



Myer Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

This theory focuses on different personality styles; on how personality can influence human behaviour. Building on the work of Swiss Psychologist Carl Jung, Briggs and Myers use a set of four separate but related scales to describe 16 personality types. The first scale shows how you prefer to direct and receive energy (Extroversion and Introversion); the second scale shows how you prefer to gather information (Sensing and Intuition); the third indicates how you prefer to make decisions (Thinking and Feeling) and the fourth what kind of lifestyle you prefer (Judging and Perceiving). Sixteen unique and different personality types result from the combinations of the four MBTI preference scales. They reflect not what skills or intelligence you have, but how you prefer to think act and be. Detailed questionnaires help to identify these personality types. For our work with young people in the UFA, the value in this method is not in identifying and labelling but much more in accepting and valuing the diversity of personalities and approaches that learners have and take. It gives you a much better understanding of yourself as a person and helps you to understand and value those around you to a greater degree.

Learning Modalities: VAK

This theory was derived from the field of NLP or Neuro-Linguistic Programming developed by Richard Brandler and John Grinder in the 1970's. VAK points out that the outside world is perceived by the brain through the senses – chiefly visual, auditory and kinaesthetic (VAK). Most people have a preference as to which one of these senses they use most. To learn effectively they need to have information presented to them in a way which allows their preferred modalities to become involved.

A person with a visual preference finds it easy to build mental pictures. They readily 'see' themselves operating in different contexts. They will see images associated with words or feelings and they will affirm their understanding of new information only when they see it happen or see it written or described visually. When spelling they may 'see' the word as they are about to write out.

An auditory preference is expressed through a preference for internal dialogue and through language generally. This sort of person may 'hear' the word spelled out before writing it. In anticipating themselves in a new situation there may be a mental rehearsal of what will be said to them.

A kinaesthetic preference often means strong emotional attachments. In spelling a word a person may feel themselves writing it letter by letter beforehand or it may simply feel right. A kinaesthetic learner is a 'hands on' learner and likes to move around while learning. VAK theory claims that when we recreate an experience we tend to favour one of our senses and this has led to some controversy as there is not enough research to substantiate these claims. The real danger with VAK comes from falling into the trap of labelling all learners as one or other of these. Questionnaires that categorise and label should be approached with extreme caution. However, using questionnaires to open up dialogue about the need to use all your senses in learning continues to be useful.

It is much more useful for both learners and tutors to be encouraged to use all senses for learning. Successful learners learn to operate with all modalities even if they do have a preference for one. It has been suggested that there needs to be a greater focus in particular on visual learning as there is evidence to suggest that using visuals helps everyone to learn irrespective of a high or low preference for visual imagery.

(Smith. 2005. pg15.)