



EXTENDING MOOC CAPABILITIES WITH DEDICATED NETWORKS: THE E-PORTFOLIO TRAINING CASE

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Introduction

A recent survey (Elaine Allen & Seaman, 2015) on the state of the art of online higher education in the United States shows that academic leaders consider online learning a key strategic issue for their institutions, and this figure has grown from 48.8% in 2002 to 70.8% in 2015. The major role in education of online learning is also attested by international studies like the Docebo (2014) report that depicts the growing market tendency of e-learning worldwide.

There is a general agreement that online education, even if long-time pre-existing the advent of the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) phenomenon became mainstream after the 2012 disruptive appearance of elite universities in the open education arena. MOOCs kicked the board of a stagnating position of higher education now facing challenges coming from inner constraints but also from social and technological accelerated changes.

MOOCs variants, the search for novel forms of open education

Even if the MOOC movement recognizes a foundational moment in Siemens Connectivism and Connective Knowledge open course in 2008 (Daniel, 2012), it is widely known that AI-Stanford like courses (Rodriguez, 2012) has gained worldwide attention and great impact.

Liyanagunawardena, Adams and Williams (2013) systematic study of 5 years of published literature on MOOCs corroborated what Rodriguez (ibid.) MOOC analysis concluded: highly prevailing MOOC offer can be associated to AI-Stanford like type of courses (or xMOOC) which “fall predominantly into the cognitive-behaviourist category (with some small components from social constructivism)” (p.11).

This finding reinforces certain critiques on MOOCs as traditional ways of conceiving education packaged in new forms (Bates, 2012) where teachers are

“...the most relevant and reliable source of knowledge and information. As teacher presence is “mediated”, mediatisation solutions point to chunking videotaped classes, providing a set of additional resources and learning activities, and assessing through more or less automated tests. This type of

MOOC privileges the knowledge transfer and duplication.” (Guàrdia, Maina & Sangrà, 2013, p.2).

The MOOC response is not to be neglected. MOOC are here to stay and to transform education, even transforming itself. There are several new acronyms reflecting this search for alternatives that highlight differences and similarities with the more popular MOOC:

- Mini MOOC (University of Exeter): while MOOCs usually last between 4 to 5 weeks, mini MOOCs are conceived for 3 weeks delivery with a 1 to 3 hours of participant involvement each.
- SOOC (Small Open Online Course) (Ross, 2012): these can be simple considered free online courses since they limit the number of participants to a very few.
- MOUC (Massive Open University style Courses) (Mulder, 2013): they are free graduate introductory courses that combine traditional Open University courses with more flexibility in terms of time and pace. They are self-study courses. Additional services like tutoring or evaluation are to be charged.
- TOOC (Targeted Open Online Course) (Baker, Rynearson & Edwards, 2014): they are professional oriented courses that can be credited in formal education. They are part of an institutional strategy aiming at establishing alliances between universities and local interest social groups.
- SMOC (Synchronous Massive Online Course) (Straumsheim, 2013): their particular trait is the teacher lectures in real time to a massive audience.
- DOOC (Distributed Open Collaborative Course) (Jaschik, August 19, 2013): this approach empowers the teacher's role that localizes high quality course structured content available on the web according to their specific reality and that of its students.
- SPOC (Small, Private Online Courses) (Goral, 2013): it can be seen as an online course at low price limiting the number of participants.

Even though the future of MOOCs is something to be written, there is evidence that claims for a new balance between formal and informal education and within formal education itself, like the those trends pointed out by Mazoue (2014) that “are shifting educational practice away from core tenets” (para.1): MOOC-based degrees, competency-based education, the formalization of learning, and regulatory reform. While not all are really new, as the author recognizes himself, a greater awareness on competency curriculum, shorter and focused courses or programs, and new regulations allowing lifelong skills recognition are now on the discussion agenda of higher education.

We already assist to original initiatives blurring boundaries between formal and new forms of education and blending open education with the traditional educational offer. Exploration of new formulas illustrate the case: embedding MOOC using a higher education blended approach (Griffiths, 2014) or adopting a flipped classroom approach where MOOC video lectures, exercises and quizzes supplement secondary school courses (Najafi, Evans & Federico, 2014).

Different needs, different motivations

The numerous initiatives, experiences and studies around MOOCs evidence an institutional concern and an intense debate of stakeholders in universities, educational organizations and government. But what are other studies telling us from the participants' perspective? The Haggard, Brown, Mills et al. (2013) report shows diversity in the intentions of enrolled people to MOOCs. The statistical analysis of the participants' behaviour let identified four distinctive profiles: auditing, sampling, disengaging and completing. It also showed a clear pattern of decreasing participation over course durations.

The new delineated scenario of MOOCs calls for a better understanding of the participants' motivations and actual needs. Arguments that try to make sense of MOOC impact in terms of traditional explanations of dropout rates are controversial (Ho, Reich, Nerterko et al., 2014). Many participants in MOOC declare to enrol for specific (bits) units or parts of a MOOC. They do not all have the intention to complete the course or they do not sign for recognition, but instead they declare to be interested in concrete competence development or being curious about specific knowledge. Some preliminary conclusions situate MOOCs and the evolving open education field as requiring a complete questioning of the way in which the educational offer is conceived, delivered, and measured... and explored.

Exploring transformative ways of educational provision

The European EPNET project (www.eportfolio.eu) aims at fostering e-portfolio practices for different actors from an integrative approach. We focus on the intersection between learning and professional stages of an individual trajectory, and we situate the e-portfolio as an asset useful to different stakeholders as broad as teachers, employers, governmental administrators and professional bodies. The project plans the provision of a MOOC-inspired open set of modules for self-regulated learning (Zimmerman, 1998).

Milligan and Littlejohn (2014) warn about the replication of traditional education into online and open learning. Their study of MOOCs for professional development showed how traditional ways of conceiving MOOCs were counterproductive: in xMOOC approaches professionals tend to focus on "viewing" content, gradually disengage in peer interaction, not establishing strong links between theory and practice, and completing assessment for the sake of certification. Lessons from this study reinforces the need to integrate course content and activities with actual participants professional needs, combine theory and practice, connect to real participant situations to easy knowledge contextualization and provide instruments for knowledge application and learning reflexion.

Based on MOOC research and documented experience, we paid attention to other conclusions that suggest avoiding recording long lectures or reifying content. To facilitate access we follow recommendations of moving away from rigid weekly pacing or even closed cohorts within time constraints (begin-end of the course). We also consider diversifying assessment diminishing the importance of automatic assessment and concentrating on learning outcomes and participants' productions for peer/social appraisal/discussion. And to better conciliate different audiences and interests we question curriculum linearity by allowing personalization.

Our proposal stands on seven independent modules aiming at providing conceptual and instrumental knowledge for the creation of an e-portfolio strategy and prototype solution, regarding individual or institutional objectives. They are structured as an activity-oriented flexible path:

- M1: Understand e-portfolios: an introduction and overview of e-portfolios.
- M2: Set the e-portfolio purpose/s: an exploration of the potential of e-portfolios and the establishment of personal purposes.
- M3: Outline an e-portfolio strategy: a strategic and programmatic decision on how the e-portfolio will help reach the purposes.
- M4: Design an e-portfolio ecosystem: an examination of different ways to implement an e-portfolio taking into account the evolving social web landscape.
- M5: Evaluate the e-portfolio solution: the development on an evaluation method and instruments to ensure the e-portfolio quality.
- M6: From the individual to an organizational initiative: an oriented process of transforming e-portfolio individual initiatives into organizational projects.
- M7: From programmatic to systemic change: an exercise of rethinking e-portfolios and their impact not as an isolated project but as organizational paradigm change.

Modules are organized around activities linking theory and practice. Conceptual content is presented in rich media formats using a variety of sources including videos, online presentations, interactive content, and readings. We have identified quality open educational resources for reuse and we have elaborated a set of valuable documents that will be used in the course. We have developed an extensive literature review for the development of an e-portfolio matrix as a conceptual and instrumental artefact supporting reflection and decision making around e-portfolio implementation (Maina, Guàrdia, Alsina & Barberà, 2014) (useful in modules 2, 3, 6 and 7). Another important resource elaborated within the project is a set of implementation guidelines for teachers, organizations and consortia (of particular interest for modules 6 and 7). Last, we have written a competency recognition and accreditation framework of value for all modules.

All content is free of use. Each activity is provided with illustrative examples showcasing diverse situations and cases of e-portfolio use. We follow principles of scaffold learning applied to online learning by means of supporting instruments. Most of the activities are accompanied with templates and guidelines.

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To support the sense of ownership the participant is encouraged to set its personal goals and decide on the number of modules to take and the pace for doing so.

The modules will be delivered in first place as a MOOC within the EMMA platform, a development of the homonym European project (www.europeanmoocs.eu). This action is understood as an initial open cohort that launches the initiative. The first MOOC iteration will have an official end but the learning space is intended to rest opened with a non-stop enrol approach. Dron and Anderson (2014) typology of social forms of learning clearly states the interplay between different level of social interventions for learning ranging from the individual predisposition to interact, to “groups”, to “nets” (connections of “nodes—such as people, objects, or ideas—and edges”, p.76) and finally “sets” (“made up of people who are bound together by commonalities or shared interests”, p.77). This MOOC is part of a greater effort within the EPNET project which has established a network of interested people and that interacts through the Europortofolio portal (europortofolio.eu) and a set of local chapters (Figure 1).

We envision providing an environment that connects the learning space (MOOC) with the Europortofolio network. This environment will support lasting debate spaces, open folders for participant-productions’ sharing, and functionalities for easing social interaction: RSS feeds notifying content addition, notifications of new messages to interest-focused groups, list of contacts with associated digital profiles. Once a person enrolls and registers to this interrelated environment, it may benefit from previous participants contributions, and in turn contribute to the growing of the community and the publishing of its own productions and ideas.

ABOUT EUROPORTFOLIO

EUROPORTFOLIO
European Network of ePortfolio
Experts & Practitioners

FIND OUT ABOUT THE COMMUNITY [JOIN US](#) [LOGIN](#)

NEWS NEWSLETTER PUBLICATIONS OER ORGANIZATIONS
EVENTS COLLABORATIONS DISCUSSIONS PROJECTS PEOPLE

MATRIX COURSE GUIDELINES FRAMEWORK CHAPTERS

ePortfolio use in classroom increases student's and teacher's motivation. EUfolio pilot experiences

EUfolio, EU classroom ePortfolios is evaluating the results of pilot implementations in lower secondary teaching and learning, preparing for the project's final conference in April 22 this year. The implementations have been not only successful, they also had a lot of positive side effects for the countries that participated in the pilot. ePortfolios and the teacher training and mentoring of teachers connected with the implementation resulted in greater awareness of the importance of formative feedback – both by teachers and peers. Furthermore, skills in self-evaluation and a greater sense of responsibility for one's own learning as well as more awareness of the peers' progress were developed. A video, produced by the Lithuanian partners of the EUfolio consortium shows experts', teachers' and students' experiences with ePortfolio-based teaching and learning and provides with opinions of the protagonists of the Lithuanian pilot. As Džiuljeta Jonikiene, one of the teachers who...

08.06.2015 ePIC 2015
22.04.2015 ePortfolio International Conference (EUfolio final conference)
16.04.2015 Researching and Evaluating Recording Achievement, Personal Development Planning and e-Portfolio.
03.12.2014 Foundation of the German Chapter at Online Educa Berlin 2014
03.12.2014 Europortofolio Workshop at Online Educa Berlin

16.01.2015

Thinking Beyond Me-Portfolios

The use of ePortfolios is growing. That is incontestable. However, most ePortfolio practice is still concentrated on portfolios about the author, rather than portfolios about activities, projects and placements: process based portfolios. This workshop explored 5 categories of process portfolios, discussing how they provide rich evidence for me-portfolios and provided valuable opportunities for portfolio rehearsal. Download the powerpoint

Global Map of Initiatives, Organisations, People, Tools

422 Members 53 Countries

Figure 4. A view of the Europortofolio portal giving access to resources and the Network

Final remarks

This paper presents new ways of expanding learning scenarios by means of an extended MOOC that differentiates from traditional ones in several ways. Firstly, it is the result of a coordinated effort of organizations, including three different and directly involved universities. Secondly, it is inserted in a broader action of fostering e-portfolio adoption through the creation of a European network of experts, researchers and users. Thirdly, it makes use of innovative scaling up pedagogies for crowd learning, focusing on scaffold and self-regulated learning together with the implementation of the latest notions of social learning including net and set learning. Finally, it pretends to act as a synergy element of the network, both providing and nourishing from each other.

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