Designing Learner-Centric MOOCs

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Lecture 26

Orchestrating your MOOC

Once the elements of a MOOC are created, it's time to offer it. We call this stage as orchestration simply because it is not nearly offering the elements one after another. It is almost similar to a conductor of a orchestra who will plan the different elements of the orchestra such as the vocals and the bass instruments and the percussions, lay them out in a particular manner and ask them to play according to the music that is designed. Elements of the MOOC when created actually should also create a impact and a engagement with the learners if they are orchestrated in a particular manner that the instructor team is designing.

Orchestration of a MOOC is an important stage in making your MOOC learner-centric. This is because you can establish learner connect, get feedback from the learners, act upon it, and adopt your strategies accordingly in a live setup. This is important because a set policy or a strategy may not work every time with a given cross section of learners. This definitely requires establishing learner connect and catering to the requirements of the mass of learners who are typically engaged in your MOOC.

Now the two obvious questions at this point are: how do you establish this connect and what does it take to establish such a connect? The first and the foremost requirement is your time and instructors are always pressed on time. The way in which we can actually address this is by involving the teaching assistants and the course creation team into the group of instructors. This not only expands our instructor team but it also helps us in addressing diversity because each one of the team members comes with innovative and useful suggestions at times.

The orchestration stage starts actually way back from where you can administer a survey form to understand the learners who have enrolled in your MOOC. You

can advertise the MOOC in the first place for a certain category of people who may benefit. However it is not in your control who will actually enroll for it. Therefore it is a good practice to have a initial survey to understand your learners. The analysis of this survey results will tell you the age group which is enrolling in your MOOC or their backgrounds, their professional status as if they are students or working professionals and so on and so forth. This data will tell you whether you can start your course as it is that you have planned, or you probably need something to make all of them at a particular even stage by introducing something called as a prerequisite knowledge. This would also be a warm up activity or some extra reading material that they should be aware of before actually getting into the thick of the course. This is orchestration action which has to be taken in order to maintain a certain level of starting point for the course.

Later during the course as you go ahead, week by week, you can see the performance of the individual learners and analyze it carefully. This is where your team of teaching assistants and co-instructors will come in handy. You can observe whether a certain concept is not getting across or there are major faults in the way the learners are solving a particular assignment. In that case, you can create a remedial action by introducing additional reading material in the form of a LxT or conducting a focus question discussion in a LxI or sometimes adding a activity to reinstate that particular concept or even otherwise sometimes you can actually record a new LeD in order to address those misconceptions. There are various measures that you can take and you can decide the remedy based on the acuteness of the problem.

The third important component is having a possibility of LIVE interaction with the learners. These days, because of the technology available there are multiple ways in which you can do this. For example, in our course you may observe that we have decided that on a particular day of a week we will have a interaction session. This is pre-announced. A reminder mail goes to all the people who are concerned and the instructor comes LIVE on a platform from where the learners can see him/her and interact with him/her using chat messages, which are LIVE, or even messages can be posted prior to this interaction. For example, if you see the interaction which Prof. Shridhar had, he was reading some of the questions which were posted earlier to him and answering them during the LIVE interaction. In addition, there were some questions popping up LIVE as a chat and he was answering them LIVE. The way in which he was answering them by addressing the

name of the person who has asked the question was very nicely observed and taken by the individual learners because they felt nice that my question has been recognized and answered. This has a good psychological impact, positive impact on the learners since they feel they are seen and heard by the instructors.

If you see the second interaction that I had with the learners of the course, I not only interacted with them for the queries which were raised prior to this interaction and also the chat messages which were coming up during the interaction. I also tried to connect to the learners who were away from my studios but were available on video link and they could share their experiences through LIVE video transmission from their own cities.

Now this is another way of engaging with the learners because I had learnt about this particular learner who wanted to share his experience about how he went about designing his own book and I thought it would be interesting for other learners to know about it. Not missing out on saying that this particular interaction being stored at a video aggregator site will not only help the instructors to check out what is being already said on this thing but it will also help the learners who have missed out this LIVE interaction to go back to this video and observe it, watch it and make notes about it. These are some of the different levels of interaction which are possible at the orchestration stage.

However, I should definitely mention that all these are not possible without a strong team working in the background. There is a team of video cameraman which are right now in front of me shooting me, the editors, and also the content team which is taking care of the feedback which is coming at time and feeding me with that in order to address that in my LeDs or in my videos or in my interactions. The teaching assistants who are constantly filtering and distilling the information and the messages and the feedback provide a vital support for me to come in front of you and talk about various things which are bothering you. All in all it's a team effort which makes the stage of orchestration a very important one and it's almost same like I said like a live Orchestra which has so many players but when you listen to it, it's only music to ears. Thank you!