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Learning styles of candidates of geography teaching

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to find out answers to the question how the learning styles of the candidates of geography teaching are. Learning styles can be defined as “each student’s using different ways while preparing, learning and recalling a new and difficult information.” It is quite important to know these styles and to do activities which are proper to them for increasing success in educational proceedings. In this research, scanning model of quantitative research type is used. 229 students from Marmara and Karadeniz Technical University Geography Teaching Department and Ondokuz Mayıs University Geography Department constitute the paradigm of this research. Data for the research is obtained via Kolb Learning Style Inventory-3 which is adopted to Turkish by Evin Gencil in 2007. Data which is obtained according to the aim of the research is analyzed with Chi-Square test in SPSS-17 program package. Obtained data can be summarized as: “It is seen that the most dominant style is assimilator learning style (38,4%) and it is followed by converger learning style (26,2%). Any significant statistical difference was not found between teaching candidates’ gender (male/female), years (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), and faculty type (education or letters and science faculty) and learning styles. Significant difference was only seen between university types $\chi^2(sd=6, n=229)=20,54, p<,05$). Among the students of Marmara University assimilator and converger, in Ondokuz Mayıs University assimilator and diverger, and among Karadeniz Technical University students diverger and assimilator learning styles are more commonly seen.

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1. Introduction

To oversee individual differences in today's educational understanding is one of the mostly spoken subjects. Evidences in the field of educational sciences, psychology, and even medicine show that there occur important differences to the utmost. Statements like "Everyone has their own peculiar style" or "learning and thinking ways of people differs like their finger prints do" are actually statements that point the reality and importance of individual differences.

On the other hand, in recent years, quite widely accepted idea of student's constructing the information actively according to constructivist education method, has also caused important changes in the roles of teacher and students. Constructivist teachers should offer opinions according to learners' personal differences, but should be a guide and mentor to the learners in making up their own minds. In this respect, learners' presence levels, former lives, learning styles are the elements directing their learning. In the process of learning, there are different styles and methods that each person uses first. This style of learning which differs from person to person is seen as that person's learning style. According to some researchers (Dunn, Beudury and Klavas, 1989), learning style is just like a signature of the individual, and it helps to choose and arrange the learning environment with regard to scientific techniques (Cited: Çelik and Şahin, 2011).

The way a student learns best in his or her learning style. A student's perception, relations with other people and cognitive, affective and physiologic structure that affect his or her behaviors in learning environment determine his or her learning style. In here, it can be said that there is no good or bad learning style in the context of personal differences. What is important is to ensure each student to learn with the most proper style for them.

According to Morris and McCarthy (1990) "There are two important differences about how we learn the information. First of them is how we perceive it and the second one is how we process the information we perceived. Each of us perceive the reality in different ways place them in our minds by different methods. Some of us realize the truths by feeling, some of us by watching, some of us by thinking and some of us by doing." (Demirkaya, 2004).

If what are the learning styles of individual is determined, how individuals learn and which teaching style should be used can be more easily understood. Thus, teacher, primarily for himself, then for the student; can create proper teaching environment for this.

Kolb (1984) defined learning styles as the method that somebody perceives and processes the information. This definition consists of his four-stage experiential learning circle. Kolb gives the definition of empirical learning which is concerning where the information is created within transactional cycle of experience (Chen, Toh, İsmail, 2005:111-124... cited: Çelik and Şahin, 2011).

Kolb stressed in his works on learning styles field in 1970 that the experiences gained as a result of learning are important. Kolb, who is still doing researches about the term learning style, classified learning styles and explained their features as it is in figure 1 below (Subaşı, 2010).

As it is understood from the figure, the basic principle of the experimental learning method is "learning". The other principle is that every individual does not learn in the same way. Main scheme of the theory is constructed from these two principles and there occurs a four stage circle as in the figure. This four stage circle constitutes Kolb's learning styles. While he was showing these styles as they are in Figure-1, Kolb has firstly tried to explain basic dimensions on horizontal and vertical coordinates. These dimensions are comprehension and conversion. When we explain these two concepts on the figure above: Vertical line on the figure constitutes comprehension dimension, horizontal line constitutes conversion dimension.

While comprehension, one of these dimensions, explains learning with tangible experience and intuitive ways; conversion explains learning by internal reflection and external motion. From these dimensions, tangible experience and intuitive conceptualization which constitutes comprehension dimension takes place in vertical dimension; reflective observation and active experience learning style which constitutes conversion takes place in horizontal dimension. Kolb has indicated that people improve in four fields while he was handling these learning styles. These are:

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