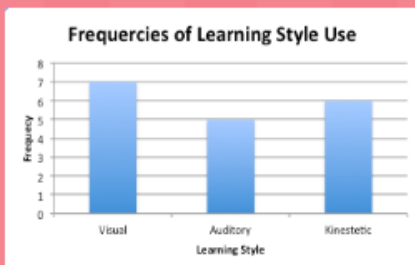


STYLES OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

Laila King, Lisset Jarquin, Luke Gray

Abstract and Data

Elementary school teachers (particularly kindergarten through second grade) are cognizant of incorporating multiple learning styles into their teaching as much as possible. Almost every learning objective was taught using multiple styles (primarily: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic). This observation spans over all of the classrooms we observed, even though the material being studied and the grade level varied. An example of this was demonstrated in Ms. Webb's kindergarten class through the reading excerpt with George Washington. She passed out a copy of the reading to each individual child and she read the book out loud (audio) while the children read along with her (visual). After the paragraph was read, the children proceeded to color in a picture that tied the paragraph they just read (kinesthetic). We found this to be an interesting observation considering the body of literature questioning the validity of the learning styles approach.



Student:
speaks Spanish

Teacher: "That sounds really lovely in Spanish but could you say it again in English so we can all understand?"

Learning Styles Research

It is a commonly accepted belief that there are different learning styles, and that different people learn in different ways. These learning styles were originally based on the senses. The three accepted styles were visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Now some people speculate that there are seven different learning styles: verbal, visual, auditory, kinesthetic, logical/mathematical, social, and solitary. However there is plenty of research that doubts the learning styles approach:

- Krarzig
 - Measured each student's learning style three different ways
 - Self report
 - Teacher report
 - Direct Measure
- They found no association amongst the three measures
- Additionally found that only 44% of students classified themselves the same way at two different points in time
- Kogowsky
 - Compared student's classification with their actual competence
 - Found no relation between styles and skills
- Yildirim
 - Learning styles did not predict academic achievement
 - Achievement was better predicted by teacher regard for student perspectives
- Brunton
 - College microeconomics class
 - Matching learning styles did not predict academic achievement, attendance did

Main objections to learning styles:

- Many people do not fit into one learning style because differences in cognition are gradual rather than nominal
- Assessment methods are unreliable
- Inconsistency across measure
- Learning styles may be preferred but not beneficial
- Deeply ingrained in the educational system
- Many universities still ask students to take a learning styles test

Western Education

Western Education is composed primarily of a distinct monoculture that emphasizes individual effort, equality, and participation. This system makes children learn in the same way and standardizes the way they are tested despite possible cultural factors that influence the way they interact or perform in school. Examples of this include:

- Managerial role of the teacher
- Turn taking to make sure everyone participates
- Teacher asking questions they know the answer to
- Expecting elaborative responses from students
- Division of labor
- Other cultures don't value early childhood experiences as much as western cultures and expect children to help out in daily chores and be more vigilant
- Based on "transmissional" model where the teacher transmits knowledge and then tests the students knowledge
- Other cultures take a more collaborative approach for solving problems while western education divides student labor and assigns them to specific roles
- Native tongue and customs are not as valued
- Open invitation is typical of indigenous cultures which contrasts drastically from what is usually seen in Western schools
- Recited pledge of allegiance before class (very patriotic)

Recommendations

Teachers should...

- Continue to add/implement activities that include all learning styles.
- Continue to use analogical reasoning to describe new topics to the younger kids.
- Call out girls when they act out and not only boys.
- Continue to praise the kids who share their thoughts in class, regardless if they are contributing comments.
- Not take away the ethnicity of a kid (i.e. tell them to not use their native language) but to have them share their ethnicity and then restate what they said in English.
- Ask the students individually at the beginning of the school year (if applicable) what learning style they prefer and then tailor the lessons around the results.
- Limit the amount of sidebars (conversations that are being had between students while the teacher is giving instruction) that occur while giving instructions or while an activity is being implemented.
- Switch up calling on kids who raise their hand and kids who do not.

References

- Chavez, P. (2006). How Mayan mothers with different amounts of schooling organize a problem-solving discussion with children. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 30(4), 371-382. doi:10.1177/0165025406066744
- Pashler, H., McDaniel, M., Rohrer, D., & Bjork, R. (2006). Learning Styles: Concepts and Evidence. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 8(3), 103-119.

powered by