

Formative assessment: CONCEPT MAPPING

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One very significant feature of formative assessment is the full involvement of pupils during lessons. The use of concept maps is one way how to integrate pupils in the learning process. This involvement motivates and challenges pupils to such an extent that it increases the chances for learning to take place.

Many of us are familiar with the term ‘brainstorming’, but not so much with ‘concept mapping’ although the term has been in use since the 1960s. Concept mapping is the strategy adopted to develop a concept map, which may take different forms and shapes as shown in the three diagrams.

Usually the concept map is formed by placing the subject in a prime position in the diagram. The subject is broken down into simpler themes, facts or opinions and therefore it becomes easier for children to comprehend the subject that is being studied.

The concept becomes the common factor that unifies what is being radiated in different directions (hence the origin of the term ‘spider concept map’). In diagram 1, for example it is clearly shown that

following the commands or instructions radiated from the centre ensures staying healthy.



diagram 1

The process adopted to develop the concept map is of great educational significance. It would be extremely unwise to present pupils with a ready-made diagram. Pupils should be fully involved in its development because the process makes them think, discuss, classify, evaluate and finally decide on what is necessary if we want to stay healthy. So the concept map helps children to clarify issues and organise their ideas

One other advantage of concept maps is that they present us with lots of information ‘at a glance’, just like a picture, which as the saying goes, is worth a thousand words. Viewing this information in a visual format (diagrams 2 and 3 are other examples) may prove to be extremely effective in helping our pupils to learn.

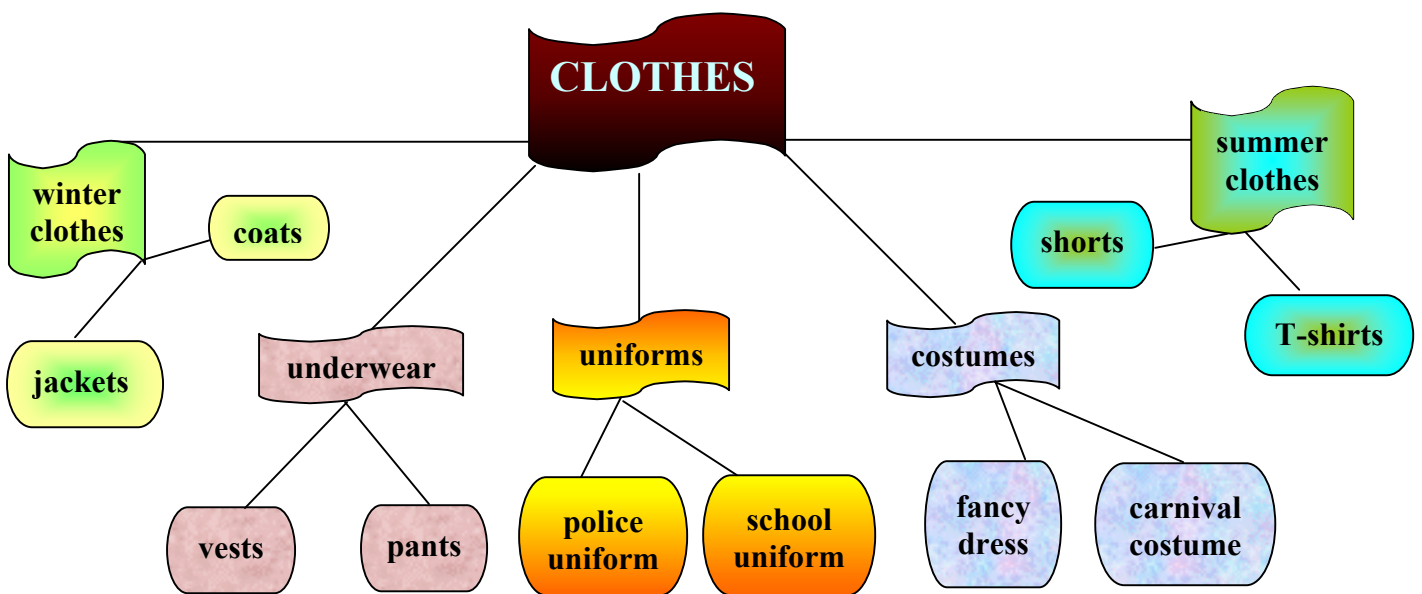


diagram 2

Concept maps are an easy tool to use in the teaching of knowledge, skills and attitudes. In fact concept maps may be used to facilitate learning about any topic, even if it is an abstract concept such as change, causes, consequences, feelings, opportunities, and risks.

One should point out, moreover, that a concept map is a tool which can be used as a strategy during any stage of the teaching and learning

process. In fact concept maps have been used successfully (a) to introduce a topic (b) to form the body of the lesson (c) during the plenary or conclusion of the lesson and (d) for revision purposes.

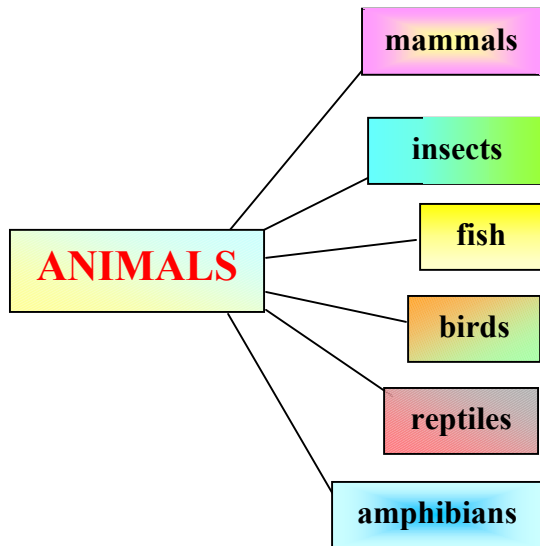


diagram 3

Hopefully Maltese teachers will experiment with the use of concept maps and discover for themselves their pedagogical benefits.
