Chapter 8
From “Connectivism”
to “Ethicism”

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ABSTRACT
Distance learning characteristics has been changing dramatically, namely since the fourth generation of distance learning. Moreover, e-learning impressive “evolution” enabled a trade-off between learning outcomes and ethical behaviour, which traditional learning theories do not embrace and that connectivism endeavours to illustrate. Although, two important queries arise: what challenges e-learning 2.0 and 3.0 impose? And, does connectivism promote ethical knowledge? Therefore, this chapter aims to endorse a theoretical debate regarding e-learning, as well as to understand if connectivism will act as 21st century learning theory, or if the quest for an ethical connective knowledge and e-learning fusion with knowledge management itself will require a novel contribution (connethionicism). Despite the assumption that connectivism has been promoting a reasonable debate, the author’s personal experiences highlight the need for ethicism.

INTRODUCTION
Since e-learning become aware literature has been debating pedagogical theories or its generations. However connectivism as a learning theory has emerged (Siemens, 2006a), and the analytical focus shifted completely. Therefore, today’s questions are: does educational technology itself fulfil good learning practices (Egbert, 2008)? Or, is simply “technological noise” in order to promote happiness and motivation to online generations, instead of offering good learning (Cornwell & Cornwell, 2009)?

It is a fact that the uprisin of new information and communication technologies opens a large range to learners’ engagement (Small & Vorgan, 2008), as well as to implement a connectivist perspective due to the existence of information and connections (Downes, 2005b). Nonetheless, these technologies also enhance the gap of pedagogical
and didactical skills with reference to educational agents’ ethical perception. Hence, is essential an urgent debate in order to ensure that appropriate pedagogical and methodological training is bounded to e-learning 2.0 and 3.0.

In that sense, this chapter aims to discuss: what challenges e-learning 2.0 and e-learning 3.0 impose? And, if connectivism reinforces the quest for an ethical knowledge? Furthermore, for analytical purposes the author refers that ethical knowledge management comprises the learning process outcome and educational agents’ behaviour.

At last, the chapter structure considers: historical background (presence versus distance learning and online learning generations); shaping educational knowledge (knowledge versus learning and emerging technology); mapping the territory (“blowing up” the mind and connective knowledge); the quest (ethics for connective knowledge, ethical frameworks for connective knowledge and a proposal: “ethicism”); and, future research directions.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

**Presence vs. Distance Learning**

During an important fraction of 19th and 20th centuries distance learning was a supporting tool for starting education, post graduation, or professional training to those who lived in peripheral areas. Therefore, Holmberg (2005) identifies several generations of distance learning:

- 1st generation (1840 to 1970): acknowledged correspondence courses;
- 2nd generation (1970 to 1980): open universities era, in which universities have full degree programmes through new media, in a systematic way, and having evaluation systems in various parts of the world;
- 3rd generation (1980 to 1990): videotapes and TV were the key technological features;
- 4th generation (from the “90s” until now): online teaching/e-learning are learning enablers. Nevertheless, this generation encompasses various strands (see section online learning generations).

Despite each generation technological features a common characteristic arises: until the 21st century presence and distance learning prevailed in two dissimilar worlds (Holmberg, 2005). Although, the evolution of e-learning to blended learning due to technological evolution gathered both realities. As a result, a distinctive feature of knowledge society is content massive production and distribution in multiple forms in order to support lifelong learning in all learning environments (Commission of the European Communities, 2009; Tuomi, 2004). Therefore, Harris, Connolly & Feeney (2009) argue that for a successful learning process in nowadays blended learning is crucial. This resumes online learning features (content delivery, potential, aperture and versatility), as well as presence learning (formal contact), in spite of e-learning latest streams of the fourth generation allow purely e-learning, as well as learners’ characteristics.

**Online Learning Generations**

E-learning definition has in itself undergone major changes since its first appearance, so the analogy as regards to information processing supported by computers and teaching exhibits this development. Initially, computational programs were referred as Computer Based Instruction or, simply Computer Based Learning which frames distance learning fourth generation. In fact, this mutual exclusive relationship and dependency on distance learning is pointed out by Rosenberg (2001), which even prophesied e-learning terminus. Furthermore, this author aimed to distinguish distance learning