ONLINE LEARNING: OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD AGENCY

Behavioral Science & Design Perspectives

fractal

COVID-19 & Online - Learning

In the midst of all the suffering, EdTech is one category that's shining. And why not! With 6+ hours of schooling, and potentially several hours of tuitions coming to a sudden halt, the space is here to be filled. Schools are aggressively moving to tutoring students through online platforms - activities, science, math, music and PE as well.

But hopefully the virus will be tamed soon. And when that happens, schools and tuitions will be back, perhaps with greater demand on student's time to make up for the lost hours. It is likely that there will be little time left for online education. Moreover, schools and parents will be keen to go back to the old normal. ASAP, than not.

Learning, Unlearning & Relearning

Meanwhile, for the past several years, universities have been increasingly turning to online and modular learning modes for continued learning. Countries like Singapore are investing heavily in providing their citizens with learning credits that they can draw on throughout their working lives. Individuals, too, increasingly seem to accept the need for continuous rebooting

According to a Pew survey, 54% of all working Americans think that it will be essential to develop new skills throughout their working lives; among adults under 30, the number goes up to 61%. Another survey, conducted by Manpower in 2016, found that 93% of millennials were willing to spend their own money on further training.

But despite all the intent, infrastructure development, content creation, and near ubiquitous access, the economist laments - "Information technology has reshaped other sectors; it has had little impact on education".

So what might online education providers engineer in these COVID-19 times to create durable engagement rather than a covid-induced temporary surge that they are currently witnessing on their apps?

a. Help learners build an engagement with the online platforms which goes beyond just providing quality content & assessment.

b. The need for learning, unlearning & relearning is ever accelerating. This is a captive opportunity to help learners take charge of their learning requirements over & above what is being provided by formal system.

c. Create a sense of ownership & investment in the learning platforms thus creating a need for preserving what was created during this TINA (there is no alternative) moment.

BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES TOOL-KIT FOR ONLINE LEARNING PLATFORMS

Over the past 3 years we have been working with several EdTech companies across k-12, teachers and adult learners to shape their education platforms in ways that drive higher order engagement between learners and the platform. Leanings from behavioral sciences and design has helped create a blue print of concepts that can be leveraged by Edtech companies to enhance the platform. Here's a glimpse.

PROMOTE AGENCY	ENGINEER FEEDBACK	SUPPORT REWARDS	SUPPORT SOCIAL VALUE	ENABLE ACTIVE LEARNING	ESCALATE COMMITMENT	DRIVE INVESTMENT
The platform drives ownership and a sense of control or power for the user.	The platform engineers feedback that guides and motivates the user.	The platform rewards learners as they make progress towards their goals	The platform provides meaningful forms of social interaction.	The platform engages the learner in consuming content and staying focused on task.	The platform helps learners escalate their initial intent into stronger and stronger commitments	The platform helps users to store value on the platform

Engagement Templates

PROMOTE AGENCY	ENGINEER FEEDBACK	SUPPORT REWARDS	SUPPORT SOCIAL VALUE	ENABLE ACTIVE LEARNING	ESCALATE COMMITMENT	DRIVE INVESTMENT
Endowment — Leverage endowment to drive ownership	**Meaningful Feedback** — Provide continuous feedback that is derived from tracking past behaviors and goals.	**Leverage Goal Achievement** — Celebrate completion and achievement of the user's goals to create a rewarding experience.	**Social Proof** — Use social proof principle to direct behaviors when learners are dealing with uncertainty of progress and outcomes	**Right Answer Feedback** — Utilize right answer feedback to provide the user an opportunity to learn in moments of mistakes	**Small Commitments** — Allow users to not only articulate their goal, but also escalate their small commitments into bigger ones	**Aggregating Effort Library** — Archives learner-driven customisations, content, edits to build a sense of ownership and dependency for the platform.
Customization — Enable customisation options to increase the learners' ownership of "their" learning space.	**Sense of Progress** — Provide continuous, motivating feedback that focuses on completion.		**Community Creation** — Create a community that helps build a sense of belonging and becomes integral to the learner's sense of identity.	**Interaction Building** — Interactions with content drive attention to the platform, which makes learners think actively.	**Goal Setting** — Enable leaners to convert their intent into macro and micro goals that can be tracked and rewarded.	
Expert Heuristic — Incorporate an easy heuristic such as expertise tags to improve the level of completion.	**Prime Expectations** — Prevent disengagement through minimising discrepancy between expectation and reality by priming the right expectation.				**Central Dashboard** — Create a dashboard that aggregates critical interactions of the learners	
Sense of Control — Build agency by providing opportunities to exert control over the choices and interactions on the platform					**Motivation Dashboard** — Dashboard that aggregates critical engagements of the learner and showcases goals/progress to build commitment.	
Loss Aversion — Leverage and reframe content to provide a 'sense of losing reward' to drive completion					**Roadmapping** — Break the learners journey into achievable milestones to manage motivation and drive continuous engagement.	