

kolb learning styles

David Kolb's learning styles model and experiential learning theory (ELT)

Having developed the model over many years prior, David Kolb published his learning styles model in 1984. The model gave rise to related terms such as Kolb's experiential learning theory (ELT), and Kolb's learning styles inventory (LSI). In his publications - notably his 1984 book 'Experiential Learning: Experience As The Source Of Learning And Development' Kolb acknowledges the early work on experiential learning by others in the 1900's, including Rogers, Jung, and Piaget. In turn, Kolb's learning styles model and experiential learning theory are today acknowledged by academics, teachers, managers and trainers as truly seminal works; fundamental concepts towards our understanding and explaining human learning behaviour, and towards helping others to learn. See also [Gardner's Multiple Intelligences and VAK learnings styles models](#), which assist in understanding and using Kolb's learning styles concepts.

In addition to personal business interests (Kolb is founder and chairman of [Experience Based Learning Systems](#)), David Kolb is still (at the time I write this, 2005) Professor of Organizational Development at Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, where he teaches and researches in the fields of learning and development, adult development, experiential learning, learning style, and notably 'learning focused institutional development in higher education'.

kolb's experiential learning theory (learning styles) model

Kolb's learning theory sets out **four distinct learning styles** (or preferences), which are based on **a four-stage learning cycle**. (which might also be interpreted as a 'training cycle'). In this respect Kolb's model is particularly elegant, since it offers both a way to understand **individual people's different learning styles**, and also an explanation of **a cycle of experiential learning that applies to us all**.

Kolb includes this 'cycle of learning' as a central principle his experiential learning theory, typically expressed as **four-stage cycle of learning**, in which **'immediate or concrete experiences'** provide a basis for **'observations and reflections'**. These 'observations and reflections' are assimilated and distilled into **'abstract concepts'** producing new implications for action which can be **'actively tested'** in turn creating new experiences.

Kolb says that ideally (and by inference not always) this process represents a learning cycle or spiral where the learner 'touches all the bases', ie., a cycle of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting. Immediate or concrete experiences lead to observations and reflections. These reflections are then assimilated (absorbed and translated) into

abstract concepts with implications for action, which the person can actively test and experiment with, which in turn enable the creation of new experiences.

Kolb's model therefore works on two levels - **a four-stage cycle**:

1. **Concrete Experience - (CE)**
2. **Reflective Observation - (RO)**
3. **Abstract Conceptualization - (AC)**
4. **Active Experimentation - (AE)**

and a **four-type definition of learning styles**, (each representing the combination of two preferred styles, rather like a two-by-two matrix of the four-stage cycle styles, as illustrated below), for which Kolb used the terms:

1. **Diverging (CE/RO)**
2. **Assimilating (AC/RO)**
3. **Converging (AC/AE)**
4. **Accommodating (CE/AE)**

diagrams of kolb's learning styles

Here is a new improved (May 2006) [free diagram illustrating Kolb's learning cycle and learning types \(MSWord\)](#). (Also as a [pdf](#).)

Kolb diagrams also in colour (like the image below): [Kolb learning styles colour diagram MSWord](#), and [Kolb colour diagram PDF](#).

(Kolb diagrams updated May 2006)

Web site information retrieved on march 2008 from <http://www.businessballs.com/kolblearningstyles.htm>