How academic knowledge can support practice learning: A case study of learning styles.

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Summary: This paper focuses on the Department of Health (2002) statement that academic knowledge should be used to support practice learning. Debates around linking theory and practice and knowledge as product and process are discussed. The particular emphasis is on critically analysing whether academic knowledge about learning styles - a form of 'process knowledge' – can be effectively utilised and therefore relevant to supporting the process of practice teaching. A small-scale qualitative research study with practice teachers and students is presented as a way of exploring this.

The findings of this research suggest that information about learning styles can be of practical relevance to practice teachers in promoting effective student learning. The key finding here is that its relevance is determined primarily by *how* such knowledge is utilised in practice. It is crucial whether practice teachers perceive information about their student's learning styles as product knowledge (something they possess but do not necessarily employ) or process knowledge (something which usefully describes part of the process they are engaged in).

Key words: learning styles, student learning, teaching

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Introduction

This paper will explore how knowledge of students' learning styles can be utilised effectively and be of practical relevance to supporting the process of practice teaching. As universities and practice agencies implement the new three-year social work degree, this is a time to reflect upon the role of practice learning within professional education. The Department of Health in the 'Requirements and Regulations for Social Work Training' (2002, p.2) states that, 'Practice is central to the new degree, with academic learning supporting practice, rather than the other way round.' The new requirement for social work students to spend at least 200 days gaining required experience and learning in practice settings, underlines this emphasis still further.

Practice placements are clearly intended to be a cornerstone in the provision of professional training for social work students undertaking the new degree. It has been argued elsewhere, that changes throughout the 1990s increasingly moved the role of practice teaching to the centre of social work education (Doel and Shardlow, 1996). Current changes emphasise the pivotal nature of this role even further. The role of the Practice Assessor in placement settings will be of vital importance in meeting the stated aspirations of the new degree. The GSCC are currently reviewing the PQ framework but are acknowledging that '…the link between the Practice Teaching Award and qualifying training remains central' (GSCC 2002, p.5).

Commentators have, however, drawn attention to the 'rather ambiguous and insecure position practice teaching has occupied within social work education' (Wilson 2000, p.46). A clear challenge for the profession now is how to seek to support the role of practice teaching and attempt to work further on developing a more supportive relationship between academic learning and practice. While the relationship between academic knowledge and social work practice is inextricably knitted together, at times it is also characterised by ambivalence, confusion and misunderstandings (Parton, 2000; Sheppard, et al, 2000).

Previous debates often focused around the distinctions between formal 'theories of practice', incorporating explicit theoretical propositions often subjected to research based verification, and informal 'practice theories' drawing upon the accumulation of

practice wisdom, incorporating knowledge generated and used by practitioners usually not subject to such attempts at verification (Curnock and Hardiker, 1979). This rather simplistic dichotomy has been more recently qualified by work such as that of Sheppard et al. (2000) which suggests that knowledge may more profitably be considered as either 'process knowledge' - connected to reflection and cognitive processes i.e. how a range of knowledge is used by practitioners; as opposed to 'knowledge as product' which is given knowledge, already researched and ready for use by practitioners.

This article covers two aspects of what may be considered 'process knowledge'. Firstly, the cognitive processes that influence how knowledge is processed differently by different people, and secondly how an understanding of this 'process knowledge' can further the integration of knowledge and skills in practice teaching.

The aim is to describe a piece of research which sought to explore the relationship between 'knowledge as product', alongside 'knowledge as process.' The research drew upon the author's experience as a social work lecturer within a university , having held specific responsibilities for supporting practice learning over a number of years; co-run workshops for practice teachers, taught as a tutor on Practice Teacher Programmes for over ten years; and worked with students within the university around the development of their practice skills and knowledge across a range of modules.

The intention is no more than to offer one example of a small but practical way academic knowledge can be utilised by practice teachers to support practice assessment in the wake of the new degree. There is no desire to minimise the real difficulties inherent in achieving this objective.

Setting the context

Most practice teachers come to their task with an often expressed hope of communicating their developing practice wisdom to new recruits to the profession. When the process of teaching and assessing the student begins, however, there is often self-doubt about how such wisdom can be effectively communicated and subsequently assessed (Wilson,

2000). At this point, practice teachers have often been particularly keen to explore ideas from the field of adult learning and to explore learning and teaching techniques to aid them in their task. A basic tenet of adult learning theory is that adults are most ready to learn when they experience a need to know something (Knowles, 1984).

It is at this juncture, which is potentially characterised by both ambiguity (what should I be doing?) and insecurity (I am a social worker *not* a teacher), that academic knowledge drawn upon from the field of adult learning theory can usefully be employed to support the teaching and assessing of practice.

Taxonomies of learning styles

There are many ways of seeking to describe and assess learning styles. Sims and Sims (1995, p.194) argue that expressed most simply a learning style represents '…the typical ways a person behaves, feels and processes information in learning situations …. It is the way in which each person absorbs and retains information and skills.' Many diagnostic instruments have been designed with the intention of measuring and classifying learning styles e.g. the Grasha-Reichmann Learning Styles Questionnaire (Reichmann, 1974, cited in Sims and Sims, 1995), the Productivity Environmental Preference Survey (Price, Dunn & Dunn, 1982), the Guglielmino Learning Style Inventory (cited in Sims and Sims, 1995). Some of these need specialist training to administer and interpret, whereas others can be administered more easily. Given this extensive range of instruments available here it may be pertinent to see this area as suffering from 'an embarrassment of riches' (Curry, 1990).

There are, however, several easily accessible examples available outlining different categorisations of learning styles that may be helpful for practice teachers to draw upon.

Serialist and holist learners

Pask (1976) classified learners as having predominantly either serialist or holist learning styles. Serialists are said to have a step by step approach to learning and prefer to utilise a narrow focus, while holists are said to prefer to focus on 'the big picture'.

Convergers, divergers, assimilators and accommodators

Wolf and Kolb (1984) identified four categories of learning style. Convergent styles focus on the practical application of ideas; divergent styles focus on generating new ideas and utilising imagination; assimilation styles focus on creating theoretical models and making connections between ideas, and accommodative styles focus on implementing plans that enable them to engage in new experiences.

Activists, reflectors, theorists and pragmatists

Fry et al (1999, p.31) suggest that ' ... perhaps the best known classification of learning style is that of Honey and Mumford (1982).' Doel and Shardlow (1996) found that the most frequently used categorisation of learning styles utilised on Practice Teacher Programmes was Honey and Mumford's (1986) Learning Styles Questionnaire. This is a self-administered questionnaire which involves respondents either agreeing or disagreeing with a range of behavioural statements. The aim of this questionnaire is to highlight an individual's preferred style of learning. The identified learning styles are intended to demonstrate how people have learnt in the past and to predict from this how they will learn best in the future. Four preferred learning styles are identified by Honey and Mumford (1986):

- *Activists*
  who operate in the 'here and now'. They enjoy the challenge of new experiences but become bored with implementation and consolidation. They are quick to move into action and enjoy activity centred around themselves. A student with this preferred

learning style is likely to benefit from 'hands on' practical experience at an early stage of a practice placement.

- *Reflectors*
  who observe and evaluate situations from a range of different perspectives before reaching a definitive conclusion. They draw upon a wide perspective and look at the past as well as the present. They are cautious and seek the observations of others as well as their own before they act. A student with this preferred learning style is likely to benefit from learning experiences being introduced at a slower pace. Observing others conducting interviews, appearing in court etc. could offer appropriate opportunities for learning.

- *Theorists*
  who integrate observations into complex but logically sound theories. They think through problems in a vertical, systematic manner and assimilate disparate facts into coherent theories. A student with this preferred style of learning is likely to benefit from a logically coherent learning package where connections between the differing learning opportunities are clearly established.

- *Pragmatists*
  who enjoy trying out new ideas and theories and testing out how they can be applied in practice. They like to act quickly and adopt a practical, problem solving approach to situations. A student with this preferred learning style is likely to benefit from learning experiences where theoretical understandings are linked directly to the process and outcome of the work undertaken.

Application to practice teaching

Despite its popularity and wide usage, a note of caution needs to be exercised when seeking to use the Honey and Mumford Questionnaire with social workers and their students. Shardlow and Doel (1996) point out that the empirical studies upon which Honey and Mumford's Questionnaire are based consisted predominantly of studies with non-social work male managers and no indication is given about the number of respondents who were black or from other minority groups.

Thus, there is little research currently available on how knowledge of learning styles can be incorporated into social work practice teaching. Much of the research that does exist draws from studies in the field of clinical practice. However, research does point to the usefulness of understanding learning styles within the context of the supervisor – supervisee relationship (Berengarten, 1957; Fox and Guild, 1987; Kadushin, 1992; Papell, 1978). Two studies, Tsang (1993) and Kruzich et al (1996) did focus specifically on social work students' learning styles.

These studies explored the changes in learning styles required by students when needing to accommodate the differing demands of learning within their academic curriculum compared to the learning they needed to demonstrate on practice placements. Both studies explored how assimilating academic knowledge at times required a different learning style to be adopted by the student than that required by the student to successfully accommodate practice learning. Tsang (1993) drew on Wolf and Kolb's (1984) learning style classification. One finding was that for social work students in their first year of training, college tutors expected students to be primarily convergent in their learning style. Practice teachers, on the other hand, expected students to adopt the opposite learning style and be primarily divergent. Over time they found that students were able to adapt and move from their own preferred learning style to accommodate the style required in the different contexts of college and practice learning. Awareness of the demands on students to accommodate two different styles of learning simultaneously in their training does potentially sensitise all parties involved with first year students to their sense of having to operate in two different worlds. Students often feel somewhat de-skilled at the start of their training and acknowledging the difficulties here may be helpful.

This paper is seeking to discuss one tangible way such differences can be constructively acknowledged and productively worked with to assist practice learning. The following case study is used as a vehicle for such exploration.

A case study

After many years of using Honey and Mumford's Learning Styles Inventory with practice teachers and students, the author undertook a small piece of research in this area. The eight practice teachers involved in this study were studying on an outer London Practice Teachers' Programme, working towards the then CCETSW Practice Teaching Award, and they each had a social work student on placement with them.

The respondents

The Practice Teachers

Of the practice teachers mentioned above, six were from the statutory sector and two from the voluntary sector. They were a mixed group in terms of ethnicity and age. Three respondents were of African Caribbean descent, three were White British, one was Chinese and one was Jewish. All eight were female. The original intention was to interview three male practice teachers but they were eventually unable to agree to interview times as a result of their work commitments (though one is referred to by a student respondent). Only one practice teacher had previous experience as a practice teacher. Overall, however, this profile was a representative sample of this particular Practice Teacher's Programme, where candidates are predominantly drawn from the statutory sector. The Programme has historically attracted a larger proportion of female applicants and this has been reflected in the recruiting of more female than male candidates. It is, however, pertinent to acknowledge that no male practice teachers were interviewed in this research. It is possible that some of the findings may have been potentially influenced by this fact, for example, if there exists a gender difference in whether such information was viewed as process or product knowledge, this would not have been highlighted in this research. In such a small- scale study, however, it would be difficult to make any clear statements in relation the impact of gender preferences, as the sample size would be too small to generalise.

The Students

The eight students who were interviewed were a mixed group in terms of ethnicity and age. Three were African Caribbean descent, four were White British and one was Jewish. Three of the eight students were male.

The Objective

The research set out to explore whether knowledge of learning styles was indeed of any practical relevance in supporting practice teachers in their task of promoting and assessing student competence. The overall process and findings of this research have been explored in greater detail elsewhere (Cartney, 2000). For the purposes of this paper, however, the key area of focus is whether practice teachers were able to utilise this academic knowledge in a practical way to promote practice learning and to explore ways such knowledge might be used more effectively. An important question here is how practice teachers viewed knowledge about learning styles. Did they see this as simply 'knowledge as product' which may have been used or disregarded, or did they also understood this knowledge as existing within the realm of 'knowledge as process'? If practice teachers assumed the latter position, they may be acknowledging that knowledge about learning styles was useful in ongoing process of practice teaching.

The Methodology

Developing a 'learning code'

The practice teachers all completed the Honey and Mumford questionnaire individually and identified their own preferred learning style. They then moved into a group with other practice teachers who had identified themselves as having the same preferred learning style. In these groups they considered how they learnt best and what

teaching methods they preferred. From this information they devised a 'learning code' for helping people with their identified learning styles to most fully utilise learning opportunities available within placement agencies. Interestingly, no Activists were identified and so responses to this category were suggested as a composite from suggestions from other groupings.

Activists group

Here the need for learning through 'hands on experience' was predominantly stressed.

I want to be thrown in at the deep end .... but with you standing by like a lifeguard in case I start drowning.
Let me get on with it and give me feedback later … I'll never learn by just watching you do it
Try to make work interesting for me … give me lots of new cases. I thrive on new things … I love beginnings. Make things seem different for me, whenever you can ...
(Practice Teachers)

The 'learning code' drawn up for the Activist's Group identified the following teaching suggestions:

• Provide accelerated induction packages ie. with a quick movement to performing tasks rather than observing, reading documents etc.
• Provide varied learning experiences which are outlined at the contract stage.
• Provide opportunities to initiate and to become involved in new projects, new pieces of work etc.
• Provide opportunities to slow down and reflect as this might be needed but not initiated by the student, for example by asking them in supervision to consider the pros and cons of a range of differing alternative courses before moving to an action plan.

Reflectors group

Here the need for time and space was predominantly stressed.

> *Let me watch you first so I can see how you do it … gives me a marker*
> *Talk to me … a lot … Say lets look at this from many angles.*
> *Don't push me into making snap decisions … give me time … I'll get there…*
> (Practice Teachers)

The 'learning code' drawn up by this group identified some of the following teaching suggestions:

- Provide opportunities to observe other's practice before undertaking tasks alone.
- Provide opportunities to participate in reviews as this needs a weighing up approach favoured by Reflectors.
- Provide reflective supervision with opportunities to discuss process as well as outcome and allow space for consideration of a range of potential options and actions.
- Provide reading material at the end of a supervision session to be discussed during the next supervision, thereby allowing thinking time prior to discussion.
- Provide encouragement to move to action as the end product of reflection as the student may get caught up too much in the reflective process. Discussions in supervision can be structured to ensure that process is attended to but the purpose of this dialogue is to lead to outcome and action. Supervision notes ending with agreement on future action plans, time-scale etc. may provide a useful tool here.

Theorists group

Here the importance of having an organised and structured teaching framework was predominantly stressed.

> *Start with ideas and concepts … let's get hold of the bigger picture first.*
> *Give me the chance to ask why .... help me think how the parts link with the whole.*

I need clear, logical information that makes sense.
(Practice Teachers)

The 'learning code' drawn up by this group identified the following teaching suggestions:

- Provide information in a clear, written format.
- Provide opportunities to link theories to practice and show their inter-relationships. In supervision the integration of this throughout the process may be helpful here eg. where different theories, concepts etc are discussed in relation to each piece of work in an integrated manner.
- Provide a structured and ordered plan for both the induction and the overall placement process, showing how the visits to be undertaken, the work allocated etc links with the student's learning needs and programme requirements.
- Provide encouragement that it is okay not to know all the answers sometimes. Discussions on the possibility of acting on a basis of safe uncertainty, for example, may be helpful here.

Pragmatists group

Here the importance of problem solving and utilising 'what works' was stressed:

Give me task centred casework anyday!
I like to get on with it …nothing is ideal but you have to do the job as best you can …dont you?
I like to be active and to do things … cant stand time wasting in all those meetings … often they go nowhere…

The 'learning code' drawn up by this group identified the following teaching suggestions:

- Provide opportunities for problem solving and planning. This can be in relation to casework, projects, organisations, specific issues etc.

- Provide opportunities to put theoretical ideas into practice and try a range of different fits. One particular piece of work could be looked at from a variety of alternative theoretical perspectives and the pros and cons of drawing upon the different theories explored.
- Provide opportunities to see different ways of working e.g. co-working with colleagues who have varied work styles, different specialisms etc.
- Provide opportunities for the student to try to see the wood for the trees. In supervision questions could be asked to encourage the student to make connections between discrete tasks being performed and generalising features operating as a background to these different individual experiences. The student could be asked to reflect on how their work fitted with the main role of the agency or whether their individual service users were from particular socio-economic groupings in society and why this might be the case etc.

Each small group then reported back their discussions and presented their 'learning code' to other groups with different learning styles. Opportunities were provided for the groups to ask questions of others who were identified as having a different learning style from theirs. The aim of this exercise was to encourage practice teachers to develop learning and teaching strategies in line with their student's particular style of learning, which may be different to their own.

Identifying learning styles and learning opportunities

Following this exercise, the practice teachers were then given a second copy of Honey and Mumford's (1986) questionnaire and asked to give this to their students to complete. They were then encouraged to use information about the student's preferred learning style as a guide to tailoring specific learning opportunities in particular ways following a dialogue with their student. It was hoped that the questionnaire would be a catalyst to discussions around how their student learnt best; what teaching methods their student preferred and how learning opportunities available on placement could be tailored to engage the student most fully. It was, therefore, anticipated that knowledge about

the student's learning style would be used to influence the teaching strategies employed by the practice teacher.

At the end of the academic year, interviews were carried out with the eight practice teachers and their respective students. The aim was to establish whether or not the academic knowledge they had gained in relation to determining each other's respective learning styles had, or had not, positively influenced their ability to promote the student's practice learning on placement.

Ethical considerations

Informed consent was gained from respondents. They were informed of the purpose and process of the research, and confidentiality. All respondents saw the report in draft and had the opportunity to comment and negociate any necessary changes.

Data collection and analysis

The data was collected in the manner outlined above i.e. through the process of the group exercise with practice teachers and then individual interviews with the practice teachers and their students. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data and all respondents were interviewed individually. The interviews were all taped with the respondents' permission and the data was subsequently transcribed.

All transcripts were then explored and analysed to identify key themes / patterns emerging from the data.

Research findings

One finding to emphasise in this paper is the fact that all respondents, practice teachers and students, enthusiastically identified the idea of

trying to find out about learning styles as a useful one. This finding appears to support other research studies in this area that highlight the usefulness of employing such learning styles instrumentation (Keefe and Ferrell, 1990; Sims et al. 1991, 1989). Many comments were made in this area and two representative comments were,

I think it's a useful exercise in helping you to understand yourself better … how you may behave as a learner in a process and help you see your way of learning isn't the best or the only way … (Practice Teacher)

It's a little bit like putting people into boxes … but not really … it's supposed to be a guide to help you think ..not the only thing … It's good … gives you important pointers. (Practice Teacher)

Despite this enthusiasm for the general idea of finding out about learning styles practice teachers varied considerably in how they incorporated the information into their teaching. Some appeared to incorporate such knowledge as a foundation for the placement and the supervisory relationship:

We used it in supervision a lot .... It raised my awareness of how he learnt best and helped him to realise the style he used. It ran through the placement as a theme. (Practice Teacher)

We spent a lot of time talking about it in supervision .... We incorporated it into how we worked together. It is like a seed that you plant and as you water it it grows and then you know what to do ... (Practice Teacher)

Other practice teachers used information about their student's learning style at a later point in the placement when they found that the way they were trying to teach was not working for their student. One pertinent example here is:

I had to use this to find out what was making her tick …I had to understand how I could try to get her *to understand .... the only thing I had to work with was the questionnaire…It was a last ditch attempt really…it took a lot of pressure off. 'Look it's nobody's fault, we're just coming from different perspectives'.* (Practice Teacher)

Where the practice teacher and student had very different learning styles, the use of the questionnaire was identified as particularly relevant. This finding supports arguments from research studies that suggest differences in learning style can be accommodated appropriately and worked with productively (Ramsden, 1985; Shipman and Shipman, 1985). One practice teacher who was identified as a strong Activist had a student who was identified as a clear reflector:

I wanted him to know exactly how I worked … we would co-work … and to say if I ran ahead it wasn't because he was going too slow for him not to worry to ask me to slow down … Said he found the questionnaire helpful … he then felt safe enough to ask me to slow down ... (Practice Teacher D)

Some practice teachers completed the questionnaire with their students but then ended discussion and did not attempt to incorporate such knowledge into their teaching in any broader sense:

I used it as an exercise on the Practice Teachers' Course … but I didn't follow it through .... I was doing the formal thing for the first time and somethings I hadn't grasped enough in terms of using them ... I'd taken it to a certain level . I hadn't physically thought this is how I am going to use it and this is how I am going to unpack it with the student. (Practice Teacher F)

No I didn't use the information … I forgot this was around after a while. Maybe it would have helped .... Yes, I guess I could have used it .... If I had shared this with my Practice Assessor this would have helped her feeding back … What she was highlighting was the difference between my learning style and my student's. It may have made the process of meeting in the middle a bit easier to see. It lays it out a bit. (Practice Teacher C)

The majority of students interviewed appeared to have a sense of a lost opportunity as on the whole they identified such knowledge as potentially very relevant for their learning but felt that their practice teachers had not used the information in a pro-active way. One comment draws attention to this clearly:

I was very interested in the idea … but we didn't go very deep into it …. not used as a technique for moving things on … You've got to have a different perspective on why you're there and that was a bit lacking …. This (pointing to the questionnaire) would have really helped to have made it more of the unique experience that it is. (Student B)

I put it down on the agenda for supervision. 'Right' I said, 'Hold on you've given me this and you've left it …. Let's look at this' … and he said, 'Okay then how do you learn?' and I said 'I learn by doing' and I told him …. he then left it and I realised that he didn't know what to do …. where to take it. (Student G)

Some students, however, did feel that the information about how they learn best had been utilised in the practice teaching relationship. Where this happened the comments were positive:

It helped us … I quite like didactic teaching … She really took that on board and would literally teach me … Where she might have actually preferred to do a brainstorm and dredge up from herself what she knew about the subject … She did actually appreciate that I didn't operate that way … (Student A)

If we hadn't done the questionnaire and talked about learning styles, it probably wouldn't have come up …. The questionnaire showed we were quite different. If we didn't have this awareness there could have been friction. (Student D)

Where information about learning styles had been utilised in the teaching process feedback on this had been very positive. Whilst all practice teachers agreed that such information was useful to have, not all appeared to find it *useful enough* to incorporate into their practice teaching. Practice teachers who had not incorporated this information more comprehensively into their teaching did say that they would do so in a later student placement as they had not initially appreciated how such knowledge could be used to permeate practice learning.

I could have used it to help her development of learning … show what she knows, what she's learning and what she wants to learn … It might have

helped her not to be so defensive and so rigid about once you've learned something that's it there's nothing else to learn .... . It would be good to use it at the beginning with another student … set the scene … (Practice Teacher)

The process of becoming a practice teacher is quite gradual … and your absorption of the theory that you are actually using actually happens at quite a slow rate .... The more I do this, probably the more will emerge … this is something I would go for first. (Practice Teacher)

The difficulty social workers find in applying theory to practice expressed in this quote is well attested in research findings (Stevenson and Parsloe, 1978; Carew, 1979; Secker, 1993 and Parton, 2000).

The key message appears to be, however, that all practice teachers and students found the knowledge around learning styles either useful at the time or potentially useful later. All practice teachers viewed such 'knowledge as product' in a positive light. For those who did not incorporate this information more fully into their practice teaching, the issue appeared to be how to use the information on the whole rather than conscious decisions being made not to use it. Those who viewed this as 'process knowledge' and actively incorporated and worked with such information in their teaching noted the most benefit.

The application of 'learning styles' knowledge

From the information above it appears that practice teachers used information about their student's learning styles in three different ways:

- *Developmentally*
  Where information was integrated into the student's placement learning throughout and teaching styles and learning opportunities were influenced as a result of this. Here knowledge was viewed as both a product and a process.
- *Diagnostically*
  Where problems in learning had been identified and information

regarding the student's learning style was used as part of planning a strategy for resolution.

- *Dilatory*

  Where information about learning styles had been sought as an end in itself or as an expectation of the Practice Teacher Programme, but had not been incorporated further into teaching. Application of such knowledge thus being effectively delayed. Knowledge here appeared to have been perceived solely as a product rather than as a process.

Thus, the potential usefulness of undertaking the exercise to ascertain learning styles appears to be determined by *how* the information is then used to inform practice learning on the placement. It appears most useful if used developmentally and least useful if its use is dilatory, Whilst its diagnostic use is clearly helpful, it would seem evident that the earlier application might have avoided problems arising in the first place.

Conclusion

This paper has explored one way in which particular academic knowledge can be drawn upon to support practice learning. The findings of this small-scale research suggest that knowledge of learning styles can be utilised effectively by practice teachers and be of practical relevance in supporting practice learning.. Such knowledge appears most useful when its *ongoing* application to practice teaching is emphasised and where possession of this knowledge is not seen as an end product but rather the start of an ongoing learning process.

Knowledge of a student's learning style can guide practice teachers in their provision of appropriate learning opportunities and can provide a framework for working with diverse ways of learning. This approach could ensure that the strengths of each learning style are utilised most effectively in the practice learning process. Unproductive and unnecessary clashes in style between practice teachers and students – often experienced as personality clashes - may be avoided here. Strengths and shortcomings of each style can

be explicitly acknowledge and worked with to aid the development of rounded, competent practitioners.

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