Designing Learner-Centric MOOCs

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Lecture 31

Maintaining Learner Connect

Learner connect is definitely important in a MOOC setting and that is seen because of this heavy dropout rate and normal scenario of a MOOC, where teachers complain that a very small fraction of the learners who have enrolled have completed the entire course. And one of the biggest reason which we also found out, is about lack of learner connect. The learners don't just feel connected to the course as it progresses. The way it happens is, because of various challenges involved in the MOOC setting as such. There are challenges of scale, numbers are really high, diversity, people from various backgrounds, prerequisite or non-prerequisite, will definitely enroll for the course at times. Also, important point in, across online learning, not just MOOC, is that often learners will be accessing the course in isolation. They will be alone and trying to learn from the course.

At this point, it is very difficult for individual learner to pay attention to whatever is going on in the course without having peers sitting next to be them or the teacher right in front of them physically. So, designers need to take this fact into account and think from the learners' side of what will make them feel a part of the course while actually doing it.

There are several ways to maintain this learner connect. One of them is to simply introduce a reflection spot inside a LeD. So the moment you have a reflection spot, the learner is going to pause, the learner is going to think, and the learner is going to respond, and all of these actually help to maintain the learner engagement and thereby maintain the learner connect throughout the course.

The instructor has to pay attention to maintaining learner connect throughout the course and there are many ways to do it which we have discussed throughout this MOOC, throughout this MOOC. For example, the feedback that the instructor gives the learners at the end of the LbD that allows the learners to improve, as well as is customized to their response, that is one way of maintaining learner connect. Another important aspect while thinking of a learner-centric MOOC is the orchestration. So, orchestration means the guidance provided by the teacher or the course team while the learner is moving through a learning path and in a MOOC, as you all know, learners can take flexible approach towards their learning process and each of them will be having a different learning path at any given point and hence, it is important that a MOOC instructor thinks of this orchestration, or design the entire course for the orchestration also.

So, first we look at what all affordances are provided by the technology, for the learning platform, to support orchestration. So this could be in terms of providing learner data, as to where they were at a particular point of time, or it could also be giving out emails or alerts. It can also be about the progress of the learner in terms of marks for the submitted assignments or the practice quizzes etc., and as a learner-centric MOOC instructor, it is important that the instructor takes these data, the learning data, and use it for designing what are the next ways forward.