

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE & MANAGEMENT

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A STUDY ON THE LEARNING STYLES OF THE EMPLOYEES OF AN IT COMPANY IN COIMBATORE

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the learning styles of the software engineers working in an IT company in Coimbatore. Everybody has a preferred learning style. By knowing and understanding the learning style one will be able to capitalize on his strengths and improve the self-advocacy skills. People have preferences about how they like to learn (learning style). This learning preferences sometimes account for problems in learning. The problem may not be entirely due to their learning style but also due to their previous experience. Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory which teaches many aspects of human intelligence, learning style, personality and behaviour - in education and industry forms the major input for the study. Multiple Intelligence questionnaire was completed by the respondents and their scores as Visual, Aural, Linguistic, Kinesthetic, Logical, Solitary and Social learners were recorded. The data collected through questionnaire was tabulated, analyzed and interpreted using Simple Percentage analysis, Mean Score Value, Correlation and Anova methods. The statistical analysis was done through SPSS 9.0 version. All the hypothesis were tested at 5% level of significance. It was found that Visual, Aural and Logical Intelligences were dominant with them. Also a high degree of correlation is found to exist between the Visual and Social intelligences. Training managers are advised to tailor training materials to their employees' learning needs.

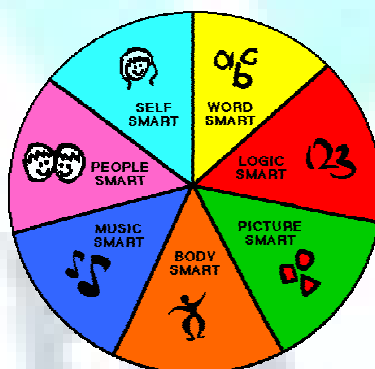
KEYWORDS

Howard gardner ,Learning styles, Multiple Intelligences.

1.INTRODUCTION

Learning style is the method of learning, particular to an individual that is presumed to allow that individual to learn best. Learning styles are simply different approaches or ways of learning. It is commonly believed that most people favor some particular method of interacting with, taking in, and processing stimuli or information. Based on this concept, the idea of individualized "learning styles" originated in the 1970s, and has gained popularity in recent years. People differ consistently from each other in their preferences for certain ways of processing information. These individual differences are measurable. Matching or mismatching students' learning styles with instructional techniques affects learning significantly. The study on "Learning Styles" was carried out with the software engineers of an IT company in Coimbatore. The IT industry being a knowledge based industry continuous learning and constant upgradation of knowledge becomes the need for the hour. Multiple Intelligences Theory posits that there are seven ways people understand in the world, described by Dr.Howard Earl Gardner in 1983 as seven core intelligences.

FIG. 1: THE SEVEN ORIGINAL INTELLIGENCES AS PROPOSED BY GARDNER



Source: <http://keep3.sjfc.edu>

HOWARD GARDNER'S THEORY OF MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

Intelligence	Brief definition/Characteristics
VISUAL/SPATIAL	They learn best visually and organizing things spatially. They like to see what you are talking about in order to understand. They enjoy charts, graphs, maps, tables, illustrations, art, puzzles, costumes - anything eye catching.
AURAL/MUSICAL	They learn well through songs, patterns, rhythms, instruments and musical expression.
LINGUISTIC/VERBAL	They demonstrate strength in the language arts: speaking, writing, reading, listening. These students have always been successful in traditional classrooms because their intelligence lends itself to traditional teaching.
KINESTHETIC/BODILY	They experience learning best through activity: games, movement, hands-on tasks, building. They are often labeled "overly active" in traditional classrooms where they are told to sit and be still!
LOGICAL/ MATHEMATICAL	They display an aptitude for numbers, reasoning and problem solving. This is the other half of the children who typically do well in traditional classrooms where teaching is logically sequenced and students are asked to conform.
SOCIAL/INTERPERSONAL	They are noticeably people oriented and outgoing, and do their learning cooperatively in groups or with a partner. They are typically been identified as "talkative" or "too concerned about being social" in a traditional setting.
SOLITARY/INTRAPERSONAL	They are especially in touch with their own feelings, values and ideas. They may tend to be more reserved, but they are actually quite intuitive about what they learn and how it relates to themselves.

Multiple Intelligence theory served as a base for the development of the questionnaire on learning styles. The Questionnaire is divided into three parts namely, 'Personal variables', 'Training programs', and 'Learning Styles'. Based on the details elicited an inventory of learning styles is made. Deciding on the learning styles will provide for the proper development of the training content. This content when matched with the learning preference of the target it will contribute to the success of the training program.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Denis H. Stott(1991) has documented that gender is one of six characteristics that tends to differentiate among individuals' learning styles.

Teaching adults is different from teaching children. **Jay Cross (2004)**states that: "Informal learning accounts for over 75% of the learning taking place in organizations today".

Dorothy D. Billington says the type of learning environment, that best helps adults to grow and develop, is the environment

- where students feel safe and supported, where individual needs and uniqueness are honoured.
- which fosters intellectual freedom and encourages experimentation and creativity.
- where faculty treats adult students as peers.
- Which encourages self-directed learning, where students take responsibility for their own learning.
- Which provides intellectual challenge.
- Which allows regular feedback mechanisms.

A Research By **Dennis W. Mills on "Applying What We Know",2005**, tells us that we now have 100% new information every five years ie, there will be new information every 38 days. That could mean that the information one learns this month may be outdated two months from now.

Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (2008), reported that economies are experiencing the transformation from their traditional industrial base to the knowledge era in which learning and innovation are central. In the knowledge era, optimising learning is the driving aim and innovation is both the widespread catalyst of change and the defining result.

Donald Martin, determined that however what we do best can depend on our mood, the subject matter, our friends and the teacher.

Heather K. Laschinger RN, says there is no relationship between learning style and preferred subject specialisation.

In real learning organizations, one cannot distinguish between the learner and the teacher, because everyone throughout the organization is expected to teach each other and learn from each other. **Karlene Kerfoot**, (2003), accentuates, the leader as learner and the leader as teacher are very basic to the role of any leader. Hierarchies are eliminated and is replaced by the belief that all are peers in learning and teaching and we can teach and learn from each other no matter where we are positioned on the organizational chart. When this happens, synergy occurs.

Tichy,(2002), notes that teaching organizations are winning organizations and cites models such as GE that effectively became a great teaching organization where everybody teaches and everyone learns. Tichy believes that teaching others to grow in a context of mutual learning is the only way to insure long-term success.

Of the six potential determinants (course structure, instructor feedback, self-motivation, learning style, interaction, and instructor facilitation) that affect the perceived learning outcomes, only instructor feedback and learning styles are significant. Apart from these variables user satisfaction is also a significant predictor of learning outcomes reports **Eom, Sean B. And Wen, H. Joseph (2006)**.

To enhance learning, instructors and trainers must recognize that individuals learn and teach differently, and what may be an optimal learning or training method for one may discourage another. **Serbrenia J. Sims and Ronald R. Sims** points out that all individuals are most effective when they are taught in their personal learning style. In fact, there are three major types of learners: visual, auditory, and tactile/kinesthetic and most people have one learning style for which they show a stronger affinity.

Sara J. Singer and Amy C. Edmondson(2006) says leaders must publicize the idea of learning else the costs of learning may be more visible than the benefits. Hence Leadership is essential for fostering the mindset, group behaviors, and organizational investments that promote learning now and invest in performance later.

3. NEED FOR THE STUDY

The study reminds the instructors of the need to be aware of individual learning styles and learner diversity. By understanding this and developing the skills that help the organisation learn in a variety of ways, the most of the learning potential can be tapped. And because the organisation is better able to learn and gather information, the organisation can make better decisions and choose better courses of action.

It provides a balanced learning experience to the respondents by aligning the learning preferences of both the instructor and the target. It builds a good communication process and enhances the learning effectiveness and will open up to many different ways of perceiving the world thus making learning successful.

This project report helps the management to enhance communication with team members, learn how their staff communicates, how they problem-solve, and what they value, conduct effective and productive meetings, refine conflict resolution skills, improve interviewing, hiring, and placement skills, assemble more effective teams, discover how different learning methods and strategies work for different people, understand, accept, and appreciate differences in learning styles, discover how learning styles influence relationships with employees, family members, and friends.

The study is intended to aid other researchers in identifying the most appropriate learning styles and designing a training program.

4. PROBLEM STATEMENT

It is important to understand learning styles to ensure that tutors are instructing according to the learner's style and not the tutor's. A tutor who instructs only according to his own style makes learning more difficult for the learner. Tutors should know about learning styles to be able to help learners identify their personal learning styles. This knowledge will help learners to build self-confidence and to learn to manage their own learning.

5. OBJECTIVES

- The prime objective of the Study is to develop a Learning Styles inventory for IT employees.
- To provide suggestions for effective designing of training materials accordingly.
- To find clusters of people who adopt similar patterns for perceiving and interpreting situations.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The descriptive study was conducted with a sample of 80 employees of the company, who were actually involved in developing the financial business solution softwares. Since the entire population(census inquiry) is taken for the study the sample is absolutely representative. The sources of data were primary and secondary data. The researcher collected primary data from the respondents by means of questionnaire. The questionnaire is divided into three parts namely, 'Personal variables', 'Training programs', and 'Learning Styles'. Multiple Intelligence questionnaire was completed by the respondents and their scores as Visual, Aural, Linguistic, Kinesthetic, Logical, Solitary and Social learners were recorded.

The data collected through questionnaire was tabulated, analyzed and interpreted using Correlation and Anova methods. The statistical analysis was done through SPSS 9.0 version. All the hypothesis were tested at 5% level of significance.

7.RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

ABBREVIATIONS USED

ABB.	EXPANSION
Sig	SIGNIFICANCE
NS	NOSIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE
S.D.	STANDARD DEVIATION
Df	DEGREES OF FREEDOM

7.1. LEARNING STYLES

CORRELATION BETWEEN MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

	Visual intelligence score	Aural intelligence score	Linguistic intelligence score	Kinesthetic intelligence score	Logical intelligence score	Social intelligence score	Solitary intelligence score
Visual intelligence score	1.000	.643**	.584**	.581**	.695**	.744**	.498**
Aural intelligence score		1.000	.606**	.487**	.578**	.657**	.453**
Linguistic intelligence score			1.000	.556**	.636**	.619**	.602**
Kinesthetic intelligence score				1.000	.578**	.478**	.405**
Logical intelligence score					1.000	.662**	.616**
Social intelligence score						1.000	.594**
Solitary intelligence score							1.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level
The assessment criteria is as follows:

$r < 0.5$	Low Correlation
$0.5 > r < 0.6$	Moderate Correlation
$r > 0.6$	High Correlation

It is found that there exists a highest correlation between social intelligence and visual intelligence.

7.2. AGE AND LEARNING STYLES

One way Anova was applied to find whether there is significant difference among the age groups and the average multiple intelligence scores.

7.2.1.AGE AND VISUAL INTELLIGENCE

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference among the age groups in the average Visual Intelligence Score.

7. 2.1.1 MEAN-VISUAL INTELLIGENCE SCORE

		Visual intelligence score		
		Mean	S.D	NOR
Age	20-25 yrs	24.71	5.36	42
	26-30 yrs	24.21	4.42	28
	Above 30 yrs	24.70	3.47	10
TOTAL		24.54	4.79	80

7. 2.1.2.ANOVA - VISUAL INTELLIGENCE SCORE

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.502	2	2.251	.096	Ns
Within Groups	1811.386	77	23.524		
Total	1815.887	79			

7.2.2. AGE AND AURAL INTELLIGENCE

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference among the age groups in the average Aural Intelligence Score.

7. 2.2.1.MEAN-AURAL INTELLIGENCE SCORE

		Aural intelligence score		
		Mean	S.D	NOR
Age	20-25 yrs	24.76	5.06	42
	26-30 yrs	24.93	5.58	28
	Above 30 yrs	23.80	4.32	10
TOTAL		24.70	5.11	80

7.2.2.2.ANOVA FOR AURAL INTELLIGENCE SCORE

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9.724	2	4.862	.182	Ns
Within Groups	2057.076	77	26.715		
Total	2066.800	79			

7.2.3.AGE AND LINGUISTIC INTELLIGENCE

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference among the age groups in the average Linguistic Intelligence Score

7.2.3.1.MEAN-LINGUISTIC INTELLIGENCE SCORE

		Linguistic intelligence score		
		Mean	S.D	NOR
Age	20-25 yrs	23.24	4.90	42
	26-30 yrs	21.79	3.69	28
	Above 30 yrs	21.70	3.02	10
TOTAL		22.54	4.33	80

7.2.3.2.ANOVA FOR LINGUISTIC INTELLIGENCE SCORE

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	43.454	2	21.727	1.166	Ns
Within Groups	1434.433	77	18.629		
Total	1477.887	79			

7.2.4. AGE AND KINESTHETIC INTELLIGENCE

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference among the age groups in the average Kinesthetic Intelligence Score.

7.2.4.1.MEAN-KINESTHETIC INTELLIGENCE SCORE

		Kinesthetic intelligence score		
		Mean	S.D	NOR
Age	20-25 yrs	23.36	5.11	42
	26-30 yrs	23.04	3.76	28
	Above 30 yrs	20.40	2.88	10
TOTAL		22.88	4.50	80

7.2.4.2.ANOVA FOR KINESTHETIC INTELLIGENCE SCORE

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	71.743	2	35.871	1.809	Ns
Within Groups	1527.007	77	19.831		
Total	1598.750	79			

7.2.5. AGE AND LOGICAL INTELLIGENCE

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference among the age groups in the average Logical Intelligence Score.

7.2.5.1.MEAN-LOGICAL INTELLIGENCE SCORE

		Logical intelligence score		
		Mean	S.D	NOR
Age	20-25 yrs	25.05	5.65	42
	26-30 yrs	24.82	4.96	28
	Above 30 yrs	26.40	3.78	10
TOTAL		25.14	5.18	80

7.2.5.2.ANOVA FOR LOGICAL INTELLIGENCE SCORE

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	19.076	2	9.538	.349	Ns
Within Groups	2102.412	77	27.304		
Total	2121.488	79			

7.2.6. AGE AND SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference among the age groups in the average Social Intelligence Score.

7.2.6.1.MEAN-SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE SCORE

		Social intelligence score		
		Mean	S.D	NOR
Age	20-25 yrs	24.86	5.40	42
	26-30 yrs	24.71	4.89	28
	Above 30 yrs	25.90	5.47	10
TOTAL		24.94	5.18	80

7.2.6.2.ANOVA FOR SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE SCORE

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	10.930	2	5.465	.199	Ns
Within Groups	2109.757	77	27.399		
Total	2120.688	79			

7.2.7.AGE AND SOLITARY INTELLIGENCE

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference among the age groups in the average Solitary Intelligence Score.

7.2.7.1.MEAN-SOLITARY INTELLIGENCE SCORE

		Solitary intelligence score		
		Mean	S.D	NOR
Age	20-25 yrs	22.71	4.55	42
	26-30 yrs	22.29	4.08	28
	Above 30 yrs	22.30	3.02	10
TOTAL		22.51	4.19	80

7.2.7.2.ANOVA FOR SOLITARY INTELLIGENCE SCORE

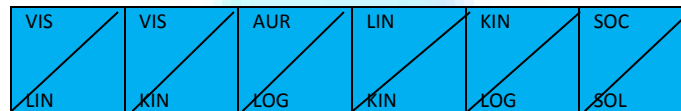
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.602	2	1.801	.100	Ns
Within Groups	1382.386	77	17.953		
Total	1385.988	79			

The following depicts the level of correlation in pictorial form

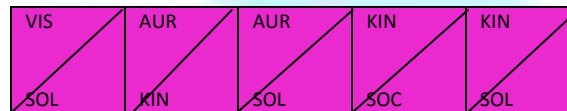
Very High Correlation High Correlation



Moderate Correlation



Low Correlation



r < 0.5 - Low Correlation
 0.5 > r < 0.6 - Moderate Correlation
 r > 0.6 - High Correlation

8. FINDINGS

S.NO	FACTORS		MAJOR FINDINGS
I	Personal factors ☞ Age ☞ Gender ☞ Marital status ☞ Educational Qualification ☞ Experience	% 52.5 63 71 50 51	20-25 years Male Single Post graduates 0-2 years
II	Training Program ☞ Recent Training program ☞ Benefits of Training program	% 70 31	Technical training Adapting to new technologies
III	Learning Styles ☞ Visual Intelligence ☞ Aural Intelligence ☞ Linguistic Intelligence ☞ Kinesthetic Intelligence ☞ Logical Intelligence ☞ Social Intelligence ☞ Solitary Intelligence	MSV 3.5 3.5 3.1 3.2 3.5 3.4 3.1	Agree that they like to use pictures and images while learning. Agree that they prefer using sound and music while learning. Neutral with reference to linguistic learning ie.they prefer words neither to speech or to write. Neutral to kinesthetic learning ie they neither prefer using body, hands or sense of touch in learning things. Agree that they learn things by logical reasoning system. Neutral to social learning ie they don't have any preference to learn with groups or with other people. Neutral with solitary learning. They don't prefer to work alone or to self study.
IV	AGE AND MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES ☞ Visual Intelligence ☞ Aural Intelligence ☞ Linguistic Intelligence ☞ Kinesthetic Intelligence ☞ Logical Intelligence ☞ Social Intelligence ☞ Solitary Intelligence	ANOVA 0.096 0.182 1.166 1.809 0.349 0.199 0.100	No significant difference among the age groups in the average Visual intelligence scores. No significant difference among the age groups in the average Aural intelligence scores. No significant difference among the age groups in the average Linguistic intelligence scores. No significant difference among the age groups in the average Kinesthetic intelligence scores. No significant difference among the age groups in the average Logical intelligence scores. No significant difference among the age groups in the average Social intelligence scores. No significant difference among the age groups in the average Solitary intelligence scores.

9. SUGGESTIONS

After analyzing various styles related to learning, it is observed that there is scope for improving the training materials accordingly. Keeping this view in mind the following suggestions are made for the trainers.

- ☞ Learners do not utilise a single style to the exclusion of others. They may have a preference for one way of learning, but can also learn via other ways. So flexible learning approaches to widen a range of teaching methods is necessary.
- ☞ Attempts need to be made to use a variety of materials and delivery methods to allow employees to at least have their learning style preference partly addressed. It would be impossible, in time as well as cost, to attempt to teach in a way that satisfies all learning style preferences to a full extent.
- ☞ When creating training programs, trainer should involve as many of the MI attributes as possible.
- Add lots of pictures, diagrams and graphs liberally before, during, and after the presentation of verbal material. Show films or use multimedia presentations, provide demonstrations and hands-on experience to the training guides.
- Make ample use of the white board or flip chart.

The trainer should get the participants doing physical activity as soon as possible. He should begin by orally introducing the main topic, and then give the class a tangible exercise within five minutes. Bang, right away, get them working on a realistic exercise. Involve the trainees in group projects. If appropriate, add a bit of competition: one side of the room against the other. But don't emphasize raw performance speed over learning and accuracy.

- ☞ Provide intervals in teaching-however brief-for students to think about what they have been told.
- ☞ Small-group brainstorming activities that take no more than five minutes are extremely effective for logical learners.
- ☞ Use group learning and team learning exercises to the greatest possible extent. Social learners generally learn best when they interact with others; if they are denied the opportunity to do so they are being deprived of their most effective learning tool.
- ☞ Male and female students have significantly different learning styles. It is the responsibility of the instructor to address this diversity of learning styles and develop appropriate learning approaches.
- ☞ Work areas need to be strategically designed so that employees are located near colleagues in the same technical or professional area.
- ☞ Instructors could choose a classroom full of people with similar learning styles and alter their training with that in mind. But good instructors will present information in a variety of ways.
- ☞ Benefits of having two trainers - There will be two perspectives; if one trainer cannot answer a question, the other one usually can; the trainees get a change of voice and style; one trainer may have a different learning and delivery style, so together trainers accommodate more learning styles; two trainers can spread themselves amongst trainees during the activities.
- ☞ Assessments for grade should include different modes of learning styles in order to fairly evaluate learning for employees who are coming from different quadrants.
- ☞ It is found that majority of the employees agreed that they have visual, aural and logical intelligences so teaching strategies for the intelligences are given below:

TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR THE VISUAL LEARNERS

- Provide lots of interesting visual material in a variety of formats.
- Make sure visual presentations are well-organized.
- Make handouts and all other written work as visually appealing as possible, and easily read.
- Make full use of a variety of technologies: computer, OHP, video camera, live video feeds/close circuit TV, photography, internet, etc.

TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR AURAL LEARNERS

- Re-phrase points, questions. Vary speed, volume, pitch, as appropriate, to help create interesting aural textures.
- Write down key points or key words to help avoid confusion due to pronunciation.
- During lessons, ensure auditory learners are in a position to hear well.
- Incorporate multimedia applications utilizing sounds, music, or speech (use tape recorders, computer sound cards/recording applications, musical instruments, etc.)

TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR LOGICAL LEARNERS

- Enable logical learners to perform mental arithmetic calculation.
- Create a process to measure something difficult.
- Analyse how a machine works; create a process; devise a strategy to achieve an aim; assess the value of a business or a proposition.

10. CONCLUSION

From the cohort of employees of the company it was found that Visual, Aural and Logical Intelligences were dominant with them. Also a high degree of correlation is found to exist between the Visual and Social intelligences. Hence it is suggested that the training materials emphasis on interaction coupled with pictorial and diagrammatic representations, multimedia applications utilising sounds and music and procedural flow of concepts need to be incorporated while designing the training materials to exploit the available human talent.

11. SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study stimulates further research on the nature of educational outcomes and their measurement-training effectiveness, performance measurement.

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