A MOOC TO BREAK THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: IBERVIRTUAL UNED COMA "BASIC DIGITAL COMPETENCES"

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Introduction

The *Open Educational Resources* movement (OER) has shared thousands of online open materials and courses all over the world since 2002. The recent 2012 *Paris OER Declaration*, at the UNESCO *First OER World Congress*, represents its consolidation after ten years of worldwide development (UNESCO, 2012). Maybe more impressive has been the MOOCs movement (*Massive, Online and Open Courses*) over the last year. In 2012, the *Horizon Report* (Johnson, Adams & Cummins, 2012) did not include MOOCs in the most important trends for the future of eLearning, whereas the most recent 2013 report, explicitly says that in just one year we will be able to appreciate their great impact on the education field as a powerful emerging trend:

> *"… interest in MOOCs has evolved at an unprecedented pace, fueled by high profile entrants like Coursera, Udacity, and edX…The pace of development in the MOOC space is so high that it is likely that a number of alternative models will emerge in the coming year " (The New Media Consortium, 2013, p.43)*

In other words, in the forthcoming years, there will be huge offering of this type of courses online, open to anybody, anywhere, at any time, giving thus support to one of the more fundamental millennium goal relating to education: lifelong training (Lisbon European Council, 2000).

However, due to the digital divide, thousands of people still lack the most basic digital competences to take advantage of this training offer, even though many international organizations point up that these skills are essential in the 21st century. In this sense, the European Commission includes the Digital Competence as one of the 8 key competences for lifelong learning in this century (European Parliament and the Council, 2006, p.5).

In order to help overcoming the digital gap, and giving response to the European Commission demand for increased opportunities of training in digital competence, a MOOC on Basic Digital Competences will be offered in 2013, starting in February, by UNED (National

Distance Education University, http://www.uned.es) of Spain, UAPA (Open University for Adults, http://www.uapa.edu.do) of the Dominican Republic and CSEV (Centre for Virtual Education, http://www.csev.org) of Spain.

This course has been designed and developed within the framework for action of the Ibervirtual/AIESAD Project (http://ibervirtual.org). The main objective of this project, created in 2010 and included in the XX Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, is to promote social inclusion by strengthening distance education in Ibero-American countries. One of its main lines of work focuses on developing skills for Distance Education and, including both basic digital competences for teachers and students and for the general public.

The main objective of this first MOOC represents an innovative proposal that aims to provide the basic digital skills that are necessary to access the opportunities offered by the Knowledge Society and, in particular, to benefit from the new global movement based on social and open learning.

Also, it aims to promote MOOC development in Ibero-American countries, taking into account that the recent Horizon report on Technologies in Ibero-American Tertiary Education, 2012-2017, places the use of MOOCs in a three to four-year time horizon (Durall, Gros, Maina, Johnson & Adams, 2012), whereas a one-year time horizon is expected for other parts of the world. This fact is mentioned in the 2013 Horizon shortlist report:

> *"The Centro Superior para la Enseñanza Virtual is encouraging MOOC enrollment to Latin American communities through a Spanish platform called unX: go.nmc.org/gyorb" (The New Media Consortium, 2013, p.4).*

Design and development of the course "Ibervirtual COMA: Basic Digital Competences"

This MOOC, or COMA in Spanish ("*curso en línea masivo y abierto*"), has been designed taking into account the definition of Digital Competence by the European Parliament:

> *"the confident and critical use of the Technology Information Society and Knowledge for work, leisure and communication. It is based on basic ICT skills: use of computers to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present and exchange information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet" (European Parliament and the Council, 2006, p.5).*

Ferrari (2012) proposes 7 main areas for The Digital Competence (Figure 1), proposal that has guided this course design.
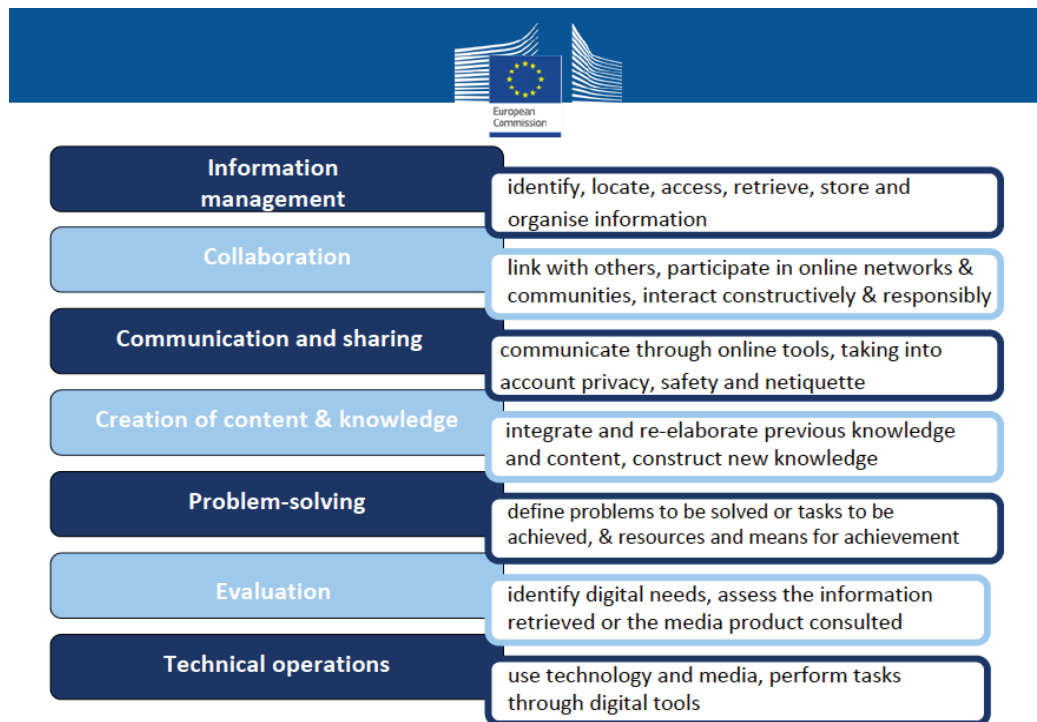
Figure 1. Areas or skills included in the Digital Competence
(source: European Commission, Ferrari, 2012, p.6)

A team of 12 experts in each main area has undertaken the design of the course structure, contents, activities and assessment. It has been conceived as a MOOC in terms of structure and methodology, based on active, participatory learning, mentoring and peer support for guidance purposes, where content delivery and assessment are supported by videos, readings, quizzes and P2P tools.

Its main structure includes the following modules:

- **Module 0**: Presentation of the course and a brief introduction about what Digital Competence is, and main keys to success in a MOOC.
- **Module 1**: Getting used to the course environment, reviewing platform e-learning functionalities and main features.
- **Module 2**: Basic technological skills in digital environments I: the computer (hardware and software) and basic production of documents such as written documents, spreadsheets, and presentations.
- **Module 3**: Basic technological skills in digital environments II: basic uses of the Internet. Guidelines for the use of the Internet, the concept of browsers and web pages, the concept of cloud and web 2.0 and e-mail.
- **Module 4**: Information Literacy in online environments. Management of searching and information storage tools in the network, as well as ethical use.
- **Module 5**: Communication skills in online environments. Types of digital content for content creation and dissemination thereof, legal uses and basic asynchronous and synchronous communication tools.

- **Module 6**: Social networks and collaborative work. Social Learning and major social networks: use and protection, digital identity and tools for collaborative work.
- **Module 7**: New proposals for massive online learning. What MOOCs, open educational resources, online learning communities or Crowded Learning are; types of educational platforms.

Each module offers a wide diversity of video contents as well as complementary documents and hyperlinks. Some of them respond to preliminary explanations and others to video tutorials, recorded both in studio and by teachers on their own: TV, polymedia and screencast recordings, all of them open in YouTube (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Types of multimedia contents on Ibervirtual UNED COMA: Basic Digital Competences

The course is equivalent to 3 ECTS or 75 learning hours, leading to the award of badges and a final diploma after the course completion.

More than 1000 participants have registered in the first call made through Universia MiríadaX MOOC platform (Figure 3). New calls will take place during 2013, both on UnX and UNED COMA online platforms.

Figure 3. Home page of Ibervirtual UNED COMA: Basic Digital Competences in MiriadaX
(Universia platform, http://miriadax.net/web/comp_dig_basicas)

Final data and main results about this first experience will be showed during the presentation of the work. This first course will be developed from February till April 2013.

Conclusions

We would like to finish, first with some words of caution as referred in the 2013 Horizon report:

> *"massively open online courses are compelling, but universities must critically evaluate their use… However, they have been criticized for low completion rates and low engagement with the instructor, in addition to insufficient forms of assessment. There is an opportunity for educators to examine how universities can integrate MOOCs to support their existing courses and programs and create new ones, while carefully determining the audiences that are likely to benefit most. (The New Media Consortium, 2013, p.18)*

Secondly with some words oh hope. With the course *Ibervirtual UNED COMA: Basic Digital Competences* we expect to contribute to help breaking the digital divide and to improve social inclusion through the development of the skills required to be able to participate in the Knowledge Society, also taking advantage of the large training offer based on online methodologies, such as MOOCs. One of the main fields for testing the efficacy of this MOOC will be Ibero-American countries, as a part of the Ibervirtual project.

First results will be available by April 2013, after the completion of the first edition of this course. We hope to be able by then to give some responses to MOOCs current questions, inquiries and challenges.

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