprend des traditions manufacturières des communautés locales*, on http://www.geocities.com/edd_krafteducom_ro/. The data have a **demonstrated potential** and are important for future quantitative and qualitative education studies at national and international level, as well as for various public services. These data were processed in software Naiads © Joint Research Centre, European Commission.

The amount of preconditions and variables identified by us in the logic of social development and its correlations in e-learning environments and networks are:

Contextual variables: centralization / decentralization bet of the school; ICT infrastructure renewal and ownership; school organizational culture; professional and personal decisions for continuing education; experience of using ICT; e-resource exploitation in a variety of practical contexts; identifying the resources used by and for students; pertinence of the land study; relevance of completion tools and electronic learning environment; the degree of emulation in the use of electronic tools and learning environment, etc.

System parameters: awareness / vs. depth, interactive, direct and electronic training; limited and / or casual training / vs. extensive and regular training; formal formative contents / introduction of personal decision support; resources for practitioners / media resources for students.

Socio-professionnal variables: performance levels for integrating ICT in learning content and teaching approaches in order to improve, extend and enrich the work of a virtual community of learning (i.e. moodle);

adjacent awareness of resources for practitioners - the use of research and development of the practices based on training resources; the relevance of research / content integration of ICT in various learning activities and teaching design; use of the research and development of evidences based on practices; the relationship between skills of directly training, face to face training and teaching by using ICT to design the complementary training by introducing ICT content.

Jams and limits of the carried out field study: no previous database of the carried out field studies; the difficulty of collecting field data, caused by a lack of previous thematic awareness; greater dispersion of responses and operationalization efforts planned for the units; lack of performative ICT and software processing.

Barriers to using ICT for teaching purposes: (1) **psychological:** fear or inconvenience of many teachers facing ICT and lack of ICT skills training to integrate ICT into teaching plan; organizational culture which is part the teacher does not encourage the use of ICT; (2) **material,** such as: lack of ICT equipment available to teachers, reported the school groups and subjects of education; lack of programs and software in schools; poor funding for the basic training to integrate ICT at the national and regional level. Lack of availability of ICT, coupled with focused distribution of school time leads to poor use and integration of ICT in teaching content, even if teachers have a minimum of training in the field; the surface integration of ICT in teaching approaches.

The formalization approach took into account the independent, dependent and semidependente variables such as:

Parameters of personal development: degree of the awareness and generating the self-reflection process; use of European documents for the key competences areas; integration of the experience and innovation education, awareness of the barriers, weaknesses in the design and teaching approach; identifying the opportunities of the validation of knowledge sources for their own learning through the complex and additional process of formal, non formal and informal education; structuration of the added value into a relevant in-pup and the participants' involvement in participation, in the action and in teaching decision.

The data collected are on **similarities and differences between groups of practitioners.** The differences are co-determined by: the degree of ICT teacher empowerment; material support for the school infrastructure and / or local community providing; the e-learning services

are differently perceived by young people or adults. To these, we add other comments: there are two separate systems for addressing ICT - one professional and one private, where there is the mark the self-training; ICT services are not provided in all schools and, especially, does not work in the disciplines of education; ICT services are not aimed at the students through teachers, but concerns an *invisible public*, largely undifferentiated and unknown.

A future societal ICT project is recommended to be focused on the intergenerational culture, given the effects of social fragmentarism generated by the ICT access and content. The differences are coming from: the investment in training facilities; the available technical equipment; the development of professional groups working with them.

Necessity of the itinerant training

The itinerant training is pivotal in creating another learning environment, in our case, e-teaching and social environment. The *itinerant training* concept is complex, covering the *provision of training* for a group interested, from different areas, on the one hand; on the other hand, it refers to *training in new teaching designed situations* ("in service training") (*Dictionnaire actuel de l'éducation*, 1993). The itinerant training can be achieved by integrating ICT in moodle content, by short stages, then, by creating, in parallel, the validation environment through the identification, navigation, exploration, dialogue, translation, editing, etc.. In our case, the use of instruments and creating the electronic environment are in: information management (information management platform); electronic environment for learning and assessment (performance platform); electronic environment for social learning (monitoring and modeling through the site); electronic environment for tutorial training (moodle).

3. E-learning environments in teaching

E-information management environment

The ICT is used in information management in the triple congruence: electronic support, data processing and centralization. The data are aggregated in a predetermined array of functional items, which, in turn, a platform for information management in a given field. The information management platform includes: input / output reports on /for users; accessible electronic questionnaires; statistical processing methods; various forms of assessment, including intergroup; the ability to perform the portfolio evaluation, etc..

Environment ICT training tutorial

The tutorial training platform which includes a home page divided into sections of the course. The platform is how to enroll pupils / students and includes them in one or more groups in a course. It also has a window which provides non-stop interaction with the learning group, on the one hand; on the other hand, it has many opportunities for dialogue teacher / student, student / students and other facilities which remain areas to be explored, both for teachers and students. Each course is created by adding resources and activities, with formatting options, including using HTML in moodle.

The e-teaching environment

The event stages for ICT integration in teaching that we aimed are equivalent to those of the common subjects of learning methodology: (1) capture attention; (2) inform users regarding the objectives; (3) strengthening the knowledge of priority; (4) the progress of content; (5) the monitoring progress of learning; (6) users demonstrate a new understanding; (7) the progress of feed-back; (8) the assessing performance; (9) the progress of retention and transfer (after Bradley et alii.1997 G.; Kathleen M. Iverson, 2005). In our records of observations, mainly, we identified a bipolar mechanical integration of ICT in teaching: generating (α) and negative (β) trends. This allows us to add some suggestions to optimize the teaching process.

(1) **The capture attention** is to create a narrative, uncertainties or surprises in the development of alternative and varied activities. The possibilities are multiple: to send for learning; to open with "over-anchored scenario"; to add the started audio clip; to use an educational factor; to use the novelty (or *to break the ice*), etc.. The phenomenon of e-environment can be influenced by the teacher in communicative-affective approaches, playful support, rational approaches, generative, self-ICT etc. The most common solutions chosen by teachers are affective-communicative and self-referential ICT approaches.

(2) **The informing users on the objectives** are to describe the performance criteria and the involving users in the development of activity purpose. The teacher's connexe actions may be: to include the objectives in the time course; to use the learning contracts; to create a forum of interest to the classroom; to include headings or project drafts, etc.. The integrating ICT at the awareness level of the teaching process occurs with the script or oral elements. A negative trend β in this segment

is the impersonal teacher position; an existing generating trend α aims at the co-informing and involving student and increases the motivation and awareness of personal development. During the events of the teaching classroom, there is a risk of loss of personality and teacher authority if the integration of ICT in learning is achieved without a consistent organizational and teaching support.

(3) The stimulating knowledge reference to priority can be achieved by identifying the potential of users and the sharing of experience and priority learning. Are integrated, in content, the specific elements, such as: type of forum *What I know that I am sure of...*; virtual interview; map of current knowledge reminder; initial pre-test etc.. In the teaching process, it is required that the teacher adapt its approaches to the specific context of learning to the student experience, according to the human and material resources. The integrating ICT at the stimulation level of relevant knowledge is done through the written communication or suggestive elements, with a propensity β to resort to the means without incentive for group. The generating approaches α , involving a greater motivation, are related to the degree of adaptation of the teacher's own resources and contextual resources, used interchangeably with electronic ones.

(4) The courses content evolves by the dynamic ICT integrating and in alternativity to the certain contents based on the traditional teaching ones, such as: the knowledge base (the essence), web resources, text / image / sound support, Power Point cards, etc.. The class phenomenon requires **interaction and alternativity of learning resources**. The integration of ICT for learning progress is made mainly based on textual resources, compounded and comprehensive, focusing on Power Point cards, which do not involve interaction. The generating approaches α , involving a greater motivation, are related to the operation of other (e-) learning resources. The negative trends β are related to the non alternative exploration of other electronic and traditional ways of interaction, where, for example, the total contexts as a virtual platform, or a lesson in life context / in a museum might offer more possibilities.

(5) The monitoring progress of learning is accomplished through: forms of address, forum FAQ, reminder charts, graphs, ancillary training, similar learning activities, etc.. In the event of teaching classroom, it is necessary to use alternative approaches: communication exercise, frontal and in group, and independent ICT activities or groups. The integrating ICT for monitoring learning progress, is mainly done through the ancillary engines. The generating trends α , involving a greater motivation, are

related to (self) assessment of autonomous activity. The negative trends β are related to other non explored opportunities to memorize, practice, create.

(6) **The users demonstrate a new understanding** by chosen performance by the perceived overall of the learning scenario, review the content, creating added value. In the events in the classroom, it is required that the teacher determines appropriate methods and strategies, creative expression of understanding. The integrating ICT at the performance and a new understanding level is mainly achieved through **the assertion in the group**, which leaves or not opportunity to express the added values of learning and creativity. The generative trends α , which usually are repetitive and static, still do not leave enough space to the creativity. The negative trends β are related to the non exploration of other alternative opportunities of understanding.

(7) **The e-environment records the feed-back progress** who is versatile, at several levels: the trainer's feedback, similar reviewing, self-reviewing, external review, review the network, etc.. The classroom phenomenon requires the teacher synchronization control to the student autonomy. The integrating ICT at the feed-back progress level is mainly achieved on the teacher's authoritarian control. The negative trends β are related to the non exploration of other possibilities to have feedback. The generating approaches α , involving a greater motivation, are related to feed-back control from the teacher.

(8) **The performance assessment:** determining that the user has achieved the objectives through multiple statements assessment based on print, thematic evaluation, the section *The user portfolio*, etc.. The event requires the **teaching portfolio assessment**. The e-portfolios or teaching folders can be posted on the moodle, being an efficient support for users who autoformează. The integrating ICT in the performance evaluation is mainly carried out at the trainer level, trough the listing - the transfer to the traditional assessment practice. The negative trends β are related to the non exploration of other possibilities for evaluating, while the generative steps α are different from one group to another - the technical portfolio assessment is not yet well assumed.

(9) **The progress of retention and transfer** is to facilitate the retention of users and application of new knowledge. The e-content practice, reviewing and checking e-mail are the most used in the teaching practice. The learning events require the creation of learning discovery situations that generate the interest for problem-solving and explore the alternative

sources of information and documentation. The integrating ICT in the retention and transfer progress is achieved, in all cases, by means of e-learning return, but with added value, procedure based on spiral. The negative trends β are linked, sequentially, to the non exploration of personal opportunities to have a new knowledge and are based on execution and return mechanisms. The generative approaches α are grouped in two different situations: the review and verification by e-mail, but it is not a practice to introduce the added values.

The home use of ICT in teaching approach is to support individual users which we consider to be able to assume its self-study by selecting the educational information and online teaching advice, accessible and impersonal, taken from a menu provided by tutor coordinators. The practitioner skills are required to be for **the creation and management of learning resources**, that are easy to use, more explorative than the negotiation of individual needs in the direct formation of an internship, as well as to connect to a professional virtual community. The prevailing influence conditions on the necessary skills related to training practitioners are the teaching and / or tutorials. Then, the skills involved in the development and use of e-learning platforms become important and complementary to those of direct implication in the process of training.

4. The amount of ICT awareness / training

The web resources for teachers are not the only a way for the use of ICT in education. We can associate the use of videoconferencing and other communication networks for the dissemination of good practice anywhere, outside the country of origin, wherever in the world, or the sites that promote the use of research and development of "evidence-based practices" by teachers around the world. These ones are intended for practitioners and researchers working in the formalization of empirical data, and experts to substantiate the decision. This theme, from our point of view is **recurrent**. Given that the portfolio of good practice run, especially, as artifact, and is considered useful in the world of practitioners, we can quantify the web resources, but even more useful are those in virtual learning communities.

Also, the e-mail is a recent dialogue location among the service locations for individuals and it serves as a tutorial part of project management systems. The e-mail is accessed, usually, on public web sites, although it can exist independently of the web. The moodle is an opportunity to create **the professional multipolar dialogue in the**

allocated community. The e-mail functions are to provide answers to questions by e-mail or by telephone; the e-mail of moodle offers direct answers through the forum, it has interactive and timely; it can be complementary by written mail of the mobile phone.

5. E-social learning environment

Formalizing the pilot experience ESD - KRAFTEDUCOM (*L'école apprend des traditions manufacturières des communautés locales, Direction de la Culture et du Patrimoine Culturel et Naturel, Conseil de l'Europe*), http://www.geocities.com/edd_krafteducom_ro/) led us to several conclusions:

E-social learning environment is based on the fusion of the two **modes of communication, face to face, by e-mail and web-site.**

Initially, the project has an *external dimension*: imitation mechanism - similar behaviors, addictive behaviors; imitation mediated processes - behavior shown by model. **The mediated and final phase** is *the symbolic meaning negotiation and extension* involving the interaction of two constituents of the process: **participation and reification** (Wenger Etienne, 1997).

The project becomes **a practical way, unique and common, in their way.** The e-social learning environment is based on *learning by doing*, learning by imitation or offered models. The real situations of social learning are complementary to ICT tools used in an early stage; the correspondence by e-mail, fax or telephone, letter methodical, in the middle and final stage, is projective and power transformer. The meaning of the theme is located in the process: negotiation of meaning is achieved in the project. The dramatic human experience demonstrates the relevance of meaning. The non-formal project, for example, structures experiences, provides a common and community sense, needs of communication support, direct and online.

The essential aspects of modeling, in operational side, are the **participation and reification.** The participation is to live in the world, to be membership, belonging to a community, to act, to to interact, reciprocity. The reification involves forms, points of focus, documents, tools, design, records, continuity. These two components are a fundamental duality to the human experience of meanings and nature of the practice. The specific aspects of participation and reification: school museums network for local memory; re-identify the old local crafts; taking them to school through the school curriculum or extracurricular activities,

by community; participation and involvement of transfer of knowledge from older to children (customs, traditions, crafts, rules and ethical conducts), from children to elderly (e.g. ICT); influence upon the decision-makers; dissemination in media, etc..

Value added of education for sustainable development:

- Construction of a European network of operators from different countries on education for sustainable development (ESD);

- Production of http://www.geocities.com/edd_krafteducom_ro/ web site for local and European operators, introduced in education for sustainable development under *Agenda 21*, the intersecting fields of environmental, cultural and economic education.

- Adopt a strategy of social and community setting working methods which focuses on assessing the *local effects*;

- Adoption of such contents in the education pro-patrimony, which facilitates the building of an European identity through the local identity based on components of sustainable environment - as natural, social and cultural and heritage environment - in the countries of Europe, such as the education for the multipolar environment, as shown in web site design ESD - KRAFTEDUCOM. This was done in 12 localities in Ialomita country, seven in rural areas and five in urban areas: *Albesti, Amara, Dridu, Fetesti, Giurgeni, Jilavele, Mărculești, Munteni Buzau, Ograda, Slobozia, Tandarei, Urziceni*. Beneficiaries in this project, there are over 10,000 people, young and adult persons, socioeconomic integrated or with difficulties;

- Relations between the effects of educational and social effects on social, cultural and environmental heritage led to a specific products - local brand (cultural and touristic, culinary, manufacturing, ethnographic, heritage and religious, resources and initiative, local memory, etc.);

- Synchronous involvement of decision makers, the prefecture, cultural and scientific institutions in the the school programmes;

- Thus, the ICT infrastructure, within the project facilitates **awareness, awareness building, and training support in school and local community**;

- The project has attached steps of entrepreneurship education, *a business plan*, a network of museums of local memory school, *virtual fair* of local specific objects, manufactured in schools or local communities);

- Education for alternativity is incorporated into another sustainable dimension at all levels of the project is derived from the individual and culture change in local.

- Trans-border dimension: direct and virtual participation of Romanians in Moldova, Serbia and Bulgaria.

- The success of this project was based on partnership, on the detection of proximity and specificity, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, on a good connection between participation and reification.

The social practice is a source of coherence in relation to the community through three dimensions: mutual engagement, partnership, it is not only network or team; a community project – the proximity generates partnership: hence the importance of neighborhood culture; a shared repertoire, re-identification from the perspectives of ESD: confers specificity (brand).

The identified real social semiosis are:

- Meanings community development directions (*where and with whom we go?*)
- Cumulative daily practices (*how we live and what?*);
- Community development in different connections (*we develop and grow, but who knows about us? with whom we cooperate?*)
- Identity and self-management (*we are what we are, we want more and we want to give a sense of participation in humanity*).

Aspects of social learning theory:

- The crucial aspect of learning is that we define ourselves in the project by our *being sociocultural status* - this premise is to develop the project more easily and more widely;
- On the basis of any shares, is underlying *information* (direct or, in our case, virtual), often re-shaping the information which modeling becomes (i.e. letters methodical project);
- *Pro-attitude is formed from gathered information and modeling* (seminar, meeting, e-mail, website, etc..) and it does not happen simply, but by decision.

We believe that there are several priority directions of rethinking social learning, in terms of direct and virtual resources:

- For individuals: a resource for employment and to contribute to their community practices;
- For communities: a resource for refining their practice and to ensure a new generation of members;

- For organizations: a resource for sustaining the interconnected communities to practice.

The expected behavior is achieved (1) **directly, by implication**, (2) are **transferred as self-representation** (potentially, a very large social motivation) and (3) representations identified by us in **new areas of communication** (interviews, seminars, debates) via e-mail and recalled the web.

The social learning is achieved through modeling the site and e-mail. The **modeling** is representation method and process of the actual or potential situation that facilitates better understanding of the nature and evolution process of representation, in particular conditions (*Dictionnaire actuel de l'éducation*, 1993). From the standpoint of our research, the modeling is done by e-mail and website, is the building work of successive models of an existing system description of information (analysis), development of a new information system (concept) related to the education for sustainable development.

Theoretical perspectives to be explored:

- The theory of social structure: the community and the distribution of power;
- The practice theories of meaning;
- The theory of identity - of subjectivity;
- The experience theory rooted in the community.

6. ICT evidences and perspectives

The training is closely related to the demand and supply of educational software. Retrospectively, we can say that there are advantages if we use **the ethics of investigation and guidance practitioners to explore the hypothesis formulated on the integration of ICT in educational content.** After the initial unstructured interviews with decision makers, with experts and practitioners, it outlines the idea that teachers have **undoubtedly need a basic ICT training.**

ICT Transcendence

- The Romanian society is directly connected with the phenomenon of information explosion and the development of communications through the historical assumptions; The individual is conditioned by the

phenomenon of explosion related information and communications development;

- Using the same instrumental language, hardware and software, the e-environment induces and creates the idea of new humanity in the information network that the individual can customize as a professional;
- The potential benefits of technology for teachers are clear, but the ICT transcends geographic coordinates, has the ability to organize virtual communities, and actual, directly for the professional profile.

But the main divisions remain at professional use of ICT for the development of teaching / learning / assessment practices.

We believe that *the setting preconditions and variables* for social projects of local development gives an evolutionary perspective, with a practical and pragmatic basis. A pre-defined amount of preconditions and variables lead also to better focus the project activity, human and material resources. The local programs relating to the development can not capture the social aspects of continuity, but have a high heuristic potential. A wide open space remains for local, national or regional initiatives. The public action gets results by overlap in space of competences exercised at different levels through which different systems check their convergence. The two systems, EU and national skills design have in common, in terms of distribution, the clarity of responsibilities that is the theoretical condition of the citizens sanction by voting. Although folds realities increasingly harder theoretical edifices, it is still necessary given the acceptance of this fundamental that is the management complexity of the modern world is made of a combination of *environments* and *networks*, where none is closed. On the other hand, in the perceptual practical plan is blamed bureaucracy, lack of practical procedures and not consistent enough, and failure of collective projects.

The teaching and social project determinates a practical partnership and creates a continuous learning of relevance and research of sense: the action is no longer measured by reference to external forms, but *the manner in which it was defined and locally staged in terms of double reference*: linked to the pursued aims (which some are made by regional or national courts) and specific realities for each context. It is not the superior knowledge that transcends the local and which immanent science and legitimacy would allow definition in the abstract of the obligations of results. *These obligations of results are built in light of experience, by sharing local experiences.*

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