

beyond... the mbh newsletter



May 2004

...It's coming - Methodology 5.0 release June 1 2004...

editorial

The mbh newsletter is back. After missing March and April editions due to a peak in client commitments, the mbh newsletter returns for May.

This month's newsletter explores learning styles and learning philosophies. In the never ending search to differentiate and provide value to our clients, mbh has spent considerable effort researching adult learning strategies. Some of the specific areas we have focused on is diversity of activities to cater for the diversity of students and in developing an mbh philosophy to training which is based around openness of communication, focus on facilitation and only lecture where content delivery is of paramount importance. We believe this progressive and humanistic style will provide satisfaction to a greater proportion of our potential students than a more traditional approach.

mbh announcement

Option pricing article published in CPA Australia

An article by mbh managing director Mark Heath has just been published in the May 04 edition of Australian CPA Magazine. Mark looks at the reasons behind investment decisions, and how companies can move beyond "gut feel" decision making processes by utilising option pricing on real assets.

If you are not a subscriber to the magazine, the article is available for free via the [CPA Website](#)

project management training

Customisation – Get 10% off customisation rates in June 2004

mbh has recently undertaken a stream of requests for customisation of our project management courses nationally. This has enabled organisations to utilise their own terminology, provide in house training using trainers within the project management fraternity and neutral assessors for their project managers and team members. mbh ensures the essential nine functions of project management are embedded through experiential activities, and achievement of the National Competency Standards for Project Management (NCSPM) are reached and measured via assessments, observations, and a final competency review.

If your organisation would like to hold in house training or you would like further information, please contact us at mbh@mbh.com.au or 02 9570 3160 to discuss your requirements.

learning styles

Learning styles take into consideration our attitudes and behaviours to determine how we prefer to learn in the overall scheme of life. Within the training industry learning styles are what trainers should be taking into consideration when developing training programs or delivering training.

Understanding learning styles of the students and what this means can often assist us in realising people will react and absorb information differently within the training environment; therefore we should ensure we incorporate the appropriate range of activities and delivery methods to assist in knowledge transference throughout our courses.

There are four types of learning styles developed by Peter Honey and Alan Mumford (1982) based on the work by Kolb (1984) that refer to how a person learns. These can change over their lifespan depending on their age, circumstances and mindset of the person. The learning styles are Pragmatist, Activist, Reflector and Theorist. Identifying your learning style will determine the ideal way you will absorb information presented and therefore embed the learning. To identify your style you can complete a questionnaire that was developed by Honey and Mumford by going to <http://www.peterhoney.com/product/learningstyles>. Here you can drill down further into the learning styles and purchase the questionnaire to help identify your own style preference

This table highlights some of the best and least ways depending on your learning style people learn.

| Learning Style | Learn best from | Learn least from |
|-------------------|---|--|
| Pragmatist | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An apparent link between the subject matter and a 'real life' problem • Techniques being provided to use for practical use that they can try in situations and then receive feedback from a credible source • Having immediate opportunities to implement what they have learned • Gaining techniques that apply directly to their job | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning not related to any thing they do and therefore cannot see the benefit • Unclear guidelines on how to carry out something • When there are political or managerial obstacles in the way of implementing • Having no clear reward for the learning activity, i.e. no performance improvements can be seen. |
| Activists | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New experiences/ problems /opportunities • Excitement, change and diverse activities • High visibility, limelight where they may chair a meeting, give presentations • Bouncing ideas off other people | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having to stand back and become a bystander • Doing individual work like reading or thinking on their own • Listening to lectures or statements on how things should be done(passive role) • Having to analyse a lot of information |
| Reflectors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be given the space to watch/think/ponder on activities • Having time to think before acting • Carrying out careful, detailed research over time • Not have pressure and tight deadlines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being forced to be the centre of attention • Having to act out of crises rather than time to plan • Given cut and dry instructions on how things should be achieved • Given time pressures or rushed to finish |
| Theorists | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring the inter relationships between ideas, events and situations • Analysing and evaluating, then generalise the reasons for success or failure • Questioning assumptions or logic • Being intellectually challenged and allowed to analyse complex situations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the subject matter is superficial • Being asked to decide without a basis in policy • Feeling out of place if, in the minority e.g. majority of group are activists • They do not get given enough information to draw conclusions on. |

I am sure you will identify with one or more of the styles. What we should recognise from this is that people do not take on the information the same way as someone else. The learning styles are one way to start to unlock the immense complexity of the human being and begin to gain some consideration on how we conduct training or transfer information that we require people to absorb.

Within adult education learning styles are a valuable asset for the trainers and developers, we need to ensure we take into them into consideration and include a variety of experiential activities, whether role plays, individual activities, group work or case studies. We are still witnessing training organisations going down the death by PowerPoint line believing this is the best way, if not only way to transfer information to the students. The definite reality is that students may absorb some information whilst they are trying to remain awake but they certainly will not gain maximum benefits from this type of training. Granted that sometimes PowerPoint can be useful on short presentations, but the reality is over a training course variety has to be the key to ensure knowledge transference and most importantly students enjoy the training course and will remember the content, embed into

their daily activities and provide positive comments onto others about the training course they have attended. As a training organisation this is our goal.

More references for information on Learning Styles and theorists

Kolb, D.A. 1984. *Experiential learning: experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

<http://www.chelt.ac.uk/gdn/discuss/kolb1.htm>

<http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-lewin.htm>

<http://www.support4learning.org.uk/education/lstyles.htm>

philosophies of learning

As a teacher/trainer we have inbuilt concepts and philosophies that guide us in the beliefs we have on education, and how we should train, teach or facilitate learning. We may not realise what these philosophies are and will act automatically on a day to basis without realising we have them. By identifying our philosophies we can locate a vast amount of information to assist us gaining a holistic understanding of adult education and obtain a framework for us to utilise as an adult educator to ensure we understand the needs of the learners.

Why should we have a philosophy? Some of the reasons noted by Hiemstra (1998) have been that having a philosophy can highlight an understanding of human relationships, it can help us to be sensitive and realise the requirements for positive exchanges towards other people, it can provide us with a framework for understanding personal values, and promotes flexibility and consistency when working with adult learners. All these principles are imperative to realising the intricate balance we as teachers/trainers require when involved in the education of adult learners.

As educators we should practice the art of reflection on all aspects of training not just the action of delivery, about ourselves, our views and beliefs, what influences us and how we influence the students. With regards to creating and understanding your philosophy try asking yourself;

- What are your perspectives on adult education,
- What is the role of the teacher and that of the learner,
- What are your ethical beliefs around standards of practice, certification and standards of teaching/ training?
- Why have a philosophy?

Once you have answered these questions have a look at the table below , you may identify where you believe you sit within the educational philosophies, however to gain a true indication I suggest you fill in the Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory by Lorraine M Zinn, PhD. This inventory assists you in truly determining where your philosophy lies and can be found at <http://www.cals.ncsu.edu/agexed/aee523/paei.pdf> .

Below is a table adapted from Galbraith , M(1990) outlining Philosophies and Traditions of Adult Education;

| Tradition | Liberal/Traditional | Behaviourist/Technical | Progressive | Humanistic | Radical |
|----------------------------|---|--|--|---|---|
| Purpose | Develop the intellectual powers of the mind. | To bring about change in behaviour for production and efficiency with regards to society | To transmit culture and promote social change, to provide learner with practical knowledge | To enhance personal growth, development and facilitate self actualisation | To being about through education fundamental, social, political and economic change in society |
| Role of Teacher | The expert, transmitter of knowledge, authoritarian and director of learning | Manager, controller, instructor, predicts and directs learning outcomes | Organiser, guides learning through educational experience | Facilitator, helper, partner, promotes but does not direct | Coordinator, suggests but does not determine direction for learning, equality between |
| Role of Learner | Always a learner, seeking the knowledge and understanding. | Active in learning, and practicing new behaviours and receiving feedback | Needs and interests are key elements in learning, people have unlimited potential to be developed through education | Highly motivated and self directed, assumes responsibility for learning | Equality with teacher in learning process, personal autonomy, combining action reflection |
| Key Concepts | Liberal learning, wisdom, learning for its own sake, enlightenment, traditional knowledge | Behaviour modification, competency based, master learning, feedback reinforcement | Problem solving, experience based education, democracy, lifelong learning, social responsibility, needs assessment, pragmatic learning | Experiential learning, individuality and freedom, self direction and co-operation, interactive | Conscious raising, critical thinking, social action, popular education, liberation |
| Methods of Teaching | 'Chalk and talk', lecture, study groups and critical reading | Programmed instruction, computer based instruction | Problem solving, experienced based education | Experiential, group tasks and discussions, team teaching, self directed tasks, individualised projects/learning | Dialogue, action research, action learning, problem posing, discussion groups and cultural action |
| People | Socrates, Aristotle, Houle ,Adler | Taylor, Skinner, Thorndike, Watson | Spencer, Dewey, Bergevin, Linderman, Benne | Rogers, Maslow, Knowles, May, MacKenzie | Friere, Illich, Bramrld, Holt, Ohliger, Habermas |

References:

Hiemstra, R. 1998, Translating Personal Values and Philosophy into Practical Action, in R.Brockett (ed) *Ethical Issues in Adult Education*, Columbia University, New York, pp.178-191.

Galbraith, M. 1990 *Adult Learning Methods*, Ed. Kreiger, Florida.