Prof. Sugata Mitra
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Title: Learning styles and self organizing systems in education

Abstract: Kolb's Learning Styles Inventory is one of the most commonly used instruments to identify a learner's style.

In this talk, the importance of learning styles for increasing the effectiveness of the learning process is discussed. It is pointed out that the use of learning style "aware" teaching-learning material is crucial to the heterogeneous learning profiles of today. The design, construction and validation of an adaptation of Kolb's original learning styles inventory test is described. The test is computer adapted for automatic use. We then attempt to find out whether our own perception of our learning style matches other people's perception of our learning style. The results show consistent differences between our own and others' perception of our learning styles. These differences are analysed and validated using a placebo method and found to be accurate descriptions of perception. The results suggest that a learning styles inventory test, used in this manner, could be a measure of public and private perceptions of self.

How can we use learning styles effectively in the learning process? We discuss a set of experiments in self organised education amongst children in India and the UK. The engineering challenges of computer use in remote and rural areas are discussed.

The talk ends with an extrapolation of these results to secondary and post secondary education.

Biography: Sugata Mitra is Professor of Educational Technology at the School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences, Newcastle University, UK.

Prof. Mitra works in the areas of Cognitive Science, Information Science and Educational Technology. He has been working on these areas as well as on Physics and Energy for more than 30 years. He has keen interest in engineering and software development.

His contributions include a number of inventions and first-time applications. Among other applications, he is credited with having started the database publishing industry (particularly the Yellow Page industry) in India and Bangladesh, as well as having implemented the first applications of digital multimedia and Internet based education in India. His experiments (often referred to as "The Hole In The Wall" experiments) with children and the Internet have been reported worldwide since 1999.

His current research interests include technologies for remote and rural education, distance education, instructional robotics, self organizing systems, and collaborative systems on the Internet.