

2 What kind of teacher am I?

The classroom appears to be an arena of choice, with infinite possibilities for learning. However, as the case study on pages 7 and 8 shows, many teachers and students are driven by unconscious motives and cognitive preferences that restrict their options and often lead to unproductive behaviour. The interaction between teachers who operate within narrow limits and poorly motivated, impulsive students conditions expectations and leads to poor outcomes. As a result, some teachers and children persist with chronically unsuccessful methods.



Activity 5: Why teachers do what they do

Consider the diagram 'Why teachers do what they do' on **Master 2**, page 14.

The horizontal axis measures the teacher's expectation of poor behaviour (from low to high). The vertical axis measures the teacher's perception of pressure from outside sources (eg the government, OFSTED, school management), also on a spectrum from low to high. The text indicates how teachers may adapt to different levels of perceived pressure and stress.

What are your perceived pressures? Which descriptions describe your teaching? Is the picture similar for a) other members of your department, b) other departments, c) the school as a whole?

Negative thoughts and patterns lock teachers into less effective, unimaginative strategies. Like novice skiers, who apply the snowplough at the first sight of a steep downhill run, teachers under pressure return to comfortable habits and routines. Although the instructor demonstrates how to use the contours of the slope to achieve an exhilarating swoop down the valley, his cautious pupils are frozen by their fear of speed. Innovative teaching methods challenge the teacher's practised, controlling snowplough, arousing fear rather than hope of improvement. To release the full potential of the classroom, trainers have to understand this fear-driven resistance and help teachers reconstruct their practice from the inside. Michael Fullan explains that this is easier for people who are naturally adaptive:

Some teachers, depending on their personality and influenced by their previous experiences and stage of career, are more self-actualised and have a greater sense of efficacy, which leads them to take action and persist in the effort required to bring about successful implementation. Psychological state can be a permanent or changeable trait, depending on the individual and on the conditions. Several researchers have found that some schools have a much higher proportion of change-oriented teachers than others...Some of this is no doubt through selection, but it also seems to be the case that the culture or climate of the school can shape an individual's psychological state for better or for worse.

Michael Fullan (1991): The New Meaning of Educational Change, London, p. 77

The following self-assessment activities are designed to help teachers to increase their awareness and understanding of their current practice and improve their readiness for change.



Activity 6: What type of teacher are you?

Using **Master 3** (page 15) review the descriptors with a colleague. Use examples from recent lessons to discuss what they mean, eg Do you ask open questions? How much do students contribute orally?

Consider the extent to which each descriptor applies to your lessons (eg there is some scope to diverge but students mainly do the same work). Compare your assessment with a partner's.

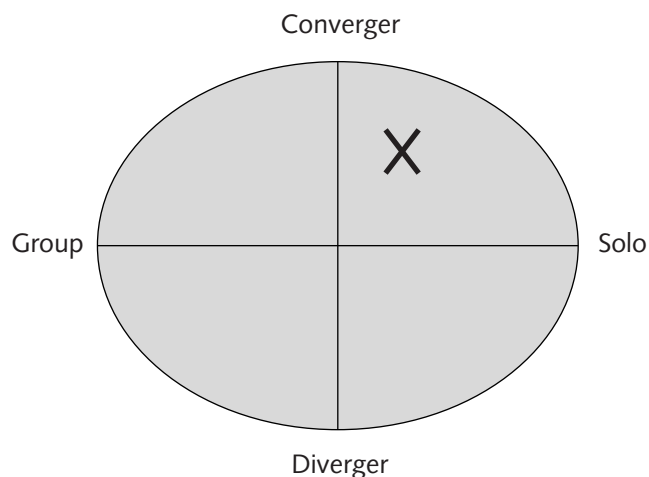


Activity 7: How does your mind work?

We assume that we all think in similar ways, generalising from our own experience. In fact, our brains are wonderfully adaptable, responding appropriately to different people, problems and situations. Our cognitive and affective capacities combine and recombine in various permutations. Every individual has, nevertheless, strengths, weaknesses and dispositions that shape his or her response, especially to learning.

Study the three sets of definitions given on **Master 4** (page 16) and consider how far each describes your instinctive cognitive response, eg 'I'm mainly a converger but once in a while I can go off at a tangent, so I'd say I'm 80% converger but once in a while I can go off at a tangent, so I'd say I'm 80% convergent', 'Although I like working on my own, I'm almost as happy in a group, so I'm 60% solo and 40% group'.

Now place a cross in one quadrant of each circle on **Master 5** (page 17), positioned to show how your dispositions combine. For example:



The cross is placed 80% towards the north on the Converger/Diverger axis; 60% towards the east on the Group/Solo axis. If the example had been 100% solo (ie hated groups) then the cross would have been positioned on the north eastern boundary. Repeat the self-assessment in each circle and compare your profile with a partner. What are the similarities; differences; peculiarities?

Teaching styles and student motivation					
Pressure	Vision and direction	Team and group work	Demonstration	Coaching	Autonomy
Characteristics					
Tight control Expects obedience	Explains, directs Checks ideas, understanding	Trusts, expects group to find way forward	Shows how Takes over when work poor	Develops strengths Explains how	Trusts, delegates responsibility
Motivational impact					
Goals clear Low ownership Negative/reactive	Understands direction Raised ownership Positive	Group buzz New ideas Lose purpose and direction easily	Positive with able Discourages less able	High energy High ownership Encourages all	Able = high learning gains; Less able lose clarity and direction

8 Coaching for styles and autonomy

The Imaginative, enthusiastic, hands-on and logical teaching and learning styles as explained on page 18 illustrate the range and variety of options available to departments and teachers. Each of these styles offers alternatives for students and teachers, opportunities to increase ownership, enhance motivation and improve outcomes.

The activities and models in this chapter are designed to help managers coach for a range of styles and develop support strategies for independent learning.



Activity 19: Language in the classroom

Consider **Master 17 – Model: Language in the classroom** (page 54). The model provides a framework for analysing and understanding how language is used. Research indicates that teachers ask up to 50 questions in each 30-minute time period, while students rarely have the opportunity to frame and ask questions about learning. Research also indicates that learning and retention are greatly increased when students do formulate their own questions and express ideas in their own language. Use the model during peer observation to check out what is happening in your department or school.

Enter the length of the longest contribution made by a student during the observed lesson. Estimate the percentage or number of contributions matching the other criteria listed. Discuss the results with the teacher observed. What are your conclusions? Surprised? Pleased? Concerned? Do you use language in clear and distinctive ways? Do students respond as you would wish? If not, why not?

Now, with a partner, compile a list of ten closed questions about a syllabus topic with which you are both familiar, eg What is the chemical symbol for lead? How are students likely to respond to such questions? Next, compile a list of ten open questions about the same learning points. How are students likely to respond?

Do you agree that:

- closed talk limits student contributions and restricts the styles available to the teacher?
- open, collaborative talk encourages student contributions and increases the styles you can use?



Activity 20: Students think of the questions

Try this with your next new topic. Explain to students that you want them to do the work in future. Hand out a list of single sentences, statements, data or facts directly related to your chosen topic.

Number each item. Ask the students to make connections between the items. There is no right or wrong link or pair. Ask the students to work in pairs to explain to one another the links they have made. Next they write down the items they have connected and record their reasons.