Health Professionals’ Inventory of Learning Styles (H-PILS)

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Objectives
Upon completion of this session, you will be able to:
a) Discuss the role of self-reflection in CPD
b) Apply learning styles theory to facilitate self-reflection
c) Use the H-PILS to support CPD

I. Self reflection in CPD

• CPD cycle begins with self-reflection
• Essential skill to support identification of learning needs
• Essential propensity to facilitate on-going learning
• Rarely taught or evaluated in a formal way
• Not necessarily a natural process for many

What is self-reflection?

• Purposeful and directed examination of one’s own behaviours, thoughts, and beliefs using a variety of different sources of evidence and criteria
• Analytical, continuous process
• Frequently aimed at quality improvement or process refinement

Why is self-reflection important?

• Throughout school, we can rely upon external standards and assessments to direct our development
• Professional work is complex, individual, and highly contextual: external standards may be difficult to find or apply
• In the absence of continuous self-reflection, complacency develops

Self reflection and self assessment

• Require on-going discipline and structure
• Require honesty and openness
• Documentation
• “We don’t know what we don’t know”: need to triangulate and solicit information from a variety of sources, but integrate this information ourselves
How good are we at it?
• Accuracy of self-reflection and self-assessment varies widely
• Over-estimation of self common in those with lowest abilities
• Under-estimation of self common in those with highest abilities

Self reflection
• A knowledge base
• A skill set
• A propensity

II. Role of Learning Styles Theory in Self Reflection
How do we learn?
- Behavioural approaches emphasize rewards and punishments
- Cognitive approaches emphasize supremacy of thought and reason
- Developmental approaches emphasize importance of age, stage, and time
- Psychoanalytic approaches help make the unconscious conscious

Learning Styles Theory
• Piaget: children are born different
• Eysenck: the biological basis of learning
• Kolb: learning styles

Learning and Memory
• Working memory
• Short-term memory
• Long-term memory
• Deep learning
• Superficial learning

How do we learn?
• Intersection of two interdependent processes:
  - How we take in information from the outside world
  - What we do with that information once we've taken it all in
**Learning Styles**

- **ACTING**
  - Accommodator
  - Diverger

- **DOING**
  - Converger
  - Assimilator

- **WATCHING**

- **REFLECTING**

**Divergers**

- “Let’s just all get along together, okay?”
- Value harmony and relationships over objective outcomes of success
- May not necessarily grasp details or timelines
- Are acutely sensitive to environment and negative feedback
- Enjoy working with others for the purpose of building relationships – this is how learning really occurs

**Assimilators**

- “Lack of planning on your part is no reason for an emergency on my part”
- Organized, detailed oriented, learn by reading and lectures: “model” students
- Require rehearsal time, advanced notice, structure and organization
- May confuse others’ confidence for competence
- Usually hardest on themselves

**Convergers**

- “Relax everyone, I’m here to help”
- Tend to be decisive, leader-oriented, competitive individuals
- Less concerned with details, more with outcomes
- Less concerned with personal feelings than with success
- May confuse their own confidence with competence

**Accommodators**

- “Are we there yet?”
- Value efficiency, sometimes at the price of effectiveness
- Require or want little direction or feedback
- Not burdened by need for perfection or detail
- Like to get things done
- Grow impatient with the abstract and the theoretical
- Dislike excessive feedback, talking, or unnecessary interaction

**III. H-PILS**

- Health Professionals’ Inventory of Learning Styles
- Tool developed to assist health professionals identify their own learning style to help facilitate self-reflection
- Initially developed for pharmacists, now used in a variety of different health professions and interprofessional settings
Using the HPILS

- Self-reflection may not come easily or naturally to everyone
- CPD requires individuals to assume personal responsibility for self-identification of learning needs and gaps
- Getting started can be difficult because we don’t know what we don’t know
- Understanding ourselves as learners is a critical first step in understanding our own learning needs

Limitations of the HPILS

- Inventory approach produces acceptable reliability and validity, but not able to “diagnose” learning styles
- Learning style is not like blood type: it is more fluid and flexible
- Still, may be useful in prompting reflection and dialogue about our own assumptions about learning as teachers, students, and practitioners

IV. Using HPILS in CPD

- Goal is to facilitate self-reflection
- While HPILS does not address content/knowledge domain learning needs and gaps, it can be useful in identifying learning process needs

How to use HPILS

- To initiate dialogue, discussion, and reflection on the process of learning
- To provide a vocabulary for discussing learning needs
- To provide a skill set for self-reflecting on learning

How NOT to use HPILS

- To stereotype and pigeon-hole people
- To make statements/claims or assumptions regarding an individual’s abilities or suitability for a position/role
- To engineer relationships between people of the same learning style
Presenting the HPILS

• A tool for self reflection
• Particularly useful for preceptors/mentors and students, to help understand when things work well – and not so well
• A vehicle for understanding differences in approaches to learning, work, life, etc.
• A fun and interactive way of thinking about and discussing learning

V. Applications of HPILS

• Student/preceptor relationships
• Workplaces
• Interprofessional settings
• CPD

Summary

• Self-reflection is integral to the CPD process
• HPILS may provide a vehicle for discussing and reflecting upon one’s own processes for learning
• By providing a vocabulary to describe learning processes, HPILS can be part of a toolkit for CPD providers, educators, and others interested in personal and professional development

About HPILS

• HPILS was developed by Zubin Austin at the Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Toronto. HPILS may be used by educators, with permission of the developer, at zubin.austin@utoronto.ca