

DIFFERENCES IN KOLB'S LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCES: AN EXAMINATION OF FOUR BUSINESS DISCIPLINES

*John Knue, Yongxian Tan, Jonathan Trower, Hankamer School of Business, Baylor University,
One Bear Place #98005, Waco, TX 76798, 254-710-4754, jonathan_trower@baylor.edu*

ABSTRACT

According to Kolb's Experiential Learning Model [1], there are four distinctive stages in the learning cycle: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. Although a student goes through all four stages in the process of learning, he may have a preference for some stages over others. Kolb's Learning Style Inventory defines learning styles based on such preferences. Knowledge about learning styles is important for educators because students are most effectively taught by teaching methods that match their learning styles.

The objective of this study is to explore the learning style preferences of business majors in several different academic disciplines. The goal of this research is to see if there are differences in preferred learning style by academic discipline, and to explore whether learning style also differs by grade level. If significant differences are found, this could have profound impacts on how students should be taught in core classes in various academic disciplines, and how preferred learning styles should be stimulated in lower-level and upper-level courses across disciplines.

METHODOLOGY

A survey was conducted to obtain preferred learning styles [1] from over 700 undergraduate business students over the span of approximately three years. These students were all enrolled in a course in training and development, which is taken by students from a wide variety of academic business majors. Chi-square analysis will be used to evaluate whether there is a significant difference in preferred learning style by academic major, and within major, by class rank.

Expected Outcomes

Based on the meta-analysis by Loo [2] and our preliminary data analysis, we expect to find that learning styles vary by academic major. While Loo looked at only three academic majors – Finance, Accounting, and Marketing, we have added Information Systems to our analysis (actually, many more majors were included in our sample, but their overall sample size was too small for further analysis). Furthermore, we have found some preliminary evidence that learning styles may vary by grade classification, an area that was not explored by Loo.

REFERENCES

- [1] Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- [2] Loo, R. (2002). A meta-analytic examination of Kolb's learning style preferences among business majors. *Journal Of Education For Business*. Washington: May/June 2002. Vol. 77, Iss. 5, p. 252-256.