Learning Styles: Ways Of Learning And Groups Of Learners

Learning styles

How we learn

In order to learn we must find the best way to do that for ourselves, however as children we are taught in a certain way and this does not suit everyone. Unfortunately, this is the way it is done and unless there is a fundamental change within our education system towards more directed learning there will be some children who fall through the cracks.

Different ways in which we learn

There are several different ways in which we learn things and in the next few pages I will outline a few of those ways. We learn by doing, seeing and thinking. But there are different ways of doing each of them.

Doing:

This is when we use our hands to do the work, we write, we build things, we feel things and some people use their hands to read or talk. All of this is taught by someone who already knows how to do these things but also has her own way of doing things in the first place. So being taught a certain way by a certain person might not feel right for you. So hold your hand up talk to the teacher, find a teacher with the right style of teaching for you. While this is not always possible to change teachers at least the teacher knows and can make certain accommodations for you. Using your hands is important because we need our hands to work for us and not against us. So practice don’t give up and look towards the future and what you will be able to do.

Seeing:

We also learn by seeing, watching what others do, copying the moves in the right way in order to see how to do it. Sign language is taught by seeing people use their hands to talk, teaching sign language takes quite a while as there is different dialects for different areas. For example, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland have two different dialects, so when you see two interpreters on the news (Especially the current pandemic situation) one is for sign language and the other is for Irish dialect version. Some people do well with learning by visual aids others don’t. It’s a simple way to find your way of learning. Spend a couple of hours on something new, see how you react, do you get frustrated easily, does your mind wander off about a new way of doing this or are you simply bored. If you answered the last one, then just keep going and persevere you will get there. If your answer was one of the first three, then find a new way of learning seeing is not for you.

Hearing:

When we listen we learn as they say. However, listening is not always what we learn. We learn audio cues, tiny details in which the way someone presents the subject they are teaching. We listen for the content sometimes but if we listen for the tone of voice we may find that the person presenting the information is not believing thus leaving the learner with the same belief especially if the style of teaching suits the student.

How to learn

To learn we must realize the different ways that each person learns. To put people into the groups that they should be in. In order to do this aptitude tests are carried out at the beginning of the year of school, but this system is a bit wrong in my opinion. Students get better as the years go on but there is only one aptitude test to enter the school. So students are stuck in a system that doesn't account for their learnings throughout the years in school. In sixth year you are still in the same grouping as you were in first year but you are a completely different person from what you were in those early days in school.

Different groupings of learners

Visual

As again this is similar to 'seeing' but it is the what you use to actually see what you are learning. So projectors, white boards, black boards, videos, you tube content, what you see on paper, the body language the teacher uses, pens and highlighters. Use your eyes to see what is in front of you and learn from it. If you get bored easily while learning a new subject, then this is probably the best way for you to learn. As your attention is drawn by the use of materials to describe the subject.

Aural

As in listening, this is when we use our listening ability to learn, we use sounds as well as tapes/CDs for language courses. You can lie down, walk around and learn at the same time. Sometimes people need to use their entire body to learn, so walking around while listening to French tapes might help you learn the language quicker. If you are an aural learner, learning to do something while you are doing something else is the easiest way to learn for you, however they're not the easiest to teach.

Verbal

Being taught with words is the standard in teaching from very early on. If you can learn this way, then that is great but as I've previously said this does not suit everyone. If you are using this method to teach you must be clear and believe in what you are teaching.

Physical

Leaners who prefer learning with the sense of touch and feel, fit into this bracket of learners. These are people who do well in apprenticeships and craftsmanship courses to do their work. Learning on the job so to speak. Using their hands is what they thrive on.

Social

People who fit into this batch of learners do well in situations where there are many people around to help them learn. They learn by doing and seeing what others do and copying them to a certain extent. Group work suits them better than working on their own, normally it is easy to see how people fit into different brackets of learners and with the result initial aptitude tests the tutor can see by their results that they would be better working as part of a team and not necessarily on their own. But it takes a good teacher to see where they would fit in.

Solitary

As the author of this report it is only fair to tell you I'm a solitary learner. I work better on my own and don't necessarily do well in groups. To be honest I normally take over. After initially sitting back and seeing what the group is doing. I tend to go off on my own and I'm normally better off for doing so. I know that is probably a bad thing to say I don't work well in groups but it is best to be honest. But if I am required to work as part of a team I will with a little bit of hesitation first.

Learning Models

This section will tell you what type of model the learner fits into. There are four different types, activist, theorist, pragmatist and reflector.

Activists

Activists are those people who learn by doing. Activists need to get their hands dirty, to jump in with both feet first. Have a flexible approach to learning, connecting themselves fully and without prejudice in new experiences.

Theorist

These learners like to understand the theory behind the events. They need models, ideas and details in order to engage in the learning process. Prefer to examine and create, drawing new information into an organized and logical 'theory'.

Pragmatist

These people need to be able to see how to put the learning into practice in the real world. Mental concepts and games are of restricted use unless they can see a way to put the ideas into action in their lives. Experimenters, trying out new ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work.

Reflector

These people learn by seeing and theory about what happened. They may avoid diving in and prefer to watch from the sidelines. Prefer to stand back and view practices from a number of different standpoints, collecting data and taking the time to work towards a fitting end.

The way I learn

As I've said above I'm a solitary learner. I sit back and learn from others, how they interact with each other, how they work. I don't copy from them. I have my own ideas and I put them down on paper and go through everything before I start my own work. Sometimes I do well in groups, but I do my own stuff first get everything down on paper, I don't jump in.

I took a few of those online 'find your learning style quizzes and what came back was 'visual and kinesthetic' so that means I like to learn with my eyes and my hands. Which fits in with the type of learner I think I am.

According to Kolb's theory I'm a reflector, which is very true for me.

Bibliography

1. https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/doctoralcollege/training/eresources/teaching/theories/honey-mumford