

Designing Learner-Centric MOOCs

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Lecture 24

What is an LxI?

Hello and Namaste.

The learner centric model of MOOCs consists of structural elements such as the learning dialogues, learning by doing activities, learning extension trajectories, learner experience interactions.

In this learning dialogue, we would discuss the learner experience interactions. A typical MOOC learner has discussion forum to interact with the peers as well as the instructors. The challenges which are faced typically are low participation in the forums because not many people would like to visit that. It is typically used for clarification of doubts, which is very short interaction at times. And if you look at the overall discussion forum, it looks very scattered because the threads are lying without a proper classification of their topics. Sometimes, you also see off-topic threads which are populating the discussion forum. And finally, the learners cannot find any connect when they are participating in any discussions. All this also leads to non-availability of any peer connection whatsoever. This makes the discussion forum a utility which is not used to the fullest potential.

Learner experience interactions address these points by creating a structure of this element in a slightly different manner. The instructors post a focus question to start a discussion thread. These posts are centered around the focus question, which avoids the scatter.

The learner experience interactions have a focus question, where the question about the content is presented to drive the discussion. The learners will read and post and comment about that question, which will be centered around the topic of that question. The discussion threads are a mechanism for regulating and steering the interaction in the appropriate direction of the focus question.

It can provide pointers, explanation and open-ended points which will create multiple threads by the learners. This discussion is followed by a reflection quiz, where the learners engage in the discussion threads and reply to the assessment questions asked in the quiz. The questions of the reflection quiz are based on the interaction which has happened in the discussion thread. Therefore, the learners need to engage in the discussion thread in order to answer them.

Now that you have seen the structure of LxI, it's a good time to reflect upon the challenges of the existing discussion forums in MOOCs.

As you know, there are three elements of LxI: a focus question, the discussion and the reflection quiz. Pause this video and write down what could be one particular challenge which is addressed by these three elements of LxI and after you are done, resume. Let's just have a look at possible answers for all the points which we had asked in the reflection spot. The focus question anchors the discussion.

It avoids the scatter which can happen otherwise, meaning that the learners are forced to point their discussion posts to the question which is asked, and thereby it sets a very clear deliverable. The discussion threads exposes the learners to the versatile viewpoints. It steers the discussion along the productive channels, because you can find all the related threads at one point now. This encourages participation in the threads of that particular interest for every learner who is trying to access the discussion forum.

In the end, the reflection quiz provides a perfect closure to this activity. It also incentivizes the engagement of the learners by making them visit the discussion and answering the quiz questions. In short, an LxI cultivates peer learning via focused discussion.

The dynamics of an LxI helps the learner not only in participating in the discussion, but also confirming that knowledge by answering the questions in the reflection quiz. Let's now have a look at some of the LxI interventions we have carried out in the MOOCs which we have recorded in the past. A MOOC on 3D animation was going on, in which there were queries about how to solve a particular assignment. The instructor posted a focus question in the discussion forum and asked the learners to post their processes of how they solved the assignment for the benefit of others. This resulted in a thread of long discussion posts which were talking about innovative ways of solving that assignment.

We also found out that lot of other learners benefited from each other and tried these processes and submitted their results once again on the discussion thread, thereby encouraging others to try them out. The instructor later on added questions about the various processes posted on this thread in the reflection quiz following this discussion. It was found out that the learners still engage in multiple discussions about that particular assignment, which makes them rich in terms of their application of that particular concept.

MOOC platform is where the learners are away from the classroom atmosphere. They look forward for peer-to-peer interaction and the experience of learning together. LxI provides exactly that experience through various interaction opportunities. LxI cultivates peer learning when you ask queries, you read the posts by others, you answer some of them, whatever you can. You are exposed to diverse learning paths which others are taking at times, or the instructors have mentioned, and in the end you build a collective knowledge by interacting with each other.

A definite take away for all of you is to ensure that you leverage peer learning in the discussion forum by anchoring the discussions and incentivizing this participation by adding a reflection quiz at the end.