

Sources of uncertainty in online school counselling in Romania

MIHAI IACOB, PHD. CANDIDATE

UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

“Ouch! My cat just scratched me. I’ll be back in a moment.”

SCHOOL COUNSELLOR DURING AN INTERVIEW

Outline

1. The school counselling system
2. Digital technology in school counselling
3. Actor network theory
4. First source of uncertainty
5. Second source of uncertainty
6. Third source of uncertainty
7. Some assemblage required!

The school counselling system

- ❖ 42 regional centres
- ❖ a little over 2500 school counsellors (2019-2020)
- ❖ access through multiple qualifications (pedagogy, psycho-pedagogy, psychology, sociology, social pedagogy, psycho-sociology, or philosophy-history)
- ❖ school counsellors are considered teachers, with all the rights and obligations entailed by this status, including a compulsory number of teaching hours every week

Digital technology in school counselling

- ❖ the job description of the school counsellors makes no specific reference to digital skills
 - ❖ the last system level investment in digital technology was in 2008
 - ❖ managerial planning documents tie development to the availability of resources
 - ❖
- ❖ the pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital technology
 - ❖ access to hardware and Internet connection was far from universal, especially in rural settings
 - ❖ informal adoption of digital technology (use of personal devices and software / service licences)
 - ❖

... and then I hit a brick
wall.

Actor network theory

- ❖ Socio-material approach
 - ❖ Anti-essentialism: the subject is a multiplicity which can't be understood when taken separately (Grillo, 1995).
 - ❖ To research is “to translate materials, actors, and texts into inscriptions that allow influence at a distance” (Ritzer, 2004).
- ❖ Principles (Ritzer, 2004) :
 - ❖ **Agnosticism** - there should be no a priori assumptions
 - ❖ **Symmetry** - a single explanatory frame be used for all actants in the network, be they human and nonhuman
 - ❖ **Free association** - advocates abandoning any distinction between natural and social phenomenon.

First source: no groups, only group formation

“there exist many contradictory ways for actors to be given an identity” (Latour, 2005)

Counsellors

Partners/Spouses

Children

Service managers

School directors

School IT specialist

Sales representatives of companies

Professional organisations

Teachers

Second source: action is overtaken

“in each course of action a great variety of agents seem to barge in and displace the original goals” (Latour, 2005)

The design of the counselling system

The pandemic

Projects

Personal beliefs

The representation of the future

Privacy regulations

Third source: objects have agency

“the type of agencies participating in interaction seems to remain wide open”
(Latour, 2005)

Hardware

Software

Pets

The home environment

Standards

Some assemblage required!

“... the social, as usually defined, is but a moment in the long history of assemblages”
(Latour, 2005, p. 247)

It will take more time before I will be able to piece together a picture of the network of actors that come together in what we call online school counselling, and even then it will be but a snapshot.

References

- Grillo, T. (1995). Anti-Essentialism and Intersectionality: Tools to Dismantle the Master's House. *Berkley Women's Law Journal*, 15.
- Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network-theory*. Oxford University Press.
- Ritzer, G. (Ed.) (2004). *Encyclopedia of Social Theory*, Sage Publications.

Thank you for your attention

Contact:

mihai.iacob@unibuc.ro