My position on connectivism
Heli Nurmi 4.10.2008

CCK08 course wiki guides:

The first few weeks of this course have provided a backdrop against which to consider the need for new views of learning. Strongly suggested through the readings is the view that information growth, technology, developments in social learning theory, and advancements in our understanding of minds and cognition require a reconsideration of learning theory. This course is partly concerned with providing participants access to learning through networks - experiencing the value of forming connections between people and ideas/concepts. This short paper (between 500-750 words) is an opportunity for you to clarify and state your position on connectivism. Is it a new theory of learning? Or is the concept of theory distracting? What are the weaknesses of connectivism as formulated in this course? What are the strengths? Does connectivism resonate with your learning experiences? If so, how? What are your outstanding questions?

Please provide citations/links to support your position: APA formatting is appreciated.

The assignment seems to be just what I need. I like to write it – I have time on weekend 3-4.10. – I’ll do what I can. I do not use citations, I am a bad model 😊 I think that it is most important to me to find my thoughts (if there are any) than to practice citations (I am post graduated, so I have freedom). C = connectivism.

My view on C
World is changing. We live in one global world and internet gives us new tools to follow news, happenings and connect us to people all around. What happens to learning in these new situations? What happens to us who can participate in this change: is our learning changing? Human mind is very complicated and it will never be totally understood. Psychological studies of neural networks have produced new knowledge, but they do not explain learning (only brain damages etc.). Neural networks are a parallel phenomenon to psychological experiences, not the explainer.

Connectivism tries to understand human behavior/action just now, in this rapidly changing connected world. I have read “Knowing Knowledge” and I appreciate its purpose and many-sided methods: art, emotions and creativity, designing, implementing, ecological orientation. Very important aspect is that the book is written in global network.

CCK08 studies are an opportunity to clarify and state my position on C. There is a need for new visions of learning: it raises from information growth and technology. Social learning theories have tried to follow the changes: I have Etienne Wenger (1998) ‘Communities of practice: learning, Meaning and identity’ in my bookshelf and I have read it. Is ‘community of practice’a scientific concept? Anyway it helped us (in my workplace) to understand, what is going on and more important: how we should collaborate? I agree with the require of reconsideration of learning theory: internet networks give more affordances than our natural surroundings. We should understand better “learning through networks, the value of forming connections between people and ideas, concepts”. 
Is C a new theory of learning? Or is the concept of theory distracting?
This is a big question. Actually we know very little about human learning. Brain functions are necessary, but they do not explain psychological phenomena, they only demonstrate what happens in neural basis. We need human mind as an entity to reflect and take the responsibility.

Introduction to this assignment considered that there is “Advancement in our understanding of minds and cognition”. I am not sure about this, I don’t believe in it, we still have wars and we are destroying our living conditions. For instance, we had in Finland second shooting-killer -case at school, it is horrible and we are confused: what is happening in young boys’ minds? These questions we hardly solve during CCCK08 course.

I listened again to Stephen Downes’ lecture “Learn Yourself”(held 21.11.2007 to Kuopio, Finland). “The idea of education is to deliver students to educate themselves.” That is just what I am doing or trying to do in teacher education. Students not always want it, but it is the right direction anyway. ”Knowing is like recognizing, pattern matching. Learning and knowledge can be described and explained using network principles.” – I cannot assess these issues yet; I am working on these questions. The purpose of this assignment is to understand my questions and I am doing it.

I suppose that I could see the level of theory formation in SD lecture and it can be seen in the publication ‘Knowing Knowledge’ – and in other course materials, but I cannot assess the level today.

What are the weaknesses of C?
Perhaps I just answered to this question, too. I am asking that do we speak about human mind or only the new tools we have in computers and in internet. SD dealt with ‘ownership of learning’ – it sounds very good. C is not restricted to internet widgets, but is C too broad? A theory about living in a changing world? Is it possible? I don’t know, but it is needed, if we want to save the world. The question cannot be only scientific (multidisciplinary is not enough), it is a practical and political and question?

What are the strengths of C?
This course exists and is working forward: so there must be something in it. Networking is possible. “The proof of a pudding is in eating it” – how about an analogy C/course?

I think that the broad area of C theory is a strength (not only weakness), because C can produce knowledge that will be really useful in real life. Knowledge is not limited in certain circumstances as scientific experiments. We all participate in theory formulation: it is strength. George just made a new wiki to us.

Does C resonate with my learning experiences?
Yes. and How? This course immersion gets me to ponder things. Resonation is a criteria of theory development. Pragmatism is OK: practice is the real test of a theory. We continue the path ofJohn Dewey and Kurt Lewin etc.

My outstanding questions 5.10.2008
Nature of learning?
Downes has somewhere said that ‘children are learning, is it difficult? Do we need a theory about learning?’ I remember a concept’ incidental learning’ -we explored it during my psychology studies (long time ago) . People are learning many things without knowing that they learn. We had experiments with instructions to other things and in the end asked something else. I wonder if, this has something to do with C?
How about associations? Associationism was an old concept: is it more philosophy or neural connections, conditioned reflexes again? Does it help me to understand anything? Is it surface learning?

Automatism is the highest level in skill acquisition; I wonder if it has something to say to C. Relaxed easy level of learning as in suggestopedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suggestopedia) ? The unconscious level of mind must be included - it gives energy, it makes the flow possible.

One of my questions deals with augmented reality and identity: what is happening? Does C help me in solving this problem? I will write an article about this theme in Finnish (dead line 15.11.)

**How about C vs. other scientific learning theories?**

I studied or tried to study inquiry oriented teaching with scientific teachers and articles. OK something happened, but students disappeared and everything was difficult. I became convinced that my teaching practice was theoretically acceptable © and I already knew it.

There was a congress of EARLI (European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction) in my home town http://ktl.jyu.fi/ktl/earli. The association has groups with themes: group number 7 is’ learning and instruction with computers’ and 20. ‘computer supported inquiry learning’. I sought concepts that near C (the program)and found: Technology enhanced co-construction of design products, Cross-fertilization of collaborative design practices, From passive indifference to proactive influence: Constructing knowledge through professional conversations, Knowledge production learning in teams, Boundaryless work and the role of ICT, Knowledge transfer: A pragmatist perspective.

Example of research: How ordinary end users learn to use ICT systems and how they solve problems they encounter while using these systems to support their work and learning at work. Theories of learning at work, learning styles and strategies, and problem solving strategies are used as analytical lenses through which to understand the learning and problem solving processes. Support functions and user training available in the organizations were also examined. Learning to use a new ICT system was mainly informal, strongly situated, and explorative. Some of the interviewed employees participated in formal user training, but it was considered only as a starting point for learning. The interviewed employees solved problems in using the system by asking advice from a workmate or acquainted expert user, or by experimenting on one’s own. The copy ends.

There are many concepts in the science describing same reality. I didn’t notice C mentioned (I didn’t read all papers). I consider that science looks always back and interprets what has happened, it cannot be up-to-dated. C explores practices in this year and future. Is this true?

My problem is: what to follow, RSS feed cannot solve that question, I must. We have just got a new wiki for concerns about and argument against connectivism. It is a good place to continue.