

# Who is Right— Madeline Hunter or Art Costa?

By understanding the researchers we can better understand the policies they promote and the lessons they plan for others.

In the 1984 ASCD Yearbook, *Using What We Know About Teaching*, Madeline Hunter and Art Costa tee off on the nature of knowing and the elements of teaching and learning. Hunter presents in articulate detail her work in classroom instruction, which has made her today's foremost authority on that topic. Costa challenges the scientific reductionism that quantifies and sequences teaching as a predictable step-by-step process. When Hunter labels intuition as "sterile" and "inarticulate," Costa reminds us that intuition provides scientists new insight and creativity and that intuition can be "on call."

Do Hunter and Costa not understand each other, or do they understand each other too well? What makes them hold so fast to their opposing views?

In an interview study (Lambert, 1983), I examined the beliefs and intentions underlying researchers' and policymakers' views on staff development. Participants included such leading educators as Bruce Joyce, John Goodlad, Ralph Tyler, Jane Stallings, Elliot Eisner, Delmo Della-Dora, and Paul Berman, among others. In this study of adult learning, Hunter and Costa—archetypes at opposite ends of

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the spectrum—helped provide an understanding of what directs their actions, the research questions they pose, the learning they plan for others, and the policies they promote. Learning style was a primary factor. Other factors included how they differentiated themselves from others, and their drive for cognitive consonance, meaning, and purpose.

Hunter, who tends to be more sequential, rational, and field indepen-

dent in style, sees the world very differently from Costa, who is holistic, experiential, and field dependent. The comments in Figure 1 reflect the different learning styles of several researchers.

Understanding these differences in learning style is critical to understanding how learning experiences are designed for others. In Figure 2, I have clustered together different staff development approaches based on the preferences of the study participants.

Obviously, these categories are not discrete nor all-encompassing. Many

Figure 1. Comments Reflecting Different Learning Styles.

#### Sequential, Modular

Madeline Hunter: "I break it into small meaningful pieces, pull out the key concepts, check to see whether I know that before I move on."

#### Field Independent

Jane Stallings: "I'm more of a looker, a listener; my style is that I observe . . . I think growing up reading a lot makes you a little more introspective."

#### Rational, Logical

Madeline Hunter: ". . . present them with evidence that would cause them to question their own point of view. I think you're convinced by your brain, not by your emotions."

#### Holistic

Art Costa: "I'll take a look at the whole thing and I'll think about it a long time and then everything will just fall into place together."

#### Field Dependent Experiential

Art Costa: "Once I've done something experientially and have talked about it and solved the problem, then I can talk about it, read about it, give meaning to the experience."

#### Intuitive

Karen Kent: "I have developed an intuitive ability over and above what I used to have. I've really started paying attention to that."

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**Figure 2. Staff Development Approaches Reflecting the Learning Styles of Study Participants.**

Staff Development Approach	Learning Style	Participants
school improvement collaborative	field dependent experiential	Goodlad, Joyce, Riles, Bond, Miller, Della-Dora, Lambert, Roberts, Berman, Bundy, Eisner, Tyler, Hart
problem-solving instructional methodology product-oriented teacher-center teacher-advisor  (as personal growth models)	holistic sequential field independent rational, logical holistic field independent experiential intuitive	Hunt, Scrofani, Knight, Horan, Choye, Guilkey, Tyler, Mesa, Stallings  Kent, McCaffree, Galagaran, Lambert, Costa, Joyce, Roberts, Berman, Vasconcellos

of the participants in this study understand the bias to a particular style and actively seek to broaden the base for learning to accommodate other styles. For example, Hunter immerses her instructional methodology in an approach that includes support, interaction, coaching, and feedback. Stallings includes a research foundation joined by support, opportunities to analyze discrepancies, interaction, and peer observation and feedback. Many who advocate a school improvement approach, such as Goodlad, Eisner, and Della-Dora, also include the instructional methodology approach.

An important distinction is that, despite the accommodation for alternate styles, the focal point of the sequential (modular) approach is an established authority base (in this case, research). The group consensus, problem solving, or inquiry models (school improvement) begin with the ideas of the participants—derived from experience, purpose, and meaning within a given milieu. This is the critical difference between the two. The "personal growth" models are similar to the school improvement, although focused on the renewal of the individual rather than the institution.

More intriguing, despite the divergence in their own styles and therefore the learning that they designed for others, participants shared a common vision of what the learning experience could be. Each was asked to provide a metaphor that captured his or her thoughts about adult learning.

Hunter found learning to be like a bird flying: "a way of loosening your constrictions and making you free." Costa saw learning as an "ever-expanding universe," growing and liberating in its process. Not so dissimilar. Perhaps it is in their vision of what learning can be that the meaning of teaching and learning can be negotiated.

The fertile field between Hunter and Costa should be tilled by joint effort. Leaders in staff development need to search for a consensus on the direction of staff development through critical discourse that recognizes the validity of various approaches to teaching adults. For the way to best do this lies neither solely with Hunter or with Costa—but with both. □



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