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Author(s)	Comfort, MB; McGrath, C; Luo, Y
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1578 Does Problem-based Learning Influence the Thinking Styles of Dental Students?

[M.B. COMFORT](#), C. MCGRATH, and Y. LUO, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China

OBJECTIVE: To identify associations between exposure to problem-based learning (PBL) curricula and dental students' thinking styles. METHOD: A cross sectional study of the thinking styles of undergraduate dental students with varying levels of exposure to PBL was undertaken. Thinking styles were assessed using the 65-item Thinking Styles Inventory, based on the theory of mental self-government (Sternberg, 1997). RESULTS: Experience with PBL was associated with students' thinking styles: function, forms and level of thinking. Those with the least level of exposure to PBL (first year students) were more executive (conforming) in their thinking function ($P<0.05$), and were more monarchic ($P<0.05$), and anarchic ($P<0.05$) in their thinking form, and were less global in their level of thinking ($P<0.05$) compared to those with greater exposure to PBL (more senior students). CONCLUSION: Exposure to PBL is associated with dental students' thinking styles. This has implications in understanding the outcomes from PBL dental curricula.

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