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Spotlight On Learner Styles: Teacher Strategies For Learner Success

by Marjorie Rosenberg

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Let me start by saying that this is a really good book: it's informative, practical and, at times, inspiring.

Ms Rosenberg has summarised some of the leading theories on learning styles into an easy-to-digest form and has provided lots and lots of mini-lesson plans for style-appropriate activities.

The approaches to learning styles that are looked at include:
how we take in information, that is:
perceptually: visual, auditory or kinaesthetic styles;
how we process information: globally or analytically;
and how we react to and deal with this information,
i.e. the Mind Organisation approach of April Bowie.

What's particularly interesting is that these different models are used to analyse teaching as well as learning styles. Possible mismatches between the two are illustrated via classroom anecdotes, and the author looks at how possible conflicts can be understood and overcome. Questionnaires and summary charts are given to determine both your learners' and your own learning style so that you can decide on the appropriate approach to take.

The tenor taken when discussing these mismatches is reassuringly non-ideological. The limits of lesson tailoring are recognised, especially with larger groups, and the author is resolute that training is a two-way street. Teachers must certainly adapt to learners, but learners must also learn how to learn, and this may involve extending and adapting their own learning styles.

Layout

The book contains three distinctive parts which focus in turn on theory, practice and development:

Part A explains the importance of our preferred learning styles.

Part B concentrates on activities we can employ to teach more comprehensively and enable all our students to become successful learners.

Part C introduces further approaches, points to further activities beyond the purely linguistic, and suggests further reading.

The book ends with a plethora of lesson plans, all of which will work in practice. There's nothing airy-fairy here, and I get the feeling that all this material has been tested in the field and not just by the author.

All in all, this is one of the better books that I've seen on the subject and a must-have for any staffroom or training library.