Spiral Dynamics® & Education

An overview of thinking processes in learning & training environments©

Marcus Barber

Strategic Foresight Analyst

Future of Education Conference

Adelaide 2003

Introduction

- What is Spiral Dynamics®?
- The myths that exist, the traps that occur
- How Spiral Dynamics® came to be
- Overview of the thinking processes
- Quick self assessment
- Its use in Education as a teaching/training tool
- Its use in Education as a Management tool
- Learning Management

Background

- Spiral Dynamics® indicates two connected threads which shape the thinking process

- **Life Conditions** are the external environmental factors that the person must deal with on a day to day basis

- **Thinking Capacities** are the various abilities and skill sets (Bloom's 8 Intelligences etc) that form the ability to think about and deal with the external problems facing the person

Managing Change & Differences

1. What is your problem solving style?

2. What is your favourite training style?

3. What strategies work, when?

4. What do you do when a problem doesn't work?

5. How do others differ from you in their approaches?

6. What problems do you avoid or strongly dislike?

7. Which do you feel confident about?

8. Become aware of how you feel about each problem.

'Cool' versus 'Warm'

- Purple – Blue - Green
- Defer to others
- Seeks comfort in group surrounds
- Looks to appropriate authority for guidance
- Consideration of own group is important
- Instructions are followed
- Dots the i, crosses the t.

- Red – Orange - Yellow
- Defers to self
- Looks for control
- Searches out answers in own way
- Challenges orthodoxy
- Thrives on challenge
- Seeks shortcuts
- Looks for quicker more effective ways for action

L2 – Learning Preferences

- Typically 'Pavlovian'
- Learner will copy the example of 'teacher' – a 'monkey see monkey do' approach
- Rote & Repetition, consistency
- Rewards for the whole group
- Set a pace and have everyone travel at same speed.

L2 Delivery Method (part two)

- Use Myths and Metaphors to convey more complex meanings and accept that it may take time for the 'penny to drop'
- Stories of mystical spirits will captivate as will songs and chants
- Group rewards that meet a basic physiological need (like chocolate) ☺ will be highly regarded
- Create 'special places' and 'icons' for important and regular activity

L3 – Learning Preferences

- Instant rewards for achievement, even pre reward for engagement.

- Fearful of shame & losing face

- No consideration of consequences of actions, no guilt & blames others for own behaviour – 'they made me do it'

- Trial and error, heroic attempts, 'I dare ya'

- Abundant passion, creativity and enthusiasm

L3 Delivery Method (part two)

- Self Directed
- Can require a firm authoritative hand to direct
- Allow for enthusiasm and bursts of creativity no matter how far off centre they may be.
- Bring back on track by recognition of 'effort' & suggest things to include for next time

L4 – Learning Preferences

- Compliant and obedient to higher authority
- Will follow the rules without question
- Can appear to lack the passion of CP as operates in 'self control' as expected by higher authority'
- Absorbs facts, seeks 'absolute' truths
- Learns in order to avoid punishment & expects punishment to be meted out when errors occur

L4 Delivery Method (part two)

- Instructive and authoritarian
- Punish appropriately for undesired activities
- No Punishment = No Learning!
- Too much punishment = Rigid Learning
- Memorised, structured curriculum

L5 - Learning Preferences

- Seeks comparisons to peers
- Likes to analyse, create new improved versions, pull things apart and reconstruct
- Uses existing knowledge as base line and expands outwards to test for further options
- Validity rests in individual's own experience, not through the stories of others
- Multiple answers more attractive than 'one right' answer

L5 Delivery Method (pat one)

- Allow for self expression and independence
- Provide experiential learning opportunities that challenge and test existing skill sets
- Enter into the learning experience with them
- Become more of a coach than 'lecturer'
- Ensure there is individual recognition
- Be supportive through the learning journey

L6 - Learning Preferences

- Collaborative, group based experiences
- Logic may be secondary to feelings
- Likes 'modelling outcomes' and dislikes competitive learning environments.
- Heavy authoritarian spaces cause frustration, anger and resentment
- Learning situations and context important and relevant

L6 Delivery Method (part one)

- Facilitate 'observational' learning approaches
- The process is where the learning takes place as this thinking approach observes how others respond to their actions
- Teachers & trainers need to be a part of this group, not external to it
- Incentive derived from group reinforcement
- Feelings are always more important than the facts
- Create overarching goals that all within the team can contribute to, to help keep the group connected

L7 - Learning Preferences

- Multidimensional and integrative – rather than forcing a preferred system, seeks to find a pattern within existing systems or improve current systems to best meet the greater majority.

- Self paced with few needs to compete

- Rewards self rather than requiring outside 'approval'

- Can lack focus, deals with multi tasking well though may need reminder to focus on completion

- Will seek to learn from any source at any time

- Instructor needs to demonstrate relevance of material

L7 - Delivery Method (part one)

- Pose problems & provide different ways to seek many answers

- Provide resources when required

- Teachers act as consultants & PA's rather then evaluators or judges

- Be aware that as GT allows for multiple possibilities you may see a delay in response.

How Learner's get 'stuck'

1. When their thinking style cannot meet the level of problem complexity

2. When in transition – 2 steps forward one step back can just as quickly become 2 steps back, one step forward

3. When the learning environment does not match their learning preference (look for signs of change)

4. When the incentives to learn do not match the things that they value. Pay attention to the 'how' of incentives, rather than the 'what'.

Learning Management

- Successful teachers & trainers risk failure if they continue to teach people who've changed in same ways that made them successful educators in the first place

- The fundamental aim is to teach in ways that match & relate to your student's learning styles

- Failures occur when educators believe students share the same value systems as they do or attempt a 'cookie cutter' delivery style

Sources & Reading

- National Values Centre, NVC Consulting – www.spiraldynamics.org, www.claregraves.com

- *'Spiral Dynamics – Mastering Leadership, Values & Change'*, Beck & Cowan, 1996 Blackwell Publishing

- *'Clare W Graves – Levels of Human Existence'*, Edited by William R Lee 2002 Eclet Publishing

- For Information on training in Spiral Dynamics in Australia, contact Dianne Moore at Paramount Training – paramounttraining@bigpond.com

- 'Spiral Dynamics' is a trademark of the National Values Centre

Special thanks to Natasha Todorovic & Chris Cowan of NVC Consulting for allowing me access to their IAL Conference Workshop Materials that provided a basis for this presentation.