

## Appendix 14 - Learning styles

We all know that people learn in different ways, and a number of studies have tried to define the different qualities that make up learning styles. This now a complex field of research and theory stated proliferating relatively recently with Honey and Mumford in 1982. There are now a wide range of models to characterise learning styles. A learning style describes the way a learner prefers to go about their learning. If we can realise that each student will have their own preferred learning style then we can understand why all teaching methods do not suit all students.

### Honey and Mumford Model

Relating to stimuli / types of knowledge

Described four preferred learning styles: **Activist, Reflector, Theorist and Pragmatist**

**Activists** learn best from activities in which there are:

- New experiences and challenges
- Short 'here and now' tasks, including teamwork and problem solving
- Excitement, change and variety
- 'High visibility' tasks such as leading discussions

Strengths

- Flexible and open minded
- Happy to have a go
- Happy with new situations
- Optimistic

Weaknesses

- Take obvious action without thinking
- Unnecessary risks
- Do too much themselves
- Don't prepare
- Bored easily

**Reflectors** learn best from activities where they:

- Are allowed or encouraged to watch/think/ponder on activities
- Have time to think before acting
- Can carry out careful, detailed research
- Have time to review their learning
- Don't have pressure and tight deadlines

Strengths

- Careful
- Thorough
- Good at listening
- Don't jump to conclusions

#### Weaknesses

- Hold back from participation
- Slow to reach decisions
- Cautious and not risk taking

**Theorists** learn best from activities where:

- What is offered is part of a system, model, concept or theory
- They can explore the interrelationships between ideas, events and situations
- They are asked to analyse and evaluate, then generalise
- They can question basic assumptions or logic

#### Strengths

- Logical
- Rational
- Good at asking probing questions
- Disciplined

#### Weaknesses

- Restricted in lateral thinking
- Don't like disorder
- Uncomfortable with intuition

**Pragmatists** learn best from activities where they:

- There's an obvious link between the subject and a 'real life' problem
- They are shown techniques for doing things with practical advantages
- They see a model they can emulate, or can concentrate on practical issues
- They are given immediate opportunities to implement what they have learned

#### Strengths

- Keen to test things out
- Practical and realistic

- Business like
- Technique orientated

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### Weaknesses

- Reject abstract ideas
- Not interested in theories
- Take the first solution
- Task orientated

## **The Vark model**

A model of learning/ digesting information /mode of delivery

Developed by Neil Fleming 1987

It looks at a student's preferences for obtaining knowledge

Features a series of questions followed by help sheets for students and Teachers

**V** = Visual

**A** = Aural

**R** = Read /Write

**K** = Kinaesthetic

**Visual learners** - Like pictorial or graphical representations

**Aural learners** – Learn by listening, enjoy traditional lectures, need directions read allowed

**Read/Write learners** – written word suites them best, like making notes from textbooks & references etc

**Kinaesthetic learners** – Learn by doing, hands on, try out etc