

# I (ego) and e-Identity( e-Id) a new way to understand the human being and the consequences on education and teacher training<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Understanding what shapes the identity of a person in general and children in particular require to redefine the term of I. The term "I" has to be expanded in order to include the Virtual "I". The Virtual "I", that can be defined as e-Id, is an integral part of any person who is exposed to mobile phone, computer, TV, etc.

Since traditionally we speak about the I (ego), we also need to take into account the aspects of the e-Identity (e-Id) connected to it. Indeed, the e-Id shapes and influences the "Normal" I in various ways.

We can define the e-Id as made from a conscious and unconscious part as well as the technological part (instrument) and the mobility part:

The conscious e-Id is the way we choose to build our profile on the Internet, the email address, the home page, the profiles that we created in Social Networks such as Facebook, Second Life etc.

The second part is the unconscious part that is created by others: entities such as governments or businesses that shape and define the citizens as well as the consumers. Regarding the technological part, when looking into the technology that surrounds us today the mobile phone pop out as the one that is leading the evolution of the e-Id. The cell phone become almost an integral part of youth in the developed world. The last part deals with mobility and especially the mobile phone that becomes an integral part of the youth.

We've put those ideas into practice by developing the concept of e-dialog. We tackle the sensitive and mostly untouchable issue of the Holocaust between German and Israeli youth. The e-dialog opens the youth to talk openly and frankly about the Holocaust, how where the grandparents involved and impact by the WWII. It was easier for them to share and discuss those dark times first via the e-dialog and then face to face.

The e-dialogue was developed in order to fill a void in today's education systems and is designed to integrate and develop the I& e-Id take. The first step of the e-dialog requires the student to present himself and his community. "Hot" or sensitive subjects, like the Holocaust for Israeli and Germans, will open the student to question about his roots, exploring his society through a lively dialogue with the other side. In the program "Michael's dialogue" between German and Israeli youth our chosen subject was the Holocaust. The leading question was "how will the memory of the Holocaust look like in twenty years?" This led the participants to check their own family biography and share it online.

The subject that seems as an untouched one among the German family became an open debate that drew the parents of both sides to become part of the e-dialogue. That was an e-inclusion between generation and communities with a past with deep wounds.

Education is a field of major interest for the new mobile Internet applications as well as a powerful mean for e-inclusion. Sustainable e-School is a project based on understanding the relationship of the "I&eID" and the impact on the youth and society. This led us to emphasize on interdisciplinary learning and multicultural dialogue. It combines English as a foreign language, computer literacy and a chosen subject as a backbone for the program. A dialogue can be established between communities with shared interest. The shared interest can vary from environmental issues, classic literature or a conflict between the two communities such as the Israeli and Palestinian one

The Sustainable eSchool projects contribute to shape the future because the e-Id will be a way for the individual to interact with his community and the rest of the world. Deeper understating of the Impact and influence of the e-Id will require rethinking and reshaping our educational institutes. If we want to meet today children we need to rethink what and how to renew the teacher training programs.

Sustainable eSchool provides training programs, that integrate civil society real issues by connecting Local Authorities and NGO activists to educational system, for educators working in formal education systems and thereby making it possible with small extra funding and in kind resource of each organization to create sustainable solution, unlike most training programs that are not multi-disciplinary

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nor focus on sustainability. This initiative is supported by organizers of the Global Forum an IT ThinkTank, and is organized by Politech Institute, Brussels, Belgium. Technology used is based upon open source programs such as the one developed by Howard Rheingold ([socialmediaclassroom.com](http://socialmediaclassroom.com)).  
[www.sustainable-eschool.net](http://www.sustainable-eschool.net)

## **Introduction**

Understanding what shapes the identity of a person in general and children in particular require redefining the term of I. The term "I" has to be expanded to include the Virtual "I". We shall define the Virtual "I" as e-Id. Indeed, today the e-Id is an integral part of any person who is exposed to the Internet, mobile phone, computer, TV, etc.

The industry already recognizes the business opportunity of the virtual "I" and offers new services. As an extreme, here is the example of the company ([www.legacylocker.com](http://www.legacylocker.com)) that promises online life after death. The ad starts with : "Your husband, an avid gamer and techie, dies of a heart attack, leaving his vast online life -- one you don't know much about -- in limbo."

Examples like this one force us to rethink about our definition of the "I", but before we do so let us explore some daily episodes taking place in the classroom.

## **Youth and Adults in the digital sphere**

The digital sphere is the place where youth feel as comfortable as a fish in the water whereas adults hardly know how to swim. The digital gap between generations is similar to the situation inside the immigrants community. One main characteristic of immigrants communities is that children adopt quickly and in no time the local language, while adults struggle and never really feel at home in their new country. The situation creates an odd relationship between the adult and the child: the child is the one who knows and the parents become like a child who needs the guidance of "adult-child". We know quite well how such situation easily deteriorates the traditions, traditional leadership and authority.

A similar situation occurs in the virtual world, where adults feel at loss and the children feel at home. A daily experience that illustrates this phenomenon is when an adult acquires a new digital device such as an iPhone. Recently, a friend of ours tried to operate her iPhone, she called a friend but his explanations were in vain, finally he lost his patience and shouted: Is not there any child around you who can show you what to do!!!

## **Youth in the classroom**

We shall start our exploration of the relationship between the "virtual" world and the "real" one in a biology lesson in 12th grade. The teacher is trying to explain something about the cell, suddenly a girl burst into tears and run away from the class. The teacher is quite in shock, and tries to rethink his action that caused such a reaction from the girl. Later on, he found out the girl received a sms from her boyfriend telling her abruptly that their relationship is over!!

Another example deals with some conflict taking place in the classroom between several pupils. The teacher will understand the roots of the conflict if she knows that several hours ago, during the previous evening, something happened between the pupils in Instant Messaging.

In many cases, children feel they know more than educators as far as technology is concerned. They feel more "intelligent" than their teacher, their father or grand-father. Some interactions have become standard for youth and yet are complex for adults and educators.

Those examples force us as educators to understand what the "I" is in first place and as a consequence to reexamine the needs of the young generation, understand the way they behave and function and thus see how we can prepare them to be better human beings and citizens.

## **e-Id: a definition**

Traditionally we speak about the I (ego) without taking into account the identity of the I in the virtual world. The e-Id is our virtual I, and yet it shapes and influences the "Normal" I in many different ways. This e-Id influences the daily life with some consequences on personal and interpersonal levels as well as in the education system.

The e-Id is made of two parts:

The conscious e-Id: the first part named conscious e-Id is built by us in the way we choose to create and maintain our profile on the Internet. It starts with the email address that people choose, their nick names, their avatars in Social Networks such as Facebook, Second Life, etc. It continues with the blogs, personal pages and all kind of information that we present to others.

The Unconscious e-Id: The second part is the unconscious part that is created by others; entities such as governments, businesses and by other people. It is built from the virtual footprint that we leave when using our credit cards, phone call records, bank accounts, web search history and any other means that record and keep digitally our actions and movements. People may also create faked profile of us, angry husband presents his ex-wife as a whore, and a student opens a facebook account on behalf of his school headmaster and presents him as a pedophile and more. The unconscious e-Id consists of all the parts that people are unaware of but may impact us greatly when gathered and used against us. People are not conscious that what they write in some social networks may be visible to everyone and can stay forever even if the information stored is problematic.

### **e-Id and mobile phone**

Looking into the technology that surrounds us today, the mobile phone pops out as the one that is leading the evolution of the e-Id. It best symbolizes the emergence of the " I & e-Id". Cellular phone has become an integral part of us. Dr Allan Shark presents over 40 roles the cellular phone can play and emphasizes the social behavior related to it as well as our dependence on it. The current youth cannot imagine life without it.

### **Technology and wisdom**

The way technology shapes and influences our real life and relationships, raises the question of the link between humanity and technology. A senior officer from the UN expresses it quite well: "I've dealt with many different problems around the world, and I've concluded that there is only one real problem: over the past hundred years, the power that technology has given us has grown beyond anyone's imagination, but our wisdom has not, if the gap between our power and our wisdom is not redressed soon, I don't have much of hope."

The challenges are great and already take a heavy toll from us and the environment. The emergence of and understanding of e-Id along side with future trends of technology will help to better prepare our children for the complexity of the relationship between virtual and real life. The emergence of a man-machine relationship forces us to rethink our education system and methods. What can we practice differently? Is there a way to make our children wiser and not only smarter? Can we find new ways that speak to the souls of the children and enable them to build healthier egos? Can we develop a consciousness that can work with technology and is not just enchanted by it? In what ways can we use technology to help us become wiser, make moral decisions and thus build a healthier civil society.

### **Trends of technology**

Before providing a description of some practice of these ideas, let us review the trends of technology as described in 2009 HORIZON REPORT ([wp.nmc.org/horizon2009/](http://wp.nmc.org/horizon2009/)), and how they influence education on one hand and how especially they shape the individual and its identity.

The report defines the short term and longer terms following trends:

### **One Year or Less: Mobiles**

A cellular phone is a personal device and interestingly its phone number has become “fixed”. Indeed, in most cases, people can move regions in the same country, switch operators and keep their phone number.

The phone number follows the person everywhere, all the time during his whole life.

What is more, these devices are not just phones. The ability to record audio and video turned them into portable multimedia devices. Geolocation, web browsing, email, phone books and calendars have brought much of the functionality of a laptop to the pocket-sized devices.

The report stresses that in countries like Japan, young people equipped with mobiles often see no reason to own personal computers.

Mobiles are becoming a universal tool for communication of all kinds. Besides, mobiles are mostly “always on line” so that people can always be reached.

The easy interface between mobiles and the Web allow people to easily publish on the web whether it is Twitter for short text messages or photo services such as Flickr. Short video clips as well as audio messages can also be easily published right from the mobile device. The power of the cellular phone can be tremendous: with just one message from a person to a machine (such as Twitter), a message can reach within minutes thousands of people and more.

One example related to the use of mobiles in education is RelatioNet.net. RelatioNet reconnects the younger generation with the older generation, acquainting students with the lives of Holocaust survivors. This project helps bridge the generation gap, educate people about the history of the Holocaust and enrich the written collective recollection of that era. RelatioNet's novel approach uses the internet as an attractive and effective mean of research, collaboration and storage of knowledge base. Israeli and Polish high school students are looking for relatives and friends among the Holocaust survivors. The Israeli students collect testimonies from survivors and make them available on the dedicated blog. The Polish students collect photos, videos, interviews. Then, a visit of Poland using a cellular phone is possible and history becomes interesting and interactive.

### **One Year or Less: Cloud Computing**

People are no longer required to own the latest laptop or desktop machine. Most applications such as email, word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, collaboration, media editing and more can be done inside a web browser.

As long as people have a browser and Internet access, they can access unlimited data storage and programs of all kinds. It is easy to share documents and files and make collaborative editing.

Yet, there is a need to trust the network that the service providers will continue to be there.

### **Two to Three Years: Geo-Everything**

Mobile devices know where they are and thus where we are.

It allows us to record our coordinates as we take photos, etc. On the other hand, mobile learners can receive context aware information.

As far as we know, there is no way to “cheat the system” with wrong coordinates. Therefore, no matter where you go, “you are where you are” in opposition with faked identities on the Web.

### **Two to Three Years: The Personal Web**

The personal web is a term coined to represent a collection of technologies that confer the ability to reorganize, configure and manage online content rather than just viewing it highly flexible and unique to each person, these personal web environments consist of collections of tools individually selected to suit the user's style and preferences.

The desktop of users becomes highly personal with not only its look and feel but with the various applications that people are used to have. Even an application such as Gmail provides a large number of options (e.g. calendar, to do list, who's on line...) that make the Gmail application different and unique for each person. There is a huge number of options for

setting up a personal web environment which leads to a high number of people who are disoriented or who simply use 'per default' options.

#### **Four to Five Years: Semantic-Aware Applications**

Semantic-aware applications are tools designed to use the meaning, or semantics, of information on the Internet to make connections and provide answers that would otherwise entail a great deal of time and effort. The idea behind the semantic web is that although online data is available for searching, its meaning is not: computers are very good at returning keywords, but very bad at understanding the context in which keywords are used. There is almost no educational application at this moment.

#### **Four to Five Years: Smart Objects**

Beyond our scope for now.

#### **Concept of the e-dialog**

We have put those ideas into practice by developing the concept of e-dialog. We tackled the sensitive and mostly untouchable issue of the Holocaust between German and Israeli youth. The e-dialog opens the younger generation to talk openly and frankly about the holocaust. It deals with the way their grandparents were involved and what was the impact of WWII.

It was easier for the youth to share and discuss those dark times first online via the e-dialog system and then have in real life discussions face to face.

The e-dialog was developed in order to fill in a void in today's education systems and it is designed to integrate and develop the I & e-Id concept.

The first step of the e-Dialog requires the student to present himself and his community. "Hot" or sensitive subjects, like the Holocaust for Israelis and Germans, will open the student to question about his own roots, exploring his society through a lively dialogue with his family and community as well as with the other side.

In the program "Michael's dialogue" that took place during one year in 2006 between German and Israeli youth, the leading question was: "How will the memory of the Holocaust look like in twenty years?"

This led the participants to check their own family biography and share it online.

The subject that seemed as an untouched one among the German family became an open debate that drew the parents of both sides to become part of the e-dialog. That was an e-inclusion between generations and communities bearing a painful past with deep wounds.

#### **Sustainable e-school: understanding the relationship of the "I & eID"**

Education is a field of major interest for the new mobile Internet applications as well as a powerful mean for e-inclusion. Sustainable e-School ([www.sustainable-eschool.net](http://www.sustainable-eschool.net)) is an initiative based upon the understanding of the relationship of the "I & eID" and the impact on the youth and society. This led us to emphasize interdisciplinary learning and multicultural dialogue. It combines English as a foreign language, computer literacy and a chosen subject as a backbone for the program. A dialogue can be established between communities with shared interest, the shared interest can vary from environmental issues, classic literature or a conflict between two communities such as the Israeli and Palestinian conflict.

The Sustainable eSchool projects contribute to shape the future because the e-Id will be a way for the individual to interact with his community and the rest of the world. Deeper understanding of the impact and influence of the e-Id require rethinking and reshaping our educational institutes. If we want to meet today's children we need to rethink what and how to renew the teacher training programs.

Sustainable-eSchool provides training programs that integrate civil society real issues by connecting Local Authorities and NGO activists to the formal educational system. It is possible with small extra funding and in kind resource of each organization to create sustainable solutions, unlike most training programs that are not multi-disciplinary nor focus

on sustainability. The principle of sustainability states that building the future must start from existing systems and programs. There is to work with the ministries of education and local authorities in participating countries in order to integrate the program into schools curriculum, so that its contents will be taught through existing lessons of English, History, sociology, etc. Sustainable-eSchool was presented in October 2008 at the Global Forum ([www.items.fr](http://www.items.fr)) Think Tank Conference and is supported by its organizers.

Sustainable-eschool is an initiative using open source platforms or existing systems offered by private companies. It is organized by Politech Institute, which is a not-for-profit international association (AISBL) and a European Centre of Political Technologies located in Brussels, Capital of Europe, and Belgium.

POLITECH is dedicated to promote novel concepts and innovation empowering the different stakeholders in a 'citizen-driven' digital world, as well as support the development of effective strategies, policies and share of good practices in the converging domains of Political Technologies - e-Politics, e-Participation, e-Democracy, e-Diplomacy, e-Citizenship, e-Governance and e-Government.

## **Conclusion**

The skillfulness of the youth in the digital sphere along the fear of the adults towards technology create a situation where adults, the society and the education system leave the kids on their own in front of their computers or electronic devices. They are alone in this ocean that is the Internet with sharks and waves that can swallow their soul easily.

The main powers that shape this world are commercial companies that seek to capture the children mind in order to enter the parents pocket.

Where are the wise people of the tribe that may lead the way with wisdom and Morals?

The surrender of culture to Technology is leading the way to huge investment in the Web of things. So our staff may be connected but who is developing and investing in web of humans?

We need to shift from the world of Newtonian billiard balls to a new worldview that is best defined by the word Connectedness: connecting the "outer world" with the "inner world", the "virtual world" with the "real world", the "I" and the "e-Id".

While philosophers and spiritual leaders have long ago spoken about connectedness, we need to develop an education worldview of connectedness.

This will have a sweeping influence on healing the self and the society.

Who can lead the desired change?

It rests on the shoulders of educators who are not afraid of technology on one hand and understand how the virtual world shapes human and humanity.

Those teachers accept the fact that their students may know more about the technical sphere but still need their guidance in terms of ethics and humanism.

Those who stand in the front are, without even being aware of, can lead the way to make the society wiser and show the youth how to become a moral human who can find their way in the stormy and risky world.

Some people dream that further technological breakthroughs will solve social and environmental crisis. Yet, we should focus on what exists on this planet and make it sustainable for us and for future generations. We should emphasis on the content and not on the technology, that connecting people, knowledge and action as we indicated in the sustainable-eSchool is a small step in the right direction.

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