

Kolb Learning Style Inventory

Kolb, D. A. (1984) *Experiential Learning*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.: Prentice Hall. 256 pages. Full statement and discussion of Kolb's ideas concerning experiential learning. Chapters deal with the foundation of contemporary approaches to experiential learning; the process of experiential learning; structural foundations of the learning process; individuality in learning and the concept of learning styles; the structure of knowledge; the experiential learning theory of development; learning and development in higher education; lifelong learning and integrative development.

"The Learning Style Inventory (LSI) is a simple self-description test, based on experiential learning theory, that is designed to measure your strengths and weaknesses as a learner.

Experiential learning is conceived as a four stage cycle:

- (1) immediate concrete experience is the basis for
- (2) observation and reflection;
- (3) these observations are assimilated into a "theory" from which new implications for action can be deduced
- (4) these implications or hypotheses then serve as guides in acting to create new experiences.

The effective learner relies on four different learning modes: Concrete Experience (CE), Reflective Observation (RO), Abstract Conceptualization (AC), and Active Experimentation (AE). That is, he must be able to involve himself fully, openly, and without bias in new experiences (CE), he must be able to reflect on and observe these experiences from many perspectives (RO), he must be able to create concepts that integrate his observations into logically sound theories (AC), and he must be able to use these theories to make decisions and solve problems (AE).

A high score on Concrete Experience represents a receptive, experience-based approach to learning that relies heavily on feeling-based judgments. High CE individuals tend to be empathetic and "people-oriented." They generally find theoretical approaches to be unhelpful and prefer to treat each situation as a unique case. They learn best from specific examples in which they can become involved. Individuals who emphasize Concrete Experience tend to be oriented more towards peers and less toward authority in their approach to learning, and

benefit most from feedback and discussion with fellow CE learners.

A high score on Abstract Conceptualization indicates an analytical, conceptual approach to learning that relies heavily on logical thinking and rational evaluation. High AC individuals tend to be oriented more towards things and symbols and less towards other people. They learn best in authority-directed, impersonal learning situations that emphasize theory and systematic analysis. They are frustrated by and benefit little from unstructured "discovery" learning approaches like exercises and simulations.

A high score on Active Experimentation indicates an active, "doing" orientation to learning that relies heavily on experimentation. High AE individuals learn best when they can engage in such things as projects, homework, or small group discussions. They dislike passive learning situations such as lectures. These individuals tend to be extroverts.

A high score on Reflective Observation indicates a tentative, impartial and reflective approach to learning. High RO individuals rely heavily on careful observation in making judgments, and prefer learning situations such as lectures that allow them to take the role of impartial objective observers. These individuals tend to be introverts.

CONVERGER - Those with highest scores in **Abstract Conceptualization (AC) and Active Experimentation (AE)**. This person's greatest strength lies in the practical application of ideas. A person with this style seems to do best in those situations where there is a single correct answer or solution to a question or problem and can focus on specific problems or situations. Research on this style of learning shows that Convergents are relatively unemotional, preferring to deal with things rather than people. They often choose to specialize in the physical sciences, engineering, and computer sciences.

DIVERGER - Those with highest scores in **Concrete Experience (CE) and Reflective Observation (RO)**. Divergers have characteristics opposite from convergers. Their greatest strengths lie in creativity and imaginative ability. A person with this learning style excels in the ability to view concrete situations from many perspectives and generate many ideas such as in a "brainstorming" session. Research shows that Divergers are interested in people and tend to be imaginative and emotional. They tend to be interested in the arts and often have humanities or liberal arts backgrounds. Counselors, organizational development specialists, and personnel managers tend to be characterized by this learning style.

ASSIMILATOR - Those with highest scores in **Abstract Conceptualization (AC)** and **Reflective Observation (RO)**. This person's strength lies in the ability to understand and create theories. A person with this learning style excels in inductive reasoning and in synthesizing various ideas and observations into an integrated whole. This person, like the converger, is less interested in people and more concerned with abstract concepts, but is less concerned with the practical use of theories. For this person it is more important that the theory be logically sound and precise; in a situation where a theory or plan does not fit the "facts," the Assimilator would be likely to disregard or re-examine the facts. As a result, this learning style is more characteristic of the basic sciences and mathematics rather than the applied sciences. Assimilators often choose careers involving research and planning.

ACCOMMODATOR.- Those with highest scores in **Concrete Experience (CE)** and **Active Experimentation (AE)**. Accommodators are polar opposites from Assimilators. Their greatest strengths lie in carrying out plans and experiments and involving themselves in new experiences. They are risk-takers and excel in those situations requiring quick decisions and adaptations. In situations where a theory or plan does not fit the "facts," they tend to discard it and try something else. They often solve problems in an intuitive trial and error manner, relying heavily on other people for information. Accommodators are at ease with people but may be seen as impatient and "pushy." Their educational background is often in practical fields such as business or education. They prefer "action-oriented" jobs such as nursing, teaching, marketing, or sales.

References

Kolb, D. (1985). Learning style inventory. Boston, MA: McBer and Company.

Lamberski, R. (2002). Kolb learning style inventory. Available at <http://www.coe.iup.edu/rjl/instruction/cm150/selfinterpretation/kolb.htm>.

Here is the short exercise that I use in my courses based on the KOLB inventory test I took for the Graduate teacher program... I have given more palatable "names" to the learning styles for the purpose of referring to them in class. The names are below and the little activity I use is directly adapted from the original Kolb inventory (it is copyrighted so I just pulled five of the twenty questions...)

My learning style titles = Kolb titles

"Devil's Advocate Learner" = CONVERGER

"Social Comfort Learner" = DIVERGER

"Hand's On Learner" = ACCOMODATOR

"Fact Oriented Learner" = ASSIMILATOR

Kolb Learning Inventory, Quick Activity

4= most like you, 1= least like you... rank each response.

1. When I learn:

___ I like to deal with my feelings. (CE)

___ I like to think about ideas. (AC)

___ I like to be doing things. (AE)

___ I like to watch and listen. (RO)

2. I learn best when:

___ I listen and watch carefully. (RO)

___ I rely on logical thinking. (AC)

___ I trust my hunches and feelings. (CE)

___ I work hard to get things done. (AE)

3. When I am learning:

___ I tend to reason things out. (AC)

___ I am responsible about things. (AE)

___ I am quiet and reserved. (RO)

___ I have strong feelings & reactions. (CE)

4. I learn by:

___ feeling. (CE)

___ doing. (AE)

___ watching. (RO)

___ thinking. (AC)

5. When I learn:

___ I get involved. (CE)

___ I like to observe. (RO)

___ I evaluate things. (AC)

___ I like to be active. (AE)

AE- Active Experimentation Score: _____

RO- Reflective Observation Score: _____

CE- Concrete Experience Score: _____

AC- Abstract Conceptualization Score: _____

Which two scores are your highest scores?