ROLE OF CONCEPT MAPPING AS A CONSTRUCTIVIST LEARNING TOOL IN DELIVERY AND OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT OF DESCRIPTIVE CURRICULUM

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Abstract: The contention of this presentation is a triangulation model integrating Constructivist Learning Theory, Concept Mapping, and non-course matching Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). The authors describe how students' capacities to elicit self-organized prior learning can be supported by Constructive Learning Theory (CLT) and both delivered and measured via Concept Mapping (CM). The role of CM in Higher Education has been discussed within the context of traditional *prescriptive* curricula: delivery and assessment of prescribed learning outcomes. Authors will address an alternative application of CM as an instrument for evolutionary and constructivist learning within the less familiar academic terrain of non-traditional PLA practices based on *descriptive* curricula: assessment for college credit of both explicit and tacit learning acquired by adult students via non-academic sources, such as employment, community service, and independent learning. Traditionally PLA based evaluation has been delivered in the linear format of expository writing. Whereas expository writing is a conventional academic skill, authors are challenging effectiveness of its utility in the framework of PLA practices and assessment of adult student experiential knowledge. Authors are introducing a Concept Map based pedagogical model that they have been implementing at the State University of New York (SUNY), Empire State College (ESC). The model has been applied to benefit students, and their advisers, in the process of conceptual reconstruction and discovery of tacit, experiential learning, and to further assist PLA evaluators with application of cmapping quantitative and qualitative assessment tools. Training and support in methodological and epistemological uses of the IHMC CmapTools for academic community members (students, advisers and evaluators) has been adapted to PLA curriculum and will be demonstrated. Post-training, users of CmapTools are confidently able to realign themselves to this platform of knowledge presentation in their discerning application of cmap morphology, content, semantics, and collaboration. Students uncover, organize and deliver reflective and meaningful knowledge, as evaluators collaborate synchronously with students to the mutual benefit of both participants in the final assessment. Research initiatives will be addressed to consider the role of Concept Map PLA curriculum across various domains of knowledge, types of learning (applied or liberal), as well as categories (methodized or un-methodized) and sources of experiential learning.