

Understand the learning process



**ASSIGN
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Learning Styles affect individuals and their ability to learn. Each individual has a preference of a learning style whether this is visual, listening, touching or performing; these ways will affect an individual understanding and processing information. As we develop in life our learning styles may change due to the environment we are exposed to. We may be required to use different techniques none the less we may still hold the preference of the particular learning style in which we obtain information easily.

There are two relevant learning theories which can categorise learners to ensure their learning style needs are met in professional development.

Personal Professional Development (PPD) “ is learning you will acquire from experience before you qualify as a professional” (B. Stretch, M. Whitehouse (2007) BTEC Nationals Health and Social Care Book 1. Page 272).

Whereas Continuing Professional Development (CPD) “ is learning you will acquire after qualifying as a professional” (B. Stretch, M. Whitehouse (2007) BTEC Nationals Health and Social Care Book 1. Page 272). We never stop learning or using learning styles, we just have the ability to apply knowledge and experience more easily as we age; as adults we are aware of other learning styles and when to apply them in a way which benefits us.

Kolb’s Experimental Learning Cycle (1984). David Kolb’s learning cycle is a theory that is widely know of and used. The objective of this theory was to explain how young adults develop cognitive abilities. Cognitive abilities means problem solving skills or “ the ways in which you think, using your knowledge and experience” (B.

Stretch, M. Whitehouse (2007) BTEC Nationals Health and Social Care Book 1. Page 275). Kolb identified that during adolescence and early adulthood we develop preferences for the way in which we collect information, make sense of experiences and use collected information to develop understanding. The Kolb learning cycle has four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation.

Concrete Experience This is the 'doing stage' where you participate in an action(s).

Reflective Observation The stage in which you personally reflect on the concrete experience.

Abstract Conceptualisation This is the decision and planning stage where the information gained from the experience is analysed and understood.

Active Experimentation This stage is the planning of Kolb's cycle so that you can learn from the first concrete experience in order to conduct it again revised – implementing the plan.

Based upon Kolb's learning theory there are four styles; each of the learning styles is made up of two elements of the cycle: Diverging, Accommodating, Converging and Assimilating. Diverging is feeling and watching.

People with this learning style are sensitive, imaginative, and open-minded, prefer to work in a team and look at things from more than one perspective.

Assimilating is thinking and watching. People with this learning style prefer visual learning rather than listening. They are able to understand and organise information to a logical format but require clear explanations.

Converging is thinking and doing. People with this learning style rely on other people's analysis and information rather than their own.

They also act irrationally rather than using a logical approach. Convergers are practical and rely on intuition. Honey and Mumford Learning Styles Theory (1985) Honey and Mumford learning theory is an advance on Kolb's learning theory. This learning theory identifies four learning styles; it looks at the characteristics, preferred learning situations and less favourable learning situations. The four learning style preferences that are identified in this theory are: reflector, theorist, activist and pragmatist.

From the table you can see that activists are dominating people who like to be heavily involved in situations but lose interest quickly. Activists like new and difficult experiences, yet dislike working alone. Reflectors are reserved. They like to think before they speak, look from different perspectives and have a considerate nature. Reflectors like time to think and being able to observe, but dislike taking the lead or not being prepared. Theorists are logical, rational thinkers who like to look at things with a different point of view; they work well in clear structured environments where knowledge and skills can be applied in complex situations yet dislike lack of structure or purpose and working with others.

Pragmatists are practical and prefer to work alone yet welcome feedback. They like to be able to experiment but with a positive outcome. Pragmatists do not like guidance or unclear benefits. These four learning style preferences were identified from a questionnaire conducted by Honey and Mumford in the workplace; they discovered that individuals tend to use many of the learning styles depending on the environmental situation, yet the preferred style of learning is easier. There is a similarity between Kolb's

learning theory and the Honey and Mumford Theory; this is the styles correspond.

Activist learners show the same characteristics to the Accommodating learners. Reflectors are the same as Diverging learners. Theorists are assimilating learners and pragmatists are the same as converging learners. Knowing which is your preferred style of learning, based on either theory, means that you can reduce the influences on how you learn. Learning styles are just one influential factor on learning out of many; people can be influenced by study space, friends, health, employment, lifestyle and funding for study. Each of these six influential factors can and will influence your ability to learn.

Study space can influence your learning because a messy study space means that your work is un-organised and can interrupt your thought processes when trying to complete work. An organised study space will influence your learning positively because you will be able to find bits and pieces of work with ease. Although study space isn't just about the organisational skills that you possess or lack of, it can include factors such as noise. For example, music playing in the back ground can be a positive or negative influence depending on whether you can concentrate with background noise; but noise can also be other people talking which can affect your learning because you may be too busy trying to concentrate on what they are saying. Friends and peers can have both a positive and negative influence on your learning.

If your friends encourage you to work through motivation or competition then you will be positively influenced, but say your friends are planning a big party at the weekend and you have work to hand in on Monday or an exam you need to revise for then you will be negatively influenced by them to leave the work and go to the party. Although you may still have time to complete the work or revise your concentration wouldn't be completely focused on the studying because of other factors which are after effects of the party your friends planned, like being tired or hung-over. Your health can influence your learning as if you are not feeling 100% you may not be focused on your study because you feeling ill. Employment is a factor which can influence your ability to learn, as the hours you work in your job may interrupt time that could be used to study or you may be too tired the next day. Working a part-time job and trying to complete full-time learning means you are under extra pressure because you must be motivated and organised enough to be able to complete the studying in the free time which you are not at work.

Lifestyle can seriously influence your ability to learn. If you are caring for someone, spend your weekends getting drunk, live in a situation which doesn't offer support and so on, your ability to learn can be influenced negatively due to lack of concentration, increased pressure or environmental issues. Yet lifestyle can also positively influence your learning if the environment around you is supportive and encouraging you will be more motivated to study. Funding for study is also another factor which can influence your learning. For example, living in an environment which means you have to work to pay for your lifestyle, or not being able to go to your

place of education because transport is expensive, or you are on a course which you have to pay for like university, means that you are under pressure to be able to create the funds which allow you to study.

Not having enough funds means you may take on extra employment to cover the cost of your expenses. Yet having funding for study can influence your learning positively because you can go further in education to learn in a more in depth way without having to worry about the cost. Each of these six factors I have identified and explained can influence your learning positively and negatively, it is up to you as the learner whether you let factors like these influence your learning and if they do, do you let them influence positively or negatively.