

Charting Peer Tutor Success and Developing Consultant Self-Efficacy Through Concept Mapping

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Concept Mapping as Praxis

Psychologist Albert Bandura defines self-efficacy as the belief in an individual's ability to perform difficult objectives (Bandura, 1977). He states there are four major schemas involved to strengthen a student's belief in self-efficacy: 1) performance accomplishments, 2) vicarious experiences, 3) verbal persuasion, and 4) emotional arousal. Attending to these four components when training consultants is essential in developing their belief in their self-efficacy, and thus their impactfulness on the students they consult. This paper explains how directors and mentors can apply a concept-mapping method in training that uses these four components to help communication consultants increase their self-efficacy.

Concept mapping is a tool that demonstrates relationships between ideas (Neumann & Kopcha, 2018). Concept maps create external visualizations of the connections between various ideas, concepts, or pieces of information. They are often used to assist learners in organizing and understanding complex information and relationships. However, when applied to more amorphous and subjective experiences like public speaking anxiety, concept mapping can become an instructional strategy to support self-efficacy through metacognition because the process of creating a concept map could assist consultants in reflective, critical, and creative thinking.

Concept Mapping and Consultant Training: Word Association

The term "concept map" can often paint a picture of a linear process, which is why the instructional strategy works for well-structured problems. However, the author of this paper is not thinking of a map that moves in only one direction, but rather a pedagogical tool without the limitations of direction. More specifically, this view of concept mapping connects to games involving word association. Word association games ask players to respond to a given prompt. This response depends on the nature of the medium provided. The initiator can request participants to draw a picture, write one word, write a series of words, reenact, or express visually and/or vocally. The associations reflect significant relationships between a person and a concept, providing insight to current schemas and how they might impact a person's sense of self.

Prompting and facilitation by instructors after the creation of a concept map via word association could yield connections for peer tutors to develop metacognitive skills. Metacognition, or thinking about thinking, allows peer tutors to learn about how they think and feel, while developing the self-regulation required to control those thoughts and feelings. This process is consistent with Bandura's Efficacy Expectations, which "outline the major sources of

efficacy information and the principal sources through which different modes of treatment operate” (Bandura, 1977, p.195). This instructional strategy seeks to capture the learner’s current schemas (experiential, informational, emotional) through concept mapping, and critically analyze the connections via metacognition to move them through advanced knowledge acquisition and thus increasing self-efficacy.

Peer tutors in training start by brainstorming concepts related to two efficacy sources and creating a concept map after receiving prompts from the facilitator. The first prompt is “words associated with the last time you spoke publicly (performance).” The second prompt is “words associated with the feedback you received (social).” After each prompt, the peer tutors were given 45 seconds to write down as many words that came to mind. The facilitator explains the rules of the game and places 45 seconds on the timer. Using the “what, so what, now what” facilitation technique, the facilitator begins to encourage reflections on the words chosen after each prompt - walking the group through their thoughts from prompt to word, and from word to word. This not only allows the tutor to engage in metacognition, but opens the group to think vicariously with each other. As the facilitator moves through the “what, so what, now what” facilitation technique, they inquire about the feelings that arose; both during word association reflection and during thinking vicariously with one another, thus attending to associated emotional states. By utilizing all the sources of self-efficacy through this structure it allows the peer tutors to practice observable behaviors that support self-efficacy.

Engaging consultants in a word association activity allows them to pull from previous knowledge and experiences. Using learning strategies, such as Bloom’s Taxonomy (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation), to discuss and synthesize the results of the word association yields the person’s current schemas and reveals a conceptual map of their thinking. The outcome: the person and the facilitator have an externalized organization of their thoughts and emotions to leverage when engaging in metacognition. When supported with verbal persuasion, vicarious experiences, and attending to emotional arousal, learners can safely and bravely engage in thinking critically.

Concept Mapping in the Session Space

Practicing self-efficacy means to increase the belief in one’s ability. If we focus on increasing the belief in ability within communication consultants, we develop self-efficacious peer tutors with the ability to then apply the same techniques modeled in their training inside of peer tutor sessions. For example, if a student comes into a session with a low belief in their ability to effectively deliver a speech, the peer tutor is equipped to use tools and strategies that can help increase the student’s self-efficacy. The session can start by identifying the area of desired need for the consultation. In this example, the need is to overcome public speaking anxiety. A peer tutor can engage the student with a simple question: “what words and feelings come to mind immediately when thinking about this assignment?” From there, the peer tutor has a road map to help the student attend to the physical and emotional experiences of the student. The peer tutor uses that road map to share their own experiences, allowing them to effectively

meet the student exactly where they are. The student and the peer tutor quickly create a safe and brave environment to practice delivering the speech. Through constructive feedback and reinforcement, the peer tutor provides verbal persuasion, attending to the last of the four areas of Bandura's (1977) model. In theory, the session ends and the student leaves with a higher belief in their ability to deliver their speech.

Conclusion

To conclude, this proposal focused on developing self-efficacy in communication consultants through active concept mapping activities which capture schemas and then develop metacognitive skills. Consultants with high belief in their self-efficacy are better at meeting their speakers' needs and identifying where the speakers themselves might need to build up their own self-efficacy.

References

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