

Proyecto WePrendo

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INTRODUCTION

Whether or not the rise of MOOCs will prove to warrant the attention that is drawn nowadays, there is no doubt that they are shaking up the educational system thanks to their ability to re-define its main pillars, such as the role(s) played by the teacher and the student, the emergence of new evaluation and certification mechanisms or the changing character and nature of learning. In fact, according to some authors (see Conole, 2013), MOOCs represent the latest in the line of disruptive technologies as defined by C. Christensen (1997).

Nevertheless, the most promising value of MOOCs is not derived from what they are, but from what they are likely to be, that is, their positive derivatives which are just starting to flourish. This wide array of possibilities has to do with the open and flexible way of learning promoted by MOOCs (Yuan and Powell, 2013). In fact, modularity, recombination and scalability are concepts very much associated with MOOCs experiences, thus opening the door to real adaptive and personalized learning. This means, for example, that MOOCs may be used to acquire professional competences following pre-defined personal learning pathways in such a way that participants may be awarded “super badges” when completing one of these routes. This “recombinatory” role of MOOCs is to be explored by MIT within Edx, as they have recently announced the offering of what is called “MOOC curricula” (Kolowich, 2013).

Useful and well-designed pathways should be built upon a wide range of contents and learning experiences. In this sense, “traditional” MOOCs should be combined, for example, with blended experiences where small groups could meet face to face, communities of practice and debate and so on, thus reflecting the diversity of learning acquisition channels. From a technological point of view, the availability of an “umbrella” platform connecting these learning activities is much needed here for the pathways to be fully operational.

This is the rationale underlying the concept of communities of practice and learning advocated by CSEV, UNED and other partners. Building upon the UnX, the first Ibero-American Community for Digital Entrepreneurship, a new “umbrella” platform has been created in order to experiment and implement this concept. This means that UnX will interact with other initiatives (e.g. WePrendo), thus fostering personalised learning experiences.

The beginnings: UnX

UnX is an innovative on-line community for entrepreneurship that promotes open education and collaboration in Spain, Portugal and Latin America (Ibero America) and aiming to:

- Promote on-line lifelong learning, particularly the skills and competences needed for the digital economy, such as digital competencies, app development, languages and new business models;
- Encourage knowledge-based entrepreneurship;
- Foster inclusion in higher education, focusing particularly on students, the under-employed and the unemployed.

The UnX project has been the result of an initial joint effort by the Center for Virtual Education (CSEV), Telefónica, Santander, UNED (National Distance University in Spain), and the Center for Mobile Learning, MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology). In any case, due to the open nature of the UnX Entrepreneurship Community, the door is open for whatever organizations may consider being involved in the initiative. This is the case of RedEmprendia (a network of universities promoting responsible innovation and entrepreneurship in Ibero-America), which has recently joined the project.

UnX is based on the delivery of MOOCs. The MOOCs draw on open, flexible content from websites, wikis, open education resources and social networks, and they can be scaled up to respond to demand. The learning is based around knowledge acquired from the community and individuals working together (social and peer-to-peer learning), while the activities draw on challenge and game-based methodology.

UnX uses an on-line badge-based approach to accreditation and certification. Badges (or insignia) are visual indications of levels of achievement, skill or knowledge, and mark exceptional involvement in a reading, discussion, group work or virtual events. The UnX platform also awards 'Karma' (social reputation) points, which measure participation in the UnX Community via the forum, Q&A and blog. This system means less reliance on course professors, which is particularly important given that there are potentially thousands of students involved in a MOOC.

Notwithstanding this, what makes UnX different from most of the rest of MOOC-based platforms is the concept of community that it advocates. In fact, UnX not only combines courses that promote entrepreneurship and self-employment with social networks, but also work with business enterprises to publish news and information regarding online and off-line job opportunities and events. New entrepreneurs can access tutoring and mentoring, information about financing, business angels, awards, grants and other opportunities. In this sense, UnX works as a melting pot where different needs, demands, skills and job offerings may be met.

Milestones to date

In its first ten months UnX has gained more than 21,200 registered members: 15,500 of them (73%) are following courses while 4,700 (27%) just take part in community activities.

Many European, American and Latin American universities and institutions are now working with UnX to offer entrepreneurial training and job opportunities for the digital economy. In addition to UNED and MIT, Alcalá University and UAPA (Open University for Adults of the Dominican Republic) are offering joint MOOCs at UnX, while other institutions, such as HP Catalyst Grant, Qualcomm Wireless Reach and Escuela Virtual Mercosur, are sponsoring courses and challenges. Yet more organisations are providing funding, leading projects, launching technological platforms and creating content for new MOOCs.

CSEV was awarded the 2013 NMC Center of Excellence Award for 'Outstanding achievement in the application of technology to teaching, learning, or creative inquiry' in recognition of UnX's development of on-line learning environments. So far, five courses are available, but the number will be substantially enlarged in the short term.



Figure 1 unX Logo

Following the track: Weprendo

CSEV, UNED and other partners launched a new Massive Open Online Community on App Development and Entrepreneurship. This online educational platform called provides access to massive open online courses (MOOCs) for creating mobile applications using cutting-edge Qualcomm technologies, and enables students to become part of a global, mobile entrepreneurship community that allows them to share knowledge and experiences. The project aims to foster a highly skilled workforce in



today's digital economy and drive employability and entrepreneurship among unemployed young adults in Spain and Latin America.

The partners are creating a Massive Open Online Community on App Development and Entrepreneurship. This online educational platform called Weprendo (www.weprendo.com) provides access to massive open online courses (MOOCs) for creating mobile applications using cutting-edge Qualcomm technologies, and enables students to become part of a global, mobile entrepreneurship community that allows them to share knowledge and experiences.



Figure 2 Weprendo Logo

This MOOCs will be used for teaching Qualcomm technologies like Vuforia™ augmented reality (AR) technology, Alljoyn™ peer to peer communication technology and Gimbal™ context awareness platform for Android and iOS. The online educational platform hosts training materials such as lessons, case studies, videos, challenges and interactive tools. Students use smart mobile devices like tablets to access the courses, learn from university professors and successful entrepreneurs, and connect with the online community. Furthermore, a blended approach is to be used in some courses, thus combining virtual MOOC-based courses with specific face-to-face workshops & seminars to experience with Vuforia™ and Alljoyn™.

Building a community of communities: The “umbrella” platform

The transition of the traditional MOOC concept to a wider vision as a tool of open online participation requires an appropriate architecture from a technological point of view. That is the rationale of the “umbrella” platform that is being created, which is not only the ultimate “container” of the different contents (MOOCs, communities of practices, open debates, etc.) allocated in the different platforms, but also, an more importantly, it provides the “glue” for fostering interactions and synergies amongst the different components.

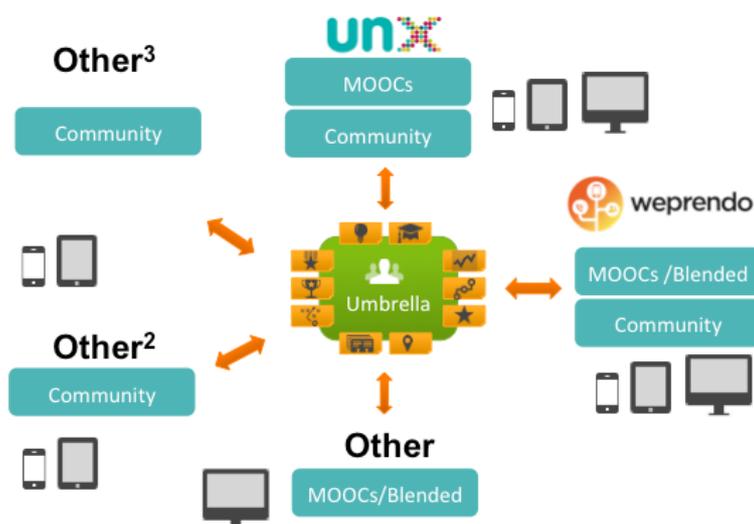




Figure 3 Design of an umbrella platform

Thus the “umbrella” platform will enable:

- The creation of a community of communities very much focused on user experience. In fact, current on line training is rather fragmented and institution-centered, so that the user may experience difficulties resulting in poor educational results, or, what it is more severe, high dropout rates. Several measures have been included in the platform to tackle these bottlenecks. For example, in order to log into de community, a single registration will be needed, irrespective of the platform (UnX, Weprendo or other) you are interested into. Furthermore, the student will be able to fully control his/her personal learning environment in manifold ways:
 - Access to a personal data scorecard (personal bookmarks/agenda & contacts/my activity/my courses and performance (learning analytics indicators)/recommendations/badges&certification management/
 - Access to the educational area (courses offered/level tests/virtual classes management)
 - Access to entrepreneurship/community data (media library/news/blog/events attended using geolocation tools/mentoring/participation on virtual workshops & conferences/projects portfolio/call for proposals)
- Provide students with the necessary tools to “browse” in the educational online space, promote reflection upon their learning processes and about the next steps to take.
- Different types of technologies interconnected through different means and a chance to create new projects in the future.
- Delivery of “super badges”. The concept of “super badge” is very much aligned with the implementation of PLEs in a MOOC framework. A “super badge” is the result of joining badges which may be gained either by completing a MOOC, participating in open debates and forums, being involved in face to face learning events, and so on. This means that badges may be obtained from different platforms and combined freely, and a super badge is delivered when completing one of different learning pathways. These pathways are suggested by the platform and in order to get a sound management, the user should define:
 - Current competences.
 - Preferences in competence acquisition.

Conclusion: learning and more...

Despite their short story (stemming from 2008), MOOCs are neither a unidirectional nor a rigid concept. On the contrary, they are an evolving phenomenon bound to impact not only the educational system, but also the way in which our society interact. In fact, MOOCs may foster the creation of new ways of civic participation and open government where shared knowledge and exchange of ideas may be used not only to identify talent, but also, more importantly, to extract useful proposals helping to shape decision taking in the fields of business and public policy. These new paradigms of Crowd-Citizenship y Crowd-Governance may give rise to a new concept: GLOOP, that is, GLocal –Global and Local at the same time - Open Online Participation. These pioneering ways of open participation are being fuelled by the appearance of MOOCs. The “umbrella” platform created by CSEV and other partners to address personalised learning pathways may ultimately evolve in that direction. Time (and good analytics) may prove necessary to elucidate whether some of the expected results become true.

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