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WIDENING CREATION OF ACCESSIBLE DIGITAL EDUCATIONAL CONTENT: A COMBINED BLENDED LEARNING AND MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE APPROACH

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Ensuring inclusive education systems at all levels and lifelong learning is a commitment shared by all the United Nations countries who in 2006 signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, by which each country should ensure that all citizens with disabilities or some special educational need have access to primary and secondary education, higher education, job training, adult education and lifelong learning, without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. This same principle should apply as well to their integration in the work environment.

To move towards an inclusive education, progressively and substantially increasing alternative education practices based on Information Technologies and Communications (ITC) are needed, through the implementation of accessible eLearning. In the virtual educational context, in which teachers use digital educational content, it should be ensured that the content is accessible, i.e., understandable, usable and perceivable by any student or lifelong learner who has the prior knowledge required to enrol in the training, and having any kind of disability is not a barrier to complete the training.

The course "Creating accessible digital educational content" is aimed at teachers conducting online training, and its objective is training for teachers to create digital educational content that any student can use, whether or not they have some kind of physical or sensory disabilities. The course is organized by participants in the cooperation project ESM-AL, which aims to move towards a virtual inclusive Higher Education in Latin America. This course has two versions. One has the format of a workshop, with an online component and a face-to-face one. The second version uses the same resources but is organized as a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course).

This paper presents how the strategy for disseminating teacher training on creating accessible educational content has been designed in such a way to include both a blended learning approach and a massive open online one. In particular we describe how a course can be designed for a closed blended learning environment and can also be used in an open massive format. The paper presents the goals to be attained by the completion of the training and the competences to be achieved. It also presents the contents of the workshop, the methodology of teaching and the assessment set to pass the course. Finally, the work shows the MOOC methodology to be used.

The objective of the training courses (workshop and MOOC) is to train teachers so they can create digital educational content in a way that is accessible to any student, whether they have or not any physical or sensory disability. Thus, a teacher will be able to create accessible educational content in different formats after finishing the training. The workshop is taught by a blended learning model, with online educational activities throughout its duration and classroom activities for a week. The open massive course uses the same online resources as the workshop and is organized in a fully open online format using the iMOOC methodological model. According to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), the workshop has 2 credits in the mandatory part, since this system considers that 25 hours of student work equate to one ECTS credit.

The two-version course created allows trainees who perform it to create accessible educational digital content. So far the workshop has been launched in different test groups in Latin America and the results have been positive. The results obtained in these pilot groups will be analyzed and studied shortly, and the results and the learned experience in these first workshops will be published. The MOOC is being produced for launch later in 2014.

We think in this way awareness about the importance of creating accessible educational digital content may be broader and may be widespread throughout the world.