Connectivism: A Theory for the Digital Age

Ginger Harper, M.S., A.B.D.

Betsy Duke, Ph.D.

Mark Johnston, Ed.D

What is a learning theory?

- Applies to the synthesis of large body of information
- Value for explaining/predicting behavior
- Can be refined or redistributed over time

Longevity of a learning theory?

- Could be accepted then disproved after time

- Testing and observation

- Criterion of falsiability

- Rule of parsimony

What is an instructional theory?

- The learning predisposition
- The design and structure of concepts that promotes understanding
- Successful profession of ideas
- Administration of rewards and punishments

Four Components to consider

- The learner

- The learner task

- The conditions and instructional methods

- A frame of reference

What are the differences between a learning theory and an instructional theory?

- Learning theories describe how learning basically occurs

- Instructional theories explain how to achieve the preferred learning outcomes

Behaviorists versus Cognitivists

- Behaviorists: evaluate a learner to determine prior knowledge

- Cognitivists: evaluate a learner to determine their predisposition to learning

Constructivism

- Instructional design based on facilitation rather than specifics

- Evaluation is more subjective

- Learner self evaluates

- Learner better able to apply existing knowledge to a new situation.

What a learning theory does

- Classifies knowledge of learning

- Enables observations to be interpreted and understood

- Provides resources to solve practical problems with practical solutions

Learning by connecting..

Criticism..

" connectivism is not actually a full learning theory, but rather is a "pedagogical view." - PlÃ¸n Verhagen

" learning theories should deal with the instructional level (how people learn) but that connectivism addresses the curriculum level (what is learned and why it is learned) Verhagen
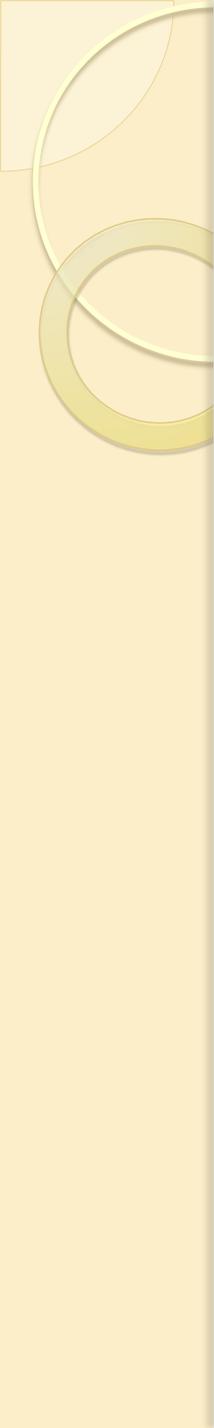
What is connectivism?

- Social learning that is networked

- Reflection of a rapidly changing society

- Mediated by advancements in technology

- Ways of knowing derived from diversity of opinions

What is connectivism?

- Learning is process of plugging into new knowledge sources

- Emotions, cognition play role in actuation

- Functioning often requires "acting blindly" as information is only revealed as action is taken

- Core assumptions shift. Continual reflection and evaluation needed to ensure currency of decisions and actions

What is connectivism?

- Learning can reside in non-human appliances (i.e. the network itself)
- The pipe is more important than what's in the pipe
- Learners have to develop a new series of meta-skills in evaluating usefulness of information and means of managing information. Pattern recognition and connection creation also important
- Interplay of organization and learner

Conclusion
What's next?