

UNIVERSITEIT TWENTE.

FINAL PROJECT THESIS

Developing a Tool for Learning Concept Maps

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April 15, 2016

Contents

I	Design	4
	Introduction	5
	General Idea	6
	Conceptual Framework	7
	Concept maps	7
	Comparison to other visual mapping techniques	7
	Novakian concept map	7
	Conditions	7
	Research	7
	Paired-Associate Learning	7
	Testing Effect	7
	Flashcards	7
	Research	7
	Criticism	7
	Design Choices	9
	Display	9
	Visual mapping technique	9
	Paired-Associate Learning	9
	Design Guidelines	10
	Summary	11
II	Research Proposal	12
	Summary	13
	Project Description	14
	Problem Statement	14
	Theoretical Conceptual Framework	15
	Flashcards systems	15
	Concept maps	16
	Flashmaps	16
	Research Question and Model	17

Scientific and Practical Relevance	17
Research Design and Methods	18
Research design	18
Respondents	18
Instrumentation	18
Procedure	18
Data Analysis	19
Planning	20
Timeline	20
Outputs	20

Part I

Design

Introduction

General Idea

Conceptual Framework

Concept maps

Comparison to other visual mapping techniques

Concept maps are not the only type of visual mapping techniques, ? (?) distinguishes four different types of visual mapping techniques. These types are quite similar to each other, and therefore the differences between them will be elaborated further. Table 1 displays the different types and there specific characteristics.

Novakian concept map

Conditions

Research

Effectiveness

Attitudes

Paired-Associate Learning

Testing Effect

Flashcards

Research

Effectiveness

Student attitudes

Criticism

	Concept map	Mind map	Conceptual diagram
Definition	A top-down diagram showing the relationships between concepts, including cross connections among concepts, and their manifestations	A multicoloured and image-centred, radial diagram that represents semantic or other connections between portions of learned material hierarchically	A systematic depiction of an abstract concept in pre-defined category boxes with specified relationships, typically based on a theory or model
Main function or benefit	To show systematic relationships among sub-concepts relating to one main concept	To show sub-topics of a domain in a creative and seamless manner	To analyse a topic or situation through a proven analytic framework
Macro structure adaptability	Flexible, but always branching out	Somewhat flexible, but always radial	Fixed
Level of difficulty to construct	Medium to high	Low	Medium to high
Extensibility	Limited	Open	Limited
Memorability	Low	Medium to high	Low to medium
Understandability by others	High	Low	Medium

Table 1: A comparison between different concept mapping techniques, as described by ? (?)

Design Choices

Display

Visual mapping technique

As described in section ?? on page ??, ? (?) distinguishes between four kinds of visual mapping techniques (concept maps, mind maps, conceptual diagrams, and visual metaphors).

Paired-Associate Learning

Design Guidelines

Summary

Part II

Research Proposal

Summary

Here follows a summary of maximum 250 words.

Project Description

Problem Statement

? (?), one of the main founders for critical constructivism, expresses a need for training students so that they permanently possess facts and are able to repeat them flawlessly whenever they are needed, while also understanding what is placed into their memory. One of the currently existing methods for efficiently rote memorising information is the flashcard system, which entails studying declarative knowledge in a paired associate format. Within this format, learners are asked to associate terms with other terms outside meaning-focused tasks (?), for example by associating a definition with a presented concept. With flashcards, large numbers of words can be memorised in a very short time, and are more resistant to decay (?). ? (?) adds to this by stating that increasing the amount of drill or practice is the most effective device that can be applied to learning. Finally, when evaluating flashcards in a psychology setting, it was found that students who use flashcards have a significantly higher final average than those who do not (?).

Per contra, not all research favours using flashcards for textual comprehension. ? (?) states that flashcards are especially useful for learning declarative knowledge, while learning from a textbook is a form of learning for intellectual skills (?). This problem is also emphasised by ? (?), who states that the use of flashcards is helpful for language learning but the main emphasis of flashcards is memorisation, not comprehension. ? (?) points out the overemphasis placed upon the rote memorisation of disconnected facts, whereas whatever it is that students are to place into memory they should, more importantly, understand. Furthermore, ? (?) describes flashcards as a relic of the old-fashioned behaviourist learning model, and states that we have to look for more modern constructivist models.

Solving the aforementioned problem could lead to better understanding of memory, and could lead to better utilisation by teachers and students with the intent to produce a store of knowledge that remains flexibly retrievable in a variety of contexts over a period of time, in contrast to only segregated paired associations which depend on specific cues in order to be retrieved. Furthermore, it could pave the way for the design of new educational activities based on consideration of retrieval processes. Furthermore, using computer-based flashcards have been used very widely (?), and more recently textbooks have started making flashcards available on their websites (?). ? (?) stated that "Perhaps no memorisation technique is more widely used than flashcards" (p. 125). Improving currently existing flashcards therefore has the potential of reaching a wide audience of future users of flashcard systems. Finally, it might be a solution to the need expressed by ? (?) for more meaningful rote memorisation.

An instructional tool more in line with constructivistic approaches is the concept map, which is a graph consisting of nodes representing concepts and labeled lines denoting the relation between a pair of nodes (see figure ??). Multiple researchers have found by means of both qualitative and quantitative studies that concept maps can promote meaningful learning