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Design and implementation of e-learning programs in folklore, ethnography and history: Following the Logic of the Mass Open Internet Courses (MOOC)

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Abstract
The subject of this essay is the design and the implementation of e-learning programs in folk culture and local history. In particular, the specific design of the programs was conducted under the scientific supervision of the Folklore Laboratory and Social Anthropology of the Department of History and Ethnology of Democritus University of Thrace with the collaboration of the Department of Preschool Sciences Education and Educational Planning of the University of the Aegean. This attempt was supported by the Academy of Folk Culture & Local History of the Cultural Organization "Magniton Kivotos'', in aid of the rescue of the cultural inventory of the Holy Metropolis of Demetrias and Almiros. The main features of this approach to the creation of e-learning programs in the folk culture, ethnography and history, were the opportunity to attend the courses for free as well as the absence of any restrictions and special conditions for the learner's involvement. The methods followed in these e-learning programs which were developed on a case-by-case basis were: a) asynchronous distance learning, b) synchronous distance learning, c) blended model which combines asynchronous and synchronous learning. Thus, the logic of Massive Open Online Courses was gradually adapted in the thematic units of folklore, ethnography and history.

Keywords: Folk Culture, Ethnography, History, Educational Programs, E-Learning, MOOC

Introduction
The design of distance learning programs, initially concerning folk culture and then issues of archival ethnography and history, started at the end of 2017, while the implementation of these programs began in the spring semester 2017-18 from the Academy of Folk Culture & Local History, Department of Cultural Organization "Magniton Kivotos", in aid of the rescue of the Cultural inventory of the Holy Metropolis of Demetrias & Almiros. (http://learn.cultureacademy.gr). According to the design, the first program that was offered was "Introduction to the Science of Folk Culture. It started during the spring semester of 2017-18 and its total duration is three academic years (six semesters).
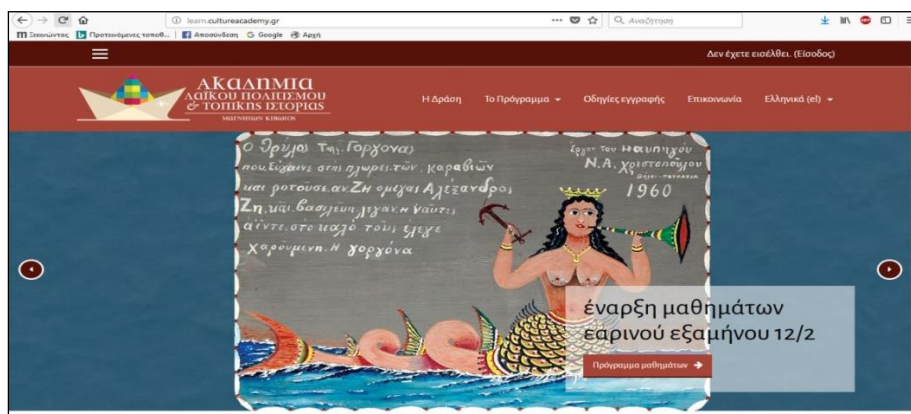

Image 1: The website of the Academy of Folk Culture and Local History
(http://learn.cultureacademy.gr)

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One of the next programs designed and implemented along with the program in folklore, is the program "People coming from Mt Pelion in Egypt: Archival Ethnography from the perspective of new technologies and the Internet". The duration of this program is one academic year, starting from the autumn semester (2018-19) and it will be completed in the spring semester (2018-19). During the first semester, the program focuses on issues of archival ethnography, while in the second semester live workshops on digital narrative and archive material will take place.

Image 2: "People coming from Mt Pelion in Egypt: Archival Ethnography from the perspective of new technologies and the Internet" in the website of the Academy of Folk Culture and Local History. (http://learn.cultureacademy.gr)

The third program (in most of its part requires physical attendance but also uses remote tools) started alongside the other two programs. It deals with the methodology of writing history and it holds the title "Under the carpet of history: How a historical work is written and judged".

The programs are implemented under the scientific supervision of the Laboratory Folklore & Social Anthropology of the Department of History & Ethnology School of Classics & Humanities of the Democritus University Thrace, as well as the Department of Preschool Education & Teaching Sciences Design of the University of the Aegean.
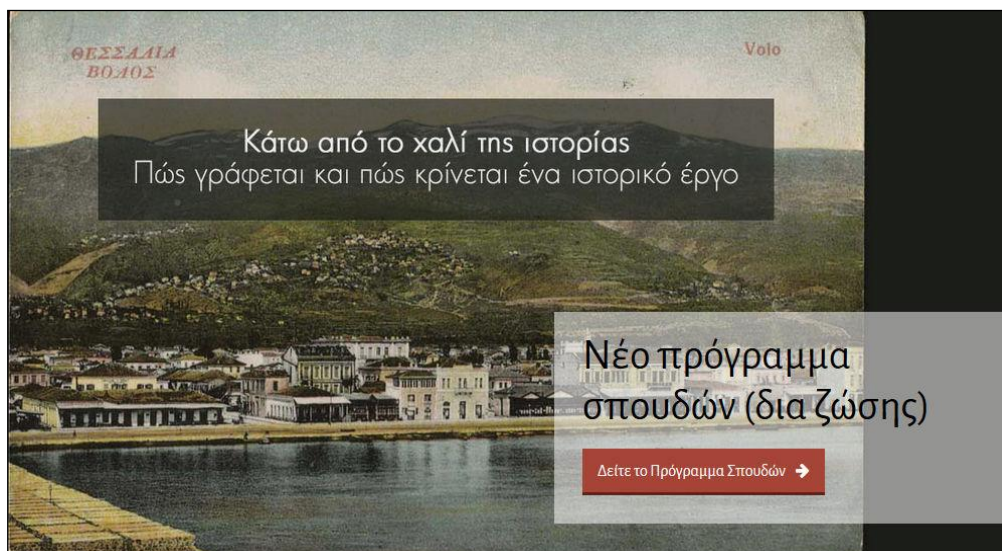

Image 3: The program "Under the carpet of history: How a historical work is written and judged" in the website of the Academy of Folk Culture & Local History (http://learn.cultureacademy.gr)

2. The Philosophy of the e-learning Programs of the Academy of Folk Culture & Local History.

The philosophy behind the design of our e-learning programs in folk culture, ethnography and history shares several common features with the axes and designing factors of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).More specifically, the e-learning programs offered by the Academy of Folk Culture & Local History hold the following characteristics:

a) Tuition is free

These online programs are completely free of charge without any other financial obligation for the participants. The only optional requirement is the purchase of a parallel book on the thematic unit, but only for those who seek to enrich their personal library. Furthermore, the provided digital material is designed to cover the needs of each of the six-month courses, which function as a separate module in the program.

b) Mass Participation (for Greece and other countries).

Anyone who knows the Greek language and has basic knowledge of computer (e-mail, browser) can participate in the program offered by the Academy of Folk Culture & Local History, regardless of their country or region. There are already registrations from many cities in Greece but also from Germany, Cyprus and America.

c) No special requirements or restrictions.

There are no special requirements or restrictions for the participants (e.g. limited places) In particular, no restrictions regarding the educational level, the profession, or any other skills that a person might have, were taken into consideration when designing the program. Every interested person has the ability to choose and enroll in more than one program.

d) Second chance for adults

The core idea of the programs is to offer a second learning chance for adults. Many adults were deprived of education due to various social and/or economic factors and they often express this wish publically. The participants were strongly motivated by the fact that non-standard education is carried out with the cooperation of two of the academic institutions of the country (Democritus University of Thrace, University of Aegean), combined with the systematic organization that converges to standard - university studies (curriculum, semester courses, examinations, exercises, educational material, certification, etc.). Moreover, economic criteria were another important factor which led people to this type of education (programs free of tuition) in the era of economic crisis in Greece. Furthermore, in order to ensure as much publicity for the programs as possible, during registration period, announcements were posted on local mass media, YouTube channel (promotional videos), Facebook (through the official page of the organization) and finally on the website of the Greek Folklore Society, to which anyone interested in the field of folk culture have access.

e) Democratization

The concept of open education is inextricably linked to the democratization of society. Society should support the fundamental right of people to develop themselves in the context of lifelong learning, while they simultaneously work, thus, creating a more fair and transparent reality.

Through the programs offered by the Academy of Folk Culture and Local History, every citizen has the opportunity to get in touch with educational units in the field of cultural studies and acquire qualifications useful for their workplace (professional needs). Nonetheless, participation in such programs may fulfill personal needs or aspirations, in the context of life-long learning.

f) Structure according to academic semesters and fortnights.

All courses are structured according to the academic calendar and in respect to the schedule of public holidays. (Christmas Holidays, Easter Holidays, time for repetition and final examinations). This helps learners, especially those who work, to plan their studying more effectively and eliminate potential learning gaps. An important point in the design of these programs aimed to adults is that each academic semester is divided into six fortnights and not into weeks. In this way, the learners are able cope with the learning load (educational material quizzes on each fortnight) more easily and efficiently.

g) Asynchronous e-learning combined with optional synchronous or live session.

The basic design of the programs includes asynchronous e-learning through the Moodle platform. However information about enrollments, curriculum and the philosophy of the Academy of Folk Culture & Local History in general, are provided through the original website (http://learn.cultureacademy.gr) the users are linked to the Moodle e-learning platform through the homepage (http://learn.cultureacademy.gr/login/index.php) and using their personal codes, they have access to the course. All the programs on asynchronous learning platform (Moodle) are structure according the academic semesters and six fortnights, with the corresponding material. Anyone who wishes to participate in the six planned online synchronous courses has the opportunity to interact with the instructor, using the chatting tools offered by YouTube live. Also, those who wish to travel to Volos or already live there, are welcome to attend the 2 hours lecture set for each lesson in a public space. Those who are not able to attend this lecture, have the opportunity, as mentioned before, to watch it through YouTube live, or watch it later through the website of the Academy of Folk Culture & Local History.
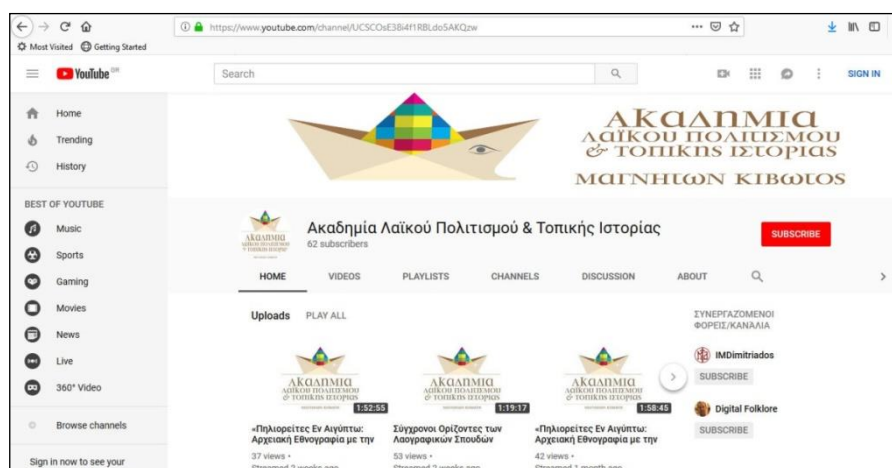

Image 4: the YouTube Channel of the Academy of Folk Culture & Local History.

h) Learning communities (debates on every separate unit and on the whole program)

The ultimate aim of the instructors and the Academy's scientific team is to gradually create a learning community regarding the field of cultural studies, using tools from the debates made on each fortnight, or on any general discussion on the sixth-month course. Other strategies that are going to be implemented are in person workshops, along with parallel discussions related to the cognitive subjects of the six-month courses. Additionally, through live session as well as graduation ceremonies an attempt is established to build a closer relationship between the learners so that they can later communicate more easily through the discussion panel of the e-learning platforms.

i) Two training circles

During the designing phase of the programs, the idea of running a second training circle for each and every six-month course occurred, in order to help those who were forced to quit the program due to a) workload, b) family and professional obligations, c) emergencies. d) Lack of time to complete weekly compulsory quizzes, or were unable to take the final examination. Moreover, these new training circles are also open for new participants. As a result, more and more participants will be beneficed (mass courses) while the percentage of those who quit the program will probably decrease. Thus, all the learners are given a second chance to attend the courses they are interested in. However, in this training circle all the six – month courses will be offered only asynchronously. Learners will not have the opportunity neither to attend the session on each unit in person, nor to participate in the live sessions on YouTube live.

j) 3 final examination periods

Taking into consideration the special needs of adult learners and given the fact that some of them participate in more than one six-month course, three examination periods were scheduled. Learners are given the opportunity to take part in the final exams whenever they see fit. Learners who fail in the first or second examination period have the chance take part in the third one. In order to take part in the final examination, learners must have answered correctly at least three out of six quizzes on the semester courses.

k) Evaluation of the program

Before the beginning and at the end of each six-month course, a quantitative evaluation of the program is conducted by the learners, in order for the program to be improved in terms of design and organization. Moreover, the scientific committee meets on a regular basis, so as to assess the participation indicators on the platform, participation in quizzes, discussions and discussions impressions or comments posted on the Academy's YouTube channel every fortnight. Finally, an evaluation report is submitted and discussed by each academic coordinator responsible for the trajectory and the instructors of each six-month course (qualitative analysis).

l) Certification of attendance and successful completion

After the completion of learners' obligations, a certificate of attendance and successful completion, for each six-month course, is issued automatically in digital format (pdf). Participants are not obligated to enroll in all the six-month courses, but they are free to enroll and participate only in those they are interested in.

3. Following the logic of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC)

The rapid development in the field of e-learning and the gradual formation of a culture of open learning have influenced higher education, lifelong learning, and non-standard types of education .A new dynamic e-learning form that emerged in 2008 by the Canadian Professor Dave Cormier (2008), who gave this characterization of his colleague George Siemens' e-courses, was titled "Connectivism and Connected Knowledge" and led to Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) (Yuan & Powell 2013). As its name suggests, the basic features of a MOOC are massiveness, openness and the use of Internet technologies. Specifically, according to Fini (2009) and McAuley (2010) et al., these are:

1. Massive: there is no restriction on the number of people who can participate.
2. Open: Accessible to anyone who has a computer connected to the Internet, usually without any charge
3. Online: Accessible through the Internet
4. Courses: structured around a set of goals for a particular field of study.

Regarding the different types of MOOCs, the division suggested by Tzimogiannis (2017:393), is related to the pedagogical approach used in every case.
 Thus, the first category is called cMOOCs (connective MOOCs) and initially was introduced by Siemens and Downes, who developed this theory based on the theory of connectivism. According to this model, learners develop learning networks having an active role in process, regulating their own learning, but they always have the option of cooperative learning.
The second category is xMOOCs (extended MOOCs), and it appears to have more common features with the so called traditional education, focusing on context and adopting behavioral models, transfer of knowledge, boundaries in learning and final evaluation tests. This category emerged out of the need of more and more people to acquire a certification from tertiary education, or other official bodies. It is also important that these programs can serve, in some cases, even hundreds of thousands of learners (Karsenti 2013)
Finally, there is also a hybrid category, the bMOOCs (blended MOOCs), which combines the above methods, or even face-to-face teaching as well, having on the one hand fixed content, but seeking cooperation and interaction between the participants on the other.
Besides the basic categories of MOOCs mentioned above, new hybrid models have been created since many designers and instructors are experimenting with new ways to enhance learning process and improve the experience of learners. These forms are: a) pMOOCs, in which learning is based on working plans (project based learning) and on problem-solving activities (problem-based learning) b) pdMOOCs (professional development MOOCs), designed for professional development in different sectors and lastly, c) sMOOCs (social MOOCs), based on social media and mobile technologies while adopting ubiquitous learning approaches in virtual communities, so that motivation for

learning and interaction between participants will be enhanced. (Tzimogiannis 2017: 394).

Building on the basic design principles of The Academy's digital lessons and the features of MOOCs mentioned above, we encountered a serious issue systematically recorded in the international bibliography. While in such free programs, a large number of people are initially enrolled with enthusiasm, later on, the percentages upon completion are significantly decreased. According to international surveys, (Bruff 2013, Jordan 2015, Khalil & Ebner 2014) on average, 55% of those enrolled are actually participating in the MOOCs, while only the 3-7% of those enrolled and 5-10% of active learners complete the course successfully. The low rate of participation as opposed to the high percentage of enrolled users, are attributed to various factors such as lack of time, reduction of motivation, insufficient knowledge or skills of the participants regarding the background MOOC's requirements, or the sense of alienation of learners and, in some cases, the hidden fees for participation (Tzimogiannis 2017: 395).

This concern combined with the high rate of drop-out recorded in international researches, mobilized us to initially fortify the way the digital learning is carried out (interactivity) and then, the organization of the program (participation) that had to be adapted to the logic of open courses. Our predominant aspiration, at an organizational level, was to ensure the communication with the learner through mass messages (mail) to inform them for every change on the platform (moodle), so as to reduce the loneliness they may experience. Thus, several clarifications regarding management and educational issues were sent, giving the learners a sense of belonging knowing that "Someone is here with you to inform you and to encourage you". Some of the regular messages sent to the learners are the following: a) a message of introduction on behalf of the academic coordinator, b) messages about new materials uploaded (presentations, bibliography, quizzes, announcements, discussions, clarifications on digital material), c) briefing on online YouTube session d) links for the sessions on YouTube, e) evaluation questionnaires (pre-post each course), f) announcements for the final exams and the mandatory and optional quizzes. It should also be underlined, that mass messages were sent even when a part of the above material was uploaded.

At a second level instructors were asked to design the learning material according certain specifications, a minimum educational package adapted at the level of learners. Thus, every fifteen days the educational material was uploaded in two phases. In the first phase, at the beginning of each fortnight (Monday), the optional bibliography and the study material (digital files, pdf) were uploaded and most of the times did not exceed -5-8 pages each. Simultaneously, conversations were activated giving the learners the opportunity to post comments and questions on each fortnight. On the first Saturday of every fortnight, a live session was held in a public space and the learners had the ability to watch it live through YouTube posting their questions, or they even had the opportunity to watch it some other time on the Academy's YouTube channel.

In the second phase of posting the material and especially the next day (first Sunday of the fortnight or Monday of the second fortnight), the power point presentation of the live session was uploaded by the instructor, as well as the link for the lesson on YouTube, and a quiz with 10 True or False, or Multiple Choice questions. Other measurements against the loneliness of the learners which aimed to enhance participation were the graduation ceremonies with relevant scientific lectures. Furthermore, an effort for solving questions in the live sessions was made however; they were recorded and uploaded on YouTube later on.
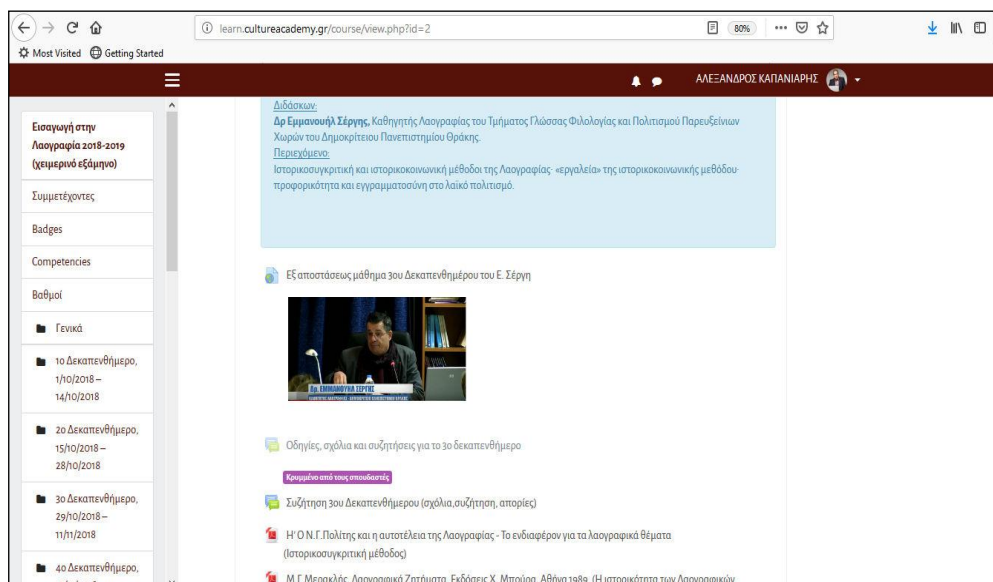

Image: 5 The Moodle platforms of the Academy of Folk Culture and Local History

If we try to draw a relation between the above design principles and the features of Massive Open Online Courses, (MOOCs) with those of the Academy of Folk Culture & Local History we will conclude that these courses were designed by adopting the blended bMOOCs model and the philosophy of open e learning. There are features such as the assessment of assignments on a fortnightly basis, the structure of content and the educational material provided, and the assignment of individual tasks (quizzes) every fortnight. Moreover, features of pdMOOCs (professional development MOOCs) were also added, which are designed for professional

development in different sectors. Especially the integration of pdMOOCs' model element was prompted by the fact that many of the learners were working in relevant sectors and they were interested in the acquisition of knowledge and skills in the field of folk culture, ethnography and heritage history.

4. The program "Introduction to the Science of Folk Culture"

The program started, as mentioned above, in the Spring Semester 2017-2018, in the middle of February 2018. The title of the first module was "Introduction to Folklore". The module that followed was titled "Contemporary Horizons of Folklore Studies (Folklore and Gender, Internet and Education)" (autumn semester 2018-19), followed by the modules (six-month courses) a) Philological Folklore (Spring Semester 2018-2019), b) Digital Folklore, Education and Development (Winter Semester 2019-2020), c) Religious Folklore (Spring Semester 2019-2020), d) Modern Folk Culture and Local Cultural/ tourism development (Winter Semester 2020-2021).

The scientific coordinators of the program are Manolis Varvounis, Professor of Folklore and Head of the Department of History and Ethnology Democritus University of Thrace, Emmanuel Sergis, Professor of Folklore of the Department of Language, Literature and Civilization of the Black Sea Countries of Democritus University of Thrace, Maria Gassouka, Associate Professor of Folklore & Gender of the Department of Preschool Education & Educational Sciences Design of the University of the Aegean and Dr. Alexandros Kapaniaris, Postdoctoral Researcher of the Department of History & Ethnology of Democritus University of Thrace, Lecturer at the Hellenic Open University. The program "Introduction to the Science of Folk Culture" will be completed in 2021 and will offer the learner (s) profound knowledge of the subject, through six-month courses that are structured around fifteen-week courses and lead to a relevant certification. Learners can attend all the courses offered in the 3 years training circle, or they can choose any six-month courses after their enrollment.

4.1 Aim of the Program

The aim of the innovative program "Introduction to the Science of Folk Culture" carried out using the mixed blended model is to train the participant (s) in the fields of folk culture and to prove that the science of folklore is not a static science, but a constantly evolving one, which records and interprets new aspects and expressions social life and folk creation.

4.2 Description of the program "Introduction to the Science of Folk Culture"

Therefore, this three-year training circle consisted of six-month courses in folklore, is indicative of the fact that the learner can understand as much as possible the folkloric phenomena, as well as to connect them with the local cultural development and the promotion of cultural reverse. The training program began with an extensive introduction to folklore, where terms and concepts on the cognitive object of folklore were studied. Issues like gender, internet and education, were developed in a next unit, defining this way the modern horizons of Folklore Studies. The next module focuses on Folklore Philology, which includes the

view of some species of the folk in their "traditional" form and in modern versions wherever and whenever they appear. Then, units regarding the digital folk culture, education and the way the internet and new technologies have invaded the field of folk culture will be introduced in the unit "Digital Folklore». Another subject of this three year training circle is the issue of "Religious Folklore" posing emphasis on the study of folk religious culture. as well as on the Greek folklore reality regarding the religious folklore. The last module in this program is devoted to the "Modern Folk Culture and Local Cultural / Tourism Development ". In this unit, topics such as the contribution of folk culture to local development contribution and the promotion of the cultural stock will be developed. Successful completion of each semester course leads to the acquisition of a certificate for the particular course, while the successful completion of all six-month courses leads to a certificate of completion of the 3- year training circle.

4.3. The organization of the program

The curriculum plan is designed by the Scientific Committee, which is responsible for its progress and evaluation. The total duration of the Program is three (3) years, i.e. six academic semesters, while the required "occupation time" is estimated at 120 hours per lesson / semester. The default format of the educational material for each course is fortnightly (a total of 6 fortnights) and it's uploaded on the Academy's Moodle. The structure of the program is defined by the academic coordinator of the program for each course and it may include e-Learning with on-line sessions, in person sessions, or a mixed model may be chosen. Every six month lesson constitutes the smallest educational subject and is independently assessed in terms of acquired knowledge, skills and competences. Finally, all the courses combined constitute a full three year training circle in the field of folklore, forming a complete learning module. The programs are offered free of charge, while learners are required to purchase an obligatory book for each course, proposed by the academic coordinator. Simultaneously, alternative books and bibliography are offered to the learners in digital form.

Depending on the subject, the academic coordinator and the particularities of the teaching subject, the content of each course includes:

➢ A course book
➢ Additional files pdf - excel - power point
➢ Links to External Websites
➢ Theory enriched with images and links
➢ Additional Bibliography and Webography
➢ Videotaped Lectures
➢ Examples - Exemplary Exercises
➢ Self-Assessment exercises
➢ Case Studies
➢ Shapes-Charts-Tables
➢ Video Presentations

Through the specific way of presenting the educational material of the course on the electronic platform, the consolidation of theory is succeeded with a more efficient way, in contrast to the linear way of teaching. As stated above, the structure of each course is announced before the start of the course (release phase). In particular, the learner will be informed a) whether any live session will be held during the six month course and when (dates), b) whether

any on-line sessions or counseling will take place and when (dates), c) whether the course will be based on the material uploaded on the platform, lectures etc. (asynchronous teaching) and. Moreover, the overall schedule of the program is announced (assignment submission dates, guide of study etc.). On some units, if necessary, there are optional and mandatory self-assessment exercises, including questions, multiple choice questions, true / false statements, or learners should write and upload a short-answer on the online platform on a fortnightly basis. In any case, the material for the courses is uploaded on the (moodle) platform.

5. The program "People coming from Mt Pelion in Egypt: Archival Ethnography from the perspective of new technologies and the Internet".

The e- learning program "People coming from Mt Pelion in Egypt: Archival Ethnography from the perspective of new technologies and the Internet" was first introduced during the autumn semester of 2018-19, as part of a one year course (two semesters). The program is implemented with the scientific diligence of the Laboratory of Folklore & Social Anthropology of the Department of History & Ethnology School of Classics & Humanities of the Democritus University Thrace.

The academic coordinators of the program are Manolis Varvounis, Professor of Folklore, President of the Department of History and Ethnology Democritus University of Thrace and Dr. Alexandros Kapaniaris, Postdoctoral Researcher of the Department of History & Ethnology of Democritus University of Thrace, Lecturer at the Hellenic Open University.

Successful completion of the program will offer the learners deep knowledge on the subject through two semesters divided into learning objects. A certificate is also provided. The teaching units offered are 1) Introduction to ethnography, 2) Digital ethnography, 3) Basic principles of archival ethnography, 4) interview as a tool of ethnographic research 5) Digital narrative and collective memory, 6) Workshop on digitization and management of evidence and sources, 7) Social Networking Tools and Collective Memory.

5.1 Aim of the program

The training program will try to approach the archive ethnography by attempting an interdisciplinary dialogue on the subjects of history folklore and anthropology. At the same time, the relationships between these sciences and the archival ethnography will be explored, as well as the relationship of technology and the different digital readings it can offer. The scope of the archival ethnography will be the program "People coming from Mt Pelion in Egypt: Archival Ethnography from the perspective of new technologies and the Internet", along with multiple files with multi-read levels. This educational program is also concerned with the reading of the files in a digital environment, using technology as a tool for projection and decryption, as well as a tool for collection of new data from relatives of the owners of the files (digital narratives, closed chat groups, blogs, etc.). Besides, primary research into archives and evidence with an eye to producing ethnography can often be done directly in archives in digital format, rather than in the original documents. Nonetheless, this fact itself has some advantages and disadvantages to be explored as the subject of another program.

5.2 Methodology of the program

Learners, except for the study material for each semester will have to study every fortnight on the platform, they must also complete at the end of the program,: a brief ethnography accompanied by an equivalent archival material for a family or person or group of people regarding Egyptian pilgrims through unpublished material that they should look for in the region of Pelion or from relatives and b) a digital narrative (5 minutes duration). In order for the learners to meet the demands of the program, during the spring semester (2018-19) they are required to physically attend the following obligatory workshops : a) Digital narrative and collective memory (lasting 12 hours), b) Digitization and Management of Documents and Resources (5 hours duration), c) Social Networking Tools and Collective Memory (3 hours duration).

6. The program "Under the Carpet of History: How a historic work is written and judged"

The Free History Workshop for adults, is conducted in person with the parallel support through the special website of the Academy and the e-learning platform (moodle).The History Lab entitled "Under the Carpet of History: How a historic work is written and judged" is implemented with the scientific assistance of the Associate Professor of Neohellenic History, History of Modern Greek Education and Teaching of the History of the Pedagogical Department of the Primary School Of the University of Thessaly Dr. Antonis Smyrnaiou and the and the Assistant Professor of Physics and Collaborative Learning Environments supported by TPE Dr. Vassilis Kollias of the same Department. The digital design of the workshop through the doodle platform has been implemented by Dr. Alexandros Kapaniaris, Postdoctoral Researcher of the Department of History & Ethnology of Democritus University of Thrace.

6.1 Aim of the program

The aim of the workshop is not to offer historical lectures or a definite historical narrative, on the contrary, this workshop is an infrastructure project, an attempt to initiate the learners in the science of history. The workshop constitutes a co-study between the organizers and the participants on issues related to the general approach of one historical theme, the formation of historical discourse and historical criticism. It's an adult learning environment targeting people who are interested in history / historiography and are willing to devote, to a possible extent, some time and effort for this initiation. The benefit for the participants is expected to be the deeper and wider understanding of it historical / historiographical process, which will eventually lead to a better understanding of the history that is taking place today and in the near future. Thus, issues such as old and modern perspectives of history are being challenged, as well as the contribution of philosophy and history to historiography, historical knowledge, historical event and the respective selective criteria, the meaning of objectivity in history, similarities and differences between the historical and the literary narrative, the study of historical sources and their use in historiography, "historical empathy," the role of the historian in the formation of historical discourse, the benefits and uses of history in human societies, etc.

Conclusion

The attempt to design and implement e-learning programs in folklore, ethnography and history of the Academy of Folk Culture and Local History is the first effort in Greece for non- typical studies in the field of cultural studies. The design of these free e-learning courses follows the logic of the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC). The research that will arise separately for each program from the assessment already submitted by the learners regarding the first two semesters of the Program "Introduction to the Science of Folk Culture" and "People coming from Mt Pelion in Egypt: Archival Ethnography from the perspective of new technologies and the Internet", which are already in the third and second semester respectively, is of great interest. However, some qualitative evidence of the effort is already visible and is related to the mass participation of learners. These are the following facts: the first semester of the program "Introduction to the Science of Folk Culture" with the six-month course "Introduction to Folklore", which had 105 entries, b)the first semester of the program "Introduction to the Science of Folk Culture" (b ' cycle) with the six-month course "Introduction to Folklore" which had 90 entries, c) the second semester of the program "Introduction to the Science of Folk Culture "with the six-month course" Contemporary Horizons of Folklore Studies, Gender, Internet and Education "with 85 entries, d)the first semester of the program "People coming from Mt Pelion in Egypt: Archival Ethnography from the perspective of new technologies and the Internet" with 25 entries (specialized subject), e) 1st semester of the program "Under the carpet of history: How a historical work is written and judged with 30 entries (specialized subject). Collecting the data from the completed six-month course "Introduction to Folklore ", it has been observed that out of the 105 people initially registered in the course, 75 successfully completed the course. This fact was a surprise for the scientific committee of the program given that the rate of those who quit such e learning programs is usually higher. However, the fist (pre - post) evaluations combined with the completion of the rest of the courses will offer even more accurate data regarding this specific project in the field of cultural studies. The attempt of the Academy of Folk Culture & Local History for the constitution of free cultural studies to adults shows that citizens embraced this effort all around the region of Thessaly. It also notable, that the scientific committee, the instructors and the university teachers in conjunction with the administrative staff, have offered voluntarily their services with great consistency and quality. The next courses to be designed by the Academy shift emphasis on issues of wider interest, focusing on teamwork, workshops, interactive material and collaboration among the learners with each other and their instructors as well.

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