

Self directed learning with personal publishing and microcontent

- Constructivist approach and insights for institutional implementations

Microcontent has been increasingly gaining importance with the rise of personal publishing on the web. Nowadays, virtually anybody can upload / generate and share content through the use of web services and personal publishing systems. Many new, sophisticated web services have arisen, helping us also to assign metadata to objects, or to construct social networks and webs of trust through the use of personal publishing or social networking platforms.

A theoretical approach to this relatively new way of sharing, accessing and contextual understanding of information should focus on our personal perception, interpretation and representation of communication and personal, subjective knowledge. The theoretical works of (Radical) Constructivism (Von Glasersfeld, Von Foerster, Hejl, Maturana et al.) provide a perspective on the construction of subjective reality and personal knowledge. We will take a constructivist approach to the way how learners experience and construct “personal webs of knowledge” by finding and researching microcontent objects (on the web, in weblogs, wikis, ...). We will also have a look at how the theory of Symbolic Interactionism (Mead, Blumer et al.) can help us understand the nature of weblog-based discourse through blog-to-blog references, RSS, trackback, and commentary.

Through the collaborative (shared cognition) assignment of metadata (RSS, RDF, tagging, categories, ...), web-based collaboration can form a deeper understanding / interpretation of microcontent objects. If multiple users assign metadata based on their individual constructions of reality and understanding of a microcontent object, a socially founded shared view will evolve. An example for this might be the possibility of adding “tags” to a microcontent object, for example through the use of a social bookmark system.

So, it is not only microcontent itself, but also it’s contextualization and metadata which contribute to an understanding of microlearning and provide insights for implementing personal publishing systems in (educational) institutions.

