**Week 1: What is e-Learning?**

*the computer and network-enabled transfer of skills and knowledge*

* E-learning applications and processes include Web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual classroom opportunities and digital collaboration.
* Content is delivered via the Internet, intranet/extranet, audio or video tape, satellite TV, and CD-ROM.
* It can be self-paced or instructor-led and includes media in the form of text, image, animation, streaming video and audio.

**What do you think about the following statements?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The use of email, chat and SMS affects children’s literacy. | Half of the information on the Web should be viewed with suspicion. |
| There is no educative value in the teacher using the social web in the classroom. | A well developed web-based learning system will replace the teacher |

**Old and New e-learning**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Old** | **New** |
| * based on instructional packets, which were delivered to students using Internet technologies. * role of the student consisted of learning from the readings and preparing assignments. * assignments were evaluated by the teacher. | * uses web 2.0 tools and places increased emphasis on constructivist and social learning. * uses social software such as blogs, wikis, podcasts and virtual worlds such as Second Life. key words here are interaction, globalisation and learning communities * attracts participants through engaged interaction while extracting, exploring, conceptualising and articulating their own learning. * students challenged to shift from passive learners, to active learners who engage in building their own understanding |

**Constructivism and Collaboration**

Constructivism: learning is an active process, unique to the individual, where knowledge is constructed from **information** and **prior experiences** (Cooper 2004). Thus, the focus shifts to the **acquisition** of knowledge rather than its transmission.

Collaboration: technology also provides opportunity for learners to revise and reconstruct their views and make substantial changes to the way they interpret their world through frequent **conversations** (Laurillard, 1995). Communicative technologies have the ability to collaboratively facilitate the construction of new and meaningful knowledge. However, collaboration is not a given in online constructivist environments, but is dependent on clearly designed activities that incorporate the appropriate use of the technologies.

Hence constructivism is not just about students constructing their own knowledge as individuals but about meaningful interactions where social interactions can offer **different perspectives** providing advances on their own level of understanding.

**Two Views of Vygotsky’s Social Contructivism**

The more traditional view emphasises learning by engagement in **collaborative activities** which otherwise could not be mastered by the learner.

The other interpretation stresses mutual engagement and co-construction of knowledge relying on **participation in a social context**. Through such exchanges, meanings gradually emerge based on the patterns of interaction in a contextually situated setting. Individuals are able to test and negotiate their newly constructed meanings with others, clarifying, proposing and modifying where needed.

Both views stress the idea that when students work together, their cognitive development is enhanced. Thus, using **asynchronous communication tools** where communication is not dependent on time and place, learners can exchange ideas and experiences while providing opportunities for discussion and reflection.

**Design Principles for Constructivist Learning Environments**

These principles are not necessarily unique to online environments but are fundamental to all effective learning settings.

In the classroom and online, learning is:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Principle** | **What does this mean for the student?** | **Give an example in a traditional learning setting** |
| learner-centred |  |  |
| reflective |  |  |
| active and engaging |  |  |
| developing cognition |  |  |
| contextual |  |  |
| social activity |  |  |
| communicating through language |  |  |
| motivational |  |  |
| learning tasks encourage developing skills in problem solving, critical thinking, collaboration |  |  |
| learning tasks are open-ended |  |  |

**Resources**

<http://www.masie.com/books/701_e-Learning_Tips.pdf>

Anderson, T & Elloumi, F(eds)(2004) Theory and Practice of Online learning <http://cde.athabascau.ca/online_book/ch2.html#one>