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DigiCulture MOOC Courses Piloting with Students

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The creation of Massive Open Online Courses and platforms has become popular in recent decade, with several private and international initiatives. Such courses have made education available for all, and basic knowledge from a variety of domains available online in simple to use information. 13 different MOOCs courses developed as part of DigiCulture Erasmus+ project – Improving the Digital Competences and Social Inclusion of Adults in Creative Industries- are made available in the UniCampus platform. Based on open source, Moodle platform, with several years of iteration and improvements, integrating open badges and certificates, and dedicated to university students, UniCampus needed to be adapted for low-digital-skilled adults. The evaluation of a first pilot of the DigiCulture courses is presented in this paper.

1 Introduction

The creation of Massive Open Online Courses [4] and platforms has become popular in recent decade, with several private and international initiatives. Such courses have made education available for all, and basic knowledge from a variety of domains available online in simple to use information. Since 2018, we create a sustainable and efficient open education program – DigiCulture – dedicated to adult learners with low digital skills and low-qualified adults involved in the creative industries sector [2]. This education program is part of the Erasmus+ Digital Culture project, a diverse partnership formed by educational institutions and creative industries stakeholders: Politehnica University of Timisoara, Romania (coordinator), Roma Tre University, Italy, Aalborg University, Denmark, Graz University, Austria, Dublin City University, Ireland, Timisoara European Capital of Culture Association, and InterArt Triade Foundation from Romania, JME Associates Ltd, UK, National Association of Distance Education, Lithuania and associated partners EDEN and Culture Action Europe (www.digiculture.eu).

The multilingual online courses are hosted on the UniCampus platform, developed on Moodle open source platform [3], which is the first MOOC platform in Romania open to all universities [1]. This paper analyses a pilot of these courses performed with university students.

2 The Experience

This research presents the experience we had with 2nd year Master students from a hybrid programme in Communication and Digital Media. For this iteration we had a number of 19 students, 1 male and 18 female with ages between 23 and 50 years old. The pre-course evaluation shows that our students have basic digital skills and experience, with a good diversity between very able students and less experienced students, which is relevant for our study. All students had to register on the UniCampus platform¹ for free online MOOC courses. Each student chose two short courses² from: The Internet, World Wide Web and introduction to the digital world; Digital Content & Publishing; Data Protection and Open Licenses; Digital Curation – Digital Libraries and Museums; Digital Safety, Security and Ethics; Digital Storytelling; Digital Audiences, Digital Analytics; Social Media for Culture; Augmented and Virtual Reality; Digital Management in Culture; Online and Mobile Digital Media Tools.

2.1 Analysis of the Reports

We divided the analysis into several parts, first analyzed being the MOOC platform the students piloted. The UniCampus platform is similar to the Moodle based one our university uses, the Virtual Campus.

The platform interface was described as easy to use (55%), familiar (35%), intuitive (29%), well organized/structured (29%) and user-friendly (29%) which makes it accessible (20%) to all people interested in MOOC courses, regardless of the level of familiarity with the online environment.

The registration process went quickly and easily, without asking for too much pointless personal data (15%).

Highly appreciated was the fact that students were able to access the platform from several devices, such as PC, tablet or mobile phone, through its mobile application (35%).

An interesting point of viewed showed that learning on this platform is a gradual one, from simple to complex, being also a more pleasant and interactive way to have certain information. Similar, one student said it was a useful way for learning, by mixing and developing learning and teaching activities to be more dynamic and interactive with the help of technology. Interactivity was underlined by 50% of our students.

¹<https://unicampus.ro/cursuri/login/index.php?lang=en>

²<https://digidculture.eu/en/project-summary/>

The time indicators from each “subchapter” and the progress bar that show you how much percent of the course you have taken are very useful to determine how much time is left until its completion (40%). Also appreciated was the fact that they can choose to print the content, if they want, and this is arranged automatically.

Other points signaled by our students were the fact that you can learn for free (15%), at your own pace, from wherever you are (20%) and you have the best examples from experienced people.

After each loaded topic or activity that had to be done, a confirmation email was received by e-mail, which is a positive aspect.

In terms of technical issues, the most common error encountered was that progress is not automatically monitored as you progress through the courses and one can manually check the activity as completed (50%). Here is an interesting opinion regarding this: “the fact that I can check by myself that I read everything was a little discouraging, thinking that anyone can go through the course without reading a line, but only after I noticed that it can be checked, indeed, when the person taking the course considers that he finished reading, plus that the assignments I had could not be checked manually, but only automatically after uploading the assignment”. Another problem was the fact that the student’s did not receive a badge (20%) followed by some errors in the quizzes (15%). Another suggestion was that one should access the next topic in the current chapter only after one has gone through the previous topic, without being able to see all course material and activities from the start. Some people might choose the bad order in which to follow the course, not in the one intended for the information to be best understood. Accessing the courses from the platform seemed difficult to some. By clicking on “My Courses” they expected to find first the courses they enrolled in and then other sections. Students would have liked the information to be available in Romanian as well, but they don’t mind that it’s in English, especially since the language used is an easy to understand one (15%).

2.2 Findings from the Questionnaire

All students were required to complete a questionnaire related to their MOOC experience, after finishing all MOOC activities. The questionnaire has 27 questions and the estimated completion time is 10–15 minutes.

In the end, we also wanted to see how our students evaluate each of the DigiCulture courses. The ratings received were the following (1 low, 5 high): Social Media for Culture (4.2), Augmented and Virtual Reality (3.9), Digital Storytelling (3.9), Digital Safety, Security and Ethics (3.8), Online and Mobile Digital Media Tools (3.7), Data Protection and Open Licenses (3.6), Digital Curation – Digital Libraries and Museums (3.6), Digital Content & Publishing (3.5), Digital Audiences, Digital

Analytics (3.5), Digital Management in Culture (3.5), The Internet, World Wide Web and introduction to the digital world (3.4). The full results can be seen in Figure 1.

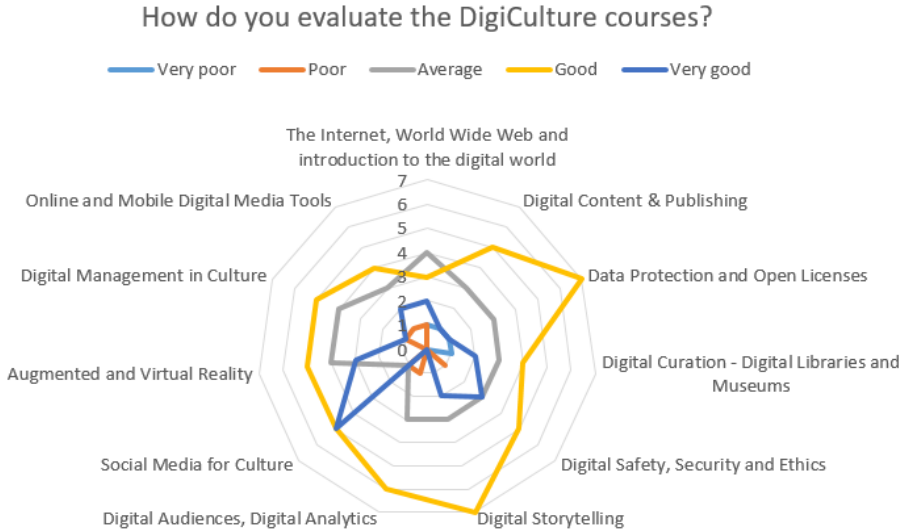


Figure 1: How do students evaluate the DigiCulture courses

3 Conclusion

Students' conclusions from the piloting indicates that the UniCampus platform is a useful platform for accessing basic knowledge for students with mixed digital skills. To summarize the whole experience of MOOC courses, one said that it had a big impact on her from different points of view. It was something different, something she was glad she was able to experience again, because this is a different way of accumulating information. The general experience was a pleasant one, and students declared that they accumulated knowledge about the topics covered.

4 Acknowledgement

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