

THE TEACHING-LEARNING STYLE-WHEEL
of Honey and Mumford (1995)

(Excerpt from Urban 2002)

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The Teaching-Learning Style-Wheel of Honey and Mumford (1995)

A teacher must begin teaching by looking at himself first, both as current teacher and as past and current learner. He must ask: What kind of teacher am I? What kind of learner am I?

Several instruments aid in the identification of thinking, learning and teaching tendencies. One of these instruments, the teaching-learning style-wheel of Honey and Mumford (1995), matches teaching style and learning style for optimum learning. The Honey-Mumford wheel can be divided into north-south (Figure 1) and east-west (Figure 3) hemispheres. According to the wheel, learning and teaching involve reflective thinking (theorizing and concluding), active execution (doing and planning), tangible creation (concluding and doing) and conceptual innovation (planning and theorizing). These hemispheres combine to produce the cardinal categories of learner and teacher recognized in the Honey-Mumford wheel (Figures 2 and 4). The theorizing learner and interpreting teacher think abstractly. They adapt and associate observations and ideas. The reflecting learner and listening teacher ponder experiences from many different angles. They think concretely. The concrete doers – the active learner and coaching teacher – engage experiences. Finally, the abstract doers – the pragmatic learner and directing teacher – test ideas for their practicality and plan ways of doing things.

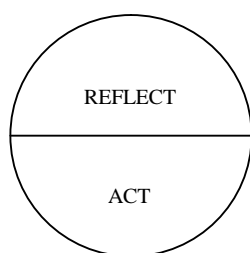


Figure 1

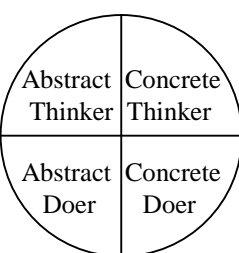


Figure 2

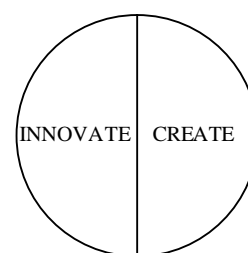


Figure 3

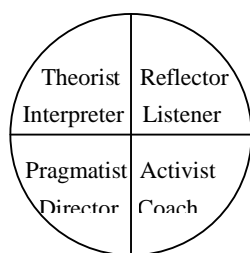


Figure 4

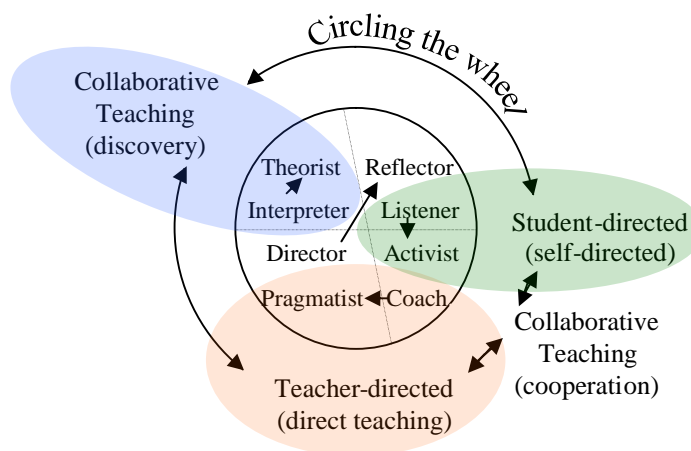


Figure 5

Figures 1-5. The teaching-learning style-wheel. After Herasymowych (1997).

Teachers and learners whose styles coincide in the same cardinal category do not necessarily enjoy an optimum learning interaction. Teaching-competence is often a matter of matching the right teaching style with each learner's strongest learning style. In the Honey-

Mumford wheel, each style of teacher is best suited to teach a different style of learner (Herasymowych, 1997). The listening teacher listens to the active learner (green areas of Figure 5 and Table 1). The learning is student-directed and uses mainly self-directed strategies and an expertise/reference teaching power base (Levin and Nolan, 2000). Opposite this, the coaching teacher coaches the pragmatic learner (orange areas). The learning is teacher-directed and typically involves direct teaching strategies. The teacher's power is based on reward and coercion. Collaborative teaching falls between the student-directed and teacher-directed management styles. The teacher and learner work together to advance learning and the teacher's power is based on his expertise and legitimacy. The directing teacher directs the reflecting learner (white areas) usually using cooperative strategies. The interpreting teacher leads the theorizing learner (blue areas) often with discovery strategies.

Table 1. Best-fit teaching-learning interaction styles. After Levin and Nolan (2000).

Coach (coaches, 'do') teaches Pragmatist (connects, 'how to')	Director (directs, 'how to') teaches Reflector (reflects, 'how fits')	Interpreter (leads, 'what if') teaches Theorist (theorizes, 'what if')	Listener (listens, 'how fits') teaches Activist (acts, 'do')
Teacher-directed	Collaborative	Collaborative	Student-directed
Reward/coercion	Expertise, legitimacy	Expertise, legitimacy	Reference, expertise
Direct study	Cooperative learning	Discovery learning	Self-directed learning

A competent teacher teaches to all students by filling all these roles.

Eclectic Teaching

An eclectic teacher fills all these roles by cycling through them. "Circling the wheel," as Herasymowych (1997) phrases it, stimulates learning. It places learners in dynamic states of vulnerability and safety. Learners learn in spurts, when they are put in uncomfortable situations. Some strategies discomfort learners. Others comfort them. By circling the wheel, the teacher alternately challenges (engages) and relieves learners. The teacher controls the pace of the lesson and, in a real sense, tailors the lesson to each learner, producing an air of personal identification between the learner and the subject. Major breakthroughs are always emotionally charged. Learners learn because they must adapt in order to restore their comfort. To maximize learning and retention, relief must be provided after key learning moments. This is accomplished by changing teaching style, so relieving the engaged learners. The learners internalize what they learn when they feel safe. Eclectic teaching, therefore, is an active, systematic coercion/reward strategy which plays off the learners' emotions.

Since different learners have different learning styles, circling the teaching-learning wheel staggers who is uncomfortable and learning, and who is safe and reflecting at any moment. This is why teaching a lesson several ways produces the most effective learning. The lesson is not only repeated, it is delivered to different learning styles. The effective lesson is subdivided into modules, each module employing different management styles and teaching strategies (Phillips, 1998). The key is to balance and pace these modules to control the lesson and respond to learner and teacher needs.

An eclectic teacher is more than competent. Phillips (1998) argues the difference between an eclectic teacher and a competent one is a matter of coverage. A competent teacher covers all teaching styles in each step of a lesson. All learning styles are attended to. However, the process of covering *all* teaching styles in each step means that no one style is strongly implemented. The result is a washed down lesson, a teaching style Phillips (1998) calls “square.” True to its name the square teaching style is devoid of direction and lacks engagement. It does not stimulate the learners’ emotions and so is literally boring. By trying to reach everyone simultaneously, the teacher weakens the impact of his or her lesson. A course consisting only of square lessons is dangerously monotonous and stressful to both the learners and the teacher.

At least, the teacher is not incompetent, one who tries but fails to successfully cover all teaching styles in a lesson in order to accommodate all learning styles. The incompetent teacher vainly juggles the different teaching styles instead of engaging the learners. The result is utter confusion for all involved.

Circling the teaching-learning wheel alternately emphasizes and sets aside the four teaching styles on the Honey-Mumford wheel. Each lesson is broken into modules and each module is taught in a different style. Since one style is implemented at any given time, that style strongly impacts the learners, whether they prefer that style or not. That style is dropped and replaced by another as modules change. The learners key into those teaching styles which best match their preferred learning styles and tune out those teaching styles which least match their preferred learning styles. As the teacher circles the wheel, the learners experience moments of intense, rapid learning followed by moments of still reflection and concept-settling. Pace is always exciting and engagement and retention are high. Furthermore, different learners engage at different times, so there is always someone engaging the lesson and someone reflecting on what he or she has learned. This is very much like the “wave:” the lifting of learners strongly engaged in one teaching style readies those, who have been reflecting a while, for the next style.

Circling the wheel does not produce a square lesson. The lesson engages different learners at different times and rates, creating a dynamic energy in the classroom. No direction is emphasized; circling the wheel engages and pulls the learner in each direction consecutively instead of simultaneously. This forces the learner to adapt and learn. The learning pace varies rapidly.

Teaching to Learning Styles

Every class comprises several types of learners, all of whom need to learn the same skills. In his Theory of Multiple Intelligences, Gardner suggests that each learner has a unique combination of talents or multiple intelligences with which to learn (Brualdi, 1996). Some learners are more linguistic than others, some more logical, some athletic, some musical, some interpersonal, some intrapersonal, some visual and some naturalistic. These talents can make for rich cooperative learning where many perspectives work together to understand new material. They also fit well in the Honey-Mumford wheel. Each quadrant of the wheel targets different types of learners. For instance, active learners are often also athletic and reflective learners are often also intrapersonal. Circling the wheel and choosing management and strategy schemes that both interest the learners and tap into their talents can produce a rich, dynamic classroom where learners want to learn.

Usually, each learner favours more than one learning-wheel style and falls short in at least one (Herasymowych, 1997). The strength of each of the learner’s learning styles is unique,

so the learner responds to the different teaching styles to different degrees. As the teacher circles the teaching-learning wheel, the learner experiences different and undulating degrees of engagement and reflection. The job of the eclectic teacher is to induce this dynamic engagement and reflection, so the learner learns to think actively and dynamically while also learning the taught skills and developing his strength in each of the learning styles.

It should be recognized that teaching and learning styles are not really distinct, but blended, so management styles and teaching strategies must also be blended, with one strategy dominant over others in each module. Furthermore, the typical teacher favours more than one teaching style and falls short in at least one, just like the learner favours some learning styles and does poorly in others. The eclectic teacher actively engages all teaching styles sequentially, to best serve her learners' needs, through professional reflection and unit and lesson planning. By doing this, the teacher models dynamic engagement and reflection during lessons at the same time she induces them in her learners. What makes the process of eclectic teaching so exciting is that the teacher's teaching style preferences are often different from her learning style preferences. In the teaching-learning wheel, the strengths of the learning and teaching styles can be mapped (Figures 6 and 7), producing a kite-like figure which reflects one's biases and shortfalls. For a given person, learning styles (Figure 6) often produce vastly different kites than teaching styles (Figure 7). Furthermore, these kites can change shape over time and under different circumstances, such as in stressed and unstressed situations. Typically one's thinking biases reflect one's learning structure or kite.

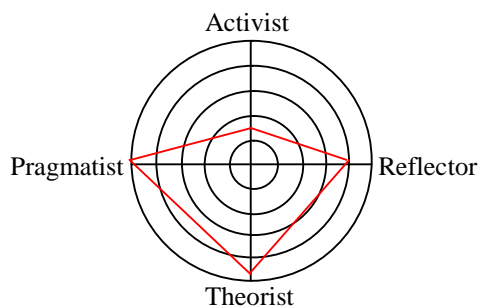


Figure 6

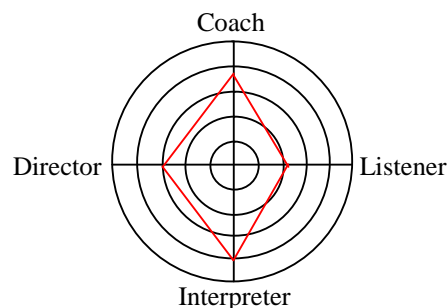


Figure 7

Figures 6 and 7. The author's learning and teaching kites under stress.
After Herasymowych (1997) and Urban (2002).

Temperament is also important to consider while teaching (Phillips, 1998). Temperament is the pattern-part of a person's personality, what the person tends to do. It applies to teachers and learners alike. There are four temperament types (Figure 8): 1) the temperament of those who want results, who want a task done quickly; 2) the temperament of those who want recognition, who want immediate interaction; 3) the temperament of those who want relationships, who want to take time to get along; and 4) the temperament of those who want reason, who want to take time to get a task right.

These temperaments can be associated with the teaching and learning styles of the Honey-Mumford wheel (Figure 8). The first temperament is associated with the pragmatist/director and activist/coach. The second with the influencer. The third with the

listener. And the last with the reflector and theorist/interpreter. Only the influencer is new. He is the social equivalent of the activist/coach and excels at motivating participation. On the Honey-Mumford wheel he would be a concrete doer.

These temperament divisions define four participant styles in any given lesson: 1) the process participant, who wants to get things right; 2) the practical participant, who wants to get things done; 3) the proactive participant, who wants to get interaction; and 4) the people participant, who wants to get along. Different teaching strategies and management styles work in engaging each of these participants (Figure 8 and Table 1).

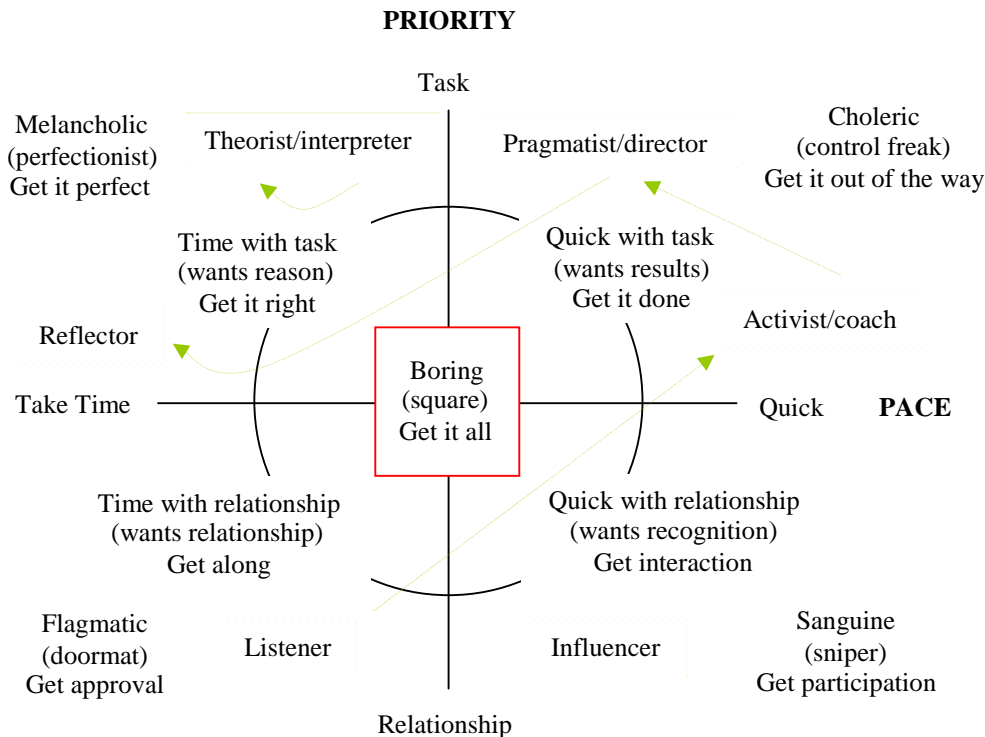


Figure 8. The temperament wheel. After Phillips (1998).

Figure 8 illustrates a further point worthy of consideration when teaching. Each of the temperaments radiates from the origin of the temperament wheel like a spoke. Each spoke in turn is a continuum, where a person is either very weak to overly strong or overbearing in a temperament. As with the square styles of the Honey-Mumford wheel, there is a square temperament, one in which all temperaments are equally favoured or accommodated simultaneously. The square temperament-kite is a centralized small square (Figure 8). It suggests shortcomings in all temperaments. The corresponding square teaching-and-learning style suggests indecision, ill-preparedness and holding-back. This explains why the square teaching style typically bores or confuses learners, depending on how well the teacher juggles the various teaching styles.

Opposite the square temperament are the extreme temperaments (Figure 8). These are strong temperaments pushed too far; they cease to become assets and turn into liabilities or weaknesses. In a similar manner, too great a bias or reliance in any teaching or learning style

weakens one's capacity to teach and learn effectively, just as too great a shortfall in or avoidance of a teaching or learning style also weakens teaching and learning effectiveness.

Circling the wheel models and engages active and effective thinking and behaviour. It opens teaching and learning opportunities and methods like doors. Targeting these opportunities and methods entertains, educates, engages and forces the teacher and learners to build skills and knowledge from many angles and many starting points. Furthermore, it builds on pre-existing strengths and weaknesses, so targeting teaching and learning to each individual. In short, circling the wheel is constructivist in nature.

The best way to teach, Phillips (1998) suggests, is to model what the learners need to learn. Moving through the four temperaments targets all learners and keeps the pace of the course and lesson dynamic. Phillips calls this flow "walking through the temperaments." It is equivalent to circling the wheel. So, circling the wheel not only targets the different learner styles and multiple intelligences, it also targets the different temperaments.

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