Getting started with cognitive mapping

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* Cognitive mapping is a technique to structure, analyze, and make sense of problems.
* Or it can be used as note-taking method.
* Founded on Kelly’s theory of personal constructs. This suggests that we make sense of the world to predict how the world will be in future and to decide how we might act.
* Helps to understand client’s perception of problem.
* Represent how client thinks. Valuable for OR’s
* Technique’s ability to structure, organize, and analyze data enable both client and Ors to begin to negotiate a suitable direction forward.

How to map

* Account of problem is broken into its constituent elements-phrases of 10-12 words which retain the language of the person providing account.
* Treat those as distinct concepts, which are then reconnected to represent the account in graphical format.
* This reveals the pattern of reasoning about a problem in a way word cannot.
* Pair of phrases may be united in a single concept where the one provides a meaningful contrast to the other. Phrases are construct: meanig is retained through contrast.
* Distinct phrases are linked, each to related others, to form hierarchy of means and ends. This involves deciding on the status of one concept relative to another. There are number of categories or levels defined in a notional hierarchy that help user to make such decisions. Meaning is retained through the context.

Guidelines

1. Seperate sentences into distinct phrases. 10-12 word. Effective mapping: mapper has a way of sorting the concepts into types of concept. Idea of layers in a hierarchy to sort out concepts. Layers are simply goals, strategic directions, potential options.
2. Build-up the hierarchy. Structure of model. Place goals -profit- at the top of map and supporting this first with concepts indicating direction and further on with potential options.
   1. İdentify concepts which you feel are goals (desired by stakeholders, not options) at top of hierarchy.
   2. Goals:
      1. extracted from stakeholders body language; not-verbal.
      2. difficult to spot in text.
      3. points of integration and differentiation.
      4. Primary of interest, but maybe not certain in beginnig.
3. Watch out for goals. This will end up at the top of the map. Superordinate concepts.
   1. Ex: improved level of service
   2. Supporting these goals are strategic direction: local rep, centralised service, opening local offices. These directions are related to goals.

A diagram of a diagram

Description automatically generated with low confidence

1. Watch out for “strategic directions” by noting concepts that have characteristic of: Long term implications, High cost, İrreversible, Need a portfolio of actions to make them happen, May require a change in culture.
   1. Potential options lead to directions and they lead to goals.
   2. The links joining the concepts together should be interpreted as “may lead to”.night may lead to light turn on.
   3. From text you get centralize service or open local offices, mapping need to highlight these contrasts since they represent significant choices. The concepts which form the basis of a map are bi-polar.
2. Look for opposite poles.
3. Add meaning to concepts by placing the concepts in the imperative form and where possible including actors and actions.
4. Retain the words used by problem owner
5. Identify the option and outcome within each pair of concepts.
6. Ensure that a generic concept is superordinate to specific items that contribute to it.
7. Helpful to code the first pole as that which owner sees the primary idea.
8. Tidying up can provide a better understanding to the problem.
9. Paper usage