CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The current study was undertaken to estimate the implications of perceptual learning style preferences of management students and faculty on management pedagogy. The researcher collected 658 samples from the respondents, using the VARK inventory designed by Neil Fleming. The data was analyzed and the implications of perceptual learning style preferences on management pedagogy were studied within the scope of this research.

This chapter presents an overall summary and conclusions of the study.
Summary

Chapter Four, dealing with the profile of the respondents, which included management students in medium-sized (40 - 60 enrollment) groups from four Management Institutes and teachers from eighteen educational institutions, gave a description of the research population. The profile of the student-respondents was described on the bases of gender, electives chosen in the MBA course, work experience and educational qualification. While detailing the profile of the teacher-respondents, along with gender and experience, the institution where they worked was also taken into consideration.

Then, a justification was given for including the teachers in the survey and it was argued that the teachers decide on their methods of teaching depending on their as well as their student’s styles of learning, and students adapt learning strategies depending on their teacher’s styles of teaching or teaching methods.

The rationale behind the inclusion of teachers in the survey was explained briefly.
In Chapter Five results of research questions were listed and the results were discussed. The following research questions were raised in the current study:

- Are the management students active learners or reflective learners?
- Is the learning of management students gender-neutral?
- How can the different learning styles influence the learning challenges of management students?
- Does learning depend on management pedagogy?
- Is there a relationship between teaching experience and the learning preferences of management faculty?

The study found that all the management students are neither completely active learners nor are all completely reflective learners.
Because students do not depend completely on one particular learning style preference, that there is no evidence to justify that the learning of management students is gender-neutral, that different learning styles influence the learning challenges of management students in varied ways, that learning depends on management pedagogy, just as management pedagogy depends on the learning styles and strategies of students, and on the effective areas of learning style preferences of management students and faculty members, and that there is a relationship between teaching experience and the learning preferences of management faculty.

In Chapter Six an attempt was made to suggest an alternative pedagogical method for management students to reduce the difficulty level in understanding the learning concept, which could pave the way for an alternative learning model for management students, and provide future researchers with an area of study for research.

It was argued that by assessing student learning styles, the faculty can attempt to employ a variety of teaching techniques as alternative learning method in an effort to provide an optimal learning environment.
Next, the question: Why an alternative pedagogical method for management students was answered. It was pointed out that in the new, changing management education environment the contemporary learners need to acquire ‘new literacies’: digital literacy, media literacy and (particularly) information literacy, as the emergence of ubiquitous computing is creating new learning and pedagogical spaces. It was pointed out that management education and management pedagogy should consider ways for crossing physical, geographical, and even temporal boundaries, and therefore, pedagogical method as an alternative is important to both the management trainer and the individual management learner.

Since the management students come from diverse academic, educational and socio-cultural background with different levels of complexity in understanding the learning concept, two pedagogical methods, which can be properly adapted to suit the management students, were suggested namely, Method for Retention (VAR) and Method for Participation. (VAK).
After that the FOUR Rs of the Method for Retention namely, Reflection, Recall, Reconstruct and Repetition were listed.

Next, the Method for Participation with its three components namely, **Think, Pair and Share** was described, after which how a pedagogical method can be developed by Stretch and Sketch Method was explained. That is to provide a lengthy input of the information about a difficult topic for a slow learner to reduce the learning difficulty and to sketch the limited input of the information for a quick learner.

It was argued that the Instructional design should take into account as many of the factors (that influence teacher’s and student’s learning styles) as possible, namely,

- the three senses (auditory, visual and kinesthetic),
- the two reasoning types (deductive and inductive), and
- the two environments (intra-personal and inter-personal).
In chapter Seven data analyses, interpretations of the data, and the major research findings and their implications were discussed. The total number of student responses was tallied for each of the four sensory modalities (V, A, R, K) and for all possible combinations of the modalities (E.g.: VA, VAR, VARK, etc.).

Cross tabulation of learning preferences of male and female students, of male and female teachers, of specific multiple learning styles combination of students and teachers by gender, and cross tabulation of students’ learning styles by their professional /career preference was done.
The data indicated that there are no gender differences in the percentages of male and female students who presented unimodal or multiple modes of sensory preferences, that there was no significant difference between proportions of female students compared to male students in the specific multiple modes preferences, that the most frequent bi-modal combination was Aural and Read/write (AR) with 10.3% for both students and teachers, that there was a significant difference in multimodal learning preferences with the teaching experience, that there is a significant association between career preference and learning preferences, and that students prefer multi-modal learning styles than the single-mode.

Two pedagogical methods were suggested namely, Method for retention (VAR) and Method for participation (VAK).
Suggestions

Suggestions to the Management Faculty

The following suggestions are given to the Management Faculty.

- Management students adapt different learning styles and as such it is possible for instructors to use VARK inventory in their mode of teaching. For example, if the institute has provision for the use of OHP (Over Head Projector) they can try to employ more of Visual style of learning, or they can try out a mix up of visual and aural style of learning.

In the same way, kinesthetic mode of learning can also be used by way of arranging for exposure of management students to:

- how management actually goes on in large companies and multinational undertakings
- video conferencing
- group discussions
- role-play, and
- simulation games.
• One of the important components that contribute to students’ retention of interest in learning includes the teacher’s capability to adapt to different learning styles. Therefore by combining a convenient and comfortable classroom with easy and simple strategies, which appeal to a variety of learning styles, they should encourage and engage students who would otherwise be lost in the learning background.

• The faculty should realize that management students do not adapt a single learning style in any given situation and as such the faculty should try to co-ordinate different learning styles so that students will be able to get the maximum from the course curriculum, and thereby enable them to share information as well as the overall learning experience.
Suggestions To the Management Institutes

- Management institutes would do well to provide enough resources to get Visual (LCD projectors, Overhead projectors, Maps, etc) and Kinesthetic (Simulation exercises, Inter-group development programs, pilot studies, industrial interface, etc.) teaching tools to the management students to enable them to be in tune with the latest developments in the global management education.

- Even though visual and kinesthetic learning preferences have a greater role to play in the management education of students, still Aural and Read/Write Learning Style Preferences dominate the learning situation, as the present VARK study revealed. As such, management institutes which do not have the resources to provide their students with Visual and Kinesthetic aids, should try to build up their infrastructure as far as Aural and Read/Write teaching tools are concerned.
• As there is a significant difference in multimodal learning preferences with the teaching experience of the faculty, the management Institutes may conduct special and different faculty development programs for junior and senior management faculty, regularly, before the introduction of new management curriculum and updated courses.
Suggestions to the Management Students

- Exposure to more of Kinetic learning style can be useful to management students in planning their career, planning projects, and reaching the targets. Simulated conditions can be used by them to train the trainees under them, and to create simulated conditions kinesthetic mode of experience can be used.

- Emphasis on inter-personal relationships and effective communication can be strengthened through oral, aural and kinesthetic mode of learning.

- Reflective style of learning may be used in developing inter-personal relationships, which are quite important to management students when they pursue their career.


**Recommendations**

Direction for future research is given below.

The present study attempted to assess the implications of perceptual learning style preferences of management students and faculty on management pedagogy. Based on the data analyses, research findings and implications of the findings, the following areas of study are recommended for future research.

A study of relationships between student’s career preference and their learning preferences may be taken up to examine how management pedagogy could be modified to suit the learning demands of career-oriented students.

A demographic study of management students could be pursued to find out if students coming from different regions show different perceptual learning style preferences, and if they do, then, how can pedagogic strategies be suitably modified to facilitate learning in such demographically diverse groups.
The relationships between students’ perceptual learning style preferences, pedagogical methods and student performance are to be researched. For example, if students are placed in groups, how might performance and learning outcomes differ between groups with a unimodal learning style and those with a multimodal learning style?

What about the significant difference in multimodal learning preferences with the teaching experience of the faculty? How faculty development programs can be designed and executed depending on the difference in multimodal learning preferences of the faculty with their teaching experience could prove to be useful for future researchers.

Another area of future research could be to examine if students perceptual learning style preferences change as they advance academically: Is a change visible as they advance from I Year MBA to II Year MBA Course, or an M.Phil Course? This could be done by conducting studies that track learning styles of students over time or other studies that contrast the learning styles of students at various stages of an academic program.
Future research should examine whether, in the present changing learning and teaching scenario, management students depend more on class-room lectures (Aural) or whether they tend to depend more on library based/internet based (Read/write or Visual) learning preferences.

At present there exists a complex research gap between the students’ use of Active and Reflective learning process. There is no proper measuring tool at present to find out whether a student’s high academic achievement is because of his reflective learning strategy viz. going to the library and referring to study materials individually or his active learning strategy viz. group discussion, knowledge sharing, informative interaction and group participation.
Conclusions

When we look into some of the premier management institutes like Harvard Business School or London Business School, the industry-academic interaction becomes the major learning style. For example:- If an industrial conflict occurs in any top multinational company, this problem is immediately conveyed to the B-Schools whereby the same problem statement is converted to an assignment or case study for the management students. Here the exposure given to the students to understand the industrial conflict is very unique and distinct. If the students couldn’t get the core problem, all the students are taken by flight to the problem location of the Multinational Company so that they will interact with the company employees, counsel the managers of different departments and analyze the root cause of the problem. This method of learning style may not be applied in all management institutes as it incurs heavy expenditure.
Hence, it is obvious that the learning style that is adapted by the Indian management institutes is content based where the students are overloaded with books and burdened with heavy classroom assignments and the western learning style is skill based where the students are given a pragmatic approach.

Let us take a common example of learning to cook a food item, say pizza, by an Indian citizen as the cuisine is from the West.

Different people adapt different learning styles according to their personal behavior.

Style 1: Preparing pizza by purchasing a cookery book where all the step by step guidelines are given.

Style 2: Preparing pizza by inviting a friend or a colleague who knows to prepare it perfectly.

Style 3: Preparing pizza by watching a cookery program on TV, which gives the visual insight with ingredients.

Style 4: Preparing pizza independently without any help.
In all the above 4 styles of experimentations, different people will adapt different learning styles based on their comfortability.

A person who is hesitant to read, may adapt the style 3 (Visual) to prepare the pizza. A person who has a migraine problem may not watch TV, thereby he may adapt the style 1 (Read/Write).

An extrovert person may like to learn the pizza preparation by choosing the style 2 (Aural).

An Introvert who is totally self-isolated may attempt to prepare pizza in his own natural way without anybody’s help, obviously he will be in the category of style 4 (Kinesthetic).

From the above example we can infer that different people are related to one or more learning styles based on their behavior and willingness to learn.

In some management institutes, the students’ learning style is dependent on the industrial requirements and the future expectations regarding the development in the business.
The objective of business development may be economy or efficiency or effectiveness. Based on these industrial requirements, the students will do a survey of what exactly is needed by the companies, by having a lot of industrial visits, and then they will decide on a proper learning style.

Therefore the aspect of learning style by management students varies from country to country, from city to city and town to town according to the situation, the perception and the culture in which they are related to both business and social environment.

As the global management education scenario is changing rapidly, management students should try to adapt visual and kinesthetic learning style preferences, as these would make them less dependent on the faculty and the library of the institute. At the same time, they can get the practical exposure to be self-equipped before entering any real-time working environment. Hence it will be a pre-defined preparation to approach the modern competitive business world.
By considering only the Aural and Read/write learning preferences, students can gain more and more information but will not gain practical experience and latest industrial exposure if the other two learning style preferences are overlooked. This may, in turn, affect their own career development. Hence, a judicious combination of all the four learning styles may be considered in a diverse learning environment.

Research in Management pedagogy has not kept pace with research on other areas of management like human resource management, marketing or finance. This study was an attempt to contribute to this area with its focus on the implications of perceptual learning style preferences of management students and faculty on management pedagogy. After going through the data analyses and research findings the following remarks are made.
According to the results of this study, management faculty encounter a broad variety of learning styles in today’s classrooms. This is an academic challenge for them as they have to adapt multimodal instructional methods to match the variety of students’ learning styles, as both male and female students prefer multimodal learning preferences more than unimodal learning preferences and present multiple sensory modalities (tri-mode and multi-mode).

A great variation in learning preferences is found in the management classroom and this has important implications and consequences for instruction in management schools. Moreover, the significant difference found in multimodal learning preferences with the teaching experience could have important implications for the planners of faculty development programs, just as the significant association between a student’s career preference and his learning preferences is an important factor to be considered in curriculum design and choice of pedagogical spaces.
Today’s modern classrooms enhance the learning styles of students with the advent of laptop computers, networks, video conferencing, distance learning through VSAT, the Internet and wireless technologies. The role of technology has become quite significant in a constantly changing management educational scenario. Computer technology provides students and teachers with unprecedented opportunities to transform the teaching and learning process. Whether it has positive implications on the learning or not remains incomplete. This is a point to be taken up for discussion by future scholars and research students who work in a global academic environment where marketability of certain topics taught in the management courses changes at a very fast pace and where the faculty have to work hard to keep themselves updated academically, pedagogically and intellectually with the latest trends in management education.