



## DDLUB First Experience in Using Google Classroom Platform

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### Abstract

The acronym DDLUB will be used to identify the Department for Distance Learning of the University of Bucharest, Romania. This department was established in 1999, based on the university's Senate Decision. The University of Bucharest has been actively contributing to the development and modernization of Romanian education, science and culture. A brief chronological history, starting with the Decree of Creation (decree no.756 of 4/16 July 1864), is presented on the official site [1]. During 2015, DDLUB will celebrate 16 years of existence and the University of Bucharest will celebrate 151 years of existence. Meanwhile, Google Corporation has released the Classroom platform on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2014, [2]: "classroom weaves together Google Docs, Drive, and Gmail so teachers can create and collect assignments paperlessly"; new features were added on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2014 like archiving the closed classes.

DDLUB was continuously focused on promoting the digital technologies in education. DDLUB has applied to obtain the statute of GAFE-Google Apps for Education for its domain "credis-virtual.net". In November 2014 DDLUB has started to implement the Google Classroom platform for the students enrolled with the academic classes delivered by professor Bogdan Logofatu: more than 350 students and seven classes; the study programs were at the level of Bachelor Degree (one program with 185 students) and Masteral Degree (four programs with 165 students).

This article is aiming to present the DDLUB experience, acquired during the academic year 2014-2015: the first implementation of the Google Classroom platform within higher education institution in Romania, University of Bucharest.

### 1. DDLUB short history in digital technology

This chapter will select ONLY some DDLUB achievement in the area of digital technology. The author, currently the Managing Director of the DDLUB, has his own history (22+ years long) in promoting digital technologies within teaching and learning [3], at University of Bucharest. The paper "RETHINKING EDUCATION – DDLUB CASE STUDY", presented during the FOE'2013 Conference [4], highlighted author's initiatives in this domain.



Fig.1. DDLUB Virtual Campus (2003+)



Starting with 2003, a "home-made" LMS was designed and implemented within DDLUB [5], Figure 1. **This virtual campus** was developed by Luca Corcotoi (as IT specialist) and Professor Bogdan Logofatu (as coordinator); it is still operational in 2015. This virtual campus is "a single box" model, with a single access point (the login window). Opening his account, the student has access the synchronous /asynchronous services listed on the left side of the image: [Prima pagina], [Calendar], [Chat], [Forum], [Mesaje], [Cursuri], [Examene], [Materiale], [Optiuni], [Deconectare=log out]. This virtual campus may be considered a standalone LMS, a first evolution of the LMS [6].

All over the world, LMS design evolved to multi-user platforms networked among students, academic and administrative staff. Starting with 2010, Professor Bogdan Logofatu begun to implemented the concept of "cloud computing" including SaaS, PaaS, IaaS. As a result, the DDLUB's students have extensively used a **LMS/LCMS** [7] having as components some of the most popular electronic platforms: GMail, Google Calendar, Google Groups, Google Docs/Drive, Google Sites, Google Moderator, Google Plus. These platforms belong to Google Apps for Education (GAPE) suite which is provided "free of charge" for educational institutions: schools and universities.

In October 2014: (i) DDLUB has obtained the statute of GAPE-Google Apps for Education for its domain "credis-virtual.net", [8]; (ii) DDLUB has started to implement the Google Classroom platform. **The last event of this history: on March 2015, the first online course** [9] implemented on Google Cloud (as IaaS) and WordPress (as SaaS).

Fig.2. The main web site for the domain [www.credis-virtual.net](http://www.credis-virtual.net)

The main point of information is the web site (Figure 2) dedicated to DDLUB's GAPE domain ([www.credis-virtual.net](http://www.credis-virtual.net)). The students are invited to enrol in order to obtain an email address suitable for the domain (...@credis-virtual.net): (i) every student has to send an email message to the domain administrator, using his/her usual email account (Yahoo, Google etc.), in order to introduce himself (full name, study programs, course he/she is interested in etc.); (ii) in response, the domain administrator send the details (user, initial password) for accessing the GAPE platforms used by DDLUB. During the first access of this new account, the user are obliged (by the GAPE system) to change the password. NB: the storage capacity for a GAPE account is unlimited!

We came into the era where the LMS/LCMS facilitates daily activities for training and learning. Nowadays, our LMS/LCMS is vital for the quality education provided by DDLUB.

Figure 3 is aiming to suggest interoperability of electronic platforms that can operate independently or as networked LMS: “One Google Account for everything Google”!

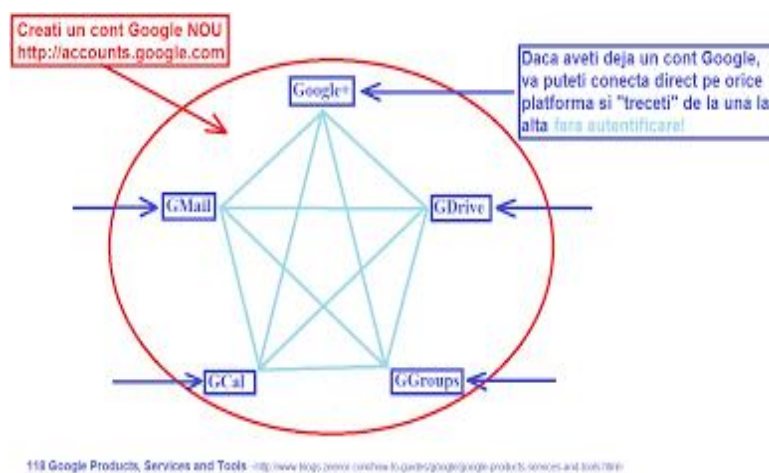


Fig.3. LMS GAFE for DDLUB

We have to notice: The Ministry of National Education and Google announced [10] a national partnership (8th May 2014) that aims to facilitate access to Romanian students and teachers to new technologies, thereby increasing the quality of learning.

## 2. Google Classroom Platform

### 2.1. Google Classroom – a recent history

“Google Classroom helps teachers create, assign, and collect student classwork and homework paperlessly. With Google Classroom, teachers can seamlessly integrate Google Docs, Google Drive, and Gmail to create assignments, provide feedback for in progress and completed work, and communicate with their students directly and with whole class announcements--all without using a single piece of paper. Students can work on assignments in Google Docs and turn it in with a few clicks.

When teachers create assignments, folders are automatically created in Google Drive for each student. They can choose to share a single document (like project instructions), or automatically make a copy for each student (like a project template). They can see who has completed the work at a glance and assign grades. Students can easily see due dates on their assignments page, so they can stay organized and submit work on time”, [11]. Benefits: (i) easy to set up; (ii) saves time; (iii) enhances communication; (iv) affordable and secure.

We consider Google Classroom, used as independent platform, as being an entry level LCMS. The full benefits of using Google Classroom arise from using it as part of the GAFE networked LMS.

### 2.2. DDLUB first experience in using Google Classroom

In November 2014, during the first semester of the academic year 2014-2015, the authors have implemented (for the first time in Romanian HE) the Google Classroom platform using the domain "credis.ro". Bogdan Logofatu is full professor employed by University of Bucharest and he delivers courses to BA and MA students, in the domain of ICT for education.

The co-authors (Andreea Visan, Alina Branescu, and Camelia Ungureanu) are employed by DDLUB and they are enrolled in doctoral programs in the domain of Educational Sciences, University of Bucharest. Mrs. Andreea Visan is in charge with social media and laboratory teaching activities, Mrs. Alina Branescu is in charge with administrative activities and student counselling, Mrs. Camelia Ungureanu is involved in assessment activities, specific to Google Classrooms.

For the second semester of the academic year 2014-2015, the Google Classrooms were implemented on the domain "credis-virtual.net". NB: the class TIC11(2015) is aiming to help those students who

have not passed the exam “TIC” during the winter session; they have the opportunity to study online and to be better prepared for the summer session!

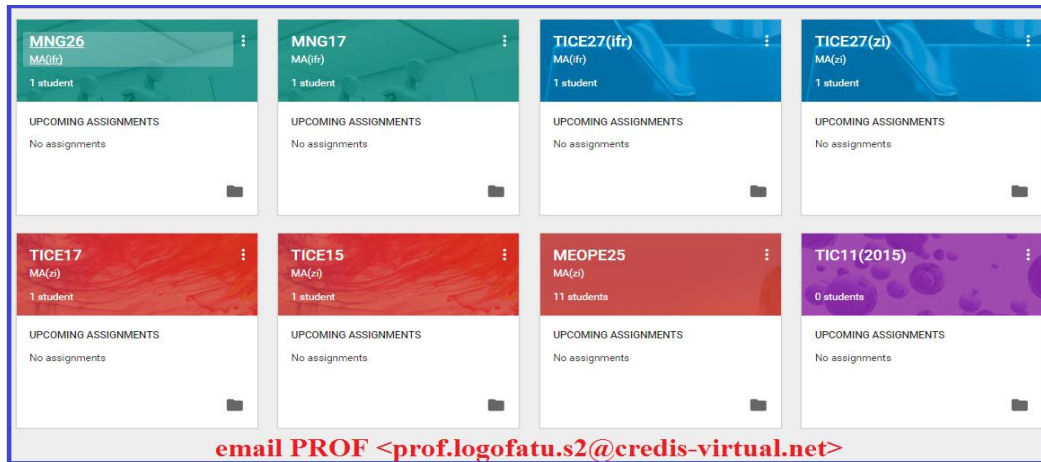


Fig.4. Google Classrooms open in February 2015

If a student open a Google Classroom (hereinafter GClass), he has three main web pages to navigate: [STREAM], [STUDENTS] and [ABOUT]. The web page [ABOUT] is the perfect place to add resources related to the course /discipline: the structure of the study program, curriculum, course syllabus; the authors add also the presentation of the ECTS system [12] because a student who understand the ECTS system applied to his study program can better organize his academic working time.

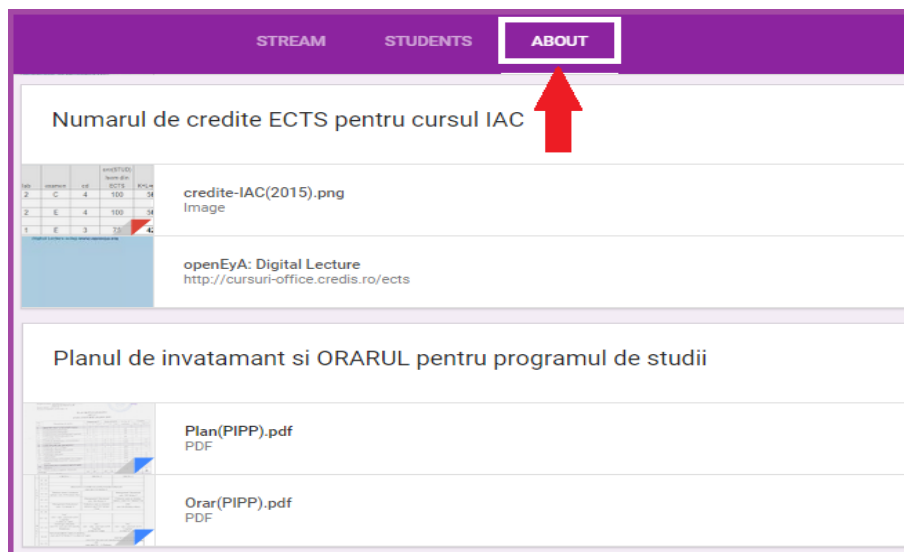


Fig.5. Screen capture from GClass>ABOUT web page

Usually, we provide students basic information concerning “Introduction in GClass” and “Assignment concepts”: two “pdf” documents for self-study. Meanwhile, two video-lectures were created using CISCO Webex video-conference platform; these videos are published on YouTube platform, [13-14]. We tried to adapt ourselves to the different ways of processing information for younger learners (different student learning styles, [15].

We found that we can add multiple resources under a single title (like in Figure 6) or add them separately under their own titles; we published the course agenda (updated weekly) and the learning resources (course modules in pdf format) added as long as the course makes progresses. Simultaneously, the course module, in eLearning technology, is published online, [9].



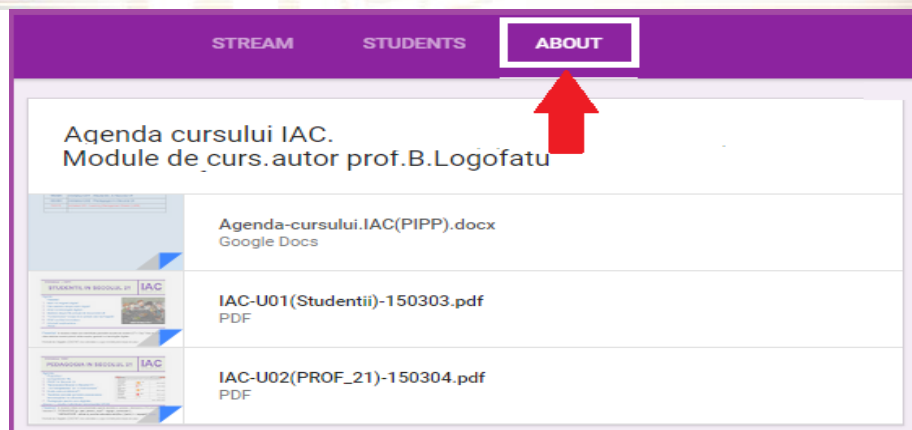


Fig.6. Learning resources added to the [ABOUT] page.

The web page [STREAM] allows us two kinds of actions: (i) to make announcements; (ii) to publish assignments. All the announcements may be considered like a “ship’s register”. An assignment has a title, a deadline, may have different attachments (files from computer, Google Drive files, YouTube videos, or a web links). The implementation of the “assignment concept”, explained in [14], depends on professor imagination and talent; we delivered already many types of assignments!

In order to understand the assignment flow between a teacher and a student we recommend [16]. The GClass practitioners are publishing continuously their best practice; example: how to use the Doctopus script to grade assignments from Google Classroom, [17]. Authors have also a valuable experience in using “the assignment service” for their Google Classrooms.

### 3. Conclusions

This article presents the DDLUB experience, acquired during the academic year 2014-2015, related to the first implementation of the Google Classroom platform within higher education institution in Romania, University of Bucharest. During the last 16 years (DDLUB is only 16 year old!), our department was in the forefront of ICT innovation in education: (i) the first Romanian virtual campus and the learning resources(2003+ ) based on eLearning technologies; (ii) using GAFE as LMS (2014+); (iii) intensive use of Google Classroom in HE(2014+); (iv) online courses based on the “cloud technologies” from Google and WordPress.

### References

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- [17] <http://youtu.be/H9zQ3Ra0-XY>