

There is often discord between general education theory and broader educational policy as it is applied in the context of the classroom. This lack of union applies to a range of ideas but is particularly the case when it comes to learning styles. Despite wide acceptance of the presence of diverse learning styles and emphasis on these theories during teacher training, there is often no follow-through at the school policy level, thus the concept of learning styles is not given room to work or function unless the individual teacher quietly changes his or her techniques based on a belief and adherence to theories about learning styles.

In the United States, there is a great deal of emphasis on teacher training and education and of course, nearly all teacher training programs include some sort of discussion about learning styles. However, there is no union between what teachers are taught and what policies schools emphasize, thus teachers are often left to their own devices when it comes to implementing classroom policies to address the issue of unique learning styles. In other words, the teacher's recognition of learning styles in his or her own classroom becomes that teacher's business solely—the school very often does not have broader initiatives aimed at reaching out to students with diverse learning styles.

This disassociation between educational theory and educational policy is not quite as defined in some countries. For instance, in Scandinavian countries, the concept of learning styles has been well-studied and widely accepted as a fundamental building block of course construction and teacher training. There, the issue of learning styles and differences took center stage in policy debates and eventually led to the “federal requirement that all special education students be provided individualized educational plans based on their learning styles” (Dunn et. al, 2009). In other words, there is enough consensus about the value of recognizing and catering to learning styles that it has become policy rather than vague theory.

There is a marked shift away from individualizing educational initiatives like directing course content to match learning styles. With the No Child Left Behind Act and other similar policy initiatives aimed at increasing and monitoring the academic test scores of students, learning styles have not taken center stage. As Dun et. al (2009) suggests, even though we have incredibly diversity in terms of ability, language barriers, and other impediments to broad-based approaches to teaching, “no one knows how to differentiate instruction or on what to base differentiation. Few educators are trained in the effective implementation of any styles other than conventional teaching.”

Without more focused effort to join educational theory and educational and school-wide policy it is going to be difficult to use broader experimental initiatives to gauge progress. With further research about learning styles more generally, one can only hope that schools and state or federal educational policymakers begin to see the value of putting theory into practice.