

Speaker 1: Welcome to the UP TechTalk Podcast, coming to you from the Academic Multimedia Studio on the University of Portland campus. Produced by Academic Technology Services.

Ben Kahn: Welcome to UP TechTalk, this is Ben Kahn. Today, I'm joined by Maria Erb. Hello, Maria.

Maria Erb: Hey, Ben.

Ben Kahn: And today we're happy to welcome into the studio, Joanne Olsen, who is a professor with us here in our school of nursing. Thanks for joining us Joanne.

Joanne Olsen: Thanks for having me.

Ben Kahn: So we have you here today to talk to you about sort of a technology related piece that you do in your teaching, and that is involved with mind-mapping. So, can you tell us a little bit about how you got started with mind-mapping? Or how that came about, or how you became aware of it?

Joanne Olsen: Nursing education has started to transition to concepts, so from problem based learning to concept learning. So I was look for a tool that would show visually how to link different concepts together because the human anatomy is totally linked together, and I wanted to have a visual representation besides just PowerPoints and the standard way in which you do that.

So I came upon mind-map software. And there's several different mind-mapping software that's out there and I settled on iThoughts as I'm a Mac user. And the other thing I like about iThoughts is it allowed me to work on my iPad as well as my Mac, or it's totally integrated.

Ben Kahn: Right, so it's a little more convenient for you. That's a good feature of any software.

So what you're saying, you went from problem-based to concept-based. So if we could back up for a second. So previously in nursing education, the teaching was done more by here's a scenario, or something like that, how would you react versus here's our abstract concepts that if you interact with one concept in one way it might impact a different part of the anatomy of your care in a certain way, so you have to be able to inter-relate those concepts.

Joanne Olsen: Correct.

Ben Kahn: Okay.

Joanne Olsen: So, yeah, that's how it's used where you map a central core concept exactly to other related concepts for problem solving.

Maria Erb: So, I'm interest to hear about your experience as a learner of this technique. Did you find it was really easy to pick up? I mean some people are just naturally visually oriented and spatially and so they naturally gravitate to something like mind-mapping. Where there's a lot of other people are very linear in their approach to things and it's more of a struggle for them. So I'm just curious about how your experiences learner was.

Joanne Olsen: So I found it easy to learn because when you start with a concept, you can have them free-float in the map as bubbles, just by themselves. And then as you start to think about how are they linked together, then you can start to overlap the concepts together and they will have subca- You'll have a main category in the center and then it will come off and have subcategories, or you can also pull concepts before your main concept to demonstrate what the antecedents are to your main concept.

Maria Erb: Yeah, that's good to hear about because it sounds like there's a lot of brainstorming in the beginning that you would have. And some people like to draw pictures and they're not sure how everything fits together yet, but just to get it out and look at it and then be able to manipulate it is key. And I think this is kind of where the software is allowing you to be who you are in a way rather than constraining your style in how you interact with it. So I'm glad the tool supported you.

Joanne Olsen: Yeah, absolutely. I would say definitely does that in thinking. You can put it out there, and then you can think about it, and then you can start to move it around. I used it to develop a mind-map for my syllabus in one of my classes. And I even- When I showed it to the students to show where we were going in this class and how we were going to map our way through all the material, I was asking them does this mind-map make sense to you, or would you like to see us talk about maybe quality and safety under a different part of the mind-map? So you're also able to interact with people about what makes sense for them.

Maria Erb: Yeah, that's great.

Ben Kahn: Yeah, I think it's interesting that you intuitively went to that interaction piece of the mind-map because I sort of understood concept-mapping or mind-mapping to be an individual's understanding of the relation of different topics. So I think if someone just handed me their mind-map, which I've had happen in classes and I'm kind of like this is sort of like I'm looking into your brain, but it's not necessarily the same way that I would think about it, it's not necessarily reflective of how I would approach it. So I think it would be really interesting to watch someone else go through a mind-map and then you can sort of hash that out and translate between brains, as it were.

Joanne Olsen: So in the 429, which we've talked about, the class, the mind-map is out there with my thoughts about how all these concepts are related together and how we're gonna go through the class and handle all these concepts. So it does give visual, I should say auditory to the visual. But then asking the students, it was important to say, "Does this make sense to you? How is this going to work together?"

Ben Kahn: Right.

Maria Erb: Yeah. I mean I feel like just doing this with any syllabus for any course would be just a huge value add for just students everywhere. You know, it's just really hard when you see a list of topics, and you're like, well, that's an order, I don't know if it's there for a reason, or we're just learning about this because we know we got to cover these, how do they relate to each other and how these all fit together.

Ben Kahn: Why are we reading chapter 17, and then chapter 4, and then chapter 12?

Maria Erb: Exactly, right! Yeah, a lot of it seems so random being on the student's side and both Ben and I are grad students right now, so we talk about this all the time. You know, just to put that kind of extra layer on top of the material is just a really big thing.

Joanne Olsen: I think it's also helpful to open every week with the mind-map and say "here's where we are, here's where we've been, here's where we are, and here's where we're going" because of that, because you do have what appears to people to be randomness in your assignments.

Maria Erb: Yes, absolutely. And now I must say that the push back that I get quite frequently from faculty is that they feel like that's to juvenile to do that for their students, that they should be able to do this on their own and shouldn't need this kind of extra help from faculty.

Joanne Olsen: The only ... I guess my push back to that would be we're here to introduce new concepts and what we know about cognition is in order to, or some of the things we know about cognition, in order to have a knowledge stick you have to hook it onto a concept you have, right? If you have no concept, then the knowledge doesn't stick. So I think it's important to put all the major concepts that are going to be covered out there so students can hook on the lecture or their reading into that concept and say, "Oh, this is where that belongs".

Definitely I agree with both of you that people think so differently that it is important that as an exercising class even, you can have them draw their own concept-map. So, yeah, I think that that's helpful. But in order to have a shared mental model, right, you don't know you have a shared mental model until you communicate your model.

Maria Erb: Yeah.

Joanne Olsen: Yes, so you can all think that you know about a concept and you know the definition, but until you both share it, you don't know that you have that.

Maria Erb: Right. And what's the feedback that you've gotten from your students? I'm assuming that they don't get a concept map in all of their classes, so what have you heard from them?

Joanne Olsen: The feedback that I got was great. People really appreciated it and it did help center where we were in the material and how did that build. I think specifically about the leadership class and if you just start talking about leaders, well it's important to talk about the antecedent to that well, prior to being a leader, more with the characteristics that needed to be in place. You can't just start with leadership, but I think that that probably happens quite a bit. So I think that's a great way to have a visual of all the connectedness of knowledge.

Maria Erb: Yeah, and are you teaching other courses this semester?

Joanne Olsen: This semester I am teaching Theory and it also has a concept-map, I did the same thing for that class.

Ben Kahn: So you find that's pretty applicable really across any class. Major talking about the way it just relates to the way that we learn and can facilitate that. It seems like it could really apply to any subject.

Maria Erb: Oh yeah.

Joanne Olsen: Yeah, I think it does.

Ben Kahn: So what advice would you give for a faculty member that might be listening to this that's interested but not sure how to get started?

Joanne Olsen: I guess they probably already know about mind-maps, so probably just draw it on a piece of paper. So they just start- when they start thinking about their syllabus, just put it down on a piece of paper. And then if you want to communicate that to the students that are coming to you, which you're thinking this semester's going to be about, it's great to do a screen shot of it, capture it, a screen capture, and then put your audio to it so that people know what you were thinking about and put it out there before you even meet the students so they can get excited about your class.

I also think you can use it in class when you're having concepts, or you're wanting to do flip classroom, you can ask the students to draw the concept map for you on particular issues they've read about and how they're related and how they might have related to the lecture that you had last week or last meeting.

Maria Erb: Yeah, that's a good low barrier entry point. But I think a lot of people have hesitancy around drawing things. You know, even if it's just simple blocks like you would a flow chart or something like that, a lot of people are just uncomfortable with that, they kind of run right away to a text response to things, or they're just so used to doing that. So I think there's- I don't know, are you kind of artistic in general, do you like to paint or draw-

Joanne Olsen: No. No. Not an artistic bone in my body. No, but I can draw circles. So to draw a mind-map you need a circle and you need a rectangle and that's about it.

Ben Kahn: Yeah.

Maria Erb: Yeah, well you know that's encouraging to hear.

Joanne Olsen: Yeah, it's even less complex than doing a flow diagram. You know if you're trying to flow chart something, that has more decision points and different styles to it. The mind-map is pretty much circles and lines and-

Ben Kahn: Right, circles and lines that connect them, and there's not a lot of nuance, I think, to like the different symbols that are necessarily- Like a square doesn't mean a different thing than a circle necessarily.

Maria Erb: Well I think the other thing that's good to say about this is that they can be really fun to make, you know? And a lot of times the software builds in fun tools like clouds, or different shapes, and colors, and so you can really have fun and make one that looks really good and you look at and go "oh, that's very inviting".

Joanne Olsen: iThoughts has great tools embedded, so you can add all the readings. So when the students open a particular week or concept, it hyperlinks them out to the library where the reserved reading list is. It also has a calendar built in for the assignments, and what the assignment is, and due dates. So it has great functionality to also keep the student, plus yourself, on track with what's happening.

Maria Erb: Now, when students are interacting with the mind-map, are they doing so through an app, or is this a- I mean what's the-

Joanne Olsen: They have the app on their phones.

Maria Erb: Is that right?

Joanne Olsen: I mean right now it's a web-based program for them, but they may not own the app. They could own the app.

Maria Erb: Okay, so they can go the website and see the map there? Okay, okay, got it.

Joanne Olsen: Correct, yep.

Ben Kahn: Yep. Well, I think that's really been enlightening and cool to talk about. Do you want to do any other segments or anything?

Maria Erb: Is there anything else you want to talk about with us?

Joanne Olsen: I don't think so. I think that, you know, you just got to jump in and try that. The software's pretty easy and it is just a moving your paper into the software position. I though iThoughts was pretty easy to learn and pretty quick to learn. I haven't had a lot of struggle with it. And there's many free out there, right?

Ben Kahn: That's a great point is that this is just one way to do it. I mean it could be as simple as drawing on a piece of paper and taking a picture of that with your phone, up to using PowerPoint or something like that, any of those free office or word processing programs have the ability to put in shapes and type in text into the shapes directly, all the way up to more advanced tools like iThoughts or MindMeister, which is what we use in ATS.

Maria Erb: Right, yeah. I will say though that it is nice that when you have something like iThoughts and MindMeister that idea that you always have it with you and that it's live, so to speak. I'm anxious just to think of how many times I've been sitting here in class and it's like I look down at my syllabus and there's a link there because I'm looking at the paper syllabus and it's like oh, I can't get to that article right now, or I can't see that. So I really like that it's live and you have it with you all the time and that the due dates are in there. I think that's important.

Joanne Olsen: Yeah, the due dates and then percent, you can actually change the percent that's complete on the assignment. So you can also sort of have a reward system in there where people are moving towards 100%, so it also gives feedback right away and motivation to people in that software.

Maria Erb: That is nice.

Ben Kahn: Yeah, very robust sounding.

Joanne Olsen: The research has been positive towards concept mapping as well, for the sciences. I've only looked at the research related to nursing and medicine. And students that either use mind-maps or are exposed to mind-maps actually in studies do better outcomes and some to the evaluations than students were not in sections that had mind-map as part of the curriculum. Now, the head-to-head methodologies are different for all the studies, so it's hard actually to synthesize all the literature together, but individual studies indicate that it's really positive for the students in outcome.

Maria Erb: I can definitely see that. I need to see things on a concept level before I dive in, but I know some people work the exact opposite, they need to be right in with the details first and then work their way backwards to see the whole. It's really interesting how styles can be so different that way.

Joanne Olsen: But with the mind-map you can see all the detail. You can explode the whole mind-map and see the whole detail, or you can explode one section up, or just see the major concepts. You can go from-

Maria Erb: As a learner, you can go whatever your style is.

Joanne Olsen: Narrow-wide, wide-narrow.

Maria Erb: That is great.

Ben Kahn: I can just picture in like ten years or so sitting with virtual reality goggles on and you're like inside a mind-map.

Joanne Olsen: Yeah.

Maria Erb: Or walking around ...

Ben Kahn: Zooming around, yeah. Seeing all the different elements.

Maria Erb: Let's hope that's not as nauseating as the Oculus Rift was.

Joanne Olsen: I think they already made that movie, right? "Inside Out"? I think its name is that.

Ben Kahn: Okay, well thanks for joining us Joanne, it was really a pleasure having you in to talk about mind-mapping today.

Joanne Olsen: Yes, thank you so much.

Ben Kahn: And I think you're maybe going to provide some visuals to go along so people can get an idea, and if you want to check that out you can visit us at sites.up.edu/techtalk and get sort of a visual mind-map to look at as a companion to this audio.

Alright, so until next time you can continue the conversation with us on Twitter, we are at UP TechTalk, and we will see you next time.

Maria Erb: Thank you.

Speaker 1: Thank you for joining us for another episode of the UP TechTalk Podcast. We post new episodes on Friday mornings. If you want to hear more please subscribe through iTunes, or check out the TechTalk blog at techtalk.up.edu.