

# Learning Styles

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## Abstract:

*The term learning styles refers to the underlying concept that each individual differ with respect to the mode of instruction or study which suits them the most. The advocates of learning-style assert that optimal instruction requires diagnosing individual's learning style and tailoring the instructions accordingly. Different learning models have contrasting meaning adhered to them and classify the learners accordingly.*

A teacher teaches in a classroom with a goal to give maximum learning experience to the learners. A teacher teaches the similar content to all the learners but in the same classroom and same atmosphere/environment no two learners learn same thing due to varied factors which may affect them. The learners learn in different ways, such as by watching and hearing, working all alone and in groups with the peers, reasoning with logics and intuitions and at times by memorizing the concepts or merely by visualizing. So, Learning Style is one of the varied factors and each learner has his/her own learning style. Thus, learning style as embodies the characteristic ways in which individuals orientate to problem-solving. (Ellis 2005).

Gibson (1976) defined learning style as “the different ways in which people process information in the course of learning.”

Laycock (1978) described learning style as an individual's characteristic way of responding to certain variables in the instructional environment.

Vermunt (1996) defines learning style as coherent whole of learning activities that students usually employ.

Reynolds (1997) opines that each person has his or her own individual way of gathering and processing information, and solving problems in day-to-day situations. These personal cognitive abilities, acquired in the course of a long socialization process are called learning styles.

According to Sarasin (1998), “the preference or predisposition of an individual to perceive and process information in a particular way or combination of ways”.

Fleming (2001) opines learning style as individual's preferred ways of gathering, organizing, and thinking about information”.

Riding (2005) assured that students are not all the same and that individual differences influence both their learning and their academic achievement.

An overview of various definitions of learning style reveals that learning styles are consistent preferred ways of learning which the individual learners employ during learning of various tasks.

The idea of individualized learning styles originated in the 1970s and has gained popularity in recent years. Learning styles are seen as characteristic cognitive, affective, and psychological behaviours that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with and respond to the learning environment. The concept of learning styles has been applied to a wide variety of student attributes and differences (Felder &Spurlin, 2005).

Research shows that individuals have different ways, modes or preferences in how they take in and process information. These preferences are known as learning styles, which are described the different ways in which different people learn. Ford and Chen (2001) stated that matching/mismatching between teachings and learning styles can have significant effects on learning outcome.

Sternberg (1994) opines that a learning style is not in itself an ability but rather a preferred way of using one's abilities. Individuals with different learning styles, i.e., they differ in their „natural, habitual, and preferred ways of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills (Reid 1995). Learning styles are typically bipolar entities (for example reflective versus impulsive, random versus sequential), representing two extremes of a wide continuum and each extreme has its own potential advantages and disadvantages (Dornyei, 2005).

Judith (1992) has pinpointed the importance of learning styles:

- It can check the feeling of frustration among teachers and their students
- It may lead to “higher achievement, a more positive attitude and improved self-concept and self-confidence.
- Teachers can make suitable lesson plans that might cater for a whole variety of learners. Such a course may bring about a telling effect in the education of school children.
- The overview of learning style research and terminology can provide a theoretical basis for versatile teaching. The effective teachers can demonstrate flexibility by using a variety of instructional techniques in the classroom.
- It is advisable that there should be interaction between teachers, administrators and counsellors about teaching styles. It will have very encouraging results.

Learning can be defined by different kind of models. Each one elaborates the process along with the relevant learning styles that incarnates from that model. Learning models are any framework that defines the mechanism of learning. It comprises of forms of learning new skills or information. These models comprise of sub categories that further diversifies into various learning styles.

### ***The Myers–Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) (1962)***

The Myers Briggs Type Indicator personality assessment was created by the mother-daughter partnership of Katharine Cook Briggs and Isabel Briggs Myers which was first published in 1962. This model classifies the learners according to the preferences on the basis of scales derived from the theory of psychological types propounded by psychologist Carl Jung's. So accordingly, the learners may be classified as:

- a) Extroverts who focus on the outer world of people or Introverts who focus on the inner world of ideas
- b) Sensors, which tend to be practical, detail-oriented and focus on facts and elaborated procedures or Intuitions who tend to be imaginative and focus on possibilities and meanings.
- c) Thinkers who are skeptical and tend to make decisions based on rules and logics or Feelers who are appreciative and make decisions based upon personal and humanistic considerations.

- d) Judgers, who set and follow the agendas and seek closure even with the incomplete data or the Perceivers who adapt to dynamic circumstances and resist closure to obtain more information or data.

So, accordingly, the MBTI type preferences may be combined together to form 16 different learning style types. To exemplify, one learner may be an ESTJ (extravert, sensor, thinker, and perceiver) and another student may be an INFJ (introvert, intuitor, feeler, and judge).

### **The Myers–Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)**



### ***Hermann Brain Dominance (1970)***

The Hermann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI) is a system to measure and describe the thinking preferences in people, developed by William “Ned” Herrman in 1970. It is based on the idea that one part of the brain is dominant over the others.

So, this model suggests that the learners can be categorised as:

- Theorists: who prefer sequential learning are good at memorizing the information.
- Organizers: who can learn new knowledge, provided the information is arranged systematically.
- Humanitarians: who focus on interpersonal thinking. Thus, their learning comprises primarily of emotions, feelings and expression of ideas.
- Innovators: who use the existing set of knowledge to build upon with their own creative thinking. Prominent traits of these learners are Problem-solving and critical thinking.

### Hermann Brain Dominance



### *Kolb Learning Style Model*

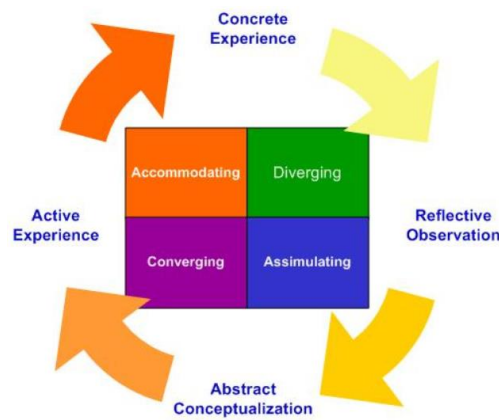
Also known as experiential learning theory, the model is given by David A. Kolb (1984). He propounded that in this model learning is a cycle that comprises of four stages.

- Concrete learning: wherein the learner either goes through some variations of an old experience or tends to experience something new.
- Reflective observation: the learner here reflects on the said experience. So, here learner's personal interpretations determine the understanding of this experience.
- Abstract conceptualization: In this stage the learner goes through an abstract conceptualisation wherein either old ideas are modified or new ideas are formed.
- Active experimentation: in the last stage, everything that has been understood in the previous 3 stages is implied; i.e, the learner may experiment with these new learnings in real life.

So, based upon the above stages, there can be four type of learners:

- Convergers: Who likes to experiment, focussing on third and fourth stages of cycle.
- Divergers: They imagine to a great extent, thus coming up with novel ideas. They mostly focusses on first two stages of the cycle.
- Assimilators: With the support of known information, these learners take onto everything. They tend to prefer conceptualisation and reflection while absorbing information.
- Accommodators: they always approach new tasks very warmly and welcomingly, with the practical style and comprises last stage in the cycle.

### Kolb Learning Style Model

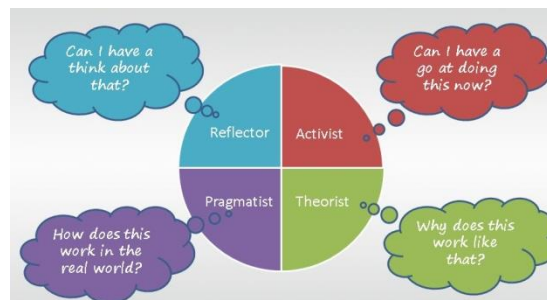


### *Honey Mumford Model (1986)*

Honey and Mumford's learning styles were developed by Peter Honey and Alan Mumford in 1986. Their work is inspired by and built upon Kolb's learning styles model. They recommend that to maximise personal learning, each learner ought to understand their own learning style and seek the opportunities to learn in their own learning styles. The Honey Mumford model is in much similarity to the Kolb model. It gave the following learning styles:

- Activists: The Active learners do the tasks practically to gain knowledge from them.
- Theorists: Includes the People tends to learn from existing facts and figures.
- Pragmatists: Before actual learning, such individuals conceptualize and experiment with ideas.
- Reflectors: These learners tends to reflect on what they see and learn from it.

### Honey Mumford Model



### *VARK Learning Style Model (2006)*

VARK learning style model is learning style that has been modified from VAK model, to VARK learning Style by Fleming in 2006. VARK here stands for visual, auditory, reading or writing, kinesthetic learning styles. As per this model every learner experiences the learning by any one of these processes. So accordingly;

- Visual learners: The ones who remember things they see much better than the things they tend to hear.
- Auditory learners: The ones who learn the information best through audio sources
- Readers and Writers: The ones who like to do either visually or auditorily
- Kinesthetic learners: The ones who gain knowledge by actually experiencing it.

So, the model divides the learners into two types.



- Type one learners: Those which switch over between the four learning styles as per the requirement of the situation.
- Type two learners: Those referred to as slow learners as they only have one preference.

### **VARK Learning Style Model**



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