

Designing Learner-Centric MOOCs

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Lecture 09

What is an LeD?

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The Learner-Centric MOOC model consists of learning dialogues, learning by doing, learning extension trajectories, learner experience interactions all of which are connected through appropriate orchestration between the course team and the learners. We will now discuss about learning dialogues.

Broadly speaking, a learning dialogue consists of content, which may be a video, explanation of the topic, interspersed with one or more reflection spots. Reflection spot is a point where the content is paused and the learner is required to answer a question.

What exactly is the content? The content could typically be a short video explanation, or it could be some text which the instructor wants the learner to read, or it could be an animation. So, any concept that the instructor wants the learner to acquire could be captured as the content. Is it sufficient to only capture the content?

Like many of us have seen videos which go on and on. So even if the videos are short, we many of us do not see the videos beyond a certain point. So, what a learning dialogue does is something more than simply provide the content. The learning dialogue has a reflection spot. Conceptually, a reflection spot is a question that makes the learner pause, reflect on the preceding content, express their thinking. Reflection spot allows the learner to micro-practice or simply apply the concept that they have learnt immediately.

Operationally, a reflection spot may be implemented as a multiple-choice question, or as a fill in the blanks, or even as a short answer question. A reflection spot is followed by content, once again. This content may be a summary of what were the expected answers in the reflection spot, or it may be continuing further from the reflection spot.

The key idea here is to have the reflection spot question in such a way that it is connected to the content that is immediately preceding it, as well as to the content that is immediately following it. The goal of a learning dialogue is to provide this conceptual knowledge along with explicit spots for learners to express their conceptions, do micro-practice and reflect on what they have learnt.

How does an instructor do that?

Instructor does that by creating a learning dialog which has content and reflection spots, which are related to each other. The learners access the content, carry out the action recommended in the reflection spot, they respond to questions, they express their thinking and then they access the content that follows the reflection spot. Now you will see a screen which has a question. This is a reflection spot. The reflection spot question is, "What is one advantage of a learning dialogue over a content delivery video?"

You have to think about the content delivery videos that you have seen, all the way from one-hour lectures right down to short, interesting, engaging videos, and think of what is the way in which a learning dialogue is different from them and write down one advantage of using the learning dialogue over a content delivery video. Once you have completed the activity, you can press "resume" to continue with the video. Some of you may have written a reason like, "A learning dialog is short, while other videos may be long..." Others may have said that "the learning dialogue is about the topic, it's focused..."

All of these are valid reasons. However, one important benefit of the learning dialogue is the reflection spot. The reflection spot has many benefits, some of which are that the learner is engaged with the content, since the learner has to do something. The learner is not simply passively watching the instructor go on lecturing, but the flow of the video is interrupted and there is some dialogue that happens and the learner has to express their ideas either via poll, or an MCQ, or write something.

The second big advantage of the reflection spot is that it is connected to the immediately preceding content. So, it gives opportunity for the learner to immediately apply their learning or express their thinking, and since the content that follows the reflection spot attempts to capture various learner responses, a learner can get feedback on their own responses.

One point to keep in mind is that although a reflection spot is question, it's not meant as an assessment. We're not grading learners by asking this question. The purpose of the reflection spot is to ensure that learners are engaged. One, learners look forward to expressing their opinion or answering the question, and they know that it's not being graded. And two, the content in the reflection spot is connected to the concept that is being discussed in the learning dialogue.

So, essentially, a learning dialogue promotes concept acquisition through learner interaction. It's not simply a one-way transmission of concepts.