

**Open educational policies and practices in the Spanish National Distance Education
University: UNED Abierta (UNED OER programme)**

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to describe the experience at UNED Abierta (OER programme in the Spanish National Distance Education University, created in 2012), and to analyse some lessons learned, related specially to the MOOCs phenomenon and their integration within the institution and into UNED's mainstream processes. The first sections provide an overview of the types of OER produced at UNED, followed by a description of those open courses managed by UNED Abierta: OCW, iTunes U and MOOCs. From the perspective of the author, Director of UNED Abierta, the paper presents a reflection on results and lessons learned. Some relevant ones are the need of an institutional discussion about open education in general, quality issues or the importance of follow-up of students' profile and learning processes. A last section focuses on future steps that this educational programme envisages at UNED, going through the integration of OERs, and MOOCs in particular, into the mainstream processes developed in this distance education university.

Keywords

Distance education, MOOC, OER, open education

**UNED Abierta: the OER programme of the Spanish National Distance Education
University**

The Spanish National Distance Education University (Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia - UNED) has offered open educational content (especially in an audiovisual format) since its creation in 1972, joined the OpenCourseWare movement in mid 2000's and launched its first massive open online courses (MOOCs) in 2013. But it was in 2012 when a specific programme related to open educational resources was established in the largest Spanish university, considering number of students (more than 250,000 in undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing education programmes).

The OER programme (*UNED Abierta*, in Spanish) intends to make visible all the open educational resources produced at UNED and promote their creation and use. Formerly located in the Vicerrectorate for Technology, UNED Abierta was moved to the Vicerrectorate for Continuing Education in September 2013. At that time the author of this paper was appointed as Director of the programme. This shift from a technologically towards a more pedagogically centred programme within the frame of lifelong learning provided by UNED was an important key for my involvement in UNED Abierta.

Different kind of OERs, produced and located in different departments at UNED, are accessible from UNED Abierta's site (<http://www.uned.es/unedabierta>). OCW, iTunes U and UNED MOOCs depend entirely on UNED Abierta; other open educational resources available at UNED are the following:

- Video and radio programmes: produced by CEMAV (centre for audiovisual media); some of them are produced in agreement with RTVE, Spanish national radio and television broadcasting. <http://canal.uned.es>
- Open access scientific journals: edited by Editorial UNED (publications service) and digitally hosted at UNED Library. <http://e-spacio.uned.es/revistasuned>
- Institutional repository: managed by UNED Library, it hosts different content, such as doctoral thesis, educational guides, scientific papers produced by UNED faculty, digitalised books from special UNED collections, etc. <http://e-spacio.uned.es>
- Video lessons self-produced by faculty and tutors and/or produced in the UNED regional centres: hosted by INTECCA (Technological Innovation and Development in the Regional Centres). <https://www.intecca.uned.es/portavip/cadenaCampus.php>

All these channels can be accessed from UNED Abierta website. Besides, three OER types with an open course character are directly managed by UNED Abierta: OCW, iTunes U and MOOCs, addressed in the following section.

One of the main tasks addressed from UNED Abierta in 2013, and a main reason for its constitution as an independent programme within UNED, are MOOCs. UNED launched its own platform for MOOCs (COMA, in Spanish) and this new focus attracts a lot of attention both inside and outside the institution.

UNED OCW, iTunes U and MOOCs

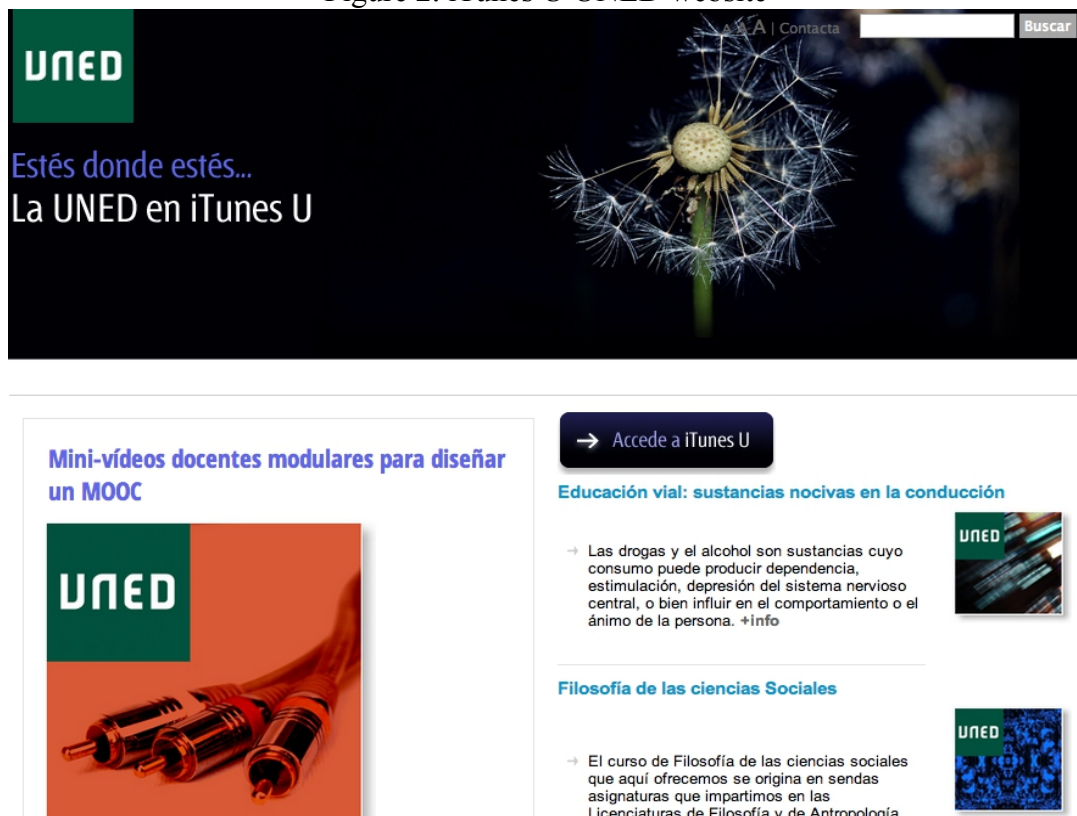
Open courses at UNED (OER with a course format) begun linked to the OpenCourseWare initiative (figure 1) in 2007. With 51 courses in different thematic areas, it has been working during almost 8 years. <http://ocw.innova.uned.es> The courses hold an Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Generic (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0) license. Data about visits are available in table 1.

Figure 1. OpenCourseWare UNED website



iTunes U was launched at UNED in 2012-13 (figure 2). It includes multimedia content: audio podcasts, videos, texts and interactive or enriched books. <http://www.uned.es/itunesu>

Figure 2. iTunes U UNED website



UNED COMA (*cursos online masivos abiertos* – MOOCs): the project was launched in spring 2013 in our own platform <http://unedcoma.es> (figure 3) with 22 courses offered in the first edition and 25 –3 of them new– in the second edition (autumn 2013).

Table 1. Figures about UNED open courses in 2012-13

Source: UNED Abierta

| 2012-13 | Number of courses | Number of visits/users |
|---------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| OCW UNED | 51 | 611,322 visits |
| iTunes U UNED | 36 (10 courses and 26 collections) | 136,722 visits |
| | | 129,345 downloads |
| | | 50,311 subscribers |
| UNED MOOCs | 22 | 139,517 users |
| | | 210,000 course registrations |

Figure 3. UNED MOOCs website



Our existing MOOCs can be framed, in general, within the x-MOOC umbrella. They fall into the cognitive-behaviorist pedagogy and rely primarily on information transmission, computer marked assignments and peer assessment (Rodriguez, 2013: 71). Each course, designed by its own professors, has chosen to put a greater focus on social interaction through debates in the

forum, or on developing a higher number of short videos thus focusing on the content (figure 4), or on promoting the use of other external social tools (social networks, blogs, etc.) (Gil-Jaurena & Domínguez, 2012). The opportunity to explore and experiment diverse pedagogical models through MOOCs has been a main motivation for our professors to participate in this new project at UNED.

Figure 4. UNED *Lógica y usos* MOOC homepage

The screenshot displays the MOOC homepage for 'Curso Lógica y Usos: Módulo 0. Presentación del curso Lógica y usos'. The interface includes a header with the UNED logo, COMA, and the text 'Entorno de formación abierta de la UNED donde podrás acceder a cursos online masivos y abiertos'. Navigation links include 'Inicio | FAQ | Metodología', 'Mis cursos', and 'Bienvenido, Inés Gil Jaurena'. A teal navigation bar contains 'General', 'Clases', 'Debates', 'Progreso', and 'Administración del curso'. The main content area features a video player showing a presenter and a slide with question marks. A sidebar on the right lists course materials and activities, including '[Materiales y Secuenciación]', '[0] Perspectiva. Objetivos. Organización.', and a list of activities from 1 to 9.

Results and lessons learned

The experience with these first MOOCs lets us reflect about the achieved results, lessons learned and future steps in UNED Abierta.

Among the achieved results, we can highlight the great expectation that the MOOC phenomenon has created. Figures from the first edition of UNED MOOCs tell us that more than two hundred thousand students took our courses (from 1,670 to 58,873 in the least and most numerous courses). In the second edition, opened in November 11th 2013, more than 60,000 students were registered in our courses in February 28th 2014 (when all the courses, except 2, were already finished). In order to explain the differences between the number of registered students in the two editions, in the first one the courses remained open during 7-8 months and in the second edition they were open during 3 months.

A general reflection within institutions should take place regarding the role that open educational policies and practices may represent. The development of OERs in parallel to the university mainstream processes is a risk at the moment, as the integration of these processes and resources has not been addressed to its full extent (Gil-Jaurena, 2013).

At a political level, a main lesson learned is that quantity shouldn't detract attention from quality. This is a main challenge in education, and also is in MOOCs and in open education in general (Misra, 2013).

At a more specific level, a lesson learned is that the access to educational content should be available at any time; considering that UNED MOOCs are open only during specific periods as a course experience (that is, with activities, forum, tutoring, etc.), an alternative site hosts all the videos that cover the main content of each course. These resources are whenever accessible in the UNED youtube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/user/UNEDcursoscoma> (10,609 subscribers).

Another important issue relates to the identification and better knowledge of our users: who they are, which motivations and expectations they present when they approach our OERs, which use they make of our resources, what other needs they show, etc. We have some information about our MOOCs' students, but lack info referred to our other OERs users. Regarding the first, registration information and survey results state that there is a majority of women, with a high level of education and either unemployed or employed (not so many full time students). Besides the profile, information about the learning paths that students follow is also of great interest in order to improve the learning experience and reduce attrition rates (in our second edition, the average of students who start the course but don't finish it is higher than 80%).

Future steps

Some of the main tasks to address in UNED Abierta have been identified, besides those already aforementioned (harder work on quality, information retrieval about users profile and learning analytics, reflection on open education in general).

In order to work on the integration of UNED MOOCs into educational mainstream processes, a set of MOOCs linked to continuing education courses are going to be promoted and launched in 2014. These MOOCs will cover introductory topics to lifelong learning courses offered by UNED (in the postgraduate programme, specially). The MOOCs will be self-contained (covering a full topic) and serve as a part of a longer course. Two MOOCs with these characteristics have been launched in December 2013-February 2014.

The recognition of the MOOC into the course is an issue to be developed in the MOOC phenomenon in general, and in our case it will be piloted linked to the continuing education programme at UNED. The credit recognition of UNED MOOCs in our undergraduate programmes is also a process that we have already started to address.

UNED has approved, in early March, the following criteria for the development of new MOOCs:

- Quality and scientific / academic relevance of the proposal and the professors.
- Current topic and social interest.
- Courses linked to UNED educational programmes: undergraduate, postgraduate, continuing education, language learning programmes.
- Courses 101, introductory courses or courses that deal with generic or cross-curricular competences.
- Courses linked to competitive research projects and/or groups, in order to disseminate research knowledge to wider audiences.
- Courses linked to collaborating institutions Chairs at UNED (UNESCO, etc.).
- Courses with a special innovative approach either in methodology, pedagogical design, social learning, etc.

Besides, a main task to acknowledge is the extension of OER at UNED, i.e. the promotion of OERs with the objective of better knowing these resources, producing more good OERs (as OCW, iTunes U content, MOOC, etc., depending on the case) and facilitating the use of OERs from other producers. The integration of open educational resources in the general educational processes, both as producers and as re-users or adapters, remains a challenge that UNED Abierta wishes to address.

In this process of actualisation and improvement within the frame of open education, we collaborate with other open and distance education institutions in Europe, specifically through our membership in the OpenUpEd (<http://www.openuped.eu>) steering committee and through our participation in the HOME project (Higher education Online: MOOCs the European way), coordinated by EADTU and focused on developing and strengthening an open network for European cooperation on open education, in general, and MOOCs, in particular (Jansen, 2014).

At the end, open educational policies and resources and more recently MOOCs are in accordance with open and distance education universities' social missions (Peter & Deimann, 2013). UNED's objective of facilitating access to higher education to everyone can be better fulfilled if open educational resources are a core of this kind of institutions' educational processes.

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