



RESEARCH PAPER

From Monoliths to Networks: Reconceptualizing Knowledge in Education

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Abstract

The education process is undergoing a transformation in the modern 21st century. This transformation is not only due to the growth of technology but also due to the nature of the knowledge. The established paradigms of current education have undergone a major epistemological transformation, away from notions of knowledge as objective, universal and distinct from any particular context, authority or community, to knowledge that is more constructed, contextually contingent, collaborative and dynamic (Hannan & Peterson, 2021). This change questions the basis of curriculum design, pedagogy and the functions of teachers. The traditional "banking model" of education, which saw knowledge poured into the passive minds of learners, is no longer viable or relevant in the face of the challenges of our digital, global, and interconnected world (Biesta, 2020). In this chapter, the epistemological foundations of modern education are addressed. It claims the shift from positivism into constructivism, connectivism and critical views is a topic that needs to be addressed if learning environments are to be developed that are relevant, equitable and empowering. We examine how these transformations are reflected in current education models and what they mean for future education.

KEYWORDS:

Modern Education, Epistemological Transformation, Constructivism, Connectivism, Critical Pedagogy.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 12 April 2026

Revised: 05 May 2026

Accepted: 18 June 2026

Published: 30 June 2026

CITATION

Ahirwar, P.L., (2026). From Monoliths to Networks: Reconceptualizing Knowledge in Education. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Advancements (IJIA)*, 1(1), 04-06.
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Introduction

Review of Literature

Much research has been done on the deconstruction of 'absolutist epistemology' in education recently. There is a tendency to replace the positivist tradition, which assumes the existence of one reality that can be discovered, with social constructivism. In social constructivism, knowledge is created through social interactions and experiences (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 2018). This is reflected in the marked change to project-based and inquiry-based learning, which are both approaches that involve building understanding actively. In addition, the digital era has helped to enhance 'connectivism'. This epistemology sees

knowledge as embedded in networks of relationships, and learning as being the ability to manoeuvre in these networks (Siemens, 2017). There is also a rising interest in critical and sociocultural perspectives that are mentioned in the literature. These viewpoints suggest whom one learns from and how power differentials impact learning (Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2021). Biesta (2020) argues that the current language of "learning" should be replaced with that of "subjectification," with a focus on developing independent and responsible individuals through education. Overall, this collection of writings moving towards epistemologies involving process and diversity,

rather than blind belief in a fixed set of facts.

Contemporary Educational Paradigms

From these epistemological understandings a number of important paradigms in education have emerged. Personalized Learning is more than simply a one-size fits all approach to learning; it's an approach that uses technology and differentiated instruction methods to provide learners with personal learning experiences based on their needs, interests, and pace (Bray & McClaskey, 2020). This paradigm is in line with constructivist approaches to knowledge acquiring as an individual process. Competency Based Education (CBE) is based on showing mastery of skills and knowledge and deviates from time based credit hours. From an epistemological perspective, CBE is based on the principle that learning is a process and that credentials should reflect demonstrated capabilities, and not seat time (Lumina Foundation, 2019). Global Education and Citizenship Education focuses on cross-cultural understanding, empathy and skills to solve global issues and problems. A principle that depends on critical and sociocultural epistemologies that sees knowledge as being vital for ethical engagement and social action (UNESCO, 2021). Last but not least, the incorporation of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) recognizes that cognition is embedded in emotions and relationships, thus reflecting an epistemology of the learner which is understood as a whole (Schonert-Reichl, 2021).

Overview of the Study

In this chapter, the epistemological transition(s) that inform(s) current paradigms of education are synthesized and critically analyzed through a conceptual analysis methodology. The main goal was to define the philosophical shifts in the perception of knowledge from traditional to emerging perspectives and their applications in curriculum, pedagogical, and assessment practices. The findings are drawn from a systematic review of scholarly research conducted in the period 2018–25, in the leading databases on education and philosophy journals. Some of the terms which were important in the search were: epistemology in education, constructivism, connectivism, critical pedagogy and contemporary educational paradigms. The study method is organized in three parts: an examination of the historical background of the traditional epistemologies, a focus on the primary epistemological features of the predominant transformations, and an elaboration of the epistemological transformations alongside some significant educational models. While primarily concerned with Western educational discourse, it recognizes the profound

Conclusion

The development of learning epistemology is a change paradigm in learning practice. The need for structural institutional reform is due to moving from passive reception to active construction, taking individual mastery to networked synthesis, and canonical acceptance to critical inquiry. Educational methods used to measure student learning, course design approaches, and teacher development strategies need to be transformed to truly

contributions of the world's and indigenous peoples' ways of knowing and knowing together to the relational and holistic approaches. The goal for this study is to offer a clear explanation to educators and policymakers about the "why" of the "what" of modern education reform.

Transformations in Educational Knowledge

Several developments connect and form the epistemological landscape of education, a step away from monolithic conceptions of knowledge. The most important evolutions are from Positivism to Constructivism and Co-construction: The transition from an objective epistemology, that assumes knowledge is something that can be transmitted, to a constructivist epistemology, that assumes that the learning process is one of learning by doing and reflection (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 2018). This model remains a paradigm of co-construction, where knowledge is born dialogically between learners, educators and communities, for it is inherently a social model (Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2021).

In this information abundant world, connectivist epistemology suggests that what is more important is the ability to learn new things rather than what is stored in the current repository. For knowledge, learning is defined in terms of abilities to navigate, connect and integrate information from various sources, and it is seen as a distributed network (Siemens, 2017). It is a re-definition of knowledge from an individual asset perspective to a network driven function. The Critical Turn and Epistemic Justice: Critical epistemology questions the neutrality of knowledge and investigates the mechanisms by which power rules what is deemed to be "valid" research, and whose viewpoints are discarded (Biesta, 2020). These inequalities need epistemic justice, the distribution of credibility in a fair way and the integration of different frameworks such as Indigenous and non-Western ones (Stein, 2019).

Certainty to Epistemic Fluency: Today's curricula are designed to teach students to solve problems with multiple solutions and open-endedness. It requires epistemic fluency – the ability to assess, blend and alternate between methodologies and theoretical frameworks (Markauskaite & Goodyear, 2022). This shift has taken educational priorities from learning predetermined knowledge to learning about knowledge generation and its validation in different disciplines. These changes, combined, reconfigure the educator's roles from one of information dispenser to one of facilitator or co-investigator of inquiry, critical analysis, and synthesis.

focus on collaborative process and metacognition.

It isn't about just handing out content, it's about training minds to change. To prepare students for an uncertain world, their minds need to be agile and their thinking needs to be "epistemic" (informed). Modern education does not seek to abandon the previous paradigm completely, but to create an academic ecosystem where learners' diverse knowledge ways are identified, assessed, and utilized to promote profound, empowering learning.

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