

DP1.

AN EXAMINATION OF LEARNING STYLES OF UNDERGRADUATES IN DIFFERENT ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES

E.B.P.PERERA

Department of Education, Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya.

The objectives of this study is to investigate whether there is a pattern of distribution in the learning styles of undergraduates in different academic disciplines of Sri Lankan universities. Some of the background variables associated with learning styles were also investigated.

The sample consisted of 1138 first year undergraduates of three Sri Lankan universities in the disciplines of arts, Engineering, Medicine, Management, Science and Agriculture. A Sinhala version of Kolb's Learning style inventory was used to identify the learning styles of Undergraduates. In addition to this a short questionnaire was utilized to obtain relevant information for the identification of background factors associated with student learning styles.

The investigation revealed some important findings.

There is a clear differentiation of learning styles between students in Arts, and Science disciplines and this is parallel to Hudson's Arts/Science converger/ diverger differentiation.

The learning styles of undergraduates in Engineering , Medicine, Management, Science and Agriculture except in the arts discipline were significantly unequal in distribution. The learning styles in these disciplines were directed towards the converger style. This shows a similarity between universities in western counties and in Sri Lanka.

Occupations of the fathers and parental education were found to be background factors in the accentuation of learning styles of students. It was revealed that the children of fathers in higher occupational levels were convergers while children of fathers in lower occupational levels were divergers and the children of parents who had obtained a higher educational level were convergers.

These findings show Kolb's Inventory could be successfully used in the identification of students learning styles and confirms the validity of further use as an instrument in the identification of student learning styles.