



## Introduction

- 2020 was the year that education saw enforced remote learning brought on by the pandemic.
- This research explores the independent approach taken to learning and the impact on the perceived development of skills such as critical thinking.
- The research also explores the value of Connectivism as a seminal pedagogical theory.

## Research Method

- 23, Level 3, 1st and 2nd year Travel and Tourism students responded to the question: "How has being taught remotely, using digital technologies, impacted on your approach to your learning?"
- 6 departmental tutors responded to the question: "In your opinion, how has being taught remotely, using digital technologies, impacted on your students' approach to their learning?"
- Reflective responses give an insight to how remote learning is viewed.

## Key Literature

- Elder, L & Paul, R, (2010 p.2) - *"the disciplined art of ensuring that you use the best thinking you are capable of in any set of circumstances"*
- Elder, L & Paul, R, (2010 p.2). *Learning the Art of Critical Thinking*. 1st ed. [ebook] Available at: [http://cehs.tu.edu/publichealth/\\_resources/mphwebfiles/BecomingaCriticOfYourThinking\\_2010.pdf](http://cehs.tu.edu/publichealth/_resources/mphwebfiles/BecomingaCriticOfYourThinking_2010.pdf) [Accessed 6 February 2021].
- Siemens, G., (2004 pp.6-7). – *"The pipe is more important than the content within the pipe"....."Connectivism provides insight into learning skills and tasks needed for learners to flourish in a digital era"*
- Siemens, G., (2004). *Connectivism: A learning theory for the digital age*. Elearnspace. pp. 1-7. Accessed 16th May 2021 [http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.1089.2000&rep=rep1&type=pdf]

## Analysis

- The "approach" to learning was not wholly considered when the question was answered by students and tutors.
- Critical thinking is a skill rather than a mindset.
- Students are not as confident or comfortable accessing digital technology as would be believed.
- A remote environment is blamed for limitations to learning in some cases.
- Not all students found remote learning difficult, some liked the independence gained from it.
- Socio-economic and domestic issues can take priority over learning in the remote environment.

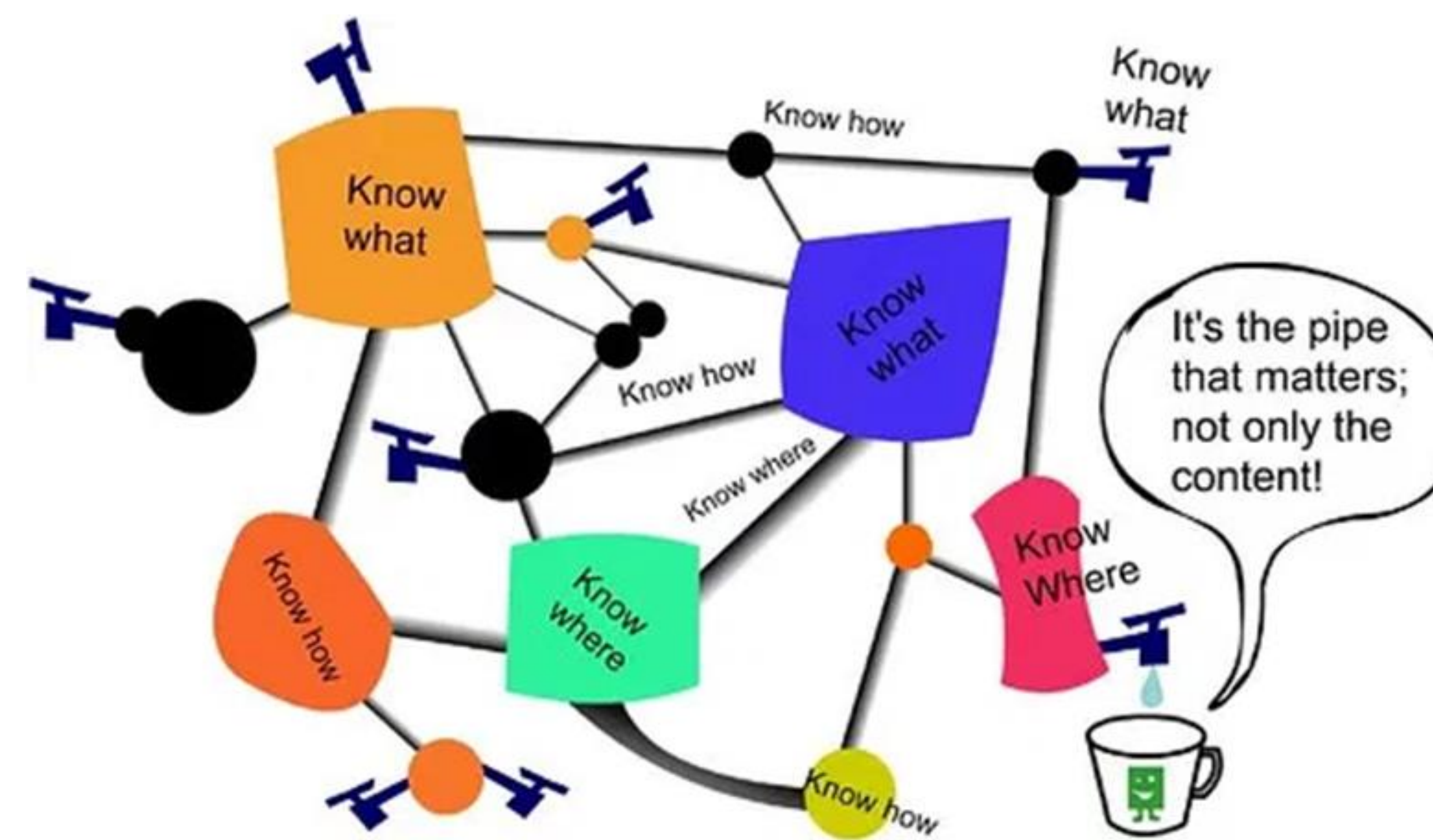


Image: Judy O'Connell Flickr

## Student views:

- "I can work at my own speed and without distraction" (S.1)*
- "I thought it would be amazing" (S.8)*
- "I hate remote learning" (S.21)*

## Tutor views:

- "The motivated students are making good progress" (T.4)*
- "They are doing their best, but it's not ideal" (T.1)*
- "They lack basic IT skills" (T.4)*

## Key Findings

- Remote learning in an emergency state rather than a planned state affects the mindset for application to learning in a remote environment.
- Learning is being judged through absence of physical, social interaction and the word 'remote' seems to be taken in the context of absence.
- 21st Century Skills such as Critical Thinking and Communication are lacking.
- Opportunities presented by remote learning such as development of independent thinking and collaboration using technology are being missed.
- The VLE is not utilised as effectively as it could be.

## Recommendations

- Students and tutors need to consider 'how' they approach learning.
- Improve focus on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills in the curriculum at any level.
- Move remote learning from emergency state to planned state.
- Support students experiencing digital poverty with early intervention.
- Educators reflect on resources, curriculum development and skill set and access training and development opportunities to fill any gaps.

## Conclusion

- Critical thinking is expected but not supported.
- Connectivism should be accepted as a seminal theory.
- If we fail to seize opportunities, we only have ourselves to blame for stagnation within education.