



LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCES AMONG PROSPECTIVE RURAL AND URBAN TEACHER EDUCATORS

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Abstract

The study aimed at finding out the difference in learning style preferences among prospective teacher educators belonging to rural and urban residential backgrounds. The sample comprised of 120 M.Ed. Students drawn from Two Urban and Two Rural Teacher Education Institutions through cluster technique of random sampling. Data were collected by using Learning Style Preferences Scale (Form-B) developed by Owens and Straton (1990). The analysis of collected data revealed that residential background had significant influence on learning style preferences among prospective teacher educators.

Key Words: Learning Styles Preferences, Rural, Urban, Prospective Teacher Educators



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Introduction

Man has got the power of reasoning which enables him to learn things quickly and learning is a key process in human behaviour. Learning pervades our life from cradles to grave. It is the phenomenon with which we come into contact in almost every walk and learning occupies a very important place in our life. Throughout life we are inspired to learn more and more. Our achievement leads to farther incentives, pursuits and efforts at any stage of life. Learning influences our lives at every turn. Learning is a key process in human behaviour and shapes our personality. Learning helps the learner to develop cognitive, affective and psychomotor behaviour. All the efforts of the teachers and parents are devoted to the learning of their children. Child's instinct, attitude, appreciation, skill and ability are

prime product of learning. Learning is acquiring new knowledge, behaviour, skills, values, preference or understanding and it may involve synthesizing different types of information.

Learning depends on practice and experience. Learning situations are most natural and common in life of everybody. Learning is quite common and frequently used in our day to day conversation. We learn at all times of our life and at any place where we get opportunity for doing so. We do it through the experiences direct and indirect which we gain in coming into contact with the objects, people and ideas. Learning contributes to the child's development because it is through learning that child acquires new habits and also adopts the custom and traditions of society. The development of intellectual skill also depends upon learning. It may be goal oriented and may be aided by motivation.

Thus, learning influences our lives at every turn accounting in part for the best and worst of human beings. We all know that both as small children and as grown up mature adults, pickup new information, acquire new skills and habits, form attitudes and cultural values and develop character traits. Decision about right and wrong as well as the growth of the concepts of justice and beauty are the results of learning but the skill of learning develops in child only when he achieves requisite mental and physical maturity.

Concept of Learning

Learning is a term used in the modification of behaviour of the learner which occurs as a result of training or experience. With the modification in behaviour learner can do what could not be done earlier. The outcome of learning from learning activities or experience may result in the modification of attitudes, skills, social competence, abstract and creative thinking. Learning is an enrichment of experiences which leads to the changes in the behaviour of organism. It is very difficult to give a universally acceptable definition of learning because various theories developed by psychologists attempted to define the term from different angles as:

According to Hilgard (1958) "learning is the process by which an activity originates or is changed through reacting to an encountered situation, provide that the change in activity cannot be explained on the basis of native tendencies, maturation and temporary states of organism."

According to Travers (1972) "Learning as a process that result in the modification of behaviour." He further added that the resultant modification of behaviour must be attributed to learning and the changes brought about by maturation of organism or such agents of change as drugs, fatigue and like.

Morgan & King (1978) defined “Learning as any relatively permanent change in behaviour, which occurs as a result of practice and experience.”

According to Owens (1980) ‘an important variable in the effectiveness of learning is the preference of the student for a mode of learning’, because university level students are able to adapt, they apparently benefit from different teaching approaches not necessarily designed primarily to cater to a specific learning preference. It is probably inappropriate for an instructor to plan a course of study based on one teaching approach, rather, a second language course should include a variety of activities and strategies, taken from different approaches, to suit all types of learners.

Crooks & Stein (1991) stated that “Learning may be defined as a relatively enduring change in potential behaviour that results from experience.”

Concept of Style

A style is a distinctive or characteristic manner or method of acting or performance. A style is a manner of doing something. A style is a way of painting, writing, reading etc. characteristic of a particular period, person etc. a distinctive appearance design or arrangement. Thus, styles represent a set of performance. In an examination of the literature on styles Grigorenko & Sternberg (1997) found three major approaches to styles which are Cognition Centred, Personality Centred and Activity Centred.

Learning Styles

According to Kolb (1984) knowledge is created from combination of grasping experience and transforming it. Thus, learning process involved two major dimensions: perceiving and processing. The first concerns with concrete and abstract thinking; and the second with reflective observation and active experimentation. The combination of two specific learning modes generates a unique learning style. For example concrete experience and reflective observation produce diverger learning style, reflective observation and abstract conceptualization create assimilator learning style, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation generate converger learning style, and active experimentation and concrete experience produce accommodation learning style. Each individual learner has preference for a learning style over the other. ‘Learning style’ has been defined by various authors differently. Dunn, Dunn and Price (1975) has defined Learning Style as those environmental, emotional, sociological and physical characteristics through which one learns most easily. Kolb (1984) defined learning style as relatively stable attributes or preferences or habitual strategies used by individual learner to organize and process information for problem solving. Keefe and Monk (1986) conceptualized learning style as

the characteristic cognitive , affective and psychological behaviours that serves relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive , interact with and respond to learning environment . Schmeck (1988) viewed learning style as a student's predisposition to adopt a particular learning strategy across the learning tasks. Debelow (1990) held that learning style is the way people absorb, process and retain information. Vermunt (1996) defined learning style as a coherent whole of learning activities that student usually employ their learning orientations and mental modes of learning. Thus, it is evident from these definitions that a learning style is a unique way of an individual learner which he adopts or prefers to approach the learning tasks. There are a number of learning styles and learning preferences.

Review of Related Literature

Review of learning style research reveals that researchers have attempted to explore the impact of locale and other background variables on learning styles of teacher trainees and students using different inventories of learning styles as given under:

Hansen (2000) found significant gender difference in learning styles. The study indicated that learning styles preferences differed between male and female certified athletic trainers. Male certified athletic trainers preferred the Assimilator and converger learning styles while females certified athletic trainers preferred the converger and accommodator learning style. However, there was statistically significant relationship between student athletic trainers' gender and learning style measure through Kolb's learning style inventory.

Oakland, Banner & Livingston (2000) from their study found that the preferences in learning style for 21 students with visual impaired and their sighted peers, students with or without visual impairments did not differ in their frequency for preferences for either on extraverted or introverted style.

Verma (2001) reported that urban students seen to have more inclination towards the adoption of dependent, collaborative and participant learning styles than rural women students, however no significant differences were observed between the two groups with reference to independent, commutative and avoidant learning styles.

William (2001) found that community college students on the basis of their gender do not differ significantly on their learning styles measured by LSI.

Verma (2004) concluded that science students seems to show superiority over arts students with regard to independent, competitive, collaborative, participant and dynamic learning.

Kumar (2006) found that male students showed more preference for analytical and precision learning styles. Whereas, female students had stronger preference for imaginative and dynamic learning.

Singh (2008) in a study of learning style among tribal senior secondary students in H. P. found that students do not differ significantly with respect to their imaginative and analytical learning styles.

Ates & Altun (2008) found no significant correlation between CEIT students' gender and their learning styles. Regarding Kolb's learning style model, 63.8% of the pre service computer teachers are converger, 25.8% of them are assimilator and 4.2% of them are diverger. It is assumed that convergers tend to have technical interests and quite often choose to specialize in physical sciences which make it possible to explain why CEIT students mostly have the diverger learning style.

Uppal (2009) from her study concluded that Male and Female B.Ed. students do not appear to differ significantly with respect to their precision and dynamic learning style. Further results shows that Urban and Rural B.Ed. students do not differ significantly with regard to their imaginative and analytic learning style.

Kumari (2010) found that there exists no significant difference in the mean scores at various dimension of learning and thinking style, among male and female Teacher Trainees in Arts Stream.

Monika (2010) found that rural and urban J.B.T students appeared to differ significantly with respect to their analytical and dynamic learning style.

Panda (2011) found that there exists significant differences in the visual learning style of senior secondary students and at their level of self concept there exists significant difference in interaction effect of three level of emotional intelligence, self concept and achievement motivation on visual style of senior secondary students.

Sahoo & Chandra (2013) from their study found that; independent learning style students were found to be significantly larger than that of dependent learning style among Distance Mode B.Ed. Trainees. Participant learning style students were found to be significantly larger than that of Avoidant learning style among Distance mode B.Ed. Trainees.

From the above review of related literature, it is crystal clear that till date lot of work has already been done on learning styles among students and prospective teachers of elementary and secondary levels by using different learning style inventories with respect to independent variables like gender, stream, emotional intelligence, self concept and

achievement motivation etc. Very few studies were conducted on learning styles of teacher trainees in relation to rural & urban residential backgrounds. But, the related literature hardly had an evidence of study conducted on learning style preferences of prospective teacher educators in relation to their rural and urban residential backgrounds by using Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire developed by Joy Reid (1984). Thus, urgent need was felt to conduct a study on learning style preferences of rural and urban prospective teacher educators.

Objective of the Study

To find out the significant difference in Visual, Auditory, Tactile, Kinesthetic, Group and Individual Learning Style Preferences among Rural and Urban Prospective Teacher Educators.

Hypothesis of the Study

There is no significant difference in Visual, Auditory, Tactile, Kinesthetic, Group and Individual Learning Style Preferences among Rural and Urban Prospective Teacher Educators.

Method

The study was carried out by employing descriptive survey method of research.

Sample

The sample of the study consisted of 120 M.Ed. Students selected from Two Urban and Two Rural Colleges of Education in Himachal Pradesh through cluster technique of random sampling.

Tool Used

Learning Style Preferences Scale (Form-B) developed by Owens and Straton (1990) was used to collect data from the subjects. Form 'B' of learning preferences scale (LPBS) is a revised form of LPSS developed in 1980. It contains originally from 30 – item each item is a brief statement of learning by cooperation with others, by completing with other and by working along. The 14 items concerned with a particular learning mode become subscale of the LPBS. In to present version of the study an adaptation of 30- items was used 6- items for each subscale. It was done in the view of the factor loading of items. Students respond to each LPBS item by indicating how '**True**' or '**False**' the statement is for them. A four point scale is used and the response categories are described to students as '**Completely True,**' '**A Bit True than False,**' '**A Bit More False than True,**' and '**Completely False**'.

Learning style preference scale measures the preferred ways of learning viz. visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, tactile, group and individual learning.

Reliability

Both internal consistency and stability coefficients were determined for each LPSS subscale. The Cronbach's AIF coefficients man were calculated on both the main testing data and retest data indicate a substantial degree of homogeneity for each of the subscale. These coefficients vary from 0.64 to 0.81. The test- retest coefficients, on the other hand indicate a modest degree of stability over the two months interval between testing.

Validity

Information concerning the validity of the LPSS was obtained through factor analyses as well as through Interco relation of the priors subscale within the LPSS and between the LPPS and the LPBS and equivalent MSAA. The results indicated that there was virtually no co- variation between co- operative and competitive subscale and positively with competitive subscale. Thus, the LPBS had the satisfactory validity.

Statistical Techniques

Statistical techniques of Mean, Standard Deviation and The 't'-Test were employed for the analysis of collected data pertaining to Learning Style Preferences. **Analysis and**

Interpretation of Data

The Table-1 gives the calculated statistics for the comparison of Visual, Auditory, Tactile, Kinesthetic, Group and Individual Learning Style Preferences of Rural and Urban Prospective Teacher Educators.

Table-1: Significance of Difference in Mean Scores of Learning Style Preferences Among Rural and Urban Prospective Teacher Educators

Learning Style Preference	Rural		Urban		d f	't'- Value	Significanc e
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Visual	15.269	2.343	15.701	2.506	118	0.972	NS
Auditory	15.507	2.161	16.438	2.146	118	2.363	*
Tactile	16.238	2.625	16.245	2.600	118	0.015	NS
Kinesthetic	16.587	2.021	16.877	2.171	118	0.754	NS
Group	15.492	2.657	16.210	2.505	118	1.524	NS
Individual	15.634	2.755	16.105	2.512	118	0.978	NS

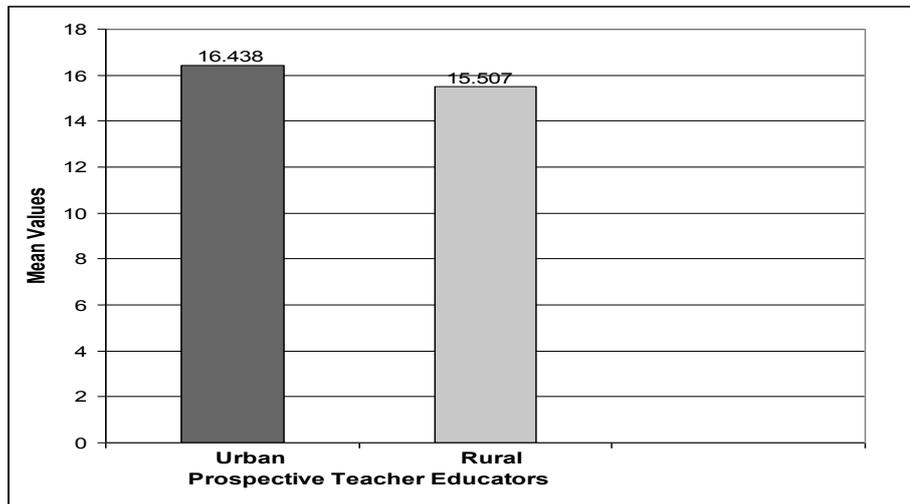
* = Significant at 0.05 level and NS = Not Significant

The Table -1 indicates that the obtained 't'- value for Auditory learning style preference among Prospective Urban and Rural teacher educators was found to be 2.36, which is

significant at 0.05 level of significance. It means that Urban and Rural prospective teachers educators differ significantly with regard to their Auditory learning style preference. The Mean value of urban prospective teacher educators ($M=16.438$) is greater than the Mean value of rural prospective teacher educators ($M= 15.507$), which means that urban prospective teacher educators had more preference towards Auditory learning style than their rural counterparts. Hence, the null hypothesis that, ‘There is no significant difference in Auditory learning style preference among rural and urban prospective teacher educators’ was not retained.

The Figure-1.1 shows the significant difference in Mean values of Auditory Learning style Preference among Rural and Urban Prospective Teacher Educators.

Figure -1.1: Showing Significant Difference in Mean Values of Auditory Learning Style Preference among Rural and Urban Prospective Teacher Educators



The Table-1 also shows that the obtained ‘t’ values for Visual (0.972), Tactile (0.015), Kinesthetic (0.754), Group (1.524) and Individual (0.978) learning style preferences among rural and urban prospective teacher educator were found to be non-significant. It means that rural and urban prospective teacher educators did not appeared to differ significantly with regard to their Visual, Tactile, Kinesthetic, Group and Individual learning style preferences. Further, it can be said that more or less on the average rural and urban prospective teacher educators were found similar or to have equal orientation towards their Visual, Tactile, Kinesthetic, Group and Individual learning style preferences. Hence, the null hypothesis that, ‘There is no significant difference in Visual, Tactile, Kinesthetic, Group and Individual learning style preferences among rural and urban prospective teacher educators’ was accepted.

Findings of the Study

1. Urban prospective teacher educators had more preference towards Auditory Learning Style than their rural counterparts.
2. Rural and urban prospective teacher educators did not appeared to differ significantly with regard to their Visual, Tactile, Kinesthetic, Group and Individual learning style preferences.

Educational Implications

The finding of the study that urban prospective teacher educators had more preference towards Auditory Learning Style suggests that Teacher Education Institutions and especially, Teacher Educators should lay more emphasis and use diverse learning strategies for rural and urban teacher trainees. They should match them with their preferred learning styles to bridge the gap of learning style preferences among rural and urban teacher trainees. This will help teachers in empowering rural teacher trainees in particular and other students in general to adopt best possible ways of learning things better and quicker. Moreover, this exercise may lead to long term benefits in teaching-learning process to each and every student irrespective of their residential background, stream, gender, socio-economic status and other demographic variables.

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