

## NETWORKED LEARNING: AN OBJECTIVE OF CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

Veronica Oboroceanu

Lecturer, PhD, "Ion Creangă" State Pedagogical University of Chişinău

*Abstract: The article reflects the importance of networked learning from the point of view of using ICT in education as an objective of contemporary education. It briefly describes and analyzes some electronic educational resources used by students for knowledge construction.*

*Keywords: learning, networked learning, contemporary education.*

Learning is the process that causes a selective, permanent change in knowledge and behaviour. It is one of the most important processes that mankind has as it trains the whole personality. Learning involves the interaction of cognitive and non-cognitive factors. This denotes an assiduous way in which knowledge, skills, and values are passed on from one generation to the next through magazines, books, talks, teaching activities, oral and written messages, and in recent years through the Internet using the new technologies.

Nowadays, networked learning is a process of developing and maintaining connections with people and information, and communicating in such a way to support one another's learning. It takes a relational stance in which learning takes place both in relation to others and in relation to learning resources [1].

Networked learning can offer educational institutions more functional efficiency, it can reduce costs to employers and taxpayers. It is a commitment to student and community-centered learning focusing on cooperation, connections, and ICT-mediated interactions. Therefore, it does not only represent collaboration with others, but it is also an essential factor in the development of the various learning communities. It also stimulates the emergence of larger and smaller collectives, depending on the potential of the learners, communicating with colleagues, teachers/tutors, and the usage of different learning resources [2, p. 432].

At the European level, the promotion and inclusion of ICT for learning is a transversal program aimed at effectively integrating ICT into contemporary education that goes beyond simply replacing, streamlining or accelerating current practices. It also provides effective ways of operating, supporting pedagogical and organizational innovation [4].

By exploring and analyzing the technological system of networked learning, based on the learners' individual differences in a contemporary society, we propose some free educational platforms that facilitate knowledge construction and the achievement of didactic tasks.

**Khan Academy** is an educational platform created in 2006 by the American professor Salman Khan who graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard Business School. The Academy offers a wide range of lectures on YouTube and provides access to a large collection of math, history, health and

medicine, finance, physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy, organic chemistry, art history, macro-and microeconomics, and computer science courses. The entire learning process is interactive and involves game activities [14].

**TED Talks.** The well-known TED conferences, is an electronic platform, with the mission of freely distributing unique ideas - " ideas worth spreading." A wide range of videos, speeches and scientific conferences are presented. It allows the student to listen to the content at any time: during breaks or free time. Many well-known scholars teach specific subjects from climate change to social issues. Also included are science, art, politics, culture, business, technology, global issues that are of interest to contemporary education [17].

**The Study Portal** includes free courses that facilitate learning for graduation exams. Video lessons are available for each class level and learner type. Teachers can assign lessons based on individual educational requirements aiming at improving the test scores [8].

Another learning platform, **Coursera**, is a project in the field of mass-media education working with universities and colleges around the world to provide education to the general public at the highest level. All online courses are free of charge, they are absolutely complete and at the end of the course, an electronic Course Certificate is issued. The subjects are diverse: physics, engineering, humanities and arts, medicine, biology, mathematics, computer science, economics and business [11].

**Documentary Heaven.** It is a documentary site that provides thousands of free online documentaries covering various topics such as art and artists, education, conspiracy, business, environment, health, lifestyle, nature, etc. Its main purpose is to educate through entertainment [3].

The most accessed learning web page is **Wikipedia**. It is a rich source of information, containing millions of pages in over 280 languages. It allows readers to edit and add valuable content [20].

**Stack Exchange.** This is a networked learning platform created in 2000 and is dedicated to questions and answers from different domains (similar to Yahoo). Users can vote on both answers and questions, and through this process, users collect reputation points on a particular subject. By collecting reputation points, users receive privileges, ranging from the ability to vote and comment on questions and answers to the ability to moderate many aspects of the site. Topics range from math to English and specific programming programs such as Ubuntu [7].

**Wolfram Alpha.** This is a computational knowledge engine developed by Wolfram Research in 2009. It represents a vast collection of built-in data and computational algorithms that impact on the questions and answers It calculates the answer based on its own built-in data, which contains data on mathematics, physics, astronomy, chemistry, biology, medicine, history, geography, politics, music, cinema, as well as information about famous people and Internet websites. It contains questions about comparison units, linguistics, or trading topics, such as MSFT, AAPL or GOOG [21].

**Udacity.** In a contemporary society, computer literacy is a must-have skill, but educational institutions do not manage to fully satisfy the exploding demand for computer science education. Therefore, the Udacity site appeared in 2011 as a result of the expansion of the computer science program at Stanford University (USA). This network has provided more than 20 free learning courses in programming and beyond. Upon completion of the course, students receive a certificate signed by teachers [19].

**MIT Open CourseWare.** Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) created the project which involves publishing all of the educational materials on the Internet, both at bachelor and master level (most of them being free). This platform, therefore, enriches the volume of knowledge, facilitates the learning process, and also allows for a higher level of free education within this prestigious institution [6].

**Open Yale Courses** is an educational platform that provides open courses with a unique offer. The Yale University shares on this educational platform its videos and course materials from its undergraduate courses. This University is part of the Ivy League, which is a community of the most prestigious universities in the United States and offers free introductory courses for the general public [5].

**Codecademy** is an online interactive platform that offers free courses in Python, Ruby, and JavaScript, as well as other programming languages, such as HTML and CSS. It is based on video games enabling users to achieve higher levels of learning [10].

**Think Tutorial.** The platform offers many video lessons and manuals covering various aspects of popular computing. This site contains frequently asked questions and problems that are likely to be encountered during different programming sessions [18].

**Duolingo** is a free language learning platform that also includes a free language proficiency assessment test. The learning is based on the principle of interactivity, the transition from one level to another, awards and badges. For each language, there are at least 25 levels [12].

**Memrise** is a unique online platform and a tool that helps the learners develop their short and long-term memory. The site offers innovative and interactive techniques that help learners learn new vocabulary. It specializes mainly in language learning, but also offers content on a wide range of other subjects. The learning process is based on three main principles: science, fun, and community [15].

**iTunes U** courses is a learning platform that includes a wide range of podcasts from various seminars and courses at universities around the world. It covers various disciplines. Its free educational content can be downloaded directly to a computer, iPad, iPod, or iPhone, so that the learners can access the content anytime, anywhere; therefore, guaranteeing access to quality education [9].

**EDX** is a global online learning project developed by world educational leaders from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard University (USA). The platform offers university courses around the world, free of charge. Many other

universities are connected to the project and participate actively to give everyone the opportunity to get high-quality education [13].

**Mocha live** is an online language learning community with over 12 million members from 196 countries around the globe. It provides teaching and learning materials in 38 different languages. It has a platform for speakers to interact with and help each other learn new languages. The foreign language courses are based on interactive activities and contextual lessons and help learners fine-tune their pronunciation. The courses can be accessed on any device [16].

**FutureLearn** is an educational platform that offers a diverse selection of courses from leading universities and cultural institutions from around the world. These are delivered one step at a time and are accessible on mobile, tablet and desktop. The courses offer users the opportunity to discuss what they are learning with others as they go, helping them make fresh discoveries and form new ideas. The platform has hundreds of partners from around the world. These include many of the best UK and international universities, as well as institutions with a huge archive of cultural and educational material, such as the British Council, the British Library, the British Museum, and the National Film and Television School [22].

Beyond technology, changes that influence contemporary education come from several interconnected sources: from globalization to internationalization; from the popularization of higher education to the population growth; as well as the technological change and the opportunities it generates.

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