Chapter 9
The Impact of the Relationship between Gardner’s Multiple Intelligence and Kolb’s Learning Style

Tse-Kian Neo
Multimedia University, Malaysia

Sahar Sabbaghan
Multimedia University, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

In a diverse work environment, it is important to have diverse leaders, managers, and people with different talents and intelligence in order to deal with different problems. In this case, each individual can know their own strength and weakness, and know which position works best for them. The concept of learning styles is used to describe individual differences in the way people learn. According to Kolb (1984), each person has a unique way to absorb and process experiences and information. He has identified four statistically prevalent learning styles—diverging, assimilating, converging, and accommodating. On the other hand, Gardner’s Multiple Intelligence Theory is very helpful to recognize that people have differing aptitude in different subject areas. This chapter documents a study in which the participants consisted of 153 bachelor students of Management from the Multimedia University of Malaysia. They were given two questionnaires, one for Kolb’s learning style and other for Gardner’s Multiple Intelligence inventory and a correlation was conducted. The results showed that there was a significant relationship between Kolb’s Learning Style and Multiple Intelligence. The relationship could be seen particularly in Abstract Conceptualization (AC) and Multiple Intelligences which were Nature, kinesthetic, music, word, interpersonal, and picture. The results also indicated that the majority of the participants are between AC and AE which means they are convergers. Having the right information for companies can be beneficial since knowing how their employees learn can lead to a diverse workplace that would have significant results on organizational structure, planning, development, and operation.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-4711-4.ch009
INTRODUCTION

Learning to learn is a competence of which has great universal value. Knowledge is crucial for continual improvements to existing products and services and for radically innovative measures. Each individual needs to master this ability so that they can adjust to the constant changes in the working environment (Kessels, 2001). Due to the fact that knowledge productivity has become more crucial to the survival of most organizations, there is more stress on how one can learn faster and more productively. Organizations spend billions on training their employees every year according to Training magazine’s 2012 Industry Report which found that the training budget has grown to 58.5 billion (Freifeld, n. d.).

Research by Warmerdam and van den Berg (1992) confirm the increasing importance of knowledge-based work. Simple, routine and low-level functions are decreasing, while complex high-level functions are increasing. Organizing educational provisions that promote learning to increase the knowledge productivity of individuals and teams have become part of the day to day business policy. Organizations are more aware about the importance of learning and on their way to promote it in every way possible. According to Kessels (1996), there are seven critical learning functions. The first one is the professional knowledge which is closely related to the organization’s core competencies. This is due to the fact that professional knowledge is what the work is related to and all objectives are drawn to it. It can be both implicit and explicit knowledge and it can be transferred, codified and shared throughout the organization. The second and third functions are problem solving and reflecting which is learning to deal and identify new problems, Argyris’ s double loop learning is a good example of questioning the existing values and therefore proceeding to consider other solutions and ideas. This tends to bring new visions and creativity. The fourth learning function is the communication skills which is foundation of how knowledge is transferred from one individual to another. Good communication skills help knowledge sharing and provide an environment where employees can be friendlier and work more effectively. The fifth function is self regulation of motivation which is the personal interest of learning. According to Pink (2010), people are motivated, when their job is challenging and they learn from it, he later states that intrinsic motivation is a powerful tool to get employees to go that extra mile. Personal interest is very much linked to inspiration, passion and sense-making (De Leenheer, 2004). The sixth learning function is the creative turmoil, According to Senge (1992) distance between vision and reality is the source of creative tension as distance makes it necessary to take action in order to come closer to the objective. A certain degree of chaos, disorder or even failure may prevent complacency, and could stimulate organizations to stretch beyond their strategic focus. Creative chaos can stimulate individuals to fundamentally change their ways of thinking and create new knowledge. The last function is peace and stability which is the need to reflect, learn and share. It gives the opportunity to assess one’s performance and effectiveness. Peace and stability gives the certainty and the time which is required for specialization and improvement (Lakerveld, 2005). The learning functions peace & stability and creative turmoil may seem to be conflicting; however, they are supposed to balance one another.

Learning therefore, leads to better thinkers, vision, and personal mastery which is defined by Senge (1990, p.141), is “the discipline of personal growth and learning.” It is a motivat-
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