INPUT

PROCESSING

OUTPUT

Olfactory

Gustatory

Kinesthetic

Tactile

Visual

Auditory

In Time

Concrete or Abstract

Random or Sequential

Multi or Single Task

Global Right Brain

Analytical Left Brain

Kinesthetic

Visual Spatial

Musical

Linguistic

Maths/Logic

Interpersonal

Intrapersonal

Naturalistic

Through Time

Learning Styles
VS.
Multiple Intelligences (MI)

Two Concepts for Enhancing Learning and Teaching

Barbara Prashnig points out the differences between these two revolutionary approaches to teaching and clarifies the confusion which often exists when classroom teachers attempt to introduce new strategies.

When talking with professional educators about new teaching methods I often hear comments like "In our school we have introduced Multiple Intelligences which now cater for our students' learning styles" and "When I teach in many different ways, using MI, I am covering all my students' learning needs."

Although the use of MI is commendable as long as teachers know what they are doing and why they are doing it, we must accept that there is a profound distinction between these ever more popular concepts.

The differences between Learning Styles and MI are very pronounced:

Learning Styles (LS) can be defined as the way human beings prefer to concentrate on, store and remember new and/or difficult information.

MI is a theoretical frame work for defining/ understanding/assessing/developing people's different intelligence factors.

The Learning Style Analysis (LSA) gives a diagnosis about someone's learning/information intake preferences and provides guidelines/recommendations for improving academic achievement and school performance.

Learning style elements can be divided into biological (innate) and learned/conditioned elements (which can change over time), an important feature which the MI framework does not have because no-one knows for sure what 'intelligence' really is and how it develops in human beings; this is better known about LS and findings are research based.

LSA reveals flexibilities, preferences and non-preferences in **49 different areas**, which can significantly contribute to a student's success or failure in learning.

MI categorises intelligence into eight (maybe more) capacities, 'biopsychological potential' as Howard Gardner des-cribes it and has so far named: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinestetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist intelligence.

Knowledge about **certain combinations of preferred LS elements** can predict school success or failure and identify underachievement in traditional school systems.

MI does NOT give information about the specific learning needs a student has during the information intake process (i.e. how the classroom environment needs to be set up for making learning successful, which time of day is best for concentrating, which physical needs will enhance/diminish study success), and **does NOT** provide an in-depth understanding of students' learning attitudes and how they respond to authority which is very important for successful learning processes.

The **LSA instruments** Creative Learning Co. has developed measure much more than VAK(Visual – Auditory – Kinesthetic), and even in the sensory modalities we make the very important distinction between TACTILE (hands-on, touching) and KINESTHETIC (experiential/doing) learning. In addition to these external modalities there are sub modalities (internal auditory, visual and kinesthetic) which are equally, if not more important but not covered in the VAK approach.

MI only distinguishes between SPATIAL-VISUAL and BODILY-KINESTHETIC intelligence, disregarding other sensory modalities which influence student performance.

LS give insight into students' reflective or impulsive thinking styles, sequential or simultaneous brain processing and overall tendencies for either analytic or holistic brain dominance.

MI only covers the ability to reason, calculate and handle logical thinking.

MI must be understood more as the 'OUTPUT' function of information intake, knowledge, skills
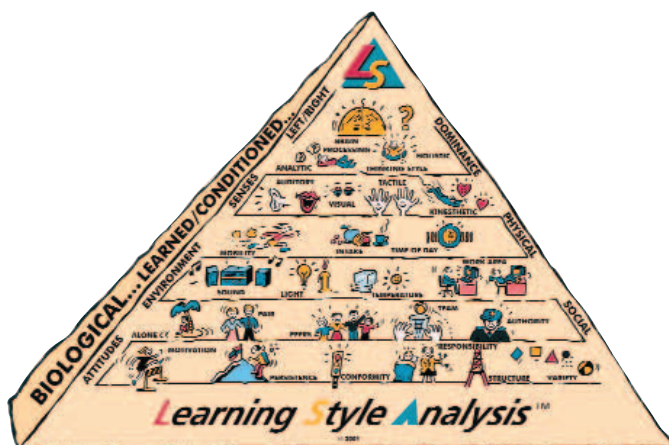
The LSA Pyramid

and 'talent' – mathematical, musical, linguistic etc., whereas Learning Styles can be seen as explaining information 'INPUT' capabilities of human beings. This ability cannot be described as 'intelligence' but as 'idiosyncratic personal style' because to say someone who learns/reads/works better in dim light with music in the background while chewing or fiddling with something is more/less intelligent than someone who concentrates better in bright light and silence, sitting still and eating/drinking only before or after a learning session, is inappropriate.

All these differences show that LS and MI are not the same, that they are certainly not interchangeable. Students with similar intelligence factors in the MI framework can have vastly different learning styles, based on their personal biological make-up and their individual conditioning.

The conclusion can only be that teachers need to know about both concepts, but should assess their students' learning styles as soon as possible to help them develop their different intelligence factors in a way which is conducive to their individual learning styles. When these important aspects are understood and acted upon, teaching strategies become more useful and effective and learning becomes more enjoyable for students who struggle in traditional classrooms.

For more information about professional development covering LSA and MI visit the CLC website: www.creativelearningcentre.com and for obtaining LSA assessments for students, please contact Network Educational Press by email: lsa@network-press.co.uk or visit the NEP website: www.net-workpress.co.uk to find out more about books, conferences and training programmes. TEX
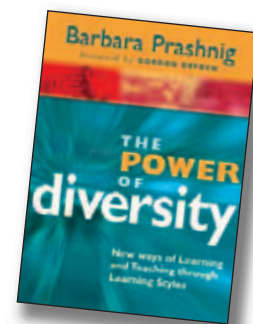
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