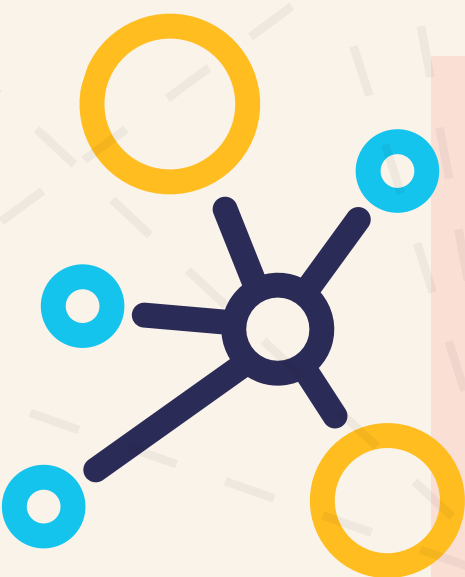# Connectivism

A Learning Theory for the Digital Age

Connectivism is a learning theory formulated for the first time by George Siemens in 2005 on the basis of his analysis of the limits that theories such as Behaviorism, Constructivism and Cognitivism highlight in an attempt to explain the effects of the use of technologies on our way of living, communicating and learning. Connectivism relates to learning theory paired with the new tools of technology.

Connecting specialized information sets

A distinctive aspect of connectivism is the use of the network with nodes and connections as a central metaphor to explain how learning occurs. In this metaphor, a node is anything that can be connected to another node: information, data, images, feelings. Learning is a process of making connections and developing a network.

Principles of Connectivism

- Learning and knowledge are based on difference of opinion.
- Learning is a process of connecting specialized nodes or sources of information.
- Knowledge may reside in non-human applications (e.g. computer applications), and learning is enabled/facilitated by technology.
- The ability to draw distinctions between important and unimportant information is vital.
- Nurturing and maintaining connections is necessary to facilitate lifelong learning.
- The ability to see connections between fields, ideas and concepts is a core skill.
- Validity (exact and up-to-date knowledge) is the intent of all connectivist learning activities.
- Decision making is itself a learning process: knowing how to choose what to learn and the meaning of incoming information is seen through the lens of a changing reality.

Connectivism for e-learning

Connectivism is the most appropriate learning theory for e-learning. The world has changed by becoming more interconnected through the web, so learning theories that developed before these global changes are less relevant. However, "*what is needed is not a new stand-alone theory for the digital age, but a model that integrates the different theories to guide the design of materials online*". (Ally 2008)

Critics to Connectivism

Connectivism has also been subject to criticism on several fronts. Pløn Verhagen argued that connectivism is not a theory of learning, but rather a "pedagogical view." Verhagen argues that learning theories should address the educational level (how one learns), whereas connectivism addresses the curriculum level (what one learns and why one learns).

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