



Learning style and Academic Achievement of Rural and urban Secondary School Students

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Abstract

The present study was conducted to compare the Rural and Urban secondary school students on Learning style and academic achievement. The sample for the present study consisted of 400 secondary school students (200 Rural and 200 Urban). The sample for the study was selected randomly from different secondary schools of Srinagar (as Urban district) and Bandipora (as rural district). The sample was selected in such a way to ensure that every unit of population could get equal chances to be selected in the sample. Learning Style inventory developed by Venkantaraman was used to measure the learning style of the sample subjects. The study revealed that there is significant difference between the two groups on Learning style and Academic Achievement.

Keywords: Learning Styles, Academic achievement, Rural, Urban, Secondary school students.

Introduction

Learning styles has been defined as a consistent way of functioning that reflects the underlying causes of learning behavior (Keefe, 1987). Learning style is both a characteristic which indicates how a student learns and likes to learn, as well as instructional strategy informing the cognition, context and content of learning. Previous studies have reported that students' learning performance could be improved if proper learning style dimensions could be taken into consideration when developing any learning or instructional process (Graf, Liu, & Kinshuk, 2010).

A number of learning-related concepts, such as perception of academic control and achievement motivation which have been a focus of attention when attempting to identify factors affecting learning-related performance (Cano-Garcia & Hughes, 2000). One concept in particular which has provided some valuable insights into learning in both academic and other educational settings is learning style.

There is general acceptance that the manner in which individuals choose to or are inclined to approach a learning situation has an impact on performance and achievement of learning outcomes. Whilst- and perhaps because-learning style has been the focus of such a vast number of research and practitioner-based studies in the area, there exist a variety of definitions, theoretical propositions, models, interpretations and measures of the construct. To some extent, this can be considered a natural consequence of extensive empirical investigation and is to be expected with any continually developing concept which proves useful in gaining understanding of such a crucial and prevailing endeavor as learning.

Utilizing awareness of learning style within the educational background promotes more effective learning and hence improved academic achievement. As Keefe (1997) claims, the biggest dilemma would be, how can we improve the achievement of our students if we do not know how they learn? How can we pretend any longer that we are serious about creating a learning society if we have no satisfactory responses to the questions: what model of learning do we operate with and how do we use to improve our practice and that of our students? There is a strong intuitive appeal in the idea that instructors, course designers and educational psychologists should pay closer attention to student's learning styles- by diagnosing them, by encouraging learners to reflect on them and by designing teaching and learning interventions around them. When this is done, learners will become more motivated to learn by knowing their strengths and weaknesses. In turn, instructors can respond to individual's strengths and weaknesses, then retention and achievement rates in formal programs are likely to rise and learning to learn skills provide a foundation for lifelong learning.

Academic achievement is a key mechanism through which adolescents learn about their talents, abilities and competencies which are an important part of developing career aspiration. One of the most important outcomes of any educational set up is achievement of the students. Depending on the level of achievement, individuals are characterized as high achievers, average and low achievers. Taylor (1964) states that the value the student places upon his own worth

effects his academic achievement. Achievement in educational institution may be taken to mean any desirable learning that is observed in the student. Academic achievement of pupils refers to the knowledge attained and skills developed in the school subjects. So, academic achievement means the achievement of pupils in the academic subjects.

Objectives

The following objectives were formulated for the present study:

1. To study and compare learning styles of Rural and Urban secondary school students.
2. To study and compare Academic Achievement of Rural and Urban secondary school students.
3. To give suggestions and some practical interventions for the development of learning style and academic achievement of Rural and Urban secondary school students.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for the present study:

1. Rural and Urban secondary school students differ significantly on learning styles.
2. Rural and Secondary school students differ significantly on academic achievement.

Operational definition of variables

Learning Style

Learning styles include the cognitive, affective and psychological elements of an individual's ability to learn. Learning styles for the present study refers to the scores obtained by sample subjects on D. Venkataraman's Style of learning and thinking Inventory.

Academic Achievement

Academic achievement of pupils refers to the knowledge attained and skills developed in school subjects. It is the end product of all the educational endeavours. For the present study the academic achievement refers to two years academic record of the rural and urban Secondary School Students.

SAMPLE

The sample for the present study was consisted of 400 secondary school students (200 Rural and 200 Urban).

The breakup of the sample is as under:

Group	Rural Students	Urban Students	Total (N)
Secondary School Students	200	200	400

Tools Used

The investigator used learning style inventory developed by Venkataraman. The tool is very valid and reliable for the assessment of learning style of sample subjects. The academic achievement of the sample subjects were assessed by consulting their previous two years academic records. The aggregate of marks were considered to be the academic index of the subjects. The investigator also used self constructed opinionaire to pool the opinion of all the stake holders and to make some suggestions for the development of learning style and academic achievement of Rural and Urban Secondary school students.

Table 4.1: Mean Comparison of Rural and Urban Secondary School Students on learning Styles (N= 400)

Group	Mean	S.D.	t-value	Level of Significance
Rural	24.23	4.6	7.03	Significant at 0.01 level
Urban	28.03	5.2		

The perusal of the above table shows the mean difference between Rural and Urban secondary school students on learning styles. The statistical analysis reveals that there is significant mean difference between the two groups and the difference was found to be significant at 0.01 level. The data reveals that the Urban Secondary School students were found to have better Learning style than the Rural Secondary School Students.

Table 4.2: Mean Comparison of Rural and Urban Secondary Students on Academic Achievement

Group	Mean	S.D.	t-value	Level of Significance
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Rural	50.23	6.17	13.75	Significant at 0.01 level
Urban	59.31	7.20		

The perusal of the above table reveals the mean comparison of Rural and urban Secondary School Students on academic achievement. The data reveals that there is significant difference between the two groups on the academic achievement and the difference was found to be significant at 0.01 level. The data confirms that the urban students were found to be better on academic achievement than Rural Students.

Major Findings of the study

On the basis of the analysis and interpretation, the following meaningful conclusions have been drawn from the present study:

1. It has been found that the Urban secondary School students have better learning style than the Rural students. The urban secondary School students were found to have better Verbal Concept, content preference, Learning preference, interest, divergent and convergent abilities, creative abilities, problem solving aptitude and imagination power than the Rural secondary school students.
2. It has been found that the Kashmiri students were found to have better academic achievement than Rural Secondary School Students.

SUGGESTIONS

In order to develop the learning styles and academic achievement of the Rural and Urban Secondary school students the following suggestions have been pooled from the different stake holders:

1. Academic Orientation programmes should be organised for the Rural Secondary School students to develop their Learning Style.
2. The Lecture methods of teaching used in the Rural Schools should be replaced by the new methods of teaching which can encourage the Rural students for self study and divergent thinking.
3. There should be the provision of library classes in the time table, so that the habit of self study shall be inculcated among the students.

4. Zero classes should be organised for the Rural Secondary School students so that their academic achievement will get improved.

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