Teaching Style *versus* Learning Styles: Something You Should Know

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The art of teaching

Teaching is about making some kind of dent in the world so that the world is different than it was before you practiced your craft.

Stephen D. Brookfield
*The Skillful Teacher* (1990)
Teaching Style

• Five basic preferred teaching styles
• Tend to teach the way we’re most comfortable
• Easy to assume students learn the way we teach
• Need to teach the way students learn
Five Teaching Styles

• Expert
• Formal Authority
• Personal Model
• Facilitator
• Delegator
Expert

- Possess knowledge, expertise that students need
- Concerned with transmitting information
- Works to ensure that all students are well prepared
Expert

**Advantage:** Sharing of expertise, information, knowledge and skills

**Disadvantage:** May be intimidating to less experienced students, limited focus on underlying processes that produced answers
Formal Authority

• Concerned with providing both negative and positive feedback
• Focused on the correct, acceptable, and standard ways of doing things
• Provides students with the learning structure and learning parameters
Formal Authority

• *Advantage*: Focus on clear expectations and acceptable ways of doing things

• *Disadvantage*: Rigid tendencies, can lead to standardized, less flexible problem solutions and lack of creativity
Personal Model

• Teaches by “personal example”
• Guides and directs by demonstration
• Encourages students to observe and mirror instructor’s approach
Personal Model

Advantage: Emphasis on direct observation and following a role model

Disadvantage: Ownership of approach, students may feel inadequate if they cannot live up to teacher’s expectations
Facilitator

• Emphasizes interpersonal communication
• Guides by asking questions, exploring options, suggesting alternatives
• Encourages students to develop criteria to make informed decisions
Facilitator

**Advantage:** Flexibility; focus on students’ needs and goals; willingness to explore other learning options

**Disadvantage:** Style may be time consuming; sometimes deployed in a positive and affirming manner
Delegator

- Emphasis on autonomy, self-directedness
- Acts as guide or coach
- Students work independently or in autonomous teams

**Advantage:** Helps students perceive themselves as self-directed learners

**Disadvantage:** May misread students’ readiness for autonomy
Learning Styles

• Visual/Verbal (20%)
  – Prefers to read information
• Visual/nonverbal (20%)
  – Uses graphs or diagrams
• Tactile/Kinesthetic (30)
  – Prefers hands-on
• Auditory/Verbal (30%)
  – Prefers to listen
Learning Style Inventory

- http://www.ion.uillinois.edu
  Search “Learning Styles”
- http://www.merlot.org
  Search “Learning Styles”
- http://www.ivc.illinois.edu
  Search “student support services”
Multiple Intelligence

1. Visual Spatial
2. Verbal Linguistic
3. Logical/Mathematical
4. Body/Kinesthetic
5. Musical/Rhythmic
6. Interpersonal
7. Intrapersonal
From a different vantage point...

Information Handling Domains

- Active/Reflective
- Sensing/Intuitive
- Visual/Verbal
- Sequential/Global
Active/Reflective

- Learns best by doing something physical with information
- Processes information in their heads
Sensing/Intuitive

- Prefers data and facts
- Prefers theories & interpretations of factual information
Visual/Verbal

• Prefers charts, diagrams and pictures

• Prefers the spoken or written word
Sequential/Global

• Easily makes linear connection between individual steps

• Must get the “big” picture before individual pieces fall into place
Still More to Consider...

- Diversity and Cultural Impacts
- Adult Learning Considerations
- Life Experiences
Hispanic American Learning Styles

- Family commitment is important
- Highly diverse group
- Tend to be kinesthetic
Mexican Americans

- Least auditory
- Prefer-peer orientated learning
- Like a high degree of structure
- Favor variety
- More comfortable with broad concepts
African American Learning Styles

• Tend to excel at relational
• Peer oriented
• Prefer to work cooperatively
• Predominately auditory and visual
• Tend to work with people not things
• Focus on general concepts
• Want to know relevance
African American Learning Styles

• Prefer practical over theoretical

• Focus on whole-to-part learning
Asian Learning Styles

• Tend to be much more visual
• Have difficulty understanding lectures
• Very peer orientated
• Chinese
• Filipinos
• Koreans
Adult Learning Assumptions

- Adults are autonomous and self-directed
- Adults are goal oriented
- Adults need to know why they are learning something
- Adults are practical problem-solvers
- Adults have accumulated life experiences
Barriers to Adult Learning

- Juggling life responsibilities
- Lack of time
- Lack of money
- Lack of child care
- Scheduling problems
- Transportation problems
- Insufficient confidence
- Not interested or ready to learn
Students of Generation X and Y

• Grew up with TV, movies, video games
• Acquired well developed skills in interacting with machines
• Skilled in interpreting visually displayed data
• Sees “big picture”
• Impatient learner
• Very tech-savvy
Students of Generation X and Y

- Want options
- Multitasking important
- Credibility
Gender Learning Characteristics

Males

° Tend to see the world as black/white
° Understand diversity - a legitimate state
° However, prefer to know what is “right”
° Ultimately, develop a personal commitment to the relativistic world
Gender Learning Characteristics

Females

Different ways of knowing

° Silence: Tend to feel voiceless
° Received knowledge: Tend to feel powerless over creation of knowledge
° Subjective: Truth and knowledge are subjectively known
Gender Learning Characteristics

Females

° **Procedural:** Are invested in learning, applying objective learning procedures for obtaining knowledge

° **Constructed:** Knowledge is contextual; can create new knowledge found objectively or subjectively
So where does this leave us???

When designing your online course consider…

• Ask students to identify their learning style
• Using multiple instructional strategies
• Learn cultural background of students
• Be aware of your learning style
• Give assessment choices
References

• Fuller, D. et al. (2000) Profiling the On-Line Professor

References


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