

Learning with collaboratively generated graphical representations in the domain of economics and business education

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Learner-generated graphical representations (e.g. knowledge maps, mind maps, concept maps) are receiving increased attention in educational research and practice, mainly because they are deemed to foster deep and meaningful learning. Moreover, contemporary scholars assume that the beneficial effects of learner-generated representations can be increased, if they are combined with collaborative forms of learning. To further investigate these suggestions within the domain of economics and business education, an experimental study with 169 business school students was conducted. In this study, cognitive learning outcomes of subjects from three treatment groups (text plus experimenter-provided graphic group; individually mapping group, and collaboratively mapping group) were contrasted. The results of this study indicate that learner-generated graphical representations are of specific use for promoting long-term retention of central text ideas, and that their collaborative generation is particularly effective with respect to accuracy and elaborateness of newly acquired knowledge. Furthermore, the collaborative learning setting is most profitable for students who can be considered as low-achievers in terms of prior economic knowledge.