THINKING STYLES: AN OVERVIEW

[*]Priyanka Rani

[**]Dr. Nidhi Agarwal

Abstract

Thinking styles refers to the preference a person displays during cognitive processing, or as Sternberg puts it, "The process used to solve a problem or to devise an answer." A style of thinking is therefore, a preferred way of thinking. It is not ability but rather a preferred way of expressing one or more abilities. How do people think about things?" Harrison and Bramson, through their research detailed in their text the Art of Thinking, found that in Western society there are five distinct styles of thinking. Sternberg approached the problem of accounting for individual differences in handling various tasks in different way from the underlying the other styles. Sternberg derives his styles top down not from performance on a test. For this, he uses a complex metaphor of mental self-government.

Keywords: Thinking Styles, Mental Self-Government.

Introduction

Thinking styles is a study of how and why homosapiens think and could be classified as interactive and reciprocal mental self-government psychology. Its major objective is to show how different thinking styles affect learning preferences and how individual abilities to learn should be recognized and respected. Thinking styles are of interest primarily to educators because they can help teachers to improve instruction and assessment. They are related with age, gender, experience, self-esteem. Thinking Styles, psychologist Robert Sternberg argues that ability often goes unappreciated and uncultivated not because of lack of talent, but because of conflicting styles of thinking and learning.

According to Bramson, the five thinking styles are:
- Synthesists
- Idealists
- Pragmatist Thinkers
- Analyst Thinkers
- Realist Thinkers

Synthesists

According to Bramson, "Synthesists are creative thinkers who perceive the world in terms of opposites. When you say black, they think white, when you say long, they think short." To connect with Synthesists, Bramson suggests "listen appreciatively to their speculation and don't confuse their arguing nature with resistance."

Idealists

According to Bramson, "Idealists believe in lofty goals and standards."

To connect with Idealists, Bramson suggests "associate what you want to do with these goals of quality, service, and community good."

Pragmatic Thinkers

According to Bramson, "Pragmatic thinkers are flexible, resourceful folk who look for immediate payoff rather than for a grand plan that will change the world."

To connect with Pragmatists, Bramson suggests "emphasize short-term objectives on which you can get started with resources at hand."

Analyst Thinkers

According to Bramsom, "Analyst thinkers equate accuracy, thoroughness, and attention to detail with completeness. They are likely to gather data, measure it, categorize it, and rationally and methodically calculate the right answer to any problem you come up with. To connect to Analysts, Bramson suggests "provide a logical plan replete with back-up data and specifications."

Realist Thinkers

According to Bramson, "Realist thinkers are fast moving doers who know that reality is what their senses – sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch – tell them it is, and not that dry stuff that one finds in accounting ledgers, or the insipid pages of manual of operations."

To connect with Realists, Bramson suggests focus on the challenge and your solution.

"If you communicate with Realist bosses as if they were Analysts, you will never get their attention. Rather than gobs of computer-printouts and other detailed information, Realists want a three-paragraph 'Executive Summary' which tells briefly what is wrong and how you propose to fix it. For

*Research Scholar, Mewar University
*Principal, Integrated School of Education, Ghaziabad

rather complicated reasons, they will often take you at your word if they see you as a qualified expert. You become an expert in their eyes when they know that you've assembled a store of facts in which they are interested, and you have proposed a set of actions that they already believe are the best things to do."

How to Use the Five Thinking Styles

Take the time to place your boss or who you need to interact with into one or two of the five thinking-style categories. Keep in mind that while one or two styles predominates for most people, about fifteen percent use all five styles equally. Those who do, are seldom difficult bosses. Once you've identified their preferred categories, figure out how you can change your approach to better suit their style

Sternberg (1988) Mental Self- Government Model of Thinking Styles

Sternberg (1988, 1993, 1997) classified individuals according to their ways of thinking into thirteen way of thinking, and distributed it into five main categories each of which comprises a variety of methods, namely:

Form Based Styles

1. Monarchic style, individuals are characterized by going towards a single goal all the time, they are flexible, and able to analyze and think logically is low. They prefer works that highlight their individuality.
2. Hierarchic style: the owners of this method tend to do many things at one time. They put their goals in the form of hierarchy depending on their importance and priority. They are realistic, logical and organized in solving problems and decision-making. (Sternberg & Wagner, 1991).
3. Anarchic method: they tend to adopt a method of random and non-compliant in a particular order to solve the problems, their performance is better when the tasks and positions that are assigned to them are disorganized, and they are confused.
4. Oligarchic style: these individuals are characterized by being nervous, confused and they have many conflicting goals, all of these goals are equally important for them.

Function based Styles

1. Legislative style: they prefer the problems which require them to devise new strategies and to create their own laws and they enjoy giving commands.

2. Executive style: The advocates of this method prefer to use the ways that already exists to solve problems, and the application and implementation of laws. They do not start work until they know when? Why, and Where? And Who? .... If he gets these answers, he will be able to start work.

3. Judicial style: The advocators of this method care about the assessment of the stages of the work and the results. They often ask questions such as: Why? What is the reason? What is assumed. They analyze the main idea in the scientific stance and hate experimentation, evaluate the work of others, and hate to be evaluated by others. They prefer problems that allow them to analyze and evaluate the existing objects and ideas.

Style based on Level

1. Global style: They prefer to deal with broad, abstract and relatively large and. high-level concepts. They prefer change and innovation, and vague positions. They often ignore the details.
2. Local style: The advocators of this method characterized by being attracted by the practical situations. And described by Sternberg (Sternberg) as subjective because they are putting an account of everything and they do not leave anything to chance or luck.

Style based on Learning

1. Liberal style: The person who follows this method tends to go beyond the laws and measures, and the tendency to be ambiguous and unfamiliar positions. They are seeking through the tasks undertaken by them to bypass laws that imposed upon them, whether at work or in school in order to bring the biggest possible change.
2. Conservative style: They prefer situations that are familiar in life, and they are characterized by diligence and order, they follow the rules and procedures that exist, and they refuse change and would prefer the least possible change.

Style based on Scope

1. External style: The person who follows this method tend to work, interact and collaborate with others within the team, and they have a sense of social contact with others comfortably and easily.
2. Internal Style: The followers of this style prefer to work individually; they are introvert and tend to be lonely. They are directed toward work or task, and they are characterized by internal focus, and they prefer the analytical and creative problems.

Principles of Thinking Styles

According to Sternberg (1997) there are some general points were need to understand about thinking styles. These are given below:-

1. Styles are preference in the use of abilities, not abilities themselves.
2. A match between styles and abilities creates a synergy that is more than the sum of its parts.
3. Life choices need to fit styles as well as abilities.
4. People have profiles of styles, not just a single style.
5. Styles are variable across tasks and situations.
6. People differ in their strength of their preferences.
7. People differ in their stylistic flexibility.
8. Styles are socialized.
9. Styles can vary across the life span.
10. Styles are measurable.
11. Styles are teachable.
12. Styles valued at one time may not be valued at another.
13. Styles valued in one place may not be valued in another.

Conclusion

This paper tells about thinking styles in two perspectives i.e. one is Bramson and other is R.J. Sternberg. Most of us tend toward one style within each category, although these preferences may vary with the task and situation. According to Sternberg's theory, people can be understood in terms of the functions, forms, levels, scope, and leanings of government. People do not exhibit just one style or another, but they do have preferences across various kinds of tasks and situations. For example, children who are liberal in science class (enjoy doing things in new ways) may be conservative in cooking class or in gym (prefer the familiar). Teachers who are legislative at work (preferring creation, invention) may be executive at home (following or giving directions, preferring structure), almost always taking the lead with the family.

References

1. Sternberg, R. J. (1988). Mental self-government: A theory of intellectual styles and their development. Human Development, 31(4), 197–224.
2. Sternberg, R. J. (1994). Thinking styles: Theory and assessment at the interface between intelligence and personality. In R. J. Sternberg and P. Ruzgis (Eds.), Personality and intelligence (pp. 105–127). New York: Cambridge University Press.
3. Grigorenko, E. L., & Sternberg, R. J. (1995). Thinking styles. In D. Saklofske & M. Zeidner (Eds.), International handbook of personality and intelligence (pp. 205–229). New York: Plenum.
4. Sternberg, R. J., Grigorenko, E. L. (1995). Styles of thinking in school. European Journal for High Ability, 6(2), 201–219.
5. Sternberg, R. J. (1997). Thinking styles. New York: Cambridge University Press.
6. Sternberg, R. J., & Grigorenko, E. L. (1997). Are cognitive styles still in style? American Psychologist, 52(7), 700-712.
7. Sternberg, R. J., & Grigorenko, E. L. (2001). A capsule history of theory and research on styles. In R. J. Sternberg, & L. F. Zhang (Eds.), Perspectives on thinking, learning and cognitive styles (pp. 1–21). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
8. Zhang, L. F., & Sternberg, R. J. (2001). Thinking styles across cultures: Their relationships with student learning. In R. J. Sternberg, & L. F. Zhang (Eds.), Perspectives on thinking, learning and cognitive styles (pp.197–226). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
9. Zhang, L.-F., & Sternberg, R. J. (2005). A threefold model of intellectual styles. Educational Psychology Review, 17(1), 1–53.
10. Zhang, L. F., & Sternberg, R. J. (2006). The nature of intellectual styles. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
11. Sternberg, R. J., Grigorenko, E. L., & Zhang, L.-F. (2008). Styles of learning and thinking matter in instruction and assessment. Perspectives on Psychological Science, 3 (6), 486-506.
12. Zhang, L.-F., & Sternberg, R. J. (2012). Culture and intellectual styles. In L.-F. Zhang, R. J. Sternberg, & S. Rayner (Eds.), Handbook of intellectual styles (pp. 131-152). New York: Springer.