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Concept mapping, mind mapping and argument mapping: what are the differences and do they matter?

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Abstract

In recent years, academics and educators have begun to use software mapping tools for a number of education-related purposes. Typically, the tools are used to help impart critical and analytical skills to students, to enable students to see relationships between concepts, and also as a method of assessment. The common feature of all these tools is the use of diagrammatic relationships of various kinds in preference to written or verbal descriptions. Pictures and structured diagrams are thought to be more comprehensible than just words, and a clearer way to illustrate understanding of complex topics. Variants of these tools are available under different names: ?concept mapping?, ?mind mapping? and ?argument mapping?. Sometimes these terms are used synonymously. However, as this paper will demonstrate, there are clear differences in each of these mapping tools. This paper offers an outline of the various types of tool available and their advantages and disadvantages. It argues that the choice of mapping tool largely depends on the purpose or aim for which the tool is used and that the tools may well be converging to offer educators as yet unrealised and potentially complementary

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