Designing Learner-Centric MOOCs

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Lecture 29

From Regular course to LCM

If you have been teaching for a few years, all this content already exists. You already have your lecture notes, you already have the assignments that you are going to give and so on. So what is important is to be able to chunk them into meaningful chunks, which will ensure learner engagement and learner connect for the learners in a MOOC.

We may no longer think of it as one monolithic course for 12 or 14 weeks. What might happen is we say that this is actually three separate MOOCs. And each MOOC focuses on a particular theme. It might turn out to be two six weeks MOOCs or sometimes it still might turn out to be one 12 week MOOC. It really depends on the instructor.

So the one key thing that you have to keep in mind, instead of simply giving pointers to the end of chapter exercises, what we can do is, at the end of every LeD, we can take those same exercises and convert them into LbDs which are relevant for that LeD. So that's one thing that we could do. Another area might be that the student requires feedback. In a classroom you might have some, you know, post-exam discussion, wherein you are addressing all student queries at one go. In a MOOC you may have to actually create separate feedback for different answers that students give and so on.

And the other point is that we are now working with a medium where there is a physical distance between the instructor, one learner and a group of learners, as well as what's called as a transactional distance which encompasses not just the

physical distance but also what's called the 'psychological and communication space which needs to be overcome', and if this space is not overcome, there is likely going to be a potential misunderstanding between what the instructor wanted to convey, what the learner expects, and how they interact with each other.

When we think of a regular classroom, we are aware of the interactions which can happen within the classroom and the learner-learner or the learner-instructor interactions. The moment we switch to a MOOC scenario there the scale and the diversity add up to various issues there and these need to be addressed with careful design of activities. The learner-centric MOOC model proposes Learner Experience Interactions or LxIs as we call it to handle this problem.

The challenge is to design such activities which will promote and kind of invite interaction in this course and also it will give opportunities for peer learning so that the learners who are already diverse and participating in the course. We learn from each other and the instructor can pitch in wherever required to either summarize or address the misconceptions and close the loop so that the learning continues.