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## HISTORICAL ANALYSIS ON LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCES AND EDUCATIONAL COMMITMENT OF TRIBAL STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF KERALA

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**Abstract:** How students learn should be a major area of consideration for their enhancement. When it comes to the tribal students it seeks prime importance as they have their own culture, unique in nature. They have their own way of learning and acquisition of knowledge. So it's necessary to analyze from their perspective how they learn and there by adopting strategies for their better understanding. The analysis unveils that the tribal students in secondary school prefer Emotional component compared to Physical, Environmental and social and the Educational commitment of the students is significantly influenced by the Gender and Type of Management of schools. The study also reveals that there exists a negligible correlation between Learning Style Preferences and Educational Commitment of Tribal students.

**Keywords:** Tribe, Educational commitment, learning style.

### Introduction

The concept of learning style is based on the theory that an individual respond to educational context with consistent behavior and performance pattern (Irvine & York, 1995). Learning Style is the way in which pupils learn and represent information in memory. Students learn more effectively from materials designed to match their learning style. Learning Style and academic achievements were reported strong positive relationships. The term Learning Style is usually used parallel with Cognitive Style. But both Cognitive and Learning Style have similarity in the fact that they refer to the processes involved in learning. They are used parallel with the use of bipolar traits. But Learning Style is different from cognitive style in the fact that cognitive style involves cognitive processes only. While Learning Style involves cognitive, physical and emotional aspects of one's learning.

Conceptually the two variables –Learning Style and Cognitive Style – are interwoven and further precision is badly needed to crystallize the two concepts. The earlier descriptions of Learning Style were primitive in nature and reduce the concepts to bipolar elements. But the recent advanced studies describe it as a multidimensional one (Harvey, 1994). This new perspective is widely accepted primarily because it accommodates the subtle individual difference as well as educational and social context in which the learners learn.

Major dimensions or style areas which are included in the multidimensional approach are- Environmental, Emotional, Sociological, Physical and Psychological. Environmental style area includes the learner's preference to noise level, light, temperature, and designs; Emotional includes style elements motivation, resistance, responsibility, and structure; Sociological area includes learning with peers, authority,

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and several ways; Physical area encompasses different learning modes and time of learning such as auditory, visual, tactile, kinesthetic, evening/morning, afternoon, and mobility and Psychological area includes psychological traits. Put in to a nut shell, students possess biologically based physical and environmental learning preferences which along with well established traits like emotional, and sociological preferences combine to form an individual's Learning Style profile . In short, the evolution of the concept Learning Style and its potential utility in the learning process is certainly appealing for tribal students.

Studies show that Learning Style is related to other variables like Aptitude (Wegner, 1980). The work of Harvey (1994) has made a breakthrough by distinguishing Learning Style and Approaches to Studying; as two separate conceptualization on how student learn and study. Attempt has been made to identify the learning style preferences of secondary school students (Koya.M.P & Kumar, 2010). However no attempt has been made so far to identify the Learning Style Preferences of Tribal Students.

Along with identification of the Learning Style Preferences of the Tribal students; it is equally important to identify how far they are committed to their academic matters. Whether; their Educational Commitment is influencing the achievement of tribal students. Commitment is a part of student's affective or emotional reaction to their experiences in a school setting. It can be seen to be part of a learned behavior or attitudes associated with in academic behavior of students. Educational Commitment among students is believed to be central to their achievement. Commitment is an integral force coming from students themselves who have needs for challenges in their work. Research studies have claimed that Educational Commitment is a predictor of student's performance. Student's commitment towards education is a key factor in balancing the teaching –learning process. It is a psychological state identifying the objects a person identifies with or desires to be involved with, There are various factors influencing Educational Commitment like commitment to family, society, school and neighbors. Family is a strong bond which is inseparable from the learners. It is the aspirations and the recognition that a student is receiving from the family, which acts as a string motivating force in him. This in turn assists him in his academic achievement. A child growing in a family maintaining healthy and pure relationships is sure to be dedicated to the family. This surely will influence his commitment towards education. Education aims at socialization of the individual. Each and everyone are dependent in the society. No one can live isolated. Since we are all social beings we have certain duties to impart for the well being of our social system. Only a committed person could contribute for the welfare of his society. We have to obey the principles of our society and even should have that courage to question the illegal movement from the part of the society. From the above explanation it is quite evident that the learner's commitment to society significantly influences his Educational Commitment as school itself in a miniature society. School factors obviously influences the commitment of the learner. The learning experiences provided by the teachers should be interesting, creative and best suiting the age level and abilities of the learners. A

stress free democratic atmosphere along with a guiding teacher promotes the commitment of the learner towards the education.

Commitment is the loyalty, identification and involvement with some appropriate subject (Buch 1974). It is a part of student's affective or emotional reaction to their experiences in a school setting. Now a day's students are not omitted to education. There is a crisis of commitment. There should be complete involvement and dedication from the part of learners. It is a sense of being bound emotionally or intellectually to some course of action, which may include a person's relationship with another individual, group, and organization. Commitment embodies a sense being bond emotionally or intellectually to some course of action, which may include a person's relationship with other individuals, group or organization.

**Aims:** Purpose of the study is to identify the learning style preferences and the educational commitment of tribal students in secondary schools of Palakkad district.

**Sample:** The study was conducted on a sample of 200 High School Pupils of standard 9<sup>th</sup> to X of Palakkad District.

### **Method**

The sample comprises 200 students of IX -X th standard studying in different localities of Palakkad district. The investigator followed stratified random sampling technique ensuring representation of factors like gender and type of school management.

### **Instruments**

Learning style inventory was used to measure the Learning Style of secondary school tribal students and Educational Commitment scale was used to measure the commitment of Tribal Secondary School Students; constructed and standardized by Firoz,k,t and Dr.Vasumathi. This Learning Style Inventory is constructed on the theoretical framework of Dunn and Dunn Model of Learning Style (Dunn,*et al.*,1989), which depicts the Learning Style as multidimensional rather than bipolar (Harvey,1994). Five style areas viz., Environmental, Emotional, Sociological, and Physical characterizes the inventory. The Learning Style Inventory comprised of 38 statements. The items required the pupils to respond on a three point scale as Always, Sometimes, and Never. For a positive item in the inventory a score of two was given to the response category- 'always', one to the category 'sometimes' and zero to the category 'never'. The scheme was reversed for the negative items.

The Learning Style inventory was validated by the investigator. Validity of the inventory was established by content validity. It is based on expert judgment and related literature. The items were selected from strong theoretical background and judgment of the subject specialist.

The reliability was established by split half method. Carried out on a sample of 40 students and the value obtained were 0.623. The validity and reliability indices of the tool show that the inventory has successfully proven the criteria of a standardized tool.

The Educational Commitment scale prepared and planned by the investigator included four major dimensions; selected from the strong theoretical background. These are Commitment to Family, Commitment to Society, Commitment to School and Commitment to Neighbors and Peers.

The Education Commitment scale comprised of 55 items. The items required the pupils to respond on a five point scale as Always, Occasionally, Frequently, Sometimes and Never. For a positive item in the inventory a score of four was given to the response category ‘Always’, three to the category- ‘Occasionally’, two to the category- ‘Frequently’, one to the category- ‘Sometimes’ and zero to the category – ‘Never’. The scheme was reversed for the negative items.

The Education Commitment Scale was validated by the investigator through content validity. The items were selected from the strong theoretical background and judgment of the subject specialist.

Reliability of the tool was established by split half method; carried out on a sample of 40 students; and the value obtained is 0.623. The validity and the reliability indices of the tool show that the scale has successfully proven the criteria of a standardized tool.

**Procedure**

Before administering the test, the permission from concerned Heads was ensured. The students were supplied printed form of the Inventory and the Scale along with the response sheets. Prior to the administration of the tools, the students were requested to read the instructions carefully and the doubts were cleared immediately. To the level best, the students were given ideal testing conditions.

**Results**

As Learning Style comprises four style areas, it is useful to delineate the style area which is preferred mostly by the students. To attain this objective the mean score along with the standard deviations obtained for the four major components of Learning Style viz., Environmental, Emotional, Sociological and Physical are listed in the Table 1 for Total sample, Boys and Girls.

**Table 1.** Learning Style Preferences for the Total sample, Boys and Girls

Components of Learning Style	Total		Boys		Girls	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Physical	15.71	2.02	15.53	1.977	15.90	2.02
Emotional	39.12	3.86	39.07	4.16	39.17	3.54
Environmental	15.34	2.02	14.97	1.97	15.75	1.77
Sociological	8.89	1.24	8.97	1.27	8.80	1.24

From the Table 2, it is clear that high mean score is associated with Emotional style area for the Total sample, Boys and Girls (Total-39.12, Boys-39.07, Girls-39.17). The mean score obtained for Physical style area rank second to Emotional style area (Total-15.17, Boys-15.53, and Girls-15.90). The mean scores obtained for Government and Aided sample are presented in the Table 2.

**Table 2.** Learning Style Preferences for the sub sample Government and Aided

Components of Learning Style	Government		Aided	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Physical	15.81	1.95	15.54	2.13
Emotional	39.14	3.61	39.08	4.28
Environmental	15.62	1.83	14.88	1.97
Sociological	8.84	1.21	8.97	1.28

As per the table 2, it is evident that high mean scores are associated with Emotional style area for Government and Aided samples (Government-39.14, Aided-39.08). The second preference area is found to be Physical with mean scores 15.81 and 15.54. This inference indicates that on comparison with other style areas, attention must be given to Emotional style area for an enhanced learning of Tribal Secondary School students. Therefore the style elements comprising Emotional style area are to be fostered.

Analysis further clarifies that the least preferred style area is Sociological as it occupies fourth position in the order. The significance of the variable Educational Commitment of the Tribal Secondary School students based on Gender and Type of Management was studied using the test of significance of difference between means for large independent sample. It is given as:

**Table 3.** *Data and result of Mean scores of Educational Commitment for the sub sample based on Gender*

Nature of Sample	Sub sample	No: of sample	Mean	SD	Critical ratio
Gender	Boys	131	78.5	7.25	8.986
	Girls	121	79.62	6.13	

It can be seen from the Table 3 that there exist a significant difference at 0.01 level in the Educational Commitment of Boys and Girls since the 't' value is greater than the table value set for 0.01 level of significance . There exists significant difference in the mean scores of Educational Commitment based on Gender of the sample.

**Table 4.** *Data and result of Mean scores of Educational Commitment for the sub sample based on Type of Management*

Nature of Sample	Sub sample	No: of sample	Mean	SD	Critical ratio
Type of management	Government	158	123.13	15.88	1.99
	Aided	94	126.82	10.79	

Table 4 reveals that the Type of Management shows significant difference in the mean scores of Educational Commitment of Tribal Secondary School students at; 0.05 level of significance. This revealed that Government and Aided school students are having significant difference in their Educational Commitment.

The investigator made an attempt to find out the relationship between the two variables Learning Style Preferences and Educational Commitment. The result is shown in the table 5.

**Table 5.** *Details of Correlation between different dimensions of Learning Style Preferences and Educational commitment.*

SI NO	Dimensions of Learning Style Preferences with Educational Commitment	'r'
1	Environmental dimension with Educational commitment	0.193
2	Emotional dimension with Educational commitment	0.074
3	Sociological dimension with Educational commitment	0.002
4	Physical dimension with Educational commitment	0.157

Table 5 gives the picture that all the major styles of area namely Environmental, Emotional, Sociological and Physical shows negligible correlation with the variable Educational Commitment as the obtained values of coefficient of correlation ; 0.193, 0.074, 0.002 and 0.157 lies in between 0.00 and 0.020.

### Conclusion

Scheduled caste and tribes are the most vulnerable sections of the community. The educational provisions made for them cover the entire educational system. All these programs should have resulted in the raising of the educational status of the tribal population. But the quality of education parted to them is still far from satisfactory. As a result of this a very large number of scheduled tribes continue to be educationally backward and are languishing at the bottom of the social and economic pyramid. Helping the students to identify their own style of learning, make it possible to capitalize on their repertoire of learning strategies (Entwistle, 1981). As the tribes are more educationally backward; living in their own ethnic culture by following their own unique customized tradition; it has become essential to identify their peculiar learning style which may further enhance their achievement and increases their level of confidence. From the study it is revealed that the Emotional style area is most preferred by the Tribal Secondary School students. Unfortunately most of the students lack a design of their style preferences at home and school. Hence the teachers' role is to help the students to stick on to the unique style preferences in these areas. Developing commitment in children to education is highly essential to develop dedication and a belief in them that getting education is for their own welfare. It in turn helps them to lead a worthwhile life with an aspiring future.

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