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An investigation of the thinking-style profiles of fine arts education department students

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Abstract

Goal of this study was to identify thinking-style profiles of the Fine Arts Education Department students and investigation of the relationship between students' thinking-styles and their academic branches (music and painting-arts education). Survey method has been used in the study and relevant literature was investigated through the scanning method. Study workgroup consisted of 168 students from Fine Arts Education Department of Nigde University (Music and Painting Teacher candidates). Thinking Styles Scalar developed by Sternberg and Wagner (1992), and adapted by Sünbül (2004) to Turkish with reliability validation has been used as data collection tool. According to the findings, it has been determined that Fine Arts Education Students possessed mostly subjective thinking style. Again on the basis of findings, it was seen that in all dimensions of the scalar there existed only one meaningful difference in terms of subjective thinking style relationship to students' branches, and no other meaningful difference was identified in other twelve dimensions of the scalar.

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1. Introduction

There are many factors which might influence the thinking behaviour of students. Personal traits form the primary reasons of this situation. When observed from the perspective of individualized differences, students tend to experiment with variety of styles for acquiring and internalizing knowledge. According to Sternberg, 'style' is the path preferred by a person in utilizing abilities. Preference is at the forefront more than ability. For this reason varied styles are neither good nor bad, but only different. Since students also prefer thinking processes different from one another they also show variations in terms of thinking styles. Individuals possess many thinking forms in connection with a problem, but due to special circumstances they use some of these more heavily. For this reason, individuals might score higher or lower levels in the thinking dimension considered during classifications of thinking (Sternberg, 1994, as conveyed by: Sünbül, 2004).

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When the literature is searched it can be seen that varied style types have been studied under different names. “Individuals possess profiles consisting of many styles rather than single style. While performing a task they either adapt their styles to the task or vice versa. There are many ways of doing this and individuals choose the most convenient one. Styles can be learned and developed. They can be used in different areas of life such as school, home, work and social life”(Sternberg, 1997, Grigerenko and Sternberg, 1997, Zhang and Sternberg, 2000, as conveyed by: Fer,2005:6).

Basic objective of the style studies is to investigate the causes and hows of performances shown by individuals in different areas. The concept of style does not include abilities, rather it is only a bundle of preferences. While abilities and styles may be seen simultaneously in the same area in some circumstances, in others they might not overlap (Sternberg,1998, as conveyed by: Sevinç and Palut,2010:2)

Thinking-styles developed by Sternberg and Wagner is a comprehensive and multidimensional model relating to the preferred thinking styles of individuals on a subject while learning and how they approach it after they have learned, and the model have been described in literature as styles inclusive of knowhow-centered, personality-centered and activity-centered(Fer,2005:5).

It was assumed that a need exists for the identification of thinking-styles among students who are being trained as educators in the field of Fine Arts, and investigation of how a training based on these styles may be actualized. Purpose of this study is to identify thinking-style profiles of the Fine Arts Education Department students and investigation of the relationship between students’ thinking-styles and their chosen academic branches.

2. Method

In this study the survey method has been used and the literature has been researched by scanning model. The entire student body of Fine Arts Education Department(Music and Painting-Arts teacher candidates) of Niğde University were identified as the study work group and 168 students responded during the scalar application phase. Thinking Styles Scalar developed by Sternberg and Wagner(1992), and adapted by Sünbül (2004) to Turkish with reliability validation has been used as data collection tool. In the scalar there are 13 styles classified under 5 categories: functions, forms, levels, scope and inclinations. These are, a) Functional: independent, rule-oriented, judgemental, b) Stylistic(Formalist): singular, staged, equivalent valuer, ruleless, c) According to Level: holistic, detailer, d) According to Scope: introvert, extravert, and e) According to Education: innovative, traditionalist thinking styles. Original scalar contains 104 items and each item may be scored as: always:5, often:4, sometimes:3, seldom:2 and never:1. Scalar has been applied to the students by the investigator and the data collected have been statistically analyzed and interpreted. Validity and reliability values of the scalar has been reviewed for this study and the thinking-style sections as well as Alpha values have been calculated as: subjective: ,81, rule-oriented: ,78, judgemental: ,81, singular: ,60, staged: ,66, equivalent valuer: ,70, ruleless: ,77, holistic: ,78, detailer: ,63, distinctive(unique): ,86, extravert: ,83, innovative: ,72, traditionalist: ,86. Data have been analyzed by SPSS 11v5 software package and organized into tables. In data analysis, the arithmetic mean and standard deviation, t and p values were used. The scoring intervals of the survey developed as five degree Likert type scale are: always(5): 4,20-5,00, often(4): 3,40-4,19, sometimes(3): 2,60-3,39, seldom(2): 1,80-2,59, never(1): 1-1,79.

3. Findings

In this section, findings both on thinking styles of Fine Arts Education Department students and comparison of students’ thinking styles with academic branches are presented.

Arithmetic mean and standard deviation values relating to the Thinking Styles Scalar sub-dimensions possessed by the students are given in Table-1.

Table 1. Thinking Styles of Fine Arts Education Department Students

Thinking Styles	N	\bar{X}	Ss
1 Subjective	168	4,273	0,829
2 Rule Oriented	168	3,715	1,011
3 Judgemental	168	3,851	1,026
4 Singular	168	3,762	1,052
5 Staged	168	3,863	1,249
6 Equivalent Valuer	168	3,568	1,110
7 Ruleless	168	3,352	1,192
8 Holistic	168	3,565	1,129
9 Detailer	168	3,756	1,513
10 Unique	168	3,581	1,133
11 Extravert	168	3,854	1,028
12 Innovative	168	3,956	1,151
13 Traditionalist	168	3,338	1,152

When the findings in Table-1 are analyzed, it is seen that the thinking styles of Fine Arts Department students are entirely subjective and individually to a great extent rule-oriented, judgemental, singular, staged, equivalent valuer, holistic, detailer, unique, extravert, innovative, partially ruleless and partially traditionalist. According to these findings it is possible to state that the students of Fine Arts Education have a subjective thinking style.

The t test values in relation to the comparison of Fine Arts Education Department students’ thinking styles and their academic branches are given in Table-2.

Table 2. Comparison of Fine Arts Education Department Students’ Thinking Styles According to Their Chosen Academic Branches

Thinking Styles	Branch	N	\bar{X}	Ss	t	p
Subjective	Music	80	34,950	3,724	2,093	0,038
	Painting	88	33,571	4,833		
Unique	Music	80	24,475	5,943	-1,205	0,230
	Painting	88	25,551	5,912		
Extravert	Music	80	26,863	5,059	-0,229	0,819
	Painting	88	27,041	5,264		
Innovative	Music	80	27,613	5,656	-0,190	0,849
	Painting	88	27,765	5,052		
Traditionalist	Music	80	23,275	5,831	-0,192	0,848
	Painting	88	23,449	6,161		
Rule-Oriented	Music	80	29,800	4,995	0,177	0,860
	Painting	88	29,663	5,248		
Judgemental	Music	80	30,900	5,703	0,202	0,840
	Painting	88	30,735	5,202		
Singular	Music	80	26,463	3,762	0,381	0,704
	Painting	88	26,235	4,129		
Staged	Music	80	27,813	5,872	1,689	0,093
	Painting	88	26,418	5,137		
Equivalent valuer	Music	80	24,925	4,597	-0,135	0,893

	Painting	88	25,020	4,773		
Rule less	Music	80	22,775	5,396	-1,537	0,126
	Painting	88	24,031	5,440		
Holistic	Music	80	24,475	5,229	-1,111	0,268
	Painting	88	25,357	5,306		
Detailer	Music	80	26,113	6,568	-0,348	0,728
	Painting	88	26,449	6,300		

When the findings in Table-2 are analyzed, there was only one meaningful difference of subjective thinking obtained between two branches in all dimensions of the scalar ($p < 0,05$), and no other were found in other dimensions. When the mean and standard deviation values were analyzed, the thinking styles of the students in the music branch were seen to score higher in the dimensions of: subjective, staged, rule-oriented, judgemental, singular, and the painting students scored higher in dimensions: unique, innovative, traditionalist, extravert, equivalent valuer, ruleless and detailer.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

In conclusion, it was determined that the students of the Fine Arts Department possessed subjective thinking style. When looked from the perspective of academic branches, the students of the Music and Painting groups demonstrated a meaningful difference in subjective thinking styles. Students of the Music Branch individually express themselves through playing an instrument and singing, whereas in Painting Branch, products reflecting either reality or abstract introversion materialize. For this reason, students' subjective thinking style may be considered to have one to one relationship with the education they are receiving.

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