

Examples of Metaphorical Thinking and Forced Analogy

Metaphorical thinking or forced analogies are techniques that give new perspectives and insights for problem solving. The idea is to compare a situation with something that, on the surface, might appear to have little in common, but allows the team to examine a problem in a completely different, but analogous, context. Studying similarities and differences of analogous circumstances helps the team to be more objective and to better understand a problem.

An example of metaphorical thinking or a forced analogy is to compare a classroom trying to improve standardized test scores to a corporation setting a production goal. Some comparisons the team might make include:

- The range of skills and abilities of members in the organizations, such as the students and the workers;
- The characteristics of the leaders, such as teachers and school administrators and corporate managers and executives; and
- The nature of the strategic use of other leadership roles, such as aides and learning specialists and corporate communication specialists and consultants.

Another example of forced analogy is to compare a classroom management problem to an ant farm, a bee hive, a family, a business or a corporation. Some issues for comparison could include:

- Group purpose and members' understanding of the purpose and their motivation and ability to achieve it.
- Rules and rulemaking.
- Organizational structure.
- Communication patterns and support.
- Leadership, authority and decision making.

Some of our society's most daunting technological problems have been solved by using these techniques. Problem solving through the use of analogies and metaphors can help teams understand things they do not understand through the lens of things they do.

Adapted from: Williams, Steve. Metaphorical Thinking. 5 October 1996.

<http://thinkingscripts.co.uk/ts/articles/art3.html>