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ABSTRACT

This paper presents research findings that address the relationship of self-directed learning with culture, learning styles, and creativity. Three doctoral dissertations at Tufts University have explored issues related to self-directed learning. The first, by L. Chuprina, investigated the relationship between self-directed learning readiness and cross-cultural adaptability among 832 U.S. expatriate managers working for 1 company using measures of self-directed learning and cross-cultural adaptability. Findings indicate that self-directed learning skills can be the factors that foster cross-cultural adaptability. A second study, by J. Canipe, examined the relationship between self-directed learning readiness and learning styles in 260 graduate students. Evidence from this study suggests that self-directed learning readiness occurs among all four learning styles, and that self-directed learning readiness appears to be an amalgamation of learning styles and modes of learning. The third study, by B. Cox, explored the relationship between creativity and self-directed learning readiness in 114 community college students. Connections between self-directed learning and creativity were reconfirmed by this study. The results of all three studies add to the knowledge of the relationship of self-directed learning to culture, learning styles, and creativity for adult learners. (Contains 14 references.) (SLD)

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Investigating Self-Directed Learning In Culture, Learning Styles, and Creativity

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Abstract: After three decades of research, Self-Directed Learning has become a foundational concept of Adult Education. This paper presents research findings that address the relationship of Self-Directed Learning with culture, learning styles, and creativity.

Self-directed learning has long been recognized as an important area of study in adult education. Its roots have been traced from Descartes and Socrates and more recently, to Frank Lloyd Wright and Malcolm X, as a method of learning in which an individual takes responsibility for his or her own learning (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991). Self-directed learning is a popular theme since many adults desire to continue learning throughout their lives and enjoy choosing what to learn and how to learn it (Garrison, 1997). As Knowles (1975) stated, self- directed learning is not an educational fad, but a "basic human competence—the ability to learn on one's own" (p. 17). Furthermore, Brockett and Hiemstra (1991) reported that self-directed learning is a broad term that encompasses such factors as "the learner taking primary responsibility for planning, implementing, and evaluating learning," as well as "personality characteristics that predispose one toward accepting responsibility for one's thoughts and actions as a learner" (p. 29).

As part of an ongoing educational research group at the University of Tennessee that explores issues relating to self-directed learning, three doctoral dissertations have emerged, as well as several conference presentations, journal articles, and other dissertations in the formative stages. What follows represents the procedures, methods, and findings of the completed dissertations.

Self-Directed Learning And Cultural Adaptability In The Global Society

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between self-directed learning readiness and cross-cultural adaptability among U.S. expatriate managers with the help of the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale by Guglielmino (1977) and the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory by Kelley and Meyers (1992). The found strong relationship between the two phenomena indicates that self-directed learning skills can be the factors that foster cross-cultural adaptability. In the age of globalization, it is essential for educators to identify factors that can aid in the development of cross-cultural adaptability for designing more effective programs and training techniques.

The study was designed to investigate the relationships between self-directed learning readiness as measured by the SDLRS (Guglielmino, 1977) and four factors that constitute cross-cultural adaptability, as measured by the CCAI (Kelley & Meyers, 1992): emotional resilience, flexibility/openness, perceptual acuity, and personal autonomy. The two questionnaires (the SDLRS by Guglielmino, 1977 and the CCAI by Kelley and Meyers, 1992), used to investigate the research questions, are reliable instruments. Their reliability coefficients are higher than or

close to .60. In 1992, Durr documented 64 studies with the SDLRS. Since the creation of the SDLRS, it has been employed in about 90 studies. The CCAI has been used in more than 25 studies and shown high validity.

The study also investigated a profile of an effective self-directed learner with the help of demographic questionnaire. Through the demographic questionnaire, information was gathered about the following characteristics of the participants: gender, level of education, major or specialization, level of management position, age, prior international experience, length of stay overseas, family presence in the international assignment, the desire to undertake an international assignment again, level of personal satisfaction, level of job satisfaction, level of problem solving, degree of routine work, and degree of change.

The respondents for this study are employees of a large global electronics development and manufacturing corporation, Motorola, with headquarters located in the U.S.A. and over 1,100 locations in 45 countries. Since 1990, 832 U.S. employees from Motorola have served in international expatriate assignments. Therefore, the population for this study was 832 expatriates from Motorola. One hundred and fifty surveys were sent to randomly selected employees from this population. The requirements for selection were as follows: the participants should be native English speakers to avoid difficulties in understanding the questionnaires; they should work in a management position; and they must have held their international assignment longer than six months. Those who chose to participate by responding to the questionnaires comprised the sample for the study. A total of 56 individuals completed the questionnaires for a response rate of 37.3%.

A Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient ($r = .692$) was calculated between total scores on the SDLRS and the CCAI. This correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed). In this case, $p = .000$. The magnitude of this relationship can be expressed with r-square that equals .478, or about 48%. In other words, 48% of the variability in the CCAI can be explained by the SDLRS, and vice versa. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant relationship between self-directed learning readiness and cross-cultural adaptability in U.S. expatriate managers.

The total score of the SDLRS and subscores of the four factors of the CCAI were used to calculate the Pearson Moment Correlation coefficient for each relationship. There is a significant relationship between self-directed learning readiness and each factor of the CCAI. In other words, as the SDLRS score increases, the subscores of the CCAI tend to increase. Similarly, as subscores of the CCAI increase, the total SDLRS score increases.

Spearman Rank Order Correlation was used to calculate a coefficient with each relationship, because the demographic data are ordinal rather than interval. The Spearman's Rank Order Correlation coefficient was calculated on the basis of correlations between the total scores in the SDLRS and selected demographic variables, as well as between the CCAI and selected demographic variables. The total score on the SDLRS and the selected demographic variables are not significantly related. Cross-cultural adaptability is significantly related to one's level of

education. At the same time, there is no significant relationship between cross-cultural adaptability and such demographic variables as age, management level, and length of stay abroad.

A strong correlation between self-directed learning readiness and cross-cultural adaptability that was found in this research indicates that SDL may be a good measure to guide expatriate selection. That is, a high total score on the SDLRS may be a predictor of the presence of a high level of cross-cultural adaptability among U.S. managers. This means that in order to be effective with an international assignment, expatriates need to be able to learn, that is to be self-directed in learning. The ability to learn can be enhanced by education or training. Therefore, it is important to show the relationship between learning/teaching methods and adaptability in addition to personal characteristics of the participants involved in cross-cultural adaptation processes. Theoretically, personal (qualities) and situational variables (facilitation of the learning process and self-direction) in combination can produce a potential for cross-cultural success.

Understanding one's own worldview is a way to understanding others' views. As Ricard (1996) puts it, "an understanding of culture as related to ourselves is the beginning of an understanding of culture as related to others" (p. 31). Both the SDLRS and CCAI include factors measuring the understanding of personal learning styles, preferences, values and beliefs. Therefore, knowledge provided by the study of the relationships between self-directed learning readiness and the four factors of the Cross -Cultural Adaptability Inventory may suggest some possible suggestions that may improve expatriate performance by helping candidates for overseas assignments understand themselves.

As this study shows, self-directed learning readiness can be considered a quality that is associated with cross-cultural assignment success. The ability to learn, to understand self and to understand what it takes to successfully adapt to another culture deserve particular attention of researchers and practitioners (Chuprina, 2001, p. 114).

Self-Directed Learning And Learning Styles

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between self-directed learning readiness and learning styles. The Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS), developed by L. M. Guglielmino (1977), and the Learning Style Inventory (LSI) developed by D. Kolb (1984), were administered as a means of exploring the relationship between the two variables. Self-directed learning readiness in this study appears to occur across all learning styles, instead of being identified with a particular learning style.

For the most part, self-directed learning readiness appears to occur across all modes of learning, and this relationship between the SDLRS and the modes of learning of the LSI can be described as an amalgamation. Furthermore, this relationship could perhaps be described as "apples and oranges." Yet, the lack of strong relationships and the lack of significant differences may also suggest that self-directed learning readiness is a part of all learning styles and all the modes of learning and does not relate to one particular learning style or mode of leaning.

The cluster sample for this study was comprised of 260 graduate students representing the population consisting of 852 graduate students who were enrolled in the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences at Morehead State University in Morehead, Kentucky during spring semester of 2001. The majority of the participants were white females between the ages of 25 and 34, with an average family income of more than $50,000. These students completed the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale designed by Lucy Guglielmino (1977), David Kolb's (1984) Learning Style Inventory and the Demographic Questionnaire.

This study combined the use of two designs, correlational and causal-comparative. The causal-comparative design was used to investigate whether a significant relationship exists between self-directed learning readiness and learning styles as defined by Kolb. The correlational design was used to examine the correlation between the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale and each of the modes of learning as indicated by the Learning Style Inventory. One-way analysis of variance, Scheffe's post hoc multiple comparison test, Duncan's multiple range test, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, and Spearman's rho were statistical procedures utilized to answer the research questions in this study.

While the nature of the relationship between self-directed learning and learning styles may need refining, evidence from this study suggests that self-directed learning readiness occurs among all four learning styles- diverger, accommodator, assimilator, and converger. More importantly, however, this study indicates that self-directed learning readiness is more of an amalgamation of learning styles and modes of learning- reflective observation, active experimentation, concrete experience, and abstract conceptualization. Also, this is consistent with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory of growth and development, which characterizes self-directedness as the ability to incorporate all four learning styles into the learning process. Such proficiency leads to integrativeness, flexibility, and adaptability in learning (Canipe, 2001, p. 97).

Self-Directed Learning and Creativity

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between creativity and self-directed learning readiness. Participants were administered the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS), the Khatena Torrance Creative Perception Inventory (KTCPI), and a demographic questionnaire. A significant moderate positive correlation was found between creativity and self-directed learning readiness. There were also significant positive correlations between self-directed learning readiness and the components of the KTCPI (SAM and WKOPAY?). The SAM and WKOPAY? had a moderate positive correlation. There were significant positive correlations, ranging from moderate to weak, between self-directed learning readiness and seven of the 11 factors of the KTCPI.

The results suggest that there is a relationship between creativity and self-directed learning readiness, which reinforces earlier accounts. It is possible that these related attributes, especially if used together, will help the achievement of adult community college students.

The population for this study was comprised of evening school students at Walters State Community College. Walters State has a main campus based in Morristown, Tennessee, and three branch campuses in Greeneville, New Tazewell, and Sevierville. Walters State is a

comprehensive community college serving 10 predominantly rural counties in East Tennessee with a student population of around 6000 (Cox, 2002, p. 80).

Cluster sampling was used as the participants were selected from groups of students who were enrolled in classes to earn a degree or certification from Walters State or who were taking non-degree classes. The customary technique is to select several clusters/sites randomly and then choose potential participants from the selected clusters. The cluster sample was obtained from classes at the main campus in Morristown and at the branch campuses in Greeneville, New Tazewell, and Sevierville. The final sample consisted of 114 students (Cox, 2002, p. 81).

These participants complied with requirements of the University of Tennessee for study participation and were at least 18 years of age. Approval of the proposed research was obtained from the community college and the necessary procedures for a review of the proposed research were completed at Walters State. Consent from instructors and students was also obtained to use part of their class time (Cox, 2002, p. 92).

A correlational/ex post facto design was used. The study was correlational because it examined the association or degree of relationship among the variables. The specific purpose of this research was to determine the relationship between creativity and self-directed learning.

Characteristics of the participants were categorized by using frequencies and percentages. Means, standard deviations, and ranges were used to portray the general scores obtained on the KTCPI and the SDLRS. Coefficient of determination, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient, multiple linear regression, Analysis of Variances (ANOVA), and Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) were used in data analysis where appropriate.

Connections between self-directed learning and creativity have been reconfirmed in this study. "Creative activity could be described as a type of learning process where the teacher and pupil are located in the same individual" (Koestler, 1964). This insightful observation was made by a novelist and essayist, neither an educator nor psychologist, and yet affirms the importance of the connection between self-directed learning and creativity (Cox, 2002, p. 160).

Conclusion

It is obvious that the results of these three research studies add to the knowledge of the relationship of self-directed learning to culture, learning styles, and creativity for the participants of these studies. Together, these studies indicate that a high level of self-directed learning readiness is a positive factor in cultural adaptability, learning across learning styles and creativity. According to Chuprina, the found strong relationship between the two phenomena indicates that self-directed learning skills can be the factors that foster cross-cultural adaptability. For Canipe, self-directed learning readiness in this study appears to occur across all learning styles, instead of being identified with a particular learning style. As presented by Cox, the results suggest that there is a relationship between creativity and self-directed learning readiness, which reinforces earlier accounts.

All three studies indicate that there is a need for more research of the relationships between self-directed learning and culture, learning styles, and creativity. All three mention the need for additional or alternative instruments to the SDLRS for measures of self-directed learning readiness. All of the studies express the need for replication of these studies with participants from a variety of age groups, ethnic groups, organizations, and professions. Finally there is a need for qualitative studies of the relationships of self-directed learning to culture, learning styles, and creativity.

Self-directed learning has long been recognized as an important area of study in adult education. The studies presented in this paper are a few of many that have been completed in numerous areas of adult education. To focus on one area in particular, there were ten studies in the 2002 Adult Education Research Conference that include self-directed learning, self-directed learners, self-directedness, and self-directed studies. There are many more available in electronic and other databases.

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