

Using mindmapping and whiteboards to improve learner satisfaction and engagement with learning

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This paper emerges from work with learners in a large first year transition unit and reflects our concern to improve learner engagement and satisfaction with the learning experience. We draw on literature about the first year experience, the need to rethink learning and teaching strategies and the importance of developing creative thinking skills by designing learning environments that value risk-taking. We bring together mindmapping and whiteboarding to develop a collaborative approach where tutors and learners participate in a learning environment that fosters intellectual risk-taking; a tolerance for ambiguity; and an ability to question and listen closely. Mindmapping is a visually spatial process that opens conceptual space and we use it to engage learners in conceptual terrain that is in-process rather than complete. It appears messy, chaotic, and contradictory, but is a disciplined engagement with ambiguity and complexity from which quality thinking emerges. Our approach is based on active learner engagement through disciplined practice and reflection. Learners prepare for class then work collaboratively to refine ideas, which they whiteboard as mindmaps. The mindmapping/whiteboard combination develops a challenging, safe and active learning environment where every learner contributes. Examples show learners' satisfaction and engagement as they take ownership of their learning and participate in conversations about ideas that are joyful, experiential, experimental, and creative.