

STUDENTS' LEARNING STYLES: BASIS FOR MODULE DEVELOPMENT IN LITERATURE

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Abstract

All human beings have different abilities and each of them has various interests in life. Indeed, every child has unique properties and has his own learner style. The study aims to determine the pattern of the learning styles among the first year 149 BS Criminology students of Jose Rizal Memorial State University System who were enrolled during the second semester of the Academic Year 2015-2016. The descriptive survey research method was employed in the study which administers Learning Styles Inventory of Honey and Mumford. The statistical tools used were frequency count, mean computations, and chi-square. The pattern that emerged was reflector-pragmatist-activist-theorist. Reflector learner style emerged as the dominant learning style among the respondents. There was a significant difference of the learning style of the students between male and female respondents on the reflector learner style. The type of school they graduated from high school either private or public did not influence their learner style. Moreover, the educational qualification of the parents influences the theorist learning style of the respondents. Thus, this study recommends that instructors generally need to understand the learning styles of their students to fit their teaching strategies and teaching methods. Moreover, instructors teaching Philippine Literature may design instructional materials which would address the learner styles of the students. Students who are strongly dependent upon only one mode of learning should be targeted with specific techniques adapted to their individual learning styles.

Keywords: learner styles, theorist, activist, reflector, pragmatist

Introduction

All human beings have different abilities and each of them has various interests in life. Indeed, every child has unique properties. Many researchers study the uniqueness of individual's learning style and at the same time generate alternatives for them to foster their learning habits, finally increase their achievements in study. Learning styles play an important role in higher education learning. They represent different individual preferences and strengths in learning and can be a stimulus for developing new ways of learning. Montgomery and Groat (2002) report, that each faculty in higher educational institution should expose all sorts of learning styles to students. Therefore, they can recognize and gain benefits throughout their own learning styles within each specialization. Whilst Felder as cited by Tee, *et. al* (2009) pointed out that students who identified their own learning style tend to follow the course better because based on the learning style's information, they are able to understand their thinking process deeply and clearly. As Kolb (1971) argued one will be more successful in any area if he knows his own strength and lowness. However, Fowler as cited by Che, Zaini (2000) believed that most of the students that have good ability in linguistic and logical intelligence usually will be successful at schooling but are not when they are in job world. There are some cases that students were not doing great in school but are very successful in doing their job after graduated from school. But Ramlah *et.al* (2002) stressed that there are still a huge figure showing most of the student haven't reach the minimum level for general examination, for example subjects like Mathematics and English. Now, people are more concern and some even argued for the graduates' quality.

A successful transition from childhood to adolescence partially depends upon the academic preparation and the motivation of student as well as the school's effectiveness in helping the student acquire life survival skills. Since every individual has unique set of experiences, a variety of responses to any given stimuli is possible. The special academic and personal characteristics of students and how these characteristics affect their success have to be taken into consideration. As the learners faced the challenges of ASEAN integration, one of the main objectives of a learning institution is to provide a world class education system by producing successful individuals based on their potentials. However, the individual's potential should be polished, nurtured and advanced as a whole. Moreover, the structure, learning materials, teaching methods, and ability to direct learning to a substantial interaction with the environment determine quality learning and experience.

This is to expose students to different learning styles so they can achieve the balance between own learning and teachers' teaching. The knowledge of learning styles is very crucial for students because this will help them especially on gaining new experiences, maximize their own potentials and guiding them to suitable career path in future based on their interest. Moreover, with paradigm shift, teachers should not assume and let students themselves to identify their own learning style. In contrast, teachers must expose and explain these to all students because students exhibit different learning styles, and only by accommodating these various abilities can instructors properly plan and conduct assignments and assess what students have learned.

Along this context, this study aimed to determine the pattern of Kolb's learning styles among the first year BS Criminology students of Jose Rizal Memorial State University System who are enrolled during the second semester of the Academic Year 2015-2016. It also aimed to determine the significant difference of the learning styles of the respondents when grouped as to gender, type of school graduated from high school and educational qualification of their parents. In so doing, research-based findings will be established to determine their students' learning style preferences which provide insights to the

instructor to they can adjust their teaching methods to improve learning outcomes. Further, assessing learning styles enables the instructor to teach in a manner more congruent with the students' needs. Further, this will help students to derive insight into their own learning strengths and weaknesses. Students will become actively more involve in their education through tools that help them become better learners. After identifying the students' learning styles, the teacher can now design a modular lesson in literature that would best suit on the styles of the learners in order to achieve a successful differentiated instruction.

Theoretical/Conceptual Consideration

This study is anchored on Learning Styles Model of Honey and Mumford as used in the study of Lowy (2013). How students process information—how well they learn and how well they retain knowledge—is directly related to the learning style of the individual. Teachers have long felt that if they lecture and tell students the same thing over and over again, the student will learn and understand a particular science concept. This learning style and instructional technique were traditionally thought of as the way that the majority of people learn. Students actually learn best through various styles: personal meaning, conceptual learning, how things work, and self-discovery.

Students who learn best through personal meaning process information according to its relationship to the individual. They learn by listening and sharing ideas, they perceive information concretely and process it reflectively, they tackle problems by reflecting alone and then brainstorming with others, and they view experiences from many perspectives. These learners are usually insightful and have a need to become personally involved with their learning.

Those who acquire knowledge best through conceptual learning are goal-oriented, solitary learners who tackle problems with logic. They perceive information abstractly and process it reflectively, form theory and concepts by integrating observations into what is known, and think sequentially.

Students who are actively involved in their own learning thrive during manipulation of objects or when presented with a problem to be solved. These are the “how things work” learners. They love a challenge and will cut right to the heart of the matter. It is these learners who are most suited to active field study. They perceive information abstractly and process it actively, excel in down-to-earth, hands-on problem solving, and tackle problems by acting without consulting others.

The last of the learning styles is self-discovery. The person who learns best in this way is stimulating, impulsive, and enthusiastic; avoids isolation; and seeks to energize others. However, the drawback to all of this enthusiasm is that he or she will often take on too many responsibilities and as a result will often not complete a task. These learners perceive information concretely and process it actively; are impulsive and intuitive; and thrive on challenges and crises.

Kolb's learning styles have been adapted by two management development specialists, Peter Honey and Alan Mumford. They use a four-way classification that closely resembles that of Kolb but is simplified for use in a practical training situation.

Activists involve themselves fully and without bias in new experiences. They enjoy the here and now and are happy to be dominated by immediate experiences. They are open-minded, not sceptical, and this tends to make them enthusiastic about any thing new. Their philosophy is: 'I'll try anything once'. They tend to act first and consider the consequences afterwards. Their days are filled with activity. They tackle problems by brainstorming. As soon as the excitement from one activity has died down

they are busy looking for the next. They tend to thrive on the challenge of new experiences but are bored with implementation and longer term consolidation. They are gregarious people constantly involving themselves with others but, in doing so, they seek to centre all activities around themselves.

Reflectors like to stand back and ponder experiences and observe them from many different perspectives. They collect data, both first hand and from others, and prefer to think about it thoroughly before coming to any conclusion. The thorough collection and analysis of data about experiences and events is what counts so they tend to postpone reaching definitive conclusions for as long as possible. Their philosophy is to be cautious. They are thoughtful people who like to consider all possible angles and implications before making a move. They prefer to take a back seat in meetings and discussions. They enjoy observing other people in action. They listen to others and get the drift of the discussion before making their own points. They tend to adopt a low profile and have a slightly distant, tolerant unruffled air about them. When they act it is part of a wide picture which includes the past as well as the present and others' observations as well as their own.

Theorists adapt and integrate observations into complex but logically sound theories. They think problems through in a vertical, step by step, logical way. They assimilate disparate facts into coherent theories. They tend to be perfectionists who won't rest easy until things are tidy and fit into a rational scheme. They like to analyse and synthesise. They are keen on basic assumptions, principles, theories, models and systems thinking. Their philosophy prizes rationality and logic. If it's logical it's good'. Questions they frequently ask are: 'Does it make sense?' 'How does this fit with that?' 'What are the basic assumptions?' They tend to be detached, analytical and dedicated to rational objectivity rather than anything subjective or ambiguous. Their approach to problems is consistently logical. This is their 'mental set' and they rigidly reject anything that doesn't fit with it. They prefer to maximise certainty and feel uncomfortable with subjective judgements, lateral thinking and anything flippant

Pragmatists are keen on trying out ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work in practice. They positively search out new ideas and take the first opportunity to experiment with applications. They are the sort of people who return from management courses brimming with new ideas that they want to try out in practice. They like to get on with things and act quickly and confidently on ideas that attract them. They tend to be impatient with ruminating and open-ended discussions. They are essentially practical, down to earth people who like making practical decisions and solving problems. They respond to problems and opportunities 'as a challenge'. Their philosophy is: There is always a better way' and 'If it works it's good'.

Methods and Materials

This research utilized the descriptive survey type of research. The 149 freshmen BS Criminology students of the five campuses of JRMSU System who were enrolled in the Second Semester; during the Academic Year 2015- 2016 were used as respondents of the study. The questionnaires consisted of two parts. These are: Part One - Respondent's Profile as to gender, type of school graduated from high school, and educational qualification of parents. Part Two – 80 items Learning Style Inventory which was developed by Peter Honey and Alan Mumford (2006). The students' learning styles will be identified through Learning Style Inventory that comprises of Activist Reflector Pragmatist and Theorist based on each student. The raw data from questionnaires were manually tallied and tabulated by the researchers. Then (learning styles) descriptive and inferential analysis was utilized to gain frequencies and percentages and T-test.

Results

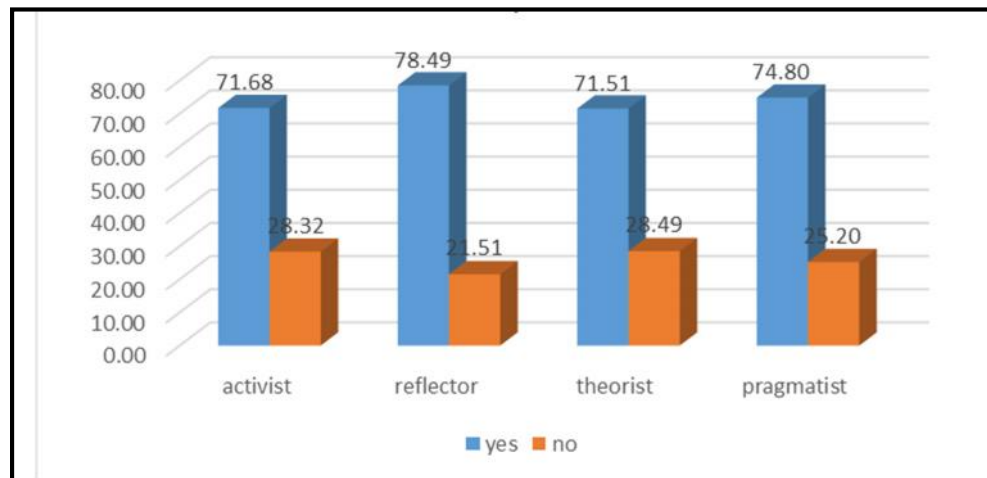


Figure 1 Pattern of the Learning Styles of the Respondents

Figure 1 presents the pattern of the Learning Styles of the respondents. As shown on the graph, the pattern that emerged was reflector-pragmatist-activist-theorist. Among the four learning styles, reflector emerged as the highest with 78.49 percent. This means that the respondents like to stand back and ponder experiences and observe them from many different perspectives. They collect data, both first hand and from others, and prefer to think about it thoroughly before coming to any conclusion. The thorough collection and analysis of data about experiences and events is what counts so they tend to postpone reaching definitive conclusions for as long as possible. Their philosophy is to be cautious. They are thoughtful people who like to consider all possible angles and implications before making a move. They prefer to take a back seat in meetings and discussions. They enjoy observing other people in action. They listen to others and get the drift of the discussion before making their own points. They tend to adopt a low profile and have a slightly distant, tolerant unruffled air about them. When they act it is part of a wide picture which includes the past as well as the present and others' observations as well as their own.

A study of 100 Temple University dental students (Murphy, Gray, Straja, & Bogert, 2004) also assessed student-learning preferences via Fleming's sensory modality instrument, the VARK questionnaire. Among the dental students the read/write and visual modalities ranked highest at 4.1 and 4.0 mean scores per respondent respectively. The aural modality ranked next with 3.2 mean scores and the kinesthetic modality ranked last with 1.7 mean scores. The strong preferences among dental students for visual learning coupled with strong read/write preferences seems to suggest that the traditional lecture format is generally adequate if highlighted with pictures, diagrams, PowerPoint presentations, handouts, or guided notes.

According to Dunn (2004), if an instructor modified classroom teaching to suit the student's learning style the most pragmatic and effective change would be understanding the differences between global and analytic students. Secondly, the perceptual styles of the students could be considered by both the student and teacher to improve achievement.

Furthermore, Felder as cited by Lowy (2013) posits that most educators typically teach from the perspective of their own preferred learning style, and generally tend to teach the way they themselves were taught. Hence, most college science courses heavily favor the small percentage of college students who are at once, intuitive, verbal, deductive, reflective, and sequential. Felder recognizes that it would be virtually impossible to address all learning styles simultaneously, but recommends instead that instructors try to address each learning style dimension at least some of the time. He also suggests that to do so should not require any drastic changes in teaching style or overhaul of materials.

However, Dembo and Howard (2007) warn that categorizing any group of students incorrectly according to their learning styles can be harmful to a student's learning process. This implies that categorizing students without an academic plan or subsequent recommendations on how to study and for pedagogical changes in the classroom is useless knowledge.

Table 1 Frequency Distribution of Student's Learning Styles

| Learning Styles | Activist | Reflector | Theorist | Pragmatist |
|-----------------|----------|-----------|----------|------------|
| Activist | 131 | 129 | 114 | 123 |
| Reflector | | 144 | 124 | 132 |
| Theorist | | | 154 | 122 |
| Pragmatist | | | | 135 |

Table 1 presents the frequency distribution of students' learning styles. As shown on the table out of 149 freshmen criminology students, there were 131 activists and 18 not activist. Out of 149 activist, there were 129 reflector, 114 theorist, and 123 pragmatist. Among the respondents, there were 144 reflector; out of 144 reflector, there were 124 theorist, and 132 pragmatist. The table further revealed that among the respondents, there were 154 theorist; out of 154 theorist, there were and 122 pragmatist. Moreover, among the respondents, there were 135 pragmatist.

This means that students may have one or more learning styles. They can be activist at the same time reflector, theorist and pragmatist. This implies that teachers in literature must be able to identify the learning style of the students as basis for the learning and teaching activities.

Table 2 Test of Difference between the Learning Styles as to Gender

| Learning Style | Chi-Square Value | p-value | Remarks |
|----------------|------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Activist | 0.291 | 0.590 | Not Significant |
| Reflector | 3.968* | 0.046 | Significant |
| Theorist | 2.395 | 0.122 | Not Significant |
| Pragmatist | 0.314 | 0.575 | Not Significant |

Table 2 presents the test of difference between the learning styles of the respondents as to Gender. As reflected on the table, there is no significant difference on the learner styles of the respondents as to activist, theorist, and pragmatist but there is a significant difference on reflector. This goes to show that there is a significant difference of the learning style of the students between male and female respondents.

This implies that instructors teaching the course should design activities that would both develop the reflector learner style of the students.

Jhaish (2010) on his study revealed that there are statistically significant differences between male and female in visual, auditory and individual learning, towards female, and in Group learning towards male, and there are no statistically significant differences between male and female in kinaesthetic, tactile and the summation degree. However, Reid as cited by Jhaish (2010) concluded that there was difference in the use of the visual auditory and individual learning style category between males and females, but contrasted with her results that males being more tactile than females.

Table 3 Test of Difference between the Learning Styles as to Type of School Graduated From

| Learning Style | Chi-Square Value | p-value | Remarks |
|----------------|------------------|---------|-----------------|
| Activist | 0.438 | 0.508 | Not Significant |
| Reflector | 0.802 | 0.370 | Not Significant |
| Theorist | 1.505 | 0.220 | Not Significant |
| Pragmatist | 0.231 | 0.630 | Not Significant |

Table 3 presents the test of difference between the learning styles of the respondents as to the school they graduated from high school. As reflected on the table, there is no significant difference between the learner styles of the respondents. This goes to show that the type of school they graduated from high school either private or public does not influence their learner style.

The finding is similar to the result of a study of Stradley (2003) in which 193 athletic training students attempted to determine if there were differences in the learning styles of students among various regions of the country. Furthermore, the study revealed no geographic differences in learning styles.

In addition, Allen as cited by Lowy (2013) conducted a study that looked for differences in learning styles between the physician assistant students of the junior and senior classes and for differences in learning styles between upper and lower academic students. Utilizing a student T-test, no significant differences were found either between the junior and senior classes or between the upper and lower academic students.

Table 4 Test of Difference between the Learning Styles as to Educ'l Qualification of Parents

| Learning Style | Chi-Square Value | p-value | Remarks |
|----------------|------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Activist | 0.150 | 0.698 | Not Significant |
| Reflector | 1.662 | 0.197 | Not Significant |
| Theorist | 5.237* | 0.022 | Significant |
| Pragmatist | 2.107 | 0.147 | Not Significant |

Table 4 presents the test of difference between the learning styles of the respondents as to educational qualification of the parents. As shown on the table, there is no significant difference on the learner styles of the respondents in terms of activist, reflector and pragmatist but there is a significant difference on theorist. This goes to show that the educational qualification of the parents influence the theorist learning style of the respondents. The findings supported, Lowy (2013) conducted a random sub-sample of 27 senior students was then selected for interviews regarding their career decision-making process. The study found a correlation between learning style and the factors that influenced

the career choice in areas such as family medicine, surgery, psychiatry, academic medicine, pathology, or other sub-specialties.

Discussion

Research shows that academic achievement increases when classroom pedagogy is customized to suit the student's individual learning styles. However, the customization of pedagogy and the institutional or departmental consensus necessary to change classroom environments to suit individual learning styles, can be a challenging, non-traditional transition for some institutions and teachers to adopt.

Student's learning style is the most pragmatic and effective change would be understanding the differences between global and analytic students. Secondly, the perceptual styles of the students could be considered by both the student and teacher to improve achievement.

On the other hand, it would be virtually impossible to address all learning styles simultaneously, but recommends instead that instructors try to address each learning style dimension at least some of the time. He also suggests that to do so should not require any drastic changes in teaching style or overhaul of materials.

Moreover, categorizing any group of students incorrectly according to their learning styles can be harmful to a student's learning process. This implies that categorizing students without an academic plan or subsequent recommendations on how to study and for pedagogical changes in the classroom is useless knowledge.

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