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## MOOCs for Faculty Professional Development with Learning Technologies in Higher Education

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# MOOCs for Faculty Professional Development with Learning Technologies in Higher Education

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## Introduction

Academic work is complex and ever changing in both research and teaching. Professors are experienced in their field of study; however, they are not usually as experienced as teachers who draw upon the newest pedagogy and teaching methods utilizing technology (Mundy, Kupczynski, Ellis & Salgado, 2011).

New and experienced professors can benefit from ongoing faculty development for technology enabled blended and online teaching and also for graduate supervision. With many demands on their time, gathering professors together for professional learning focused on teaching and graduate supervision can be a challenge.

MOOCs can provide an ideal learning environment for faculty to continue to develop their expertise as online teachers and as graduate supervisors.

**This study focuses specifically on the use of MOOCs for faculty development as graduate supervisors.**

## The Uses of MOOCs in Higher Education:

MOOCs are used in three key ways:

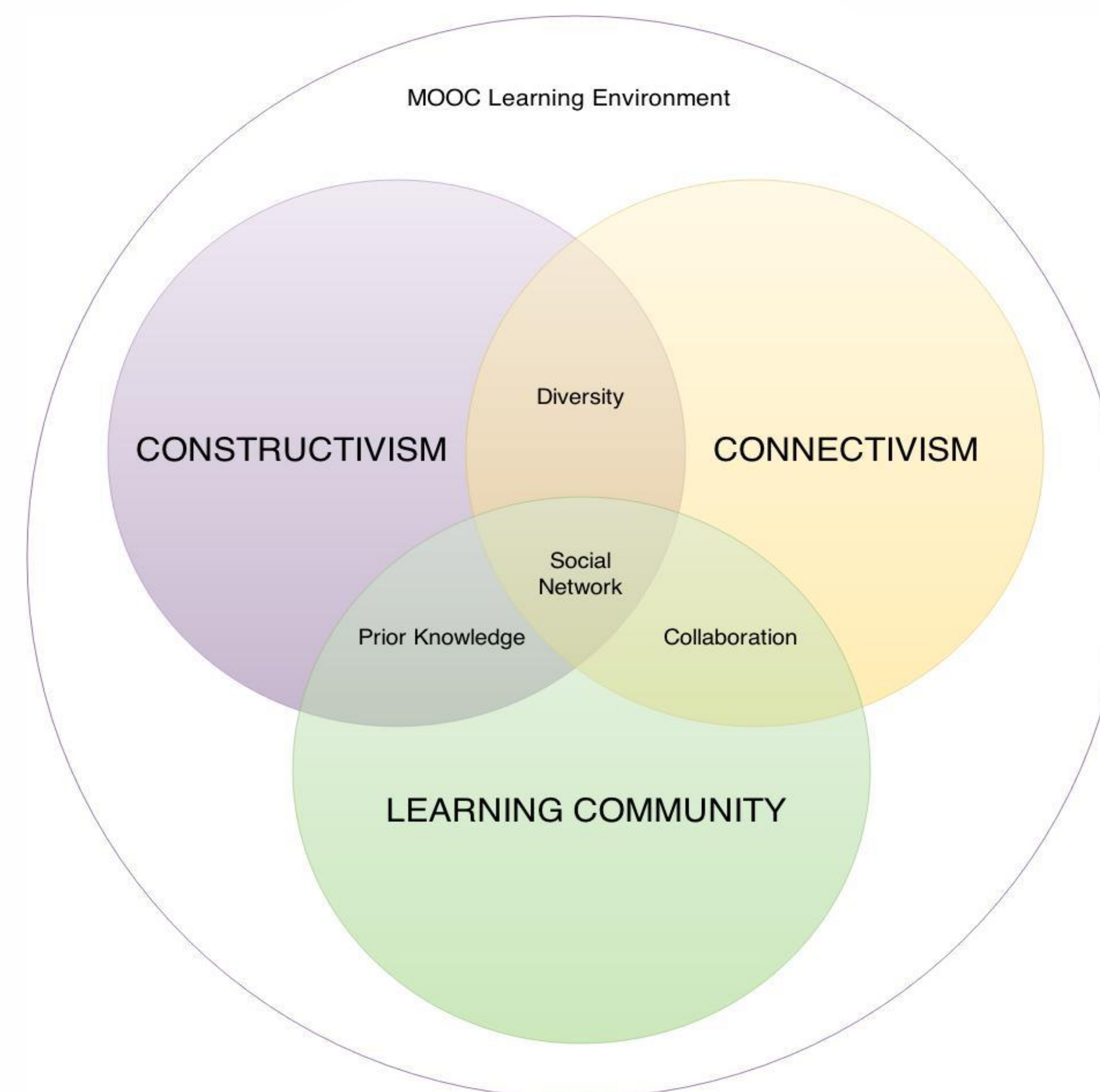
- **Blended learning** (Bruff et al., 2013).
- To **facilitate multi-institutional relationships**.
  - The collaboration between University of Maryland and Vanderbilt University, the collaboration between multi-institutions and the National Science Foundation to create two MOOCs on evidence-based teaching practices for future STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) faculty (Hollands and Tirthali, 2014).
- **Faculty development**.
  - Portland Community College developed an activity-based MOOC through D2L on web accessibility for educators that targets teachers from K-12 and MOOC-Ed is a professional development course developed by Friday Institute for Educational Innovation at North Carolina State University in partnership with the Alliance for Excellent Education (Kleiman, Wolf & Frye, 2013; Bolkan, 2014).

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## Interesting MOOC Facts:

- Researchers from Harvard University, Tsinghua University, and MIT demonstrated that MOOCs can be as effective for learning outcomes as face-to-face courses (Schaffhauser, 2014).
- There are many MOOCs platforms dedicated for non English-speaking audience. Rwaq is one of these platforms and it was founded by two Saudi entrepreneurs in 2013; the only platform built from scratch to cater for the needs of the Arabic-speaking audience (Macleod, Haywood, Woodgate & Alkhatnai, 2015).



Conceptual Framework for Designing Faculty Development MOOC

## Framework for Designing Faculty Development MOOC:

- **Connectivism Theory:**  
Informs social networking, learner diversity and active learning.
- **Constructivism Theory:**  
Informs social construction of knowledge, prior knowledge and experience and learner diversity.
- **Learning Community:**  
Informs the collaboration between instructors and learners in community.

## Why MOOCs for faculty development?

- **Affordability and flexibility:**  
“MOOCs promise to offer flexibility, affordable access and fast-track completion at a low cost for whoever is interested in learning” (Yuan & Powell, 2013, p 5) .
- **Multidisciplinary, multi-institutions collaboration:**  
MOOCs can facilitate relationships between institutions and present opportunities for collaboration among institutions by exchanging materials and courses According to Hollands and Tirthali (2014) “a number of cross-institutional collaborations have already been formed to offer online courses, including MOOCs” (p. 164).
- **Increasing Digital skills:**  
Another reason to consider using MOOCs for faculty development is the approach Canada is taking towards increasing the digital skills among its citizens “increased understanding of the literacies needed to succeed in a MOOC may indicate possible directions for Canada toward achieving its goal of increasing digital skills and capacity among its citizens” (McAuley et al., 2010, p. 9).

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