



KOLB - LEARNING STYLES

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INTRODUCTION

- David Kolb published his learning styles model in 1984 from which he developed his learning style inventory.
- Kolb's experiential learning theory works on two levels:
 - **A four stage cycle of learning** and
 - **Four separate learning styles.**
- Much of Kolb's theory is concerned with the learner's internal cognitive processes.
- **Kolb states that learning involves the acquisition of abstract concepts that can be applied flexibly in a range of situations.**
- In Kolb's theory, the impetus for the development of new concepts is provided by new experiences.
- **“Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience”** (Kolb, 1984, p. 38).



Concrete Experience

(doing / having an
experience)



Active Experimentation

(planning / trying out
what you have learned)

Reflective Observation

(reviewing / reflecting
on the experience)



Abstract Conceptualisation

(concluding / learning
from the experience)

THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE

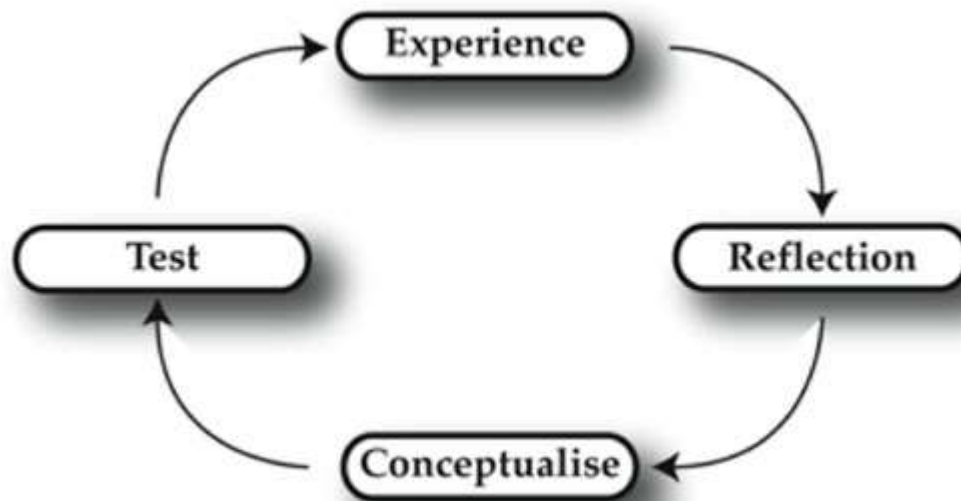
- Kolb's experiential learning style theory is typically represented by a four stage learning cycle in which the learner '**touches all the bases**':
- **1. Concrete Experience** - (a new experience of situation is encountered, or a reinterpretation of existing experience).
- **2. Reflective Observation** (of the new experience. Of particular importance are any inconsistencies between experience and understanding).
- **3. Abstract Conceptualization** (Reflection gives rise to a new idea, or a modification of an existing abstract concept).
- **4. Active Experimentation** (the learner applies them to the world around them to see what results).



THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE

- Effective learning is seen when a person progresses through a cycle of four stages: of
 - (1) Having a concrete experience followed by
 - (2) Observation of and reflection on that experience which leads to
 - (3) The formation of abstract concepts (analysis) and generalizations (conclusions) which are then
 - (4) Used to test hypothesis in future situations, resulting in new experiences.
- Kolb (1974) views learning as an integrated process with each stage being mutually supportive of and feeding into the next.
 - It is possible to enter the cycle at any stage and follow it through its logical sequence.
- However, **effective learning only occurs when a learner is able to execute all four stages of the model.**
 - Therefore, no one stage of the cycle is an effective as a learning procedure on its own.





LEARNING STYLES

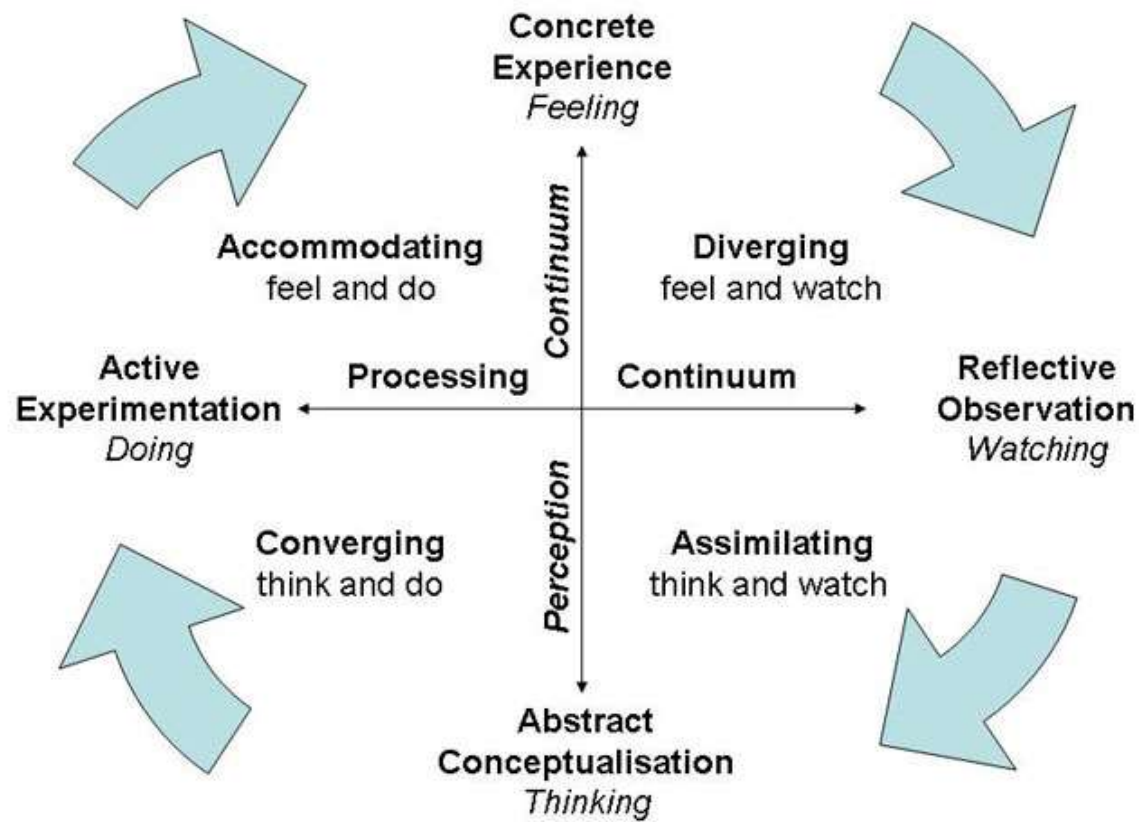
- Kolb's learning theory (1974) sets out four distinct learning styles, which are based on a four-stage learning cycle noted above.
 - Kolb explains that **different people naturally prefer a certain single different learning style.**
 - **Various factors influence a person's preferred style.** For example,
 - **Social environment,**
 - **Educational experiences, or**
 - **The basic cognitive structure of the individual.**
- Whatever influences the choice of style, **the learning style preference itself is actually the product of two pairs of variables, or two separate 'choices' that we make,** which **Kolb** presented as lines of axis, each with **'conflicting' modes at either end:**



LEARNING STYLES

- Whatever influences **lines of axis, each with 'conflicting' modes at either end:**
 - A typical presentation of Kolb's two continuums is that
 - **The east-west axis** is called the **Processing Continuum** (how we approach a task), and
 - **The north-south axis** is called the **Perception Continuum** (our emotional response, or how we think or feel about it).





LEARNING STYLES

- Kolb believed that **we cannot perform both variables on a single axis at the same time (e.g. think and feel).**
 - **Our learning style is a product of these two choice decisions.**
- It's often easier to see the construction of Kolb's learning styles in terms of a two-by-two matrix.
- Each learning style represents a combination of two preferred styles.
 - The diagram also highlights Kolb's terminology for the four learning styles;
 - **Diverging, Assimilating, and**
 - **Converging, Accommodating:**



	Doing (Active Experimentation - AE)	Watching (Reflective Observation - RO)
Feeling (Concrete Experience - CE)	Accommodating (CE/AE)	Diverging (CE/RO)
Thinking (Abstract Conceptualization – AC)	Converging (AC/AE)	Assimilating (AC/RO)



LEARNING STYLES DESCRIPTIONS

- **Knowing a person's (and your own) learning style enables learning to be orientated according to the preferred method.**
 - **But everyone responds to and needs the stimulus of all types of learning styles to one extent or another –**
 - **It's a matter of using emphasis that fits best with the given situation and a person's learning style preferences.**



BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS OF THE FOUR KOLB LEARNING STYLES

- **Diverging (feeling and watching - CE/RO)**
- These people are able to look at things from different perspectives.
 - They are sensitive.
 - They prefer to watch rather than do, tending to gather information and use imagination to solve problems.
 - They are best at viewing concrete situations at several different viewpoints.
- Kolb called this style 'diverging' because these people perform better in situations that require ideas-generation, for example, brainstorming.
 - People with a diverging learning style have broad cultural interests and like to gather information.
- They are interested in people, tend to be imaginative and emotional, and tend to be strong in the arts.
 - People with the diverging style prefer to work in groups, to listen with an open mind and to receive personal feedback.

BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS OF THE FOUR KOLB LEARNING STYLES

- **Assimilating (watching and thinking - AC/RO)**
- **Preference is for a concise, logical approach.**
 - **Ideas and concepts are more important than people.**
 - **These people require good clear explanation rather than practical opportunity.**
 - **They excel at understanding wide-ranging information and organizing it in a clear logical format.**
- **People with an assimilating learning style are less focused on people and more interested in ideas and abstract concepts.**
 - **People with this style are more attracted to logically sound theories than approaches based on practical value.**
- **This learning style is important for effectiveness in information and science careers.**
 - **In formal learning situations, people with this style prefer readings, lectures, exploring analytical models, and having time to think things through.**

BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS OF THE FOUR KOLB LEARNING STYLES

- **Converging (doing and thinking - AC/AE)**
- People with a converging learning style **can solve problems and will use their learning to find solutions to practical issues.**
 - They prefer technical tasks, and are less concerned with people and interpersonal aspects.
- People with a converging learning style **are best at finding practical uses for ideas and theories.**
 - They can solve problems and make decisions by finding solutions to questions and problems.
- People with a converging learning style **are more attracted to technical tasks and problems than social or interpersonal issues.**
 - A converging learning style **enables specialist and technology abilities.**
 - People with a converging style **like to experiment with new ideas, to simulate, and to work with practical applications.**



BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS OF THE FOUR KOLB LEARNING STYLES

- **Accommodating (doing and feeling - CE/AE)**
- **The Accommodating learning style is 'hands-on', and relies on intuition rather than logic.**
 - **These people use other people's analysis, and prefer to take a practical, experiential approach.**
 - **They are attracted to new challenges and experiences, and to carrying out plans.**
- **They commonly act on 'gut' instinct rather than logical analysis.**
 - **People with an accommodating learning style will tend to rely on others for information than carry out their own analysis.**
 - **This learning style is prevalent within the general population.**



EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- Both Kolb's (1984) learning stages and cycle could be used by teachers to critically evaluate the learning provision typically available to students, and to develop more appropriate learning opportunities.
- Educators should ensure that activities are designed and carried out in ways that offer each learner the chance to engage in the manner that suits them best.
 - Also, individuals can be helped to learn more effectively by the identification of their lesser preferred learning styles and the strengthening of these through the application of the experiential learning cycle.
- Ideally, activities and material should be developed in ways that draw on abilities from each stage of the experiential learning cycle and take the students through the whole process in sequence.



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