

## **Concept Map Assignment Summary and Reflection:**

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This assignment was the culminating activity after cohort participants presented various learning theories during our third Saturday class. We were to create concept map that best represented our philosophy of learning and teaching on-line, and additionally, were to provide a personal statement explaining how our vision connected to the learning theories reviewed.

I found this assignment extremely challenging. It was difficult for me to distill all that I do to support and encourage learning into one image and even more demanding for me to inject my values and beliefs without creating an un-navigable mess of shapes, words and arrows! This exercise forced me to be consciously competent, metacognitively mobile and super succinct. Working through the tumult of cross-connecting ideas, eventually I was able to tease out what I thought were the main elements of my philosophy that could represent the gamut somewhat simply. I was not so sure, however, that others viewing my map would concur. I hoped that the statement of explanation would help clarify things for those attempting to make sense of my schema as surely as the process of writing it seemed to solidify things for me.

What became imminently apparent to me was how difficult it would be to create the connection with students in an online environment. Relying heavily on a blend of observation and intuition to "sense" where students sit on the conceptualization continuum in my classroom, I was at a complete loss as to how I might develop this "sense" online. Figuring out how I might create connection and more importantly correctly assess it online was intriguing for me to contemplate and in fact, sparked a new avenue for me to explore.

I have been following neuroscience for over a decade now and am fascinated by what is being discovered. I believe that the research currently being done in neuroscience, especially as related to brain-based learning theory, is an absolute necessity for any educator, but especially those who are moving with technology to provide learning experiences online. Though technology now provides many opportunities for more, there are limitations when learning at a distance that need to be ameliorated. Thoughtful course design and practice informed by current research are steps worth taking, if distance education is to strongly attract learners and leaders alike.