

PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION



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Student Learning Styles

The concept of learning styles is fairly recent in educational practice. A learning style, basically, is the way each person absorbs and retains information and/or skills. In order to identify the learning styles of high school students, a study was done with students studying vocational agriculture in Arizona high schools. The research project verified earlier work completed by Drs. E.K. and G.B. Sproles from the School of Family and Consumer Resources.

It was found that Arizona vocational agriculture students' learning styles can be characterized as: (1) serious, analytical; (2) active, practical; (3) observation-centered; (4) passive accepting; (5) concrete, detail, fact-oriented; or (6) non-adaptive, struggling. In addition, interesting variations were discovered between males and females and younger or older students. Other differences were noted between rural and urban students.

It is anticipated this research will continue to provide useful information for

public school teachers about learning styles. Once teachers are able to determine the learning styles of their students, they can then adapt their teaching styles.

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Learning Agricultural Management

Agricultural economists have used various simulators, case studies, games and other activities to teach agricultural management. The benefits of these teaching innovations include cost savings, increased effectiveness, increased student performance, more positive student attitudes, accelerated learning and greater satisfaction for both teachers and students. The continuing sophistication of low cost microcomputers promises to accelerate the development of additional innovative teaching tools. As new teaching techniques are developed, the evaluation of these techniques has been and will continue to be the subject of much concern.

The evidence on the cost effectiveness of new teaching techniques does not always agree. For example, it has been concluded that computerized management simulation games, may be fun but may not be an efficient way to learn. This contradicts the conclusions reached by other researchers. The most likely source of this disagreement is that a complete cost-benefit analysis has not been performed because all of the costs and benefits have not been identified.

Research is under way to develop an economic model of student learning, and then to examine the model's implications for evaluating teaching innovations. The development of this model and an understanding of its implications are important because teachers are managers of society's resources and play a vital role in the production of a skilled and educated labor force. Understanding the economics of learning can generate greater efficiency in teaching which will result in a better trained labor force for both the agricultural and nonagricultural sectors.

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