The IT Crowd

Learning Styles (Honey and Mumford)

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Introduction:

A learning style is how a person learns best from a given scenario. Depending on the situation and what the person aims for would decide which different learning approach be more appropriate for the highest possible outcome. An example is the leaving certificate, or a continuous assessment in a post leaving certificate course or even in a work environment. One type of learning would not be as sufficient for one course as opposed to another, like studying for the leaving certificate is not an approach many people would take for a continuous assessment.

Reasons would be one person way of thinking would not be the same as another person. For example, a person who has wonderful creative mind would look at another person's page of textual document/ equation and think "what is that person doing" as the writing is all over the page. Neatness for one person may not suit another person, they would need a messy environment to work. Another example is the amount of pressure imposed on to a person may get one person to work more efficient, but make another person boil to the state of total stress that it makes them pass out. Each person learning method is unique to one person as to another, which can be applied to every different given situation.

The definition of learning styles, as applied to everyone, regardless of their position, is "an individual's best method of gaining knowledge". This literal meaning does not say for a certain group of people. This means these methods are universal. The best method for one person could be in preparation for a future exam in college in a 'Developed country', or trying to obtain the cleanest water possible in order to survive in an 'Underdeveloped Country'. Depending on each person knowledge would determine which learning style to use and how to implement it.

For example, in the "Honey and Mumford Learning styles", there are four main types of learning, known as "Theorist, Activist, Pragmatist and Reflector". These learning styles, which will be furthered explained, are in everyone in some shape or form. It may be the case that one person is more of an Activist Learner than a Reflector type of learner, but all four-learning style are applicable to everyone.

Honey and Mumford based their learning styles on the Kolb version of the learning styles. Their version was first published in 1982 and newer editions were published since then, with newer editions containing more accurate questionnaires etc. These books were published by Peter Honey's company. Since these versions, more types of learning styles has evolved, such as "Howard Gardner's Nine Learning styles". The thing they all have in common is each one is applied to each person in some shape has some of these

characteristics, that not one applies to one person. It is up to each person to discover theirs.

Brief Overview:

Theorist learning is learning by reading facts, quotes and statistics. Everything that has been done in some shape or form has a fact, quote or a formula behind it. For example, Why are 'for loops' loops etc. Activist learning is done by doing. It is the process of doing an activity associated with the topic they are adopting to. For example, if a code was had to be learned, the activist would learn by trying to implement the code onto the screen and seeing the result.

Pragmatist learning is learning by taking a certain formula and testing it. The trial and error process is the best way for them. If a code statement was passed onto them, they would test it to see if it ran properly. If yes, they would note this, but if not, they would either discard the entire thing or the bit that is destroying the function. Reflector learning is learning by going back over what has been done or seeing others doing it before trying it for themselves. If an activist for coding away on the computer, the Reflector would learn best by sitting beside the coder and watch what is going on, and decide then if the learning was satisfactory standard.

How these are demonstrated in daily life is the everyday activities we see every day. In college, as a student there is a variety of methods which you must do to thrive in college. The same applies in work area, where again you are reinforcing what you are learning to push forward on what need to be done to get paid. The three types of learning stances are "The Completion Stance, The Performance Stance and The Development Stance".

The Development stance is the most sufficient type of learning, where as much learning is done as possible, whereas The Completion Stance contrasts as little effort as possible is done just to ensure the work is done, so the person can move on. The Performance Stance is an average amount of work put in so the work can be a certain type of standard, but not near perfect. All three correspond with the learning mechanisms "Active Learning vs Passive learning". Active Learning involves engaging in the topic with effort in a higher standard, whereas passive learning involves learning with some effort, but not engaging.

Active learning and passive learning are both used even by other creatures, like a bear cub watching its mother hunt for fish, then years later tries it out for itself. Both have

its strengths and weaknesses, but active learning has proven to be more beneficial to the human population, where the activist is doing the activity, the reflector is watching the activist, the pragmatist has given the activity to the activist or the theorist providing the theory in the first place. It has to be an engaging topic for the people to learn in a more constructive way and remember it for a longer period of time. If learned in a non-engaging, passive way, studies shows we learn a lot less. This is the brief overview of the depth of the "Learning styles Topic".

Evaluation:

For the group "IT Crowd" power point, the group attempted to apply the guidelines outlined by Ms Shoemaker to the best of the group's ability. This was met with varying degrees of success and difficulty. As opposed to using PowerPoint the group chose to use Google slides. This was of great benefit to the group as the application allowed any member of the group to edit the document from anywhere and contained all the changes in one single document. The application was also equipped with a chat room which allowed the group to be in constant communication with each other while each member worked on the document, but the drawback to this was the group could only communicate with each other if the document was open simultaneously. To ensure constant communication with each other without needing the google documents to be open, a Viber group chat was set up between the groups. This allowed the group to be able to contact each other at any given moment, which was far more reliable than the chat room. The group also met regularly to discuss the topic but face to face conversations also had its faults as a method of communication as the group spent as much time laughing as a group as working. This was surprising. Another surprising fact was the group found they were more productive working apart then working together in person.

The layout of the power point was of constant discussion as the group strived to meet the layout requirements. In the end the group agreed to play it safe and chose a plain blue background for its soothing colour and its compatibility with the images the group chose. The group tried to make the presentation as entertaining and informative as possible. It was done by adding memes and jokes, in effort in trying not to overload the targeted audience with information. But in the group's efforts to make it informative, it was found there had been written too much information onto our slides. So the group had to shorten and rephrase their bullet points. This was time consuming and could have been avoided had the group planned their segments better. The group also found difficulties with the font size. The group tried to keep it the same for every slide and every word written. While this was effective for majority of the slides, it failed to impress on the introduction slide. The group realised it could not justify enlarging the word 'introduction' while the other words remained a couple sizes smaller. This panic was averted when it was agreed to replace the word with an image that used the word 'introduction' in it. This way the group could enlarge the title while leaving the other slides alone.

The group practiced their presentation skills by watching other people on Ted talks and reserving the library study rooms. The group availed of the screens to present each member their segments to each other. This way the group were able to give each

other friendly advice while improving their public speaking skills. Advice like "less mumbling", "speak louder" and rearranging the order of the presentation was given and taken into account. The group also timed themselves repeatedly during the time leading up to the presentation so that it could estimate how long it would take each of the members to say their parts. The group also tried to use a combination of movement while speaking in order to help the presentation to flow. The group realised this meant working on the nerves as each member tended to walk about too much making the audience dizzy. The group experienced difficulty with changing the slides as every member found themselves ambivalently gesturing to the screen only to have the slides change unexpectedly. It was soon realised that there are very few signals that we can give to the "clicker" without it seeming too obvious, in the end we settled on simply pointing to the "clicker", simple yet effective.

The Presentation

When faced with the final grade of the presentation, there were a multitude of things that could have been changed that would have increased the overall grade. These mistakes had been taken into account and their solutions found, as this is the only true way to improve the groups' presentation skills.

The first change the group had made was the use of more interactive content. Although the presentation interacted with the audience, it failed to reach the depth needed for any substantial learning to occur as most things heard by the audience will be forgotten a few days after the presentation. To counter this the group intends to make use of a more interactive presentation technique. This will include using hand-outs and workable exercises to demonstrate the topic to the audience and so cause them to start actively learning, increasing the amount taken in sufficiently. These hand-outs will stay close to the given topic, and if possible also to the topic of computer science in general, as to play on the interests of the class. These hand-outs will be complemented by questions posed to the class in order to catch their attention. The questions will also be used to demonstrate the topic to the audience in a way that suits their style of thinking. To give an example of this, questions would be laced with a logical undertone as to stimulate the logical thinking style of a computer science class.

Another issue that the group intend to fix was the attitude towards improvisation when asked a question. As questions are inevitable when giving a presentation, and these questions can often come in the form of an interruption of flow, the group intend on improving their abilities to improvise around these questions and bend the flow to the needs of the audience. The group believed that the best way to combat this difficulty is with practice, and so the group intended on including the asking of questions in the rehearsals to allow for more preparation for the situations that may arise in a presentation. This allowed them to increase their ability to combat oncoming questions thus allowing for a smoother presentation style.

The group also intend to fix the problem of the presentation being too static. This was caused by a lack of movement on the screen leading to a less entertaining presentation overall. The group intend to fix this by adding a more animated feel to the presentation. This was accomplished through the use of animated images, gradually introduced bullet points and suitable transitions between the slides. This allowed for a more eye-catching presentation that held the audience's attention for longer, while also adding to the immersion in the presentation itself.

Another part of the presentation that the group believed they could improve on was the conclusion, as the current conclusion style was too vague and did not fully sum up all of the main points of the presentation. This was combated by introducing a more in depth conclusion. The group also intend on using the conclusion to remind the audience of the goals set in the introduction which would have been accomplished by this time. This effect highlighted the information that the group had given and allowed them to leave with refreshed knowledge of the topics covered, further cementing it in their memories.

The group also believed that the structure of the presentation could be improved to allow for a smoother transition between the topics. This was achieved through structuring the topics in an order that placed the similar or interlinking subjects close to one another. This allowed the presentation to seem less like a selection of pieces thrown together in a random order, and more like a structured jigsaw of perfectly interlocking parts. This had the effect of making the transition from one topic to the next easier for the audience as the switch will be almost seamless apart from the obvious change in speaker.

<u>Conclusion:</u>

In conclusion, the group worked reasonably well together and despite initially being quite disorganised still managed to get the job done. The group stayed in contact throughout the assignment, but there is no doubt that a few more visits to the library to practice would have helped considerably. Also, the group eventually agreed on a layout for the presentation after resolving a few minor disagreements. More visits to the library would certainly have helped with this aspect as well.

It was also concluded that having too much information in the slides can quite easily overwhelm the audience and that a good way to avoid this is to pre-plan what goes into the slides and to include humour. Making the presentation relevant to the audience also helped to keep their interest. Also, it became apparent that the font size is very important as having too small a font size makes it difficult to read, too large a font size reduces the amount of information that can be presented at once and having different font sizes can be very distracting
.

In addition, it was concluded that it is very important to pay attention to body language while presenting in order to avoid making the audience, as well as ourselves, dizzy and to make sure that prompts to the person controlling the slides are discreet yet clear. It was also concluded that using handouts would be a good way to engage the audience and aid their retention. This would also be helped by asking the audience questions, making them think about what they had learned.

The group also concluded that including answering possible questions during practice would help to avoid interruptions in flow during presentations. Conclusions also need to be more in-depth and transitions between topics need to be smooth so the audience finds it easier to follow along with the presentation.

Finally, it was concluded that the Honey and Mumford Learning Styles are still relevant today. The group came to this conclusion quite easily as, not long after beginning the assignment, each group member realised that they strongly identified with at least one of the learning styles, making our studies easier and more effective. The logical conclusion to draw from this was that the Honey and Mumford Learning Styles could be effective for most people, making them highly relevant.

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