

Individual discussion post #2: What are the similarities and differences between constructivism and connectivity? Which “edtech trend” interested you the most from Weller’s (2018) article and why?

In your post consider: How does your chosen “edtech trend” relate to constructivism or connectivism and why? What did you already know about the topic, what do you know now based on the course readings and activities, what do you hope to learn? How can learning theories influence online and open teaching? Which learning theories do you think were considered in this course and why?

Constructivism

- Constructivism emphasizes the experience and role of the individual in developing concepts
- Vygotsky (1978) developed this concept further with the idea of social constructivism: the proposition that learning is not an individual exercise but is developed through social interaction and couched in language.
- Vygotsky for many constructivists is the “zone of proximal development”
- Bruner scaffolding key in early web-based learning
- the appeal of this for online learning is the sense that the web gave agency to learners — they could create, collaborate, and discover for themselves, freed from the conventions of time and distance.
- “student-centred” learning
- doesn’t apply equally across all disciplines
- Study guide, no online textbook, assignments, examples online, course communication, interactive skill-building
- Sounds like it formed the basis of inquiry-based learning RE: research-based learning and problem-based learning

Connectivism

- The networked, connected model
- Siemens (2005) defined connectivism as “the integration of principles explored by chaos, network, and complexity and self-organization theories.
- Not a pedagogy but a series of principles
- knowledge and people are distributed, and it is the process of engagement with these that constitutes learning
- connectivism takes this chaotic nature as a core principle and seeks approaches to navigate through it meaningfully
- our major types of activity: aggregation, in which learners access and curate a wide range of resources; relation, in which learners are encouraged to relate content to

their earlier experiences; creation, in which learners are encouraged to create an artifact of their own, such as a blog post, using tools of their choosing; and *sharing*, in which learners share their work with others in the network.

- Challenges: Self-directed, connected, be able to critically assess content and find it, can feel isolated
- Really no timeline

Similarities

- Both resurrected

Edtech Trend

- Videos

I don't know about you but reading Weller's article on constructivism took me right back to the second-year educational philosophy we were required to take at the beginning of our BEd. I remember complaining about it to a friend who was well into her teaching career and she said that for the first ten years of your career you are just trying to keep the children alive and teach them whatever you can along the way, after that you get good enough at what you're doing those theories start to come back to you and guide your teaching. I'm only just beginning my 5th year so I appreciate the opportunity for a refresher on these theories every once and a while.

Personally, I found the similarities more abundant than the differences. With regard to differences, constructivism is a pedagogy while connectivism is a series of principles (Weller, 2020). Constructivism is far more structured and based on the theories of many prominent educators of the past such as Vygotsky, Bruner, and Skinner (Weller, 2020). Where connectivism defines itself as chaotic and doesn't seem to draw heavily on any past educational research. When it comes to similarities both very student-centred and honour the fact the learners bring something to the table and are not empty vessels we must fill with knowledge. Both require the student to do their own research in one way or another and focus on the connection between students to enhance and solidify learning. Finally, both methods really have no set timeline, constructivism in a way that learners are free from synchronous learning and free to interact with the material, resources and other learners at their own pace. Connectivism embodies these principles and takes it one step further allowing learning to continue far after the end of the course. In closing at first glance I thought these theories were very different but as I dove deeper into the article and wrote my blog post I realized that they are only really different on a structural level and are very similar in the way they encourage the learner to gather knowledge and interact-which I see as the more defining characteristic.

I chose the Edtech trend “videos” because I love to use them in my own teaching practice. In this day and age, there isn’t a topic you can’t find an age-appropriate video for. Youtube has everything and nothing engages kids like a video. I can stand in front of a class until I’m blue in the face talking about a concept while half of them aren’t paying attention or I can play a two minute video and have a discussion about what they noticed or learned and get much better results. Videos also allow students to see things you wouldn’t necessarily be able to impress upon them with lecturing or books such as a tropical rainforest or how the earth revolves around the sun or what it’s like millions of kilometres under the ocean. Videos also give you the power to invite guest speakers into your classroom such as Chris Hatfield playing guitar to your students while he’s in outer space. In my opinion, videos are related to connectivism more than constructivism because if you are looking for information and come across videos you need to have the skills to decide whether it is relevant, factual information or not. Also, the process of finding videos can be slightly chaotic and follows the principle that knowledge and people are distributed (Weller, 2020) and that the learner has to search to find what they are looking for. Weller sums it up perfectly when he said “explanations that can be shared and embedded easily-met a great educational demand” (2018) and they continue to do so today.