

IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING STYLES MAGNITUDE IN EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

In present situation the whole education actually operates in classroom which focuses upon communicating the necessary knowledge and skills effectively to its recipient. However, the teaching is very delicate and complex activity carried out in the classroom. Galloway (1976) says, "The teacher must also be effective teaching, especially for those children whom he identifies as poor learners, since the simple truth is that poor learning usually follows that effective instruction is a major contributor to learning and that for child who is not learning and that for child who is not learning well, instruction is ineffective. Thus, the questions emerge as to how a teacher could become effective for each of his students. (Agarwal 1983) Classroom observation reveal the basic fact that students differ in their reaction time, in the amount of encouragement, they need to attack learning task, in term of amount, frequency and type of motivation they require, in ways in which they deal with a given task and so on. Teaching is made adaptive to the differences which exist among the learners with regard to their style of perceiving, capacity the independent works, willingness, level and pace of attention. For planning a system instruction, different type of motivation about the learners are needed, besides the information about students, from which social class do they come, what are interests and abilities etc. it is very important to know as to what are the style of the students for learning in general and for learning a particular content? Do they vary significantly? What types of learning procedures and activities promote the most rapid and successful learning in the students, who have deeply ingrained patterns for their own learning?

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It is supposed that the most effective learning occurs when activities. Infact most closely with learners preferred style. Chief among the concerns in this connection is the identification and description of most preferred learning styles and development of training programmes to train the prospector teachers. Rezler and Rezmovic (1980), the assert that a teacher who wants to component the interest of many different students, needs to find out about their learning style and whenever possible, try to match these preferences with suitable learning condition. Teaching methods also vary; some instructors lecture, other focus on principles and other on applications, some emphasize memory and other understanding. When mismatches exist between learning styles of most students may become bored and inattentive in class, do poorly on tests, get discouraged about the courses, the curriculum and themselves and the same cases change to other curricular or drop out of school. Teacher unformed by low test grades, unresponsive or hostile classes, poor attendance and drop-outs, know that something is not working. They may become overly critical of their students, making things even worse or to wonder if they are in the right profession. Most seriously society loses potentially excellent professionals. Felder (2000) thus underscores the importance of match between learning style of students and methodology of teaching adopted by teachers.

NECESSITY TO KNOW ABOUT LEARNING STYLE

Let us remember that our focus is the learner and not just what is learnt. The purpose of the education is to enable the learner to help the individual to drive maximum benefit and joy from his learning efforts, and in fact this occurs in idiosyncratic ways, we them away or press them out. The individual learner is the centre, while the classroom may be the setting. The focus as one goes up the ladder of complexity of learning is the individual learner. If a large number of students in a single class learner are well, it only means that these students individually learn well. This is not mere verbal quitting. The learning entity is the individual leaner and not the whole class.

Learner may be made happier and their achievement may be enhanced simply by employing the appropriate teaching method, playing and learning activities best suited to learners' characteristics and specially their preferred learning style.

But the question is that how can a teacher know about specific learning style of his each and every learner. Is there any authentic information regarding the variation in learning style of children with different characteristics? Further, how the learning styles are formed in children is also worth knowing.

Answer to these questions can be given if learning style of learner could be identified.

LEARNING STYLE: CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

The term 'Learning style' was provably first used by Thelen (1954) in discussing the dynamics of group at work. During 1970's, Lauren Bikeway noted the existence, importance and the effect of distinct learning style. The range of definitions that have been adopted to describe the construct of learning style is large.

Most simply, the term learning style refers a way or approach a student follows in the course of learning. Laycock (1978) describes 'Learning style' as an individual's characteristics way of responding to certain variables in the instructional environment.

Agarwal (1987) viewed learning style in terms of attention or factors that affect the learning of students in one way or the other or the sum total of individual preferences for physical, social, emotional and the environmental elements in the course of learning. He suggests that as these elements vary for different students and in different situation, these may be various types of learning style for different students.

Vermunt (1992, 95) described the concept of learning style as consisting of four aspects: processing strategies, regulation strategies, mental model of learning and learning orientations.

Thus 'learning style' is the choice of one learning situation or condition over another. Every students has his/her own learning style, for instance, some students enjoy listening to lectures, other prefer to read in library some like to be given specific assignment, others to define a problem for them selves and search for solutions, some prefer verbal interaction other like laboratory or other learning experience requiring manipulation or strenuous physical efforts, some are strong minded, self directed and quite capable of independent study, other prefer interaction with peers, similarly some learners are quite sensitive to physical environment features such as sound levels, conversations, street noises and other distraction while other are insensitive these aspect.

Thus learning style can be summarized in single statement, "n individual's preferred and habitual approach for organizing and representing information. "Riding and Rayner (1998), in other words that way in which students is best able to learn visually, aurally, by motor activity or combination of these. A student's habitual manner of problem – solving or thinking or learning is different e.g. serialist and holist, reflective or impulsive etc. The students may not be conscious of his style and may adopt different style of learning.

LEARNING STYLE – THEORETICAL APPROACH

Since its inception the term ‘Learning style’ has been conceptualized in several ways. At present we notice two lines of research which attempt to explain the underlying process of learning and teaching or group of working with applied models of learning style (e.g.) Myers-Briggs 1967, Ramirez and Castenda 1974. Hill 1976. Reinert 1976, Dunn and Dunn 1978, Letteri 1980) interview technique or self report questionnaires are used to identify students perception of their own characteristics traits. In the same sense some important models of learning style have been given below.

- Myers-Briggs Model (1976)
- Ramirez’s Learning Castenda Model (1976)
- Raniert’s Learning style Model (1976)
- Hill Learning style Model (1976)
- David Kolb’s Learning style Model.
- Dunn and Dunn’s Learning style Model.
- Letteri’s Learning style Model
- Grasha Riechmann’s Learning style Model.
- NASS’s Learning style Model
- Mc Carthy’s Learning style Model
- Schmeck’s Learning style Model

TYPES OF LEARNING STYLE

There is several aspect of learning on the grounds of which. Styles can be classified Educationists and Psychologists have suggested various types of learning styles on different dimensions.

Reissman (1966) identified three basic learning styles as visual, aural and physical Shumsky (1968) has given following four learning styles:-

- a. Tempo in learning Independence in work.
- b. Attentiveness Redactions in new situation

Noor (1972) has provided the analysis of the process of responding to a learning situation and noted that

- (i) Individuals differ with respect to what they require to initiate and sustain the learning process.
- (ii) Children differ with respect to the amount of encouragement, they need to attack a learning task,

- (iii) Children differ with respect to the amount, frequency and kind of motivation for learning they require
- (iv) Children differ in the amount of prodding they require
- (v) Children differ with respect to how much they rely on eyes or ears for learning.

Bickler (1974) has identified following learning style.

- Impulsive
- Reflective
- Short attention span
- Long attention span
- Convergent production
- Divergent Production
- Resistance to change
- Flexibility has

Grasha Richmann (1974) developed the student learning style scale to measure the preferences of college students in interacting with teachers and other students. Preferences appear along three bipolar dimensions, are as follows

- Independent / Dependent
- Competitive / Collaborative
- Participant / Avoidant

Kolb (1976, 1984) has also designed a learning style inventory and defined four types of learning style.

- Convergent learning style
- Divergent learning style
- Assimilative learning style
- Accommodative learning style

Laycock (1978) has given six most common learning style as follows.

- Modality preferences
- Attention control
- Reflection Impulsivity
- Levels of processing
- Reinforcement
- Grouping preferences

Agarwal (1983) analyzed all the available literature on the types of learning styles and chose the eight learning styles as most suited, relevant and important from the point of view of teaching learning process. These learning styles as summarized by Agarwal (1983).

- Individualistic Vs Non-individualistic
- Field independent Vs Field dependent
- Motivation centered Vs Non motivation centered
- Aural Vs Visual
- Environment Vs Environment free
- Flexible Vs Non flexible
- Short attention span Vs Long attention span
- Responsible Vs Irresponsible

Keller (1987) present the attention, relevance, confidence and satisfaction (ARCS) mode as consulting four concepts that are useful in stimulating students motivation to learn. These motivation components based on J.M. Keller's (1983) general theory motivation in relation to learning and have research support, It is conducted that ARCS model provides typology that help designers and instructors organize their knowledge about motivation strategies, which are important for effective learning.

Fleming (2001) is used in the study. VARK stands for visual (V) aural (A) spread/write (R) and kinesthetic (K) learning preferences. Learners with visual learning preferences learn best by observing, watching and seeing. Aural learners learn through listening, discussing and talking. Read/write type learners learn best by interacting textual materials, learners with kinesthetic learning preferences learn best by doing.

Thus, variations are usually the functions of the ways in which students approach their learning task. Just as there have been different approach to learning there are also different styles corresponding to these different approach.

Definitions of learning style:-

The term 'Learning Styles' has been defined by:-

Hill (1976) defines 'learning styles as unique way in which and individual is researching for meaning'.

The term has been defined by keef (1979), as the composite of characteristic cognitive, affective, psychological factors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how a learner perceives, interacts with respond to the learning environment.

The term has been interpreted by Gresha (1980) as “The particular strategy we use to adapt to a given situation. As the situation changes, one learning style might also vary our learning style might rather complex in one relatively simple to another.”

Grasha and Richman describe six types of learning style.

- Independent
- Dependent
- Competitive
- Collaborative
- Participant
- Avoidant

1. INDEPENDENT

This response style is characteristic of the student who likes think for his self. He prefers to work on his own but he will listen to the ideas of others in the classroom. He learns the content; he feels what is learning abilities.

2. DEPENDENT

This style is characteristic of the student who shows little intellectual curiosity and who learns only what is required. He sees teachers and peers as source of information and support. He looks to authority figures for guidelines and wants to be told what to do.

3. COMPETITIVE

This response style is exhibited by the students who learn materials in order to perform better than other in the class. He feels he must compete with other students in the class for the rewards of the attention. He views the classroom as win lose situation where he must always win.

4. COLLABORATIVE

This style is typical of the students who feel he can learn the most by sharing his ideas and talents. He sees the classroom as a place for social interaction as well as content learning.

5. PARTICULAR

This style is characteristic of the students who wants to learn course content and likes to go to class. He takes responsibility for getting the most out of class and participates with others when told to do so. He feels that the should take part in as much of the class. Related activity as possible and does little that is not part of the course outline.

6. AVOIDANT

The response style is typical of a student who is not interested in learning course content in the traditional classroom. He does not participate with student and teachers in the classroom. He is uninterested by what goes on in the classes.

Dunn (1983) says that learning style consists of a combination of physical, psychological, emotional and widespread elements that affect the ways individuals receive, store and use knowledge or ability.

According to Mann and Sabatino (1985) learning style can be defined in their simplest form as ways that student's personal characteristics including their needs and preferences stylistically affect their learning.

Reiff (1994) holds the view that "learning style can be described as a set of factors, behaviors and attitudes that facilitate learning for a student in a given situation.

Fleming (2001) defines learning style is an individuals preferred ways of gathering, organizing and thinking about information.

In fact, we say that each learner's personality is unique and his approach to a variety of learning task and his chosen way of tackling a particular task is also unique. Learning depends upon individual learning style. The way in which a student is best able to learn-visually, aurally, by motor activity or a combination of these.

CRITICISMS OF LEARNING STYLE

While learners often have personal preferences about the types of learning experiences that they prefer-there is no research that supports the idea that people are somehow a certain 'type' of learner. In fact many times learner preference has more to do with previous personal experience than cognitive differences. For example, if an individual had a boring teacher who lectured all day every day, they may not prefer to learn by listening to someone speak-yet someone who had an engaging speaker as a teacher may say that they do prefer to learn by listening to someone speak. Clearly people have learning preferences, but they are most likely not because they are specific type of learner.

The other major criticism of learning style, other than the fact that it is not based on valid research, is that it labels learners. This labeling may actually do more harm than good.

Learning styles theories have been criticized by many some psychologists and neuroscientists have questioned the scientific basis for those models and the theories on which they are based. Many educational psychologists believe that there is little evidence for further more that the models often rest on dubious theoretical grounds. According to Stahl, there has been

an “utter failure to find that assessing children’s learning styles and matching to instructional methods has any effect on their learning.”

‘Coffied’ steam found that none of the most popular learning style theories had been adequately validated through independent research, leading to conclusion that the idea of a learning cycle. The consistency of visual, auditory and kinesthetic preferences and the value of matching teaching and learning style were all “highly questionable”.

CONCLUSION

Learning style is a good predictor of an individual’s preferred learner behaviors (Bostrom Olfman and Sein 1993).

Lendsay (1993) found that a match between learning style and teaching style reveals increases in students’ achievement and satisfaction.

It is general realization by majority of psychologists, educationists and researchers that schools, teachers and instructional programmers or method being used are directly responsible for the academic achievement of students. They also felt that individual differences among youngsters are so extreme that identical method, resources and grouping procedure can prevent learning for the urgent need to examine each individual learner in order to identify exactly how he or she is likely to learn most effectively.

Knowledge about learning styles may benefit teachers, administrators, school manager, principals, parents and students also.

- Teacher may match his/her teaching styles with the learning style of the students. Though it will be difficult for him in group teaching.
- Administrators and principals should provide various teaching aids, equipments, good physical surrounding, more books etc. So that teacher may create conducive learning environment in consideration of students learning style preferences.
- Students can gain confidence in their strengths and develop diverse strategies for coping with challenging situation, they may begin to see how they learn most effectively and efficiently and they may be able to take student may learn that their ways are not better or worse than those of their peers, they simply differ I learning style.

So it can be said that knowledge of learning style is of great important for the students, teachers, administrators, parents and researchers.

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