

Learning Styles and Its Role in the Attainment of Learning Outcomes

Khavya AR

Received on: 10 June 2022; Accepted on: 26 June 2022; Published on: 31 December 2022

ABSTRACT

The never-ending search for a better learning style and better learning outcome has kindled so many experiments and researches globally. The aim of this study is to remind the fact that different students and different subjects require different learning methods. Despite following apt teaching methods, some students might grasp late and that aspect has to be considered and managed accordingly. Also, one should keep in mind that the medical education is not just about memorizing subjects, but proper practical knowledge is mandatory, and thus to make the medical education more learner friendly, the faculties should also bear the pain in making the ends meet. The various methods that can be used for better learning and teaching has been outlined in brief.

Keywords: Learning styles, Medical education, Medical student.

SBV Journal of Basic, Clinical and Applied Health Science (2023): 10.5005/jp-journals-10082-03168

INTRODUCTION

It is often common to find kids wanting to become a doctor in the future.¹ Yes, in India, medical doctor is one of the highly admired professions that people would love to choose and as a result, it invites students from different educational background such as Central Board of Secondary Education, Indian Certificate of Secondary Education, State Board of Secondary Education from various states in English or in the local language. However, it is not easy for all of them to grasp the subjects. At first, there is a huge difficulty in getting through the entrance examination, which varies from one board of education to the other² and even when an aspirant gets through the medical entrance examination, the learning process would pose a big challenge to the budding medicos as studying Indian medical undergraduate degree, bachelor of medicine and bachelor of surgery (MBBS), is never about mugging up the concepts; a perfect understanding and interpretation of topics is mandatory to excel in the field. Practical or clinical knowledge is considered to be even more important than the theoretical knowledge, which demands proper skill to be taught to the students. All-together, it makes the curriculum of MBBS degree course a challenging task both for teachers' and the students' communities to teach and learn, respectively.

Learning Styles

There's always a huge inconsistency in the learning system and this is because different students feel comfortable with different learning methodologies. A good learning system must therefore understand the students' needs and their preferences over one style of learning over another. To classify the learning styles, Neil Fleming came up with the VARK model.³ The acronym VARK stands for visual, auditory, reading/writing, and kinesthetic. Usage of diagrams, flowcharts, pie charts, etc. comprises the visual model. Visual model plays an important role in the learning of the biochemical pathways, pathogenesis of a disease, life cycle of different parasites, etc. The auditory model includes learning

Department of Community Medicine, Shri Sathya Sai Medical College and Research Institute, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

Corresponding Author: Khavya AR, Department of Community Medicine, Shri Sathya Sai Medical College and Research Institute, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India, Phone: +91 9677247093, e-mail: indhavi99@gmail.com

How to cite this article: Khavya AR. Learning Styles and Its Role in the Attainment of Learning Outcomes. *J Basic Clin Appl Health Sci* 2023;6(1):21–22.

Source of support: Nil

Conflict of interest: None

from group discussion, lecture classes, seminars, etc. Lots of students prefer group discussion especially for the subjects such as community medicine. The reading/writing model is the most popularly followed learning style since times immemorial. Writing is always considered improving your memory and that is the reason students are given little punishments such as writing smaller content repeatedly for many times, that is, to resent the imposition, as it uplifts their memory. The kinesthetic model comprises of learning from experience, simulations, demonstrations, and applications. This is the most preferred learning style nowadays as students enjoy as well as learn together. From schools to other private organizations, the teacher–student communities are working on this model as it is easier for the students to grasp onto such modalities of learning rather than from lectures and textbooks. Digital application platforms, such as the BYJU'S, focus both on visual and kinesthetic style of learning.⁴ The Government of Tamil Nadu, India has also started an e-learning website that helps in the similar way for those who cannot afford private digital application platforms. Thus, different students as well as different subjects require different methodologies for convenient understanding. As a result, for any learning system to function properly, one should keep these two domains in mind.

Teaching–Learning Methods and Learning among Students

As different students and different subjects require different learning styles, so does different learning domains (such as knowledge, skills, and attitude) require different teaching methodologies. Theoretical knowledge can be imparted via lectures and seminars. A simple read, understand, memorize concept will work for it. However, when it comes to teaching different skills, demonstration, practical training, and evidence-based medicine is the preferred methodology.⁵ For example, you can never learn to put an intravenous line by just seeing videos or listening to lectures, but you have to do it yourself, make little mistakes, and finally master the task.

The learning curve in the medical field is all about making mistakes and correcting it but one should make sure that the mistakes are not grave, and for this we need to perform the given task under the guidance of our seniors and with utmost caution possible. The online lectures that took place because of the COVID-19 lockdowns was totally unfriendly for proper medical training as in this field, even the pre-clinical subjects require proper practical demonstration for easy understanding.⁶ As for instance, one can never understand anatomy without dissecting the cadaver. Many colleges and also some schools have life skill classes for attitude training as attitude change occurs only through experience. As a result, attitude training can be kindled by means of role-play, self-observation, and positive interaction.

Teaching–Learning Methods and Learning Styles

Teachers' should play an important role in understanding the learning styles of the students.⁷ "Good teachers know how to bring out the best in students" as quoted by Charles Kuralt to bring out the best in each of their student, every teacher should put themselves in the student's shoes before performing the role of a teacher and that is the only way they will know how varied the student learning style is. This is not a wearisome task as every teacher was once anyway a student who struggled to study. So, it is not an impossible task for the teacher to understand the learning styles of students. However, in a class of, say, 150 students handled by a single staff, such combined methods of teaching would not be working well. For that, we need more of small-group teaching where the teacher-to-student ratio is minimal enough for the teacher to be able to analyze each one of their student.⁸ Many schools and colleges have separate session for the late bloomers to make sure their needs are met. Individual doubt clearing session is one big way to make their students learn better.

Plan of Action

As per the saying that actions speak louder than words, it is mandatory to put all the ideologies into research. Faculties instead of just learning about different learning styles should implement and experiment it with their students.⁹ At the start of every batch, any faculty can run a small study on them with few questionnaires and quizzes to understand the student's state of mind and attitude toward learning. This should be included as an important step during the initial-stage orientation process provided to the freshers. A programmed software can be utilized for this purpose as it saves time both for the faculty and the students. The regular way of identifying the late bloomers and giving them special attention is practically a positive approach but according to a psychological point of view a negative one.

Being branded as a late bloomer is never a welcome move among the students. To make it quite acceptable among the students, the faculties can arrange small-group teaching sessions where they can concentrate fully on the late bloomers with little attention to the average students. By doing so, they would not be branded as a coaching class student or a late bloomer, but in the end, they all will be benefited with the extra attention paid. Any subject should be taught via all the four constituents of the VARK model to kindle interest among the students.¹⁰ Apart from studies, we should also give great importance to life skills, attitude development, and positive social interaction as learning is not about just memorizing subject topics but also about happy survival techniques.

CONCLUSION

Thus, to achieve better learning outcomes, it is mandatory to both understand and work on the different learning styles of different students as well as different subjects. Universities and various school education systems/boards should make it a point to understand the fact that different flowers bloom at different time and require different manures so do different students learn at a different pace, and are inclined toward one mode of learning compared to other modes of learning. This cannot be achieved in a single move, and it requires patience from both students' and the teachers' sides. However, with a determined effort and proper planning, learning can be made a joyful process for all the students.

REFERENCES

1. Times of India. 6 reasons why you should choose a career in medicine and become a doctor; 2021. Available at: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog/dr-amit-bhasin-blog/6-reasons-you-should-choose-a-career-in-medicine-and-become-a-doctor-34896/>. Accessed on: 18 June 2022.
2. News18. NEET led to 30% drop in TN state board enrollments, students move to CBSE; 2021. Available at: <https://www.news18.com/news/education-career/neet-aspirants-move-from-state-board-to-cbse-medical-entrance-based-on-later-4227008.html>. Accessed on: 18 June 2022.
3. Kumar PIJ, Michael SA. Understanding your student: using the VARK model. *J Postgrad Med* 2014;60(2):183–186. DOI: 10.4103/0022-3859.132337.
4. Tripathy S, Devarapalli S. Emerging trend set by a start-ups on Indian online education system: A case of Byju's. *J Public Affairs* 2020;21(1):e2128, 1–7. DOI: 10.1002/pa.2128.
5. Sackett DL, Rosenberg WMC. On the need for evidence-based medicine. *J Public Health* 1995;17(3):330–334. DOI: 10.1093/oxfordjournals.pubmed.a043127.
6. Shetty S, Shilpa C, Dey D, Kavya S. Academic crisis during COVID 19: Online classes, a panacea for imminent doctors. *Indian J Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg* 2020;74(1):45–49. DOI: 10.1007/s12070-020-02224-x.
7. Fatt JPT. Understanding the learning styles of students: implications for educators. *Int J Sociol Social Policy* 2000;20(11/12):31–45. DOI: 10.1108/01443330010789269.
8. Steinert Y. Student perceptions of effective small group teaching. *Med Educ* 2004;38(3):286–293. DOI: 10.1046/j.1365-2923.2004.01772.x.
9. Mayya SS, Rao AK, Ramnaryana K. Learning approaches, learning difficulties and academic performance of undergraduate students of physiotherapy. *Internet J Allied Health Sci Pract* 2004;2(4):6. DOI: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.12.067.
10. Zhang M, Quan Y, Huang L, Kuo YL. The impact of learning styles on academic achievement. *Int J Intelligent Technol Applied Stat* 2017;10(3):173–185. DOI: 10.6148/IJITAS.2017.1003.04.