

ABSTRACT

Interest in differences in cognitive styles, particularly field independence, as well as differences in the academic, cognitive and vocational orientation of students at the university level instigated the undertaking of this investigation.

The variables under study included field independence, spatial, abstract reasoning, and verbal ability, achievement at CXC/"O" Level and "A" Level and syllabus bound/syllabus free orientation. Three hundred and nine U.W.I. students from the faculties of arts, medicine and natural sciences registered in the Level I university course UC 120 constituted the sample.

One of the main aims of the investigation was to identify differences among students in the variables under study; thus subjects were categorized according to sex, faculty choice, "A" Level performance, vocational choice and vocational decision (time taken to decide on career).

Another aim of the investigation was to identify significant interrelationships between the variables under study.

Results were achieved using the statistical tests One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Two Sample "t" Test, Pearson's Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation and Scheffé's Post Hoc Procedure.

Findings were as follows:

- i. Males possess superior skills in the areas of field independence, spatial ability and abstract reasoning.
- ii. Science oriented students are superior to their arts counterparts in the areas of field independence, spatial and abstract reasoning and verbal ability.

They are also higher academic achievers.

- iii. Science oriented career aspirants show cognitive and analytical skills superior to those choosing arts oriented careers, particularly those choosing education.
- iv. Subjects who have decided on a career for a relatively long time display superiority in verbal skills to those who are still undecided.
- v. High "A" Level achievers possess superior analytical and cognitive skills to their counterparts with low "A" Level passes as well as those with no "A" Levels. They are also higher achievers at CXC/"O" Level.
- vi. Cognitive and analytical abilities are significantly interrelated as is academic achievement at CXC/"O" Level and "A" Level.