

Student Learning Style Preferences and Undergraduate Academic Performance at two UK Universities

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Abstract

As part of a three-year study of accounting undergraduates, information regarding student learning styles preferences (Kolb's LSI) was gathered. At the completion of their studies, the students' academic performance was also measured and analysed over student learning style preference. The study took place at a traditional university and a post-1992 university involving 150 students; 112 from the traditional university and 38 from the post-1992 university. The results indicate that the students with Assimilator and Converger learning styles outperform significantly their counterparts with Accommodator and Diverger learning styles by as much as a degree class. Earlier evidence from the USA suggested that accountancy students (Baldwin and Reckers 1984; Baker, Simon and Bazeli 1986) and accounting practitioners (Brown and Burke 1987; Collins and Milliron 1987) were Convergents and those with this learning style were more successful (Togo and Baldwin 1990). This study supports partially these earlier findings. However, this paper also attempts to explore the reasons behind this reported difference and to discuss the potential implications. For example, Assimilator learning style preferences were least popular and were mainly found in the traditional university students. Accommodator learning style preferences were the most popular but are not the most successful. The paper considers why some students adopt a relatively less successful learning style preference and whether the LSI can be used as a pedagogical tool allowing undergraduates to assess their own learning style preference, which they could then adapt, to deal with different situations and hence improve their overall learning effectiveness.