

LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 11 : 6 June 2011

ISSN 1930-2940

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A Comparative Study of Students Learning Style, Socio-economic Status and Learning Achievement of Developed and Under-developed Districts of Pakistan

Zarina Akhtar, Ph.D.

Abstract

The study aimed to compare the students learning styles, socio-economic status and learning achievement of developed and under-developed districts of Pakistan. 1580 secondary school students from both the areas were selected as sample. Learning style questionnaire, socio-economic status scale questionnaire and the student's scores in SSC examination was used to collect data.

The major findings were the high achievers of developed districts don't prefer collaborative and participant learning styles they prefer independent learning style. The upper class of developed districts prefers avoidant and upper class of under-developed districts prefer dependent learning style. The middle class students of developed and under-developed districts prefer independent learning style.

Key Words: Learning Styles (LS), Socio-economic Status (SES), Developed District, Under-developed Districts, Secondary School Certificate (SSC).

1. Rationale

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Learning is the major concern of psychologists, educationists and researchers since long. Learning was defined by different perceptions. These different perceptions lead towards learning theories. Learning theories defined the ways how people learn. Many research studies were conducted at different time to know the ways and means by which the learning can be maximized.

The result of these research studies provide the base for the improvement of teaching and learning process, as these are the important components of over all students personality development. Researchers studied the effect of different variables pertaining to personality and academic achievement of students.

People learn in different ways. These different ways are called learning styles. Learning styles are the preferred ways of receiving, responding and processing information in a learning task. Learning style was defined by Imtiaz (2004, p.6), “the way people perceive and process information”.

It was observed that, to know anything, to manipulate facts and to reach conclusion varies between individuals. It depends on their personal experiences and family back ground. The family back ground or the status of parents is an important variable which affects the learning. All over the world the status was defined with the same indicators.

Stockwell, Peter (2002) defines the status as, “a status is a rank or position in a group or organization”. Further it was defined by Thomas, (2007), “a status is a position in a social system independent of given factors”. A person’s status or position determines the nature and degree of his responsibilities and obligations as well as his superior, inferior relations to other members of the society. In literature the socio-economic status (SES) is defined by status of social class and mainly social classes are divided in to five groups the “upper class”, “upper middle class”, “middle class”, “lower middle class” and “lower class”. The distribution of social class is based on different indicators like, education, occupation, income, location of residence, facilities at home etc.

A review of literature reveals that in Pakistan little effort has been made to investigate the relationship of SES and Learning Style (LS) with achievement, where as all over the world many research studies were conducted to explore the relationship of LS, SES and achievement of students as, Wittenberg (1984), Verma and Sharma (1987), Kirk (1986), Simmons (1986), Bhatt (1987), Sing (1987) Dunn (1989), Verma and Tiku (1990). Yuen & Noi, Lee Seok. (1994), Uzun and Sentruk (2008) and (Hamidah, Jaafar Sidek, 2009).

The findings of some of the studies showed relationship between SES, LS and achievement exist (Kirk, 1986, Sing 1987). The findings of some other studies reflect no relation exists (Wittenberg, 1984; Simmons, 1986; Bhatt, 1987).

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The present study explored the relationship of SES, LS and achievement of students of developed and under-developed districts of Pakistan.

2. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated:

1. There is no significant relationship between the different learning styles and learning achievement of secondary school students of developed and under-developed districts of Pakistan.
2. There is no significant relationship between the different learning styles and different SES classes of the parents of secondary school students of developed and under-developed districts.

3. Methodology

The design of the study was descriptive. The focus of the study was to investigate the effects of learning styles on socio-economic status and achievement of secondary school students. Thus, the learning style was taken as independent variable and SES and achievement were treated as dependent variables.

4. Population

The students enrolled at public sector school of four districts Attock, Chakwal, Islamabad and Rawalpindi were identified as population. The classification of districts as developed and under-developed was made on the bases of physical conditions. The Attock and Chakwal districts were categorized as underdeveloped and Islamabad and Rawalpindi were as developed districts.

5. Sample

In the current study multi-stage sampling was done. At first stage 10% schools were selected randomly from the list of schools provided by the respective Executive Districts Education Offices and Federal Directorate of Education Islamabad. At second stage respondents were selected. All students who were present on the data collection day were included in the study. In this way the sample become 1580 respondents 944 from underdeveloped and 636 were from developed districted.

6. Instruments

The information about the students learning styles was collected by adopting Grasha and Riechmann (1974) learning style questionnaire. It consists of sixty items assessing the six learning styles namely Independent, dependent, collaborative, competitive, participant

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and avoidant. It was translated in Urdu and English language with the help of experts and professors of the respective departments of different universities.

The socio-economic status questionnaire was developed keeping in view the indicators for the socio-economic status (SES) defined by National Documents of Pakistan; i.e. Economic Survey of Pakistan 2005-06, Pakistan Living Standard Measurement Survey 2004. The main indicators were the parents' academic and professional qualification, parents income group, job, family size, locality and nature of accommodation, facilities at home, traveling facilities, distance of school from home and coaching at home.

The information of students' achievement was collected by the Gazette of the Board of Intermediate & Secondary Education Rawalpindi and Federal Board of Intermediate & Secondary Education Islamabad. These boards were conducted the examination in 2007. The achievement of students was measured by different grades.

The instruments were pilot tested in four schools other than sampled schools. The instruments were finalized in the light of opinion of different experts of the field. The reliability of the learning style questionnaire was measured by Cronbach alpha and it was found .075.

7. **Data Collection**

The learning style questionnaire was administered directly to students in their classrooms with the help of their teachers. The students have filled it themselves and the SES questionnaire was filled by the parents of the students. The collected data was analyzed by Pearson's correlation.

8. **Findings**

a) **Findings regarding the developed districts**

1. No one from upper and lower class got A⁺ grade.
2. There is significant negative relation between A⁺ grade achievers and collaborative and participant learning style.
3. There is significant negative relation between A grade achievers and collaborative learning style.
4. No other significant relation exists between the other grade achievers and any of learning style.
5. There is a positive relation between the upper class students and avoidant learning style.
6. There is a significant positive relation between the middle class and independent learning style.
7. There is significant positive relation between lower middle class and independent and avoidant learning styles.

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b) **Findings regarding the under-developed districts**

1. No one from upper and lower class got A⁺ grade.
2. There is a positive relation between A⁺ grade achievers and independent learning style.
3. There is negative relation between E grade achievers and dependent, participant and avoidant learning style.
4. There is a positive relation between upper class and dependent learning style.
5. There is a significant positive relation between middle class and independent learning style.
6. There is negative relation between lower class and participant learning style.

Conclusion

1. The upper and lower class respondents of developed and under-developed districts are not A⁺ grade achievers.
2. High achievers of developed districts do not prefer collaborative and participant learning style.
3. The high achievers of under-developed districts showed preference for independent learning style.
4. The low achievers of under-districts do not prefer dependent, participant and avoidant learning styles.
5. The upper class students of developed districts prefer avoidant learning style whereas the upper class students of under-developed districts prefer dependent learning style.
6. The middle class students of developed and under-developed districts prefer independent learning style.

10. **Discussion**

Achievement is the key component in the process of teaching and learning. Every one is concerned to know what makes a learner to be a high achiever and the researchers tried to find out the effect of different variables on achievement. This study investigates the relationship of learning style with socio-economic status and achievement of the students of developed and under-developed districts.

The data analysis showed that the upper and lower class students of developed and under-developed district are not the A⁺ grade achievers. The high achievers of developed districts do not prefer collaborative and participant learning styles. It means they do not prefer collaborative work and group activities. They don't like to share their knowledge and ideas with others. They don't prefer team work. Similarly they do not prefer participant learning style. It means they are not willing to accept the responsibilities and

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they don't like to participate in activities which enhance their own learning. They don't like those teachers who gave class reading assignments.

It can be concluded in this way that as they are high achievers they are concerned with their learning and achievement but they don't like to collaborate and participant in classroom activities. It shows the classroom participation is not focus, their locus of control lies outside the class, which is very alarming situation. The whole world becomes a global village and everyone is collaborating sharing their knowledge and activities. Now the trend changes and isolated knowledge is not preferred. This is the time to collaborate and participate with the people of different disciplines and create new knowledge, resolving the conflicts and cross cultural variations. The Pakistani students are behaving differently. If this continues they will be segregated and remain alone in the world. There is a need to share ideas and resolve the conflicts and adjust in varied cultural societies.

The high achievers of under-developed districts prefer independent learning style. Those students who prefer independent learning style set their goals themselves. They need less direction from teachers. They like those assignments which enhances their independent skills. They focus the content which is important to them. It means they are self centered personalities. They don't like to share the knowledge. They like to work in independent circles. They are deficient in collaborative skills. They are failed to consult teachers and facilitators when they need help. This shows they are not able to adjust in global world where every one is collaborating and different inter disciplinary approaches are adapted to share and help others and generate new researches and knowledge for the advancement of their country and facilitating the people.

Along with the high achievers the lower achievers of under-developed districts also not prefer dependent and participant learning styles. This is very strange situation for teachers that their students don't trust them. They do not prefer classroom activities and teachers teaching. They dislike teacher centered approach and they don't like to participate in classroom activities. They don't prefer discussions. It can be concluded in this way that when the whole world is turning in to a small village people are sharing their knowledge, information and skills to create new knowledge the Pakistani students want to remain in corner. They will not be able to lead the world if the classroom situation will not be tackled properly.

The SES also affects the learning styles along with the geographical location. The upper class of developed districts prefers avoidant learning style whereas the upper class of under-developed districts prefers dependent learning style. The students prefer avoidant learning styles remain passive rather avoid participating in classroom activities. They are back benchers don't like teachers attention. Their interest lies out of the class. They may have other activities as they belong to developed districts their parent can afford and

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provide them different experiences like inter net access, tuition academies, coaching centers etc so they don't like classroom activities.

The middle class students of developed and under-developed districts prefer independent learning style. The lower middle class of developed districts prefer independent learning style and the lower class of under-developed districts don't prefer participant learning style.

The findings support the findings of already conducted researches. These findings verify the results of the study of Kaeley (1990); Barry (2005) and Ewijk and Slegers (2010) but do not support the findings of the study of Verma and Tiku (1990). Verma and Tiku (1990) conducted a research and study the effect of SES and general intelligence and found that SES and intelligence in combined form do not have any differential effect. The reason for this finding may be the small sample size and urban institutional environment of Verma and Tiku's research. He selected the sample from Shimla city schools. There is no other study available which opposes these findings.

In the light of above discussion it is recommended that teachers may review and revise their teaching and make it interesting for students. They may try to inculcate the collaborative and participatory approach in their students to make them a good and balance personality so that they can take a lead in their region. For this the teachers may trained to adopt different collaborative skills. The content may be delivered by different interesting activities. More funds may be provided to prepare the learning material and activities. Projects may be launched to give exposure to the working teachers how to handle the class. Teacher's delegation may send to different countries to observe the classroom situation of the advance countries. In-service teacher training programs regarding collaborative activities may be started for working teachers. Curriculum for pre-service teachers may focus these activities for the prospective teachers.

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Appendices

Table-1 Relationship among different Learning styles and Pearson value of students' achievements by grades of respondents of developed districts.

Learning styles	A ⁺	A	B	C	D	E
Independent style	.092	-.049	.001	-.048	-.074	Not Defined
Dependent style	-.419	-.210	-.114	-.112	-.079	Not Defined
Collaborative style	-.606*	-.258*	.011	-.034	-.031	Not Defined
Competitive style	Not Defined	Not Defined	Not Defined	Not Defined	Not Defined	Not Defined
Participant style	-.606*	-.224	.005	-.049	-.131	Not Defined
Avoidant style	-.098	-.101	.075	.030	-.061	Not Defined

Number of respondents = 636

* Significant at $\alpha=.05$

Table-2 Relationship among different Learning styles and Pearson value of students' achievements by grades of respondents of under-developed districts

Learning styles	A ⁺	A	B	C	D	E
Independent style	.308	-.087	.074	-.045	.035	-.367
Dependent style	-.267	-.121	.071	.007	-.027	-.494
Collaborative style	Not defined	.096	.088	-.017	-.068	Not Defined
Competitive style	Not Defined	Not Defined	Not Defined	Not Defined	Not Defined	Not Defined

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Participant style	.182	.081	.086	-.021	.129	-.494
Avoidant style	-.059	-.046	.006	.072	.025	-.494

Total number of respondents = 944

Table-3 Relationship among different Learning Styles and Pearson value of different SES groups of respondents of developed districts

Learning styles	Upper Class	Upper middle class	Middle class	Lower middle class	Lower class
Independent style	.039	-.149	.131*	.176*	-.086
Dependent style	.164	-.101	.051	-.033	.236
Collaborative style	Not Defined	-.051	-.072	-.070	Not Defined
Competitive style	Not Defined	Not Defined	Not Defined	Not Defined	Not Defined
Participant style	.035	-.115	-.014	-.112	-.053
Avoidant style	.260	-.202	.094	.150*	.067

Number of respondents = 636

* Significant at $\alpha=.05$

Table 4-31 Relationship among different Learning Styles and Pearson value of different SES groups of respondents of under-developed districts

Learning styles	Upper Class	Upper middle class	Middle class	Lower middle class	Lower class
Independent style	.000	.153	.120*	.004	-.067
Dependent style	.318	-.011	.059	.030	-.185
Collaborative style	-.289	-.099	.003	.022	Not Defined
Competitive style	Not Defined	Not Defined	Not Defined	Not Defined	Not Defined
Participant style	.276	-.005	.040	-.008	-.270
Avoidant style	.293	.153	.055	-.072	-.186

Total number of respondents = 944

- Significant at $\alpha=.05$

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