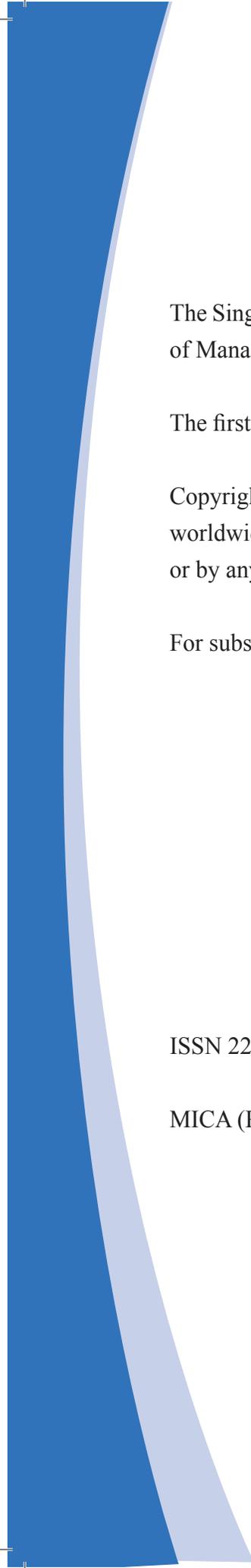






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## EDITORIAL COMMENT

Academic research, in so far as it is a scientific endeavour, is premised on the possibility of prediction and control by the discovery/unearthing of the governing quantitative relationships among variables/subjects being investigated.

While the battle cry of the Enlightenment project was ‘Dare To Know’, we must, in the process, be aware that human knowing is often exposed to the dangers of totalising tendencies by zealous advocates of a ‘one true interpretation only’ school. A further challenge is not to allow knowing to stay only at the conceptual level, accentuating the sterility of a theoretical model that has no or little practical utility.

In this context, the centrality of dialogue is a useful corrective to achieve inter-subjective understanding. Thus conversational dialogue is an integral, essential part of moving a work-in-progress towards some degree of finitude. Understanding is always a dialogic, practical and situated activity. It gains a voice when it becomes conversational, interpretive and translative through and within the domain of a specific contemporary situation.

We invite readers to enter into this conversation as they interact with the articles in this issue. These include Janson’s study of strategic initiatives and their implementation effectiveness, Manodip’s attempt to link strategic HR initiatives to industry types and management levels, Lalit’s investigations into personality traits and youth entrepreneurship and Selvi’s investigation into the relationship between learning style preferences and learning effectiveness in a multi-cultural classroom.

The authors of these articles can be contacted via their email addresses listed in the biodata section at the end of the journal.

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**“We were young, but we had good advice and good ideas and lots of enthusiasm.”**

*– Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft Corporation*

# Personality Traits Influencing Youth Entrepreneurship – An Empirical Study in Uttarakhand State, India

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## Abstract

Career selection is one of many important choices students make in determining their future plans and this decision will impact them throughout their lives. A number of factors play a role in deciding the choice of a career. Personality as a whole has its own impact on choice of a career for an individual. Some of the traits may be positive for some professions while others may be negative for other professions. This paper attempts to examine the effects of some of the personality factors of students on their choice of becoming an entrepreneur. Primary data was collected from a sample of 530 final year students of professional courses in Uttarakhand who were interviewed and assessed on various personality factors. The key research objective of the study was to develop and empirically link general personality characteristics of students and their career intention upon completion of their professional course. The results from this study show that personality factors such as level of faith and commitment, drive and determination, level of energy and level of tolerance of risk and uncertainty influence a student's decision to become an entrepreneur. However, personality factors of leadership and passion are seen to be independent factors.

**Keywords:** Personality Traits & Youth Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship, Youth Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship in Uttarakhand, Career Intentions.

## Introduction

Every student is unique in his personality, nature and preferences. These traits in turn depend on a number of factors like family and social influences, education, culture, environment at home and at the school and college etc. What makes someone an entrepreneur is a question that has aroused the curiosity of the layman as well as researchers for many years, but can such personality traits be identified or is it simply a socially constructed phenomenon? Entrepreneurs are typically seen to be focused, confident, aggressive, risk takers, dominant, optimist, leaders, intelligent, having high levels of energy, drive and determination. Any or all of those traits can be found not only in entrepreneurs but also in employees, corporate executives, teachers, or people in other professions. Of course, these personality traits would prove to be helpful if one has taken the path of entrepreneurship but does the presence of these traits also help one decide his/her choice of career especially in becoming an entrepreneur? Is there any influence of these personality traits on a student's decision towards his career? Despite 40 years of entrepreneurship research, little has been learned about the personal characteristics influencing youth entrepreneurship. This research is an attempt to identify personality differences in youth that influence them towards entrepreneurship.

## Literature Review

The literature review for this study has been divided into two parts. In the first part, we focus on finding out the possible effects of personality traits on the career choice decision with special reference to entrepreneurship and in the second part we focus on developing our understanding on six personality characteristics which are the important elements in this research. Holland's (1997) theory proposes that people are attracted to work environments that conform to their personality orientation. Holland (1997) referred to the alignment between personality and work environment as congruence. He proposed that individuals, whose personalities are poorly matched to their work environments, are more likely to change careers than their congruent counterparts. The personality of entrepreneurs may be crucial for their small firm-related decisions (Antonicic *et al.*, 2008). Entrepreneurship is also based on the personality of the entrepreneur (Baum *et al.*, 2007). Gartner (1988) noted several personal antecedents (need for achievement, locus of control, risk-taking propensity, autonomy, commitment, perseverance, vision, creativity, single-mindedness, popularity, physical attractiveness, sociability, intelligence, decisiveness, and diplomacy) of entrepreneurial start-up and performance but expressed doubts in the usefulness of entrepreneurship personality research. Newer reviews and evaluations of entrepreneurship personality research

(Baum *et al.*, 2007; Frese & Rauch, 2007; Chell, 2008) suggest that personality traits of entrepreneurs may be important for entrepreneurship. Autonomy or independence may be important motivators for entrepreneurship (Collins & Moore, 1964). Among other factors, the personality traits of the entrepreneur may explain entrepreneurial failure (Shepherd & Wiklund, 2006). Nevertheless, although personality traits have a direct effect on entrepreneurial performance measures (Ciavarella *et al.*, 2004; Baron & Markman, 2005; Frese & Rauch, 2007a; Zhao *et al.* 2010) factors which moderate the trait performance relationship rarely have been investigated in entrepreneurship research (Frese & Rauch, 2007a; Hisrich *et al.*, 2007; Zhao *et al.*, 2010). The link between personality traits and entrepreneurial performance is empirically well founded (Frese & Rauch, 2007, 2007a; Zhao *et al.*, 2010). In addition, contextual factors may also have a moderating effect on an entrepreneur's personality on firm success though these relationships are sparsely investigated (Frese & Rauch, 2007a). Innovative entrepreneurship, which may be defined as the implementation of novel business ideas, is characterized by lack of information on customer behaviour, uncertainty regarding production processes or not assessable competition (Koellinger, 2008). Splaver (1977) further states that "personality" plays an important role in the choice of the right career. Students who are self-motivated are likely to investigate career possibilities from early on in their lives, while procrastinating types will wait until they are compelled to decide. Students must take seriously the role grades play in limiting opportunities in the future. Splaver (1977) went on to say, "It is important for you to have a good understanding of yourself, your personality, if you are to make intelligent career plans."

In this study, we have identified six important personality factors that are found to play a significant role in entrepreneurial success and entrepreneurial action and have tried to relate them with the entrepreneurial intentions of the youth. The six personality factor identified are - passion, level of faith & commitment, level of tolerance of risk and uncertainty, level of leadership, level of drive & determination and level of energy.

#### *a. Passion*

Cardon *et al.* (2005) suggest that entrepreneurship can be thought of as a "tale of passion" and Smilor (1997) goes as far as to say that passion is "perhaps the most observed phenomenon of the entrepreneurial process". Cardon *et al.* (2009) conceptualize entrepreneurial passion as being consciously accessible, intense positive feelings related to the entrepreneurial activities that are meaningful and salient to the self-identity of the entrepreneur.

#### *b. Level of Faith & Commitment*

Commitment has been conceptualized as a psychological state or frame of mind which impels an individual towards a course of action of relevance to one or more

targets (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). As such, it is a psychological attachment, bond, or attitude that links an individual to an idea or entity (or other foci) and subsequently influences behavior in ways that are consistent with that idea or entity (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). According to Gartner (1989), commitment is a crucial component to any cognitive view of the entrepreneur.

#### *c. Level of Tolerance of Risk and Uncertainty*

Tolerance of uncertainty is an emotional reaction to ambiguity. A low tolerance results in stress and unpleasantness in a complex situation. Individuals with high tolerance, on the contrary, find such situations desirable and challenging. Therefore, individuals with high tolerance would expose themselves to higher risks than individuals with low tolerance, who prefer well-known and familiar situations. Entrepreneurs are found to have somewhat greater degree of tolerance than managers (Scherer, 1982). Risk taking is considered to be an important personality trait of an entrepreneur (Knight, 1921; Mill, 1954; Gürol & Atsan, 2006). However, Chell. et al., 1991 makes clear that for entrepreneurial success it might be wise not to maximize the riskiness of investments.

#### *d. Level of Leadership*

As postulated by Hollander (1978), leadership is a process of influence between a leader and those who are followers. Entrepreneurial leaders have specific personal and functional competencies that empower them to successfully lead entrepreneurial endeavors either in their own new venture or in established organisations (Gupta *et al.*, 2004; Swiercz & Lydon, 2002). Of all the personal characteristics identified for entrepreneurial leaders, proactiveness, innovativeness and risk taking are the most cited in the literature (Chen, 2007; Surie & Ashley, 2008; Gupta *et al.*, 2004; Kuratko, 2007). Sambasivan *et al.* (2009) and Baron (2007) have stressed upon the critical importance and necessity of entrepreneurial leadership competencies in new venture creation, performance and success.

#### *e. Level of Drive & Determination*

Self determination theory is an approach to human motivation and personality that highlights the importance of a person's inner resources for personality development and behavioural self-regulation (Ryan *et al.*, 1997). Three distinct psychological needs that underpin whether an individual can be identified as self-determined are the needs for competence (White, 1963; Harter, 1978), the need to relate to others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), and the need for autonomy (Deci, 1972). Individuals base their self determination on their values (Schwartz, 1992) and also on natural inclinations, interests and curiosities. (Deci, 1972; Deci & Ryan 1985)

#### *f. Level of Energy*

Energy level is an individual's characteristic overall level of functioning in carrying out day to day activities. A person scoring high on energy level is expected to be energetic in a variety of self-selected tasks and to demonstrate appreciable enthusiasm and endurance. Entrepreneurs are described as having high energy levels, working the long hours associated with the founding and management of enterprises (Begley & Boyd, 1987; Sexton & Bowman, 1983)

## **The Need for Study**

In spite of the increasing recognition of entrepreneurship as a source of job creation, regional development, and economic dynamism in a rapidly globalising world, there has been no systematic attempt to look at it from a youth angle. Youth entrepreneurship is fast becoming a trend not only in developed countries but also in developing countries like India. However, the same trend does not seem to be seen in Uttarakhand. The poor rate of entrepreneurship in the Uttarakhand state may be attributed to several different factors. In 2008, the state government initiated the Special Integrated Industrial Promotion Policy to promote investments and local entrepreneurship as part of a larger industrial development programme for hilly and remote areas of Uttarakhand state. The major provisions under the policy include providing 25% subsidy on investment in plant and machinery. In case of mega projects, 50% cost of infrastructure is met by state. The government reimburses 75% of the expenses incurred on Intellectual property rights, ISO Certifications, ISI Certifications, Quality marking, FPO Licenses and Trademarks to a maximum of Rs. 1 Lakh (100,000 rupees). All new industrial units engaged in manufacturing and production of goods including the industrial enterprises engaged in the activities in service sector are entitled for 100% rebate on electric bills for a period of ten years. The government has also offered 6% interest subsidy up to a maximum of Rs. 5 Lakhs. Value Added Tax is reimbursed up to 90%. Despite the state government providing a host of incentives for industrial development, the rate of youth entrepreneurship remains low. Educated, skilled and unskilled youth need to turn to entrepreneurship. According to a survey, there are over 7 Lakhs unemployed youngsters who are registered with different unemployment exchanges in the Uttarakhand state but are desperate to take up any job. Presently, there is also a general lack of accurate and systematic data on youth, especially those related to youth entrepreneurship. If we can identify the personality factors associated with the desire of an individual to become an entrepreneur, we may be able to develop these factors in the school and home. Educational institutions, teachers, mentors and even parents can work on traits which influence entrepreneurship among the students.

## Objective of the Study

This study examines the effect of personality factors of students on their choice of becoming an entrepreneur.

## Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

H0 1: The personality factor “Level of passion” of a student has no influence on the decision of a student to take up entrepreneurship as a career choice.

H0 2: The personality factor “Level of faith & commitment” has no influence on the decision of a student to take up entrepreneurship as a career choice.

H0 3: The personality factor “Level of tolerance of risk and uncertainty” has no influence on the decision of a student to take up entrepreneurship as a career choice.

H0 4: The personality factor “Level of leadership” has no influence on the decision of a student to take up entrepreneurship as a career choice.

H0 5: The personality factor “Level of drive & determination” has no influence on the decision of a student to take up entrepreneurship as a career choice.

H0 6: The personality factor “Level of energy” has no influence on the decision of a student to take up entrepreneurship as a career choice.

## Methodology

Quantitative research is centred on the quantification of relationships between variables. This approach is coupled with deductive reasoning to provide the least complicated explanation and a statement of statistical probability. The quantitative approach provides a more detailed description of a phenomenon by giving a generalization of the gathered data with tentative synthesized interpretations. The quantitative approach helps to minimise bias in gathering and presenting research data by establishing very specific research problem and terms. Subjectivity of

judgment is reduced and conclusions, discussion and experimentation are more likely to be objective. Variables, both dependent and independent are clearly and precisely specified.

A self-administered questionnaire was developed and used as the main data-gathering instrument for this study. It contained a ten-statement scale derived from Roberts (2010) to determine the strength of specified psychological factors measuring the entrepreneurial 'mindset' or attitudes, traits and characteristics associated with success in leadership. The 5-point scale used indicate the level of agreement/disagreement, with a score of 1 (strongly agree and 5 points for strongly disagree. Since the study tends to evaluate the preferred career choices of students of professional courses, the target respondents were the students studying in B.Tech., MBA, PGDM, BHM, B.Pharm. and MCA, who are in the final year of their degree courses in the Uttarakhand region. The sampling method used in this research is proportionate stratified sampling. In this type of sampling, each stratum is properly represented so that the sample size drawn from the stratum is proportionate to the stratum's share of the total population. This approach is considered to be more popular than other stratified sampling procedure because it is higher in statistical efficiency compared to simple random sample. It provides a self-weighting sample; the population mean or proportion can be estimated simply by calculating the mean or proportion of all sample cases, eliminating the weighting of responses. The total number of the target respondents was nearly 20,300, broadly divided into two categories. Category 1 consists of students who have studied Entrepreneurship as a subject in their professional course, (approximately 15%) with the other category comprising students who did who enrol for the Entrepreneurship subject (about 85%). Given that those from population size falls in the range of 20,000, the sample size for a 95% confidence level when parameter in population is assumed to be over 85% or under 15%, and with a reliability of  $\pm 3\%$  the sample size suggested is 530 (Zikmund, 2003). Accordingly, the sample size for this research is 530. Based on the total number of students in Uttarakhand state of each of the following courses – MBA, MCA, B.Tech., B.Pharm and BHM&CT, a conversion exercise was carried out to determine the equivalent ratio of the sample size and finally separate samples were drawn from each course. A similar process was used to draw samples from the Government institutions and private institutions as well and also from the institutions present in the Garhwal & Kumaun regions.

## Data Analysis & Findings

We have examined each of the hypothesis as given below:

H0 1. The personality factor “Level of passion” of a student has no influence on his decision to take up entrepreneurship as a career choice.

To test the above hypothesis, the researcher decided to apply the chi-square test to determine the strength of this personality factor. Scores of between 10 to 100 were obtained and used to assess the level of the personality factor. Table 1 indicates the level of passion against the score of a student.

**Table 1: Student’s Level of Passion vis-à-vis the score of the student**

Score of the student	Level of passion
10 – 30	Strong
31 – 70	Moderate
71 – 100	Low

**Table 2: Cross tabulation between Level of Passion and Intention after completion of Degree**

		Intention after completion of Degree				Total
		Start a new business	Seek a suitable job	Go for higher studies	Not yet decided	
Level of Passion	Low	24	244	53	22	343
	Moderate	4	142	25	11	182
	Strong	1	4	0	0	5
Total		29	390	78	33	530

Table 2 displays that out of 530 respondents, the majority of the respondents fell in the “Low” to “Medium” category and only 5 respondents fell in the “Strong” category.

**Table 3: Chi-Square Test**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.068 <sup>a</sup>	6	.170
Likelihood Ratio	10.255	6	.114
Linear-by-Linear Association	.008	1	.928
N of Valid Cases	530		

a. 4 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .27.

Table 3 contains the output of the Chi-Square test. df equals the number of categories minus one. A significance value of above 0.05 typically indicates non-dependence of factor ‘Level of passion’ on taking up entrepreneurship as a preferred career choice. Since the tabulated value of Chi square (~12.592) is more than the calculated value (~9.068), the hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, the variable “Level of passion” has no influence on the decision of a students to become an entrepreneur.

H0 2: The personality factor “Level of faith & commitment” has no influence on the decision of a student to take up entrepreneurship as a career choice.

Table 4 shows the cross tabulation between level of faith & commitment and intention after completion of degree.

**Table 4: Cross tabulation between Level of Faith & Commitment and Intention after completion of Degree**

		Intention after completion of Degree				Total
		Start a new business	Seek a suitable job	Go for higher studies	Not yet decided	
Level of Faith & Commitment	Low	19	247	54	10	330
	Moderate	8	138	24	23	193
	Strong	2	5	0	0	7
Total		29	390	78	33	530

Out of the 530 respondents, a majority of the respondents fell in the “Low” to “Medium” category and only 7 respondents fell in the “Strong” category.

**Table 5: Chi-Square Test**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	25.895 <sup>a</sup>	6	.000
Likelihood Ratio	23.121	6	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.019	1	.082
N of Valid Cases	530		

a. 3 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .38.

Table 5 contains the output of the Chi-Square test. df equals the number of categories minus one. A significance value of below 0.05 typically indicates dependence of the factor ‘Level of faith & commitment’ on taking up entrepreneurship as a preferred career choice. Since the calculated value of Chi-square (~25.895) is more than the tabulated value (~12.592), the hypothesis is rejected at 5% level of confidence. Therefore, the variable “Level of faith & commitment” has an influence on the decision of a student to become an entrepreneur.

H0 3: The personality factor “Level of tolerance of risk and uncertainty” has no influence on the decision of a student to take up entrepreneurship as a career choice.

**Table 6: Cross tabulation between Level of Tolerance of Risk and Uncertainty and Intention after completion of Degree**

		Intention after completion of Degree				Total
		Start a new business	Seek a suitable job	Go for higher studies	Not yet decided	
Level of Passion	Low	20	158	37	10	225
	Moderate	5	220	37	21	283
	Strong	4	12	4	2	22
Total		29	390	78	33	530

Table 6 shows that only 22 respondents fell in the “Strong” category in terms of level of Tolerance of risk & uncertainty while the rest of them fell in the “Moderate” and “Low” category.

**Table 7: Chi-Square Test**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	23.730 <sup>a</sup>	6	.001
Likelihood Ratio	23.190	6	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.782	1	.182
N of Valid Cases	530		

a. 3 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.20.

Table 7 contains the output of the Chi-Square test. A significance value of below 0.05 typically indicates dependence of factor ‘Level of tolerance of risk and uncertainty’ on taking up entrepreneurship as a preferred career choice. Since the calculated value of Chi-square (~23.730) is more than the tabulated value (~12.592), the hypothesis is rejected at 5% level of confidence. Therefore the variable ‘Level of tolerance of risk and uncertainty’ has an influence on the decision of a student to become an entrepreneur.

H0 4: The personality factor “Level of leadership” has no influence on the decision of a student to take up entrepreneurship as a career choice.

Table 8 shows the cross tabulation between level of leadership and intention after completion of degree.

**Table 8: Cross Tabulation between Level of Leadership and Intention after completion of Degree**

		Intention after completion of Degree			
		Start a new business	Seek a suitable job	Go for higher studies	Not yet decided
Level of Leadership	Low	20	250	52	17
	Moderate	9	135	24	15
	Strong	0	5	2	1
Total		29	390	78	33

As displayed in Table 8, a majority of the respondents were seen to have a “Low” level of leadership and only 8 respondents out of 530 showed “High” level of Leadership.

**Table 9: Chi-Square Test**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.219 <sup>a</sup>	6	.647
Likelihood Ratio	4.413	6	.621
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.699	1	.192
N of Valid Cases	530		

a. 3 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .44.

Table 9 contains the output of the Chi-Square test. A significance value of above 0.05 typically indicates non-dependence of factor ‘Level of Leadership’ on taking up entrepreneurship as a preferred career choice. Since the tabulated value of Chi-square (~12.592) is more than the calculated value (~4.219), the hypothesis is accepted at 5% level of confidence. Therefore, the variable ‘Level of Leadership’ has no influence on the decision of a student to become an entrepreneur.

H0 5: The personality factor “Level of drive & determination” has no influence on the decision of a student to take up entrepreneurship as a career choice.

Table 10 shows the cross tabulation between level of drive and determination.

**Table 10: Cross tabulation between Level of Drive & Determination and Intention after completion of Degree**

		Intention after completion of Degree				Total
		Start a new business	Seek a suitable job	Go for higher studies	Not yet decided	
Level of Drive & Determination	Low	23	247	59	14	343
	Moderate	6	140	19	19	184
	Strong	0	3	0	0	3
Total		29	390	78	33	530

As displayed in Table 10, out of 530 respondents, 343 respondents fell under the “Low” Level of drive & determination and only 3 respondents were placed in the “High” Level of drive & determination.

**Table 11: Chi-Square Test**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.296 <sup>a</sup>	6	.018
Likelihood Ratio	16.008	6	.014
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.846	1	.174
N of Valid Cases	530		

a. 4 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .16.

Table 11 contains the output of the Chi-Square test. A significance value of below 0.05 typically indicates dependence of factor ‘Level of drive & determination’ on taking up entrepreneurship as a preferred career choice. Since the calculated value of Chi-square (~15.296) is more than the tabulated value (~12.592), the hypothesis is rejected at 5% level of confidence. Therefore, the variable ‘Level of drive & determination’ has an influence on the decision of a student to become an entrepreneur.

H0 6: The personality factor “Level of energy” has no influence on the decision of a student to take up entrepreneurship as a career choice.

Table 12 shows the cross tabulation between level of energy and intention upon completion of degree.

**Table 12: Cross tabulation between Level of Energy and Intention after completion of Degree**

		Intention after completion of Degree				Total
		Start a new business	Seek a suitable job	Go for higher studies	Not yet decided	
Level of Energy	Low	22	217	46	8	293
	Moderate	7	165	32	23	227
Total		29	382	78	31	520

The results shown in Table 12 demonstrates that none of the respondents fell under the “Strong” Level of Energy. A majority of the respondents in this case were captured under the “Low” Level of Energy.

**Table 13: Chi-Square Test**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	16.497 <sup>a</sup>	3	.001
Likelihood Ratio	16.947	3	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	9.948	1	.002
N of Valid Cases	520		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 12.66.

Table 13 contains the output of the Chi-Square test. A significance value of below 0.05 typically indicates dependence of factor ‘Level of energy’ on taking up entrepreneurship as a preferred career choice. Since the calculated value of Chi-square (~16.497) is more than the tabulated value (12.592), the hypothesis is rejected at 5% level of confidence. Therefore, the variable ‘Level of energy’ has an influence on the decision of a student to become an entrepreneur.

## Results Discussion and Conclusions

This study was an initiative towards finding out the link between the personalities of students and their inclination towards entrepreneurship. The results indicated that there is congruence between some of the psychological personality factors of students and their intentions of becoming an entrepreneur. The study also indicated that the level of passion has no significant influence on the entrepreneurial intention of the student. Although work by many scholars links entrepreneurial passion to venture growth (Baum *et al.*, 2001; Baum & Locke 2004), there are other scholars who believe that they are yet to test these ties with respect to individual entrepreneurial actions, a key component of the study of entrepreneurship (Amabile, 1997; McMullen & Shepherd, 2006). The study further supports studies by Baum *et al.* (2001) and Baum & Locke (2004) who found that passion does not impact venture growth directly, but rather works through pathways mediated by constructs more proximal to individual behavior, such as motivation, goals and self-efficacy. Another study by Chen *et al.* (2009) evaluated the impact of perceived entrepreneurial passion on venture capitalists’ decisions to invest in new businesses. They found that venture capitalists were less influenced by passionate displays of emotion versus logical presentations supported by facts. The study showed that the level of commitment has influenced the entrepreneurial intention of the student. It further complements the study by Cardon *et al.* (2009), who posited that entrepreneurial passion may be a key element fueling the behavior of individual

entrepreneurs. The studies by Bruce and Sinclair (2009) also established the validity of the entrepreneurial commitment concept. The study also showed that the level of risk and uncertainty has an influence on the entrepreneurial intention of the student. Previous research supports this judgment insofar as positive correlations between risk tolerance and the decision to become an entrepreneur were observed (Cramer *et al.*, 2002; Caliendo *et al.*, 2009). The study showed that the level of leadership has no significant influence on the entrepreneurial intention of the student. Although many studies have stressed upon the importance and a significant relationship between leadership and entrepreneurship (Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Swiercz & Lydon, 2002; Sambasivan *et al.*, 2009 and Baron, 2007), there are other authors who have differentiated between the two. Thus, Czariawska-Joerges & Wolff (1991) claimed that while leadership is responsible for clarifying causality, simplifying reality and strengthening control over it, entrepreneurship is an action that can be related to generating new realities. Although leadership and entrepreneurship overlap to some degree, leadership involves influencing subjects' symbolic realm in order to move them towards certain actions and determining the time and scope of these actions, whereas entrepreneurship represents the operational translation of symbols and behaviors into actions. It is not just a matter of looking for opportunities; it is even more about generating a new organisational agenda and creating new things, while translating symbols into tangible organisational initiatives, action plans and performance (Leavy, 1996; Shamir *et al.*, 1993). We can fairly posit that while conceptually the fields overlap, entrepreneurial leadership learning and development processes differ in fundamental ways. Entrepreneurial behaviour is primarily a self determined behaviour, that is, individuals decide for themselves what course of action they will follow (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Shane, 2003; Krueger, 2007) and it goes well with our research output which shows that the level of drive & determination has an influence on the entrepreneurial intention of the student. The study also shows that the level of energy has an influence on the entrepreneurial intention of the students. The study replicates the findings by Al-Habib (2012) who concluded that student entrepreneurs are more likely to be high on energy level, risk taking and innovation. The results of this study are also in agreement with the studies by Kuratko & Hodgetts (2001), who explained that there are common characteristics (attributes) that are often inherent in an entrepreneur, such as commitment, determination and perseverance, initiative and responsibility, tolerance for ambiguity, risk taking propensity, integrity and reliability, high energy level and self-confidence in addition to others. However, unlike our study, both studies did not investigate the link between leadership and passion attributes. Since the earlier studies were carried out in different countries, this study also suggests that regional parities do not have any effect on the personality attributes influencing entrepreneurship. It should also be noted that these are not the only factors which contribute towards the decision-making of an individual as there could be several other personality factors as well which could form further areas of research.

Economic growth is not only the responsibility of the government. Everyone in the country has a part to play to contribute towards economic growth. The job market at the moment is not very promising. Young people are at the highest risk in such situations as they are still seeking jobs. Due to this, they may be forced to do work which do not match their educational background. Promoting the factors which contribute to entrepreneurship among our young ones may help to alleviate problems of unemployment. Therefore, students can be given special training designed to promote entrepreneurship while in college, irrespective of their area of study. Educational institutions and teachers will have to spark the interest in their students towards becoming an entrepreneur. They can provide personality-profiling of students to identify potential entrepreneurs at the school and college level. Parents can also play a crucial role by developing in their children from young, entrepreneurship traits.

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**“Perception is strong and sight weak. In strategy it is important to see distant things as if they were close and to take a distanced view of close things.”**

*– Miyamoto Musashi 1584-1645,  
legendary Japanese swordsman*

# A Model to Evaluate Strategy and Implementation Effectiveness

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## Abstract

When strategies fail, companies and organisations would often question if it was the implementation of a strategy or a combination of both that impacted the business performance. Research studies have been conducted to establish the true reason behind why strategies fail. Some of these past studies on failed strategies have reported that the majority of these cases are due to ineffective implementation, with “people” issues being one of the major causes.

This paper introduces a Strategy and Implementation Effectiveness Evaluation (SIEE) model to assess the effectiveness of strategies. Using action research, the SIEE model integrates both theory (academic literature on strategy implementation) and practice (experiential) through knowledge gained in the implementation of strategies. A review of literature reveals a scarcity of studies on this topic, compared to the literature on strategy formulation, with some of these studies on strategies linking to business performance. Specific studies which examined criteria on strategy and implementation effectiveness include the work by Johnson, Scholes and Whittington (2008). The methodology expounded by Johnson et al. (2008) examines strategy implementation effectiveness by the criteria of suitability, acceptability and feasibility.

Fourteen managers utilized this model to evaluate their strategy implementation, as part of a twelve month, workplace-based doctoral project. The analysis indicates that there is more objectivity in evaluating effectiveness when this model is applied. The use of guided evaluation is more detailed and precise rather than ad-hoc perceived evaluation. Acceptability deals with whether the organisation’s stakeholders are willing to implement the strategy. Mitigating risks associated with the management of change is a determining factor in the acceptability criteria. This resonates with findings that most strategy failures are due to implementation issues.

**Keywords:** Strategy effectiveness, Implementation effectiveness, Evaluation Criteria, Business Performance, Suitability, Feasibility, Acceptability, Business Environment, Action Research

## Introduction

Applying strategy from design to reality is often more difficult than anticipated. Past studies on failed strategies report that a majority of these cases are due to ineffective implementation. When business outcomes improve or falter, the management would often question if it was the strategy, its implementation or a combination of both that impacted the business performance.

Managers who are tasked with implementing strategies have often attributed failure to inadequate knowledge about how to evaluate their effort in a systematic manner. Most rely on subjective feedback and financial results as indicators of whether their strategies are working. The evaluation process is also often found to be ad-hoc and reactive.

This paper thus introduces a Strategy and Implementation Effectiveness Evaluation (SIEE) model to evaluate the effectiveness of both strategy and its implementation. It is written to assist managers in evaluating the effectiveness of their effort.

The research associated with this model was part of a twelve-month project in a workplace-based doctoral study. The scope includes the effectiveness evaluation of 14 strategy implementation episodes which were designed to transform a professional services business.

## Development Approach and Methodology of the SIEE Model

The development of this model was based on a review of key episodes and findings of research on strategy evaluation (theory), and also experience gained through implementing strategies at the workplace (practice). In workplace-based learning, the concept of theory informing practice and the learning refining theory is at work.

During the project planning stage, several research methods such as action research, “processual”, descriptive and exploratory approaches were explored. The processual approach, as further described by McDermott, Coghlan, and Keating (2008) focuses on analysing and explaining patterns in management and change processes. Besides action research, the other approaches were found to be inappropriate for this type of project study. Exploratory studies are centred on literature reviews and primary research such as interviews and inputs from experts whereas descriptive studies are used for profiling analyses of people and events.

This project utilised experiential knowledge gained from implementation efforts to validate and refine evaluation criteria theory. This collaborative approach prioritising both the researchers and practitioners' involvement in managing change resulting from the strategy implementation is also the essence of action research and thus increases the integrity of the SIEE model. It is also in line with McDemott et al.'s (2008) description of action research which is research concurrent with action. Research-in-action, as demonstrated in this research also makes action more effective, dealing with real issues, whilst simultaneously building up knowledge.

## Literature Review

To establish the academic foundation for the SIEE model, episodes and insights on strategy and implementation evaluation were considered and analysed in detail. On the whole, 8 main episodes were integral to the design and construction of the SIEE model, which will be discussed in more detail in the later sections of this journal article.

As emphasised by Weibes, Baaij, Keibek & Witteveen (2007), it is a known and accepted fact that strategy implementation is often difficult and may not always be successful. As further explained by Johnson, Scholes & Whittington (2008), the strategy process involves not one but three main steps which include analysis-choice-implementation. This is further expanded upon by Payne (2007) who stresses that changes are normally made in the implementation stage to ensure that strategic plans are executed in a controlled way.

It has also been repeatedly shown in research related to strategy implementation and evaluation that better business performers are those with clear strategies and objectives. This area continues to be the focus of substantial research, with most of the research directed at examining the relationship between strategy and performance. One such piece of research is that of Porter's (2004) generic strategies and business performance. Further research has also been done by Gonzalez-Benito & Suarez-Gonzalez (2010) to investigate this link through the examination of the integration of strategies, capabilities and performance in a single model. Through this research, it was proposed that both competitive strategies are essential to explain the link between generic business strategies and their commercial and financial performance.

Post hoc tests, conducted by Gonzalez-Benito et al. (2010) have in turn indicated that organisations with a clear business strategy perform better in objective fulfilment and relative competitive performance than those who do not pursue strategies. This finding seems to reiterate Kaplan and Norton's (2004) extensive research on business performance, which recommends that elements of Balanced Scorecard be interwoven

with business objectives. Together with the understanding of correlation between business performance and strategies as well as the application of the Balanced Scorecard, better performance can be achieved from the implementation of a strategy.

Thirdly, it is said that the effective execution of a strategy is highly dependent on the formulation and utilisation of the right strategy. In a study by Hrebiniak (2008), it is said that effective execution is impossible if strategies are flawed. Therefore, this points toward the importance of developing a means to evaluate whether strategies are suitable, which helps companies and organisations avoid significant resources being wasted on strategies which are unsuitable.

According to a study by Ali and Hadi (2012), obstacles and consequences of inadequate planning have also been listed as being the top two impediments to successful strategy implementation thus impressing upon all businesses that staff obstacles, inadequate planning, and managers' self-interests must be addressed. Mirroring this insight, Guth and MacMillan's work (1986) on middle management's motivation concluded that middle management's self-interests motivate its degree of commitment. Therefore, this prioritises the importance of having its needs anticipated and managed carefully to ensure positive alignment.

In order to overcome people resistance, it is advocated by John (2012) that the community-based change approach be used. As such, it is increasingly common to see human resources partnering other functions to lead organisations in embracing fundamental change for sustainable strategy implementation (John, 2012). This community-based change approach is also seen in Chimhanzi and Morgan's (2005) research which discussed the partnership of marketing and human resources to achieve strategy implementation success. Both of these concepts underscore the importance of talent management in strategy implementation.

Another key insight that has guided the construction of the SIEE model is the prominent role of the management of change in the implementation and success of a strategy. In businesses, the management of change may be reflected and emphasised in a host of ways. As outlined by Wiebes et.al (2007), these steps and strategies to manage change may be used to mitigate challenges encountered during implementation which may include the lack of support from senior management, communication failure, inexperienced teams, resistance, and capacity shortage.

Companies are now looking at increasing organisation capabilities to improve performance and this has also been a consideration when developing the SIEE model. An example of how a company has pursued productivity and efficiency is seen in Toyota's Total Production System (TPS). This programme, built on two drivers of "continuous improvement" and "respect for people" as emphasised by Liker (2004) was

designed to improve performance and profitability. Another methodology, which has seen a substantial amount of evolution is the Six-Sigma which has morphed from being focussed on operational productivity to customer care and growth (Abramowich, 2005).

The SIEE model also takes into consideration the fact that performance measurement is a key management tool. This concept is reinforced by Homburg, Krohmer, & Workman's (1999) study on strategy and business performance using the dimensions of adaptation, effectiveness, and efficiency

The last guiding principle and insight into strategy and implementation effectiveness evaluation is focussed on the gap between strategic management literature and strategy and implementation effectiveness. Compared to other aspects of strategic management, strategy and implementation effectiveness evaluation has perhaps received the least attention. As such, this points to a need to develop a model so that feedback is systematic and timely, for improvement is increasingly important to address the poor implementation issue. In this respect, Johnson et al. (2008)'s study on the suitability, feasibility and acceptability criteria when evaluating strategy effectiveness is the most relevant. Clearly, understanding these drivers enables strategy teams to focus on evaluating whether the strategy is suitable, feasible and acceptable. The next section thus looks at the construction and design of the SIEE model and how the insights discussed in this section are reflected in the overall SIEE framework.

## **Strategy and Implementation Effectiveness Evaluation (SIEE) model**

The learning derived from the literature review and also the practical lessons from observing failures when implementing strategy point towards the need to develop a model to assist managers to evaluate the effectiveness of their strategy and implementation effort. Johnson et.al's (2008) model which proposes the three criteria of suitability, feasibility and acceptability is found to be a good guide to help managers evaluate the effectiveness of a strategy and implementation effort. However, given that businesses operate in dynamic live competitive environments, an additional criterion of environment must be added as it plays a significant role in explaining why the same strategy may work in one place and not in another.

The Strategy and Implementation Effectiveness Evaluation (SIEE) model thus proposes adding environment as the fourth criterion besides the three criteria cited in Johnson et al., (2008)'s model. Business environment which may be implicit in Johnson et al., (2008)'s model is proposed to be explicitly evaluated, given the dynamic changes in today's marketplace. The SIEE model, therefore examines the four interdependent

criteria of strategy and implementation effectiveness. They are:

- Suitability evaluation – Strategy effectiveness
- Environment evaluation – Business context in which strategy is being implemented
- Feasibility evaluation – Implementation effectiveness
- Acceptability evaluation – Business outcomes monitoring and risk management

It must also be noted that strategy effectiveness deals with suitability and its environment whereas implementation effectiveness is about feasibility and acceptability. This makes sense, given that the latter two criteria are “people” factors and implementation requires as such. The SIEE matrix therefore describes the eight factors and their categorisation, questions and relevant success factors.

**Table 1: SIEE Matrix**

Evaluation	Criteria	Factors	Questions	Key Success Factors
Strategy Effectiveness	Suitability Evaluation (What)	Business Case	Will the strategy work?	Soundness and Relevance of Strategy Rationale
	Environment Evaluation	Business Context	Is it conducive and relevant?	Appropriateness, conduciveness and relevance of strategy to environment
		Timing	Is it right time?	Right time for market and organisation
		Availability, Accessibility and Affordability (3A) of Business Infrastructure	Is the assumption on business infrastructure realistic?	Availability, Accessibility and Affordability (3A) of Business Infrastructure
Implementation Effectiveness	Feasibility Evaluation (How and Who)	Continuous Improvement (capability)	Can the strategy be made to work?	Capability of resources
	Acceptability Evaluation (Monitoring)	Resources (respect for people)	Are there resources to do the work?	Skilled resources who are willing to be aligned to implement strategy
		Business outcomes Reflection	Will implementation managers work on the strategies?	Leadership, Business Governance, Stakeholders commitment and Performance Culture
		Risk Management Monitoring		Internal and External Risk Intelligence Management

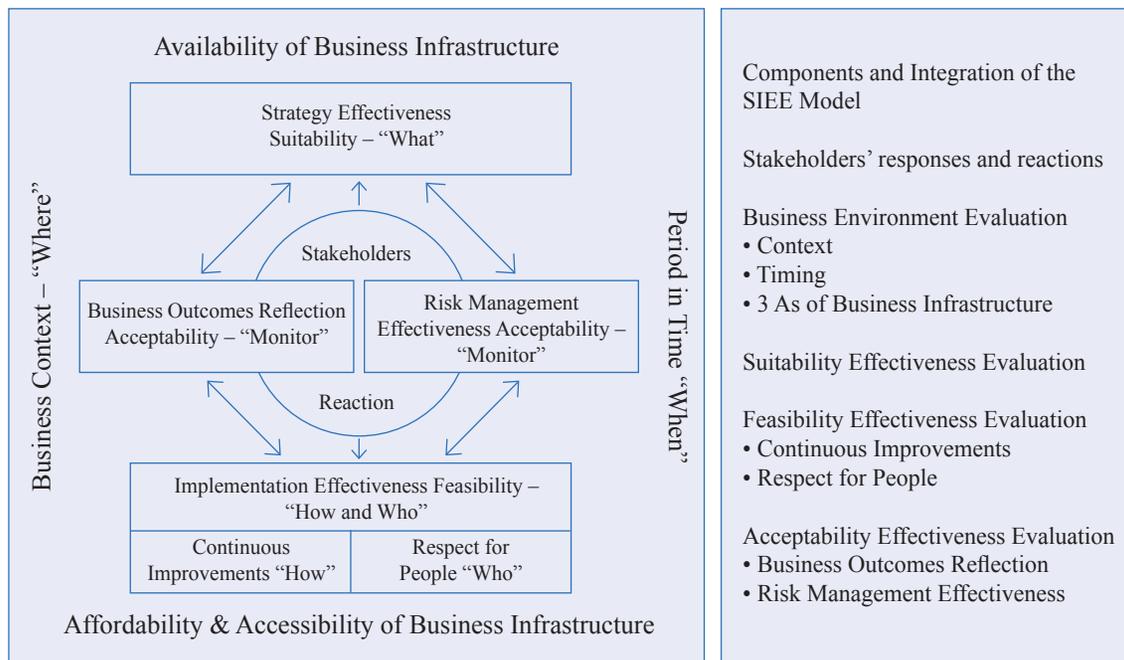
(Source: Yap, 2012. Created by Author for this study)

At the heart of the SIEE model is the stakeholders’ reaction with all criteria being inter-dependent. Results (implementation outcomes) are often a reflection of the acceptance of the strategy and how risks are managed. As Hrebiniak (2008) pointed out,

implementing the right strategy (suitability) is therefore as important as implementing it right with appropriate resourcing and capability (feasibility).

The diagram below outlines the interaction of the four evaluation criteria.

**Table 2: SIEE Model**



(Source: Yap, 2012. Created by Author for this study)

Each of the criteria is explained in the following sections:

### ***Business Environment Evaluation***

In the environment evaluation criterion, the strategy is evaluated in the context of the business environment and the questions of relevance and conduciveness are considered. In addition, it is also important to question whether the assumptions on the business infrastructure are realistic and whether it can enable the strategy to be successfully implemented. Within this criterion, there are three factors which are business context, timing, as well as the business infrastructure (comprising the 3As of availability, affordability and accessibility)

### ***Business Context and Timing***

Strategists often make certain competitive and economic assumptions when formulating strategies. These assumptions should be revalidated during implementation. In today’s dynamic and changing competitive environments, evaluating implementation

in its current context is important. Increasingly, it has been demonstrated that a longer implementation timeline increases the risks of vulnerability and relevance.

### ***Availability, Affordability and Accessibility (3A) of Business Infrastructure***

Some strategy implementation may require significant capital investment. For example, the implementation of shared services centres for transaction processing in low cost locations (aimed at improving service quality and driving cost efficiencies) require significant start-up costs. The availability and accessibility of stable high speed internet (an essential infrastructure element) can be a limiting factor in some less developed locations. These factors can ultimately make or break the success of the implementation.

### ***Suitability Evaluation – Strategy Effectiveness***

Suitability of the strategy is another criterion in the evaluation of strategy effectiveness. Strategies, regardless of whether they are differentiated, niched, focused or cost driven, are designed to address both internal and external competitive market opportunities. Business cases supporting well designed strategies are as such more robust and comprehensive. Therefore, this calls for managers to reflect whether the assumptions and rationale of the strategy (business case) are still sound, applicable and correct during implementation.

As described earlier, companies with integrated strategies have been found to perform better. Hrebiniak (2008) has thus proposed that sound strategy should come first. He further notes that translating these strategic objectives into short term operating tactics are critical factors in successful implementation.

One method to evaluate strategy effectiveness is to validate actual condition against assumptions and rationale of the business case during implementation. This monitoring of the business case to ensure the “rightness” of strategy during implementation addresses the literature finding that “right strategy comes first”.

Moving from strategy effectiveness, the discussions on implementation effectiveness are just as important. Feasibility and acceptability criteria are essential dimensions of implementation effectiveness.

### ***Feasibility Evaluation – Implementation Effectiveness***

Strategies are implemented by people. As such, successful implementation may be compromised by incompetent leaders, even though they may be equipped with the right tools and given the required resources. This feasibility criterion deals with

capability (continuous improvement-the “how”) and capacity (resources - the “who”) in implementation. Many organisations that pursue operational excellence strategies train their leaders and managers in problem-solving techniques and continuous improvement methodologies.

Organisation capability is a function of talent quality. However, high calibre talent is scarce. Due to this, the increasing demand for talent has driven labour costs up. Therefore, a key item on any organisation’s agenda is talent strategies which are aimed at attracting and retaining the best talent.

### ***Acceptability Evaluation – Business Outcomes and Risk Management***

Another key finding highlighted in the literature review is that staff obstacles, inadequate planning, and managers’ self-interests must be addressed. It is further emphasised that a manager’s acceptance of the strategy improves when he/she is convinced that the strategy is right for the organisation. Conversely, unwilling but capable leaders will sub-optimize this implementation effort. This is reinforced by the findings of Guth and MacMillan,(1986) who postulate that success or otherwise in strategy implementation is dependent on alignment of one’s self-interest to strategy goals. Therefore, alignment of the agenda of the middle managers and demonstrating that the strategy is right for the organisation are important considerations of this acceptability criterion.

Monitoring acceptability can be done through the constant evaluation of an organisation’s commitment and alignment with the middle managers’ agenda. This stakeholder group is crucial for implementation success because the middle management is the go-between for general management and the workforce.

### ***Reflections on Business Outcomes***

There are various ways to evaluate strategy outcomes. One such way is through financial results which are explicit and objective. However, there are also other subjective factors that should be considered. Just like doctors who use a combination of visual inspections and objective results when evaluating patients’ progress against the treatment plan, managers should likewise use a combination of financial results and other performance indicators to evaluate strategy and implementation effectiveness.

The performance measures have to be stakeholder-aligned. Different stakeholder groups have different expectations. For example, shareholders look for investment returns while for the management, it is measured by profitability and growth, the demands of “two hats” (Lester, 2009). Customers look for assurance that their purchased products and services deliver on their promises and uphold the brands they

represent. Employees look for rewarding career development in “brand recognised” companies. A commonly accepted performance measurement system is the balanced scorecard system (Kaplan and Norton, 2004).

### ***Risk management and monitoring***

According to Girotra and Netessine (2011), risk may be built into a business model when management examines the major sources of risk and mitigation when designing their value chains, which are focused on the revenue, cost structure and resource velocity factors. Strategies fail when there is insufficient mitigation if the assumed value drivers do not materialise.

Whilst management may decide to form specific implementation teams, for reasons of focus and attention, their activities must form part of business routines. Continuous evaluation should be integrated into the fabric of management governance for maximum traction.

The next section therefore discusses an evaluation matrix which is developed for managers to assist them in the evaluation of the effectiveness of their strategy and implementation effort.

## **Evaluation Matrix of Strategy and Implementation Effectiveness**

An evaluation matrix covering the spectrum of the eight component criteria is designed to assist the manager in evaluating his effort. Mapping the score against each of the criteria provides a perspective of the effectiveness of the implementation. The manager can further utilize this scorecard to develop remedial or proactive actions to improve the effectiveness of the strategy implementation.

**Table 3: Strategy and Implementation Effectiveness Evaluation  
Criteria Maturity Matrix**

	Sub criteria	1	2	3
Environment Evaluation	Business Context	Client and Market do not need this product or service.	Client and market view the product or service as “nice to have” in their business life	Client and market absolutely needs product or service. It is both relevant and conducive
	Timing	A past requirement for business.	Not institutionalised or optional requirement. Business can choose to use this product or service.	Mandatory to use this service and it may be a regulatory requirement.
	Availability	Not available to support strategy	Intermittent availability	Highly available to support strategy
	Affordability	The business infrastructure is not affordable	Business infrastructure is affordable and business can stretch to afford	Affordability is not an issue
	Accessibility	Organisation has no access to Business Infrastructure to support strategy	Business Infrastructure is accessible for most part to support the strategy	Business Infrastructure is highly accessible to organisation to support strategy
Suitability Evaluation	Business Case	No formal strategy and business case	Strategy supported by partial business case. Only qualitative benefits are defined.	Proper study completed. Strategies addressed business issues. Business case is well defined, with agreed strategies, investments, timeline, risk mitigation, qualitative and quantitative benefits
Feasibility Evaluation	Continuous Improvement (How)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No framework to manage the strategy implementation.</li> <li>Strategy may require new capability. Not addressed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Framework exists but not followed</li> <li>Strategy may require new capability and team has some methodologies and tools to implement strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Framework duly followed using PEAR(Plan-Evaluate-Analyse-Refine) approach to continuously monitor implementation. Much like PDCA(Plan-Do-Check-Act) of project management</li> <li>Implementation team has access to methodologies and tools to successfully implement strategies</li> </ul>
	Respect for People (Who)	Implementation team does not know how to implement strategy	Implementation team has some skills and competency. Leaders can follow instructions	Implementation team is competent. Leaders are capable and competent. They can provide direction and manage teams, duly supported by experts
Acceptability Evaluation	Business Outcomes Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heavy emphasis on financial performance and ad-hoc reflection on non-financial indicators on talent, processes and organisation.</li> <li>No formalised linkage of performance to evaluation of strategy implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Balanced scorecard system of evaluating business outcomes formalised</li> <li>Periodic assessment of getting updates on strategy implementation but not vigorous other than using feedback for adjustments to strategy implementations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governance structure in place to report and manage strategy implementation at the highest level depending on the relative importance of strategy</li> <li>Objective, subjective, financial and non-financial measurements in place to evaluate business outcomes</li> <li>Surveys undertaken to obtain insights from the business on acceptance of strategy</li> <li>Linkage of business outcomes to strategy implementation evaluation</li> </ul>
	Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ad-hoc risk review of strategy implementation</li> <li>Address issues as they surface</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop risk management framework during planning stage of strategy implementation</li> <li>Follow through on risk management framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement governance on risk management framework associated with strategy implementation</li> <li>Mitigate risks and refine strategy as appropriate to protect strategy implementation success</li> </ul>

(Source: Yap, 2012. Created by Author for this study)

## Feedback from Applying the Model

The managers were briefed and requested to use this SIEE matrix to evaluate their strategy and implementation effectiveness. This effectiveness evaluation process was “guided” by the use of the maturity matrix. The manager was also requested to rate his overall perception of the initiative’s effectiveness.

**Table 4: Applying the SIEE matrix to rate the effectiveness of each implementation**

No.	Criteria	Factors	Rating based on effectiveness evaluation Matrix
1	Business Environment	Business context	Possible values are from 0 to 5 with increments of 0.5
2		Period in Time (Timing)	
3		Availability, Accessibility and Affordability of Business Infrastructure	
4	Suitability	Business Case	
5	Feasibility	Continuous Improvement (“How”)	
6		Respect for People (“Who”)	
7	Acceptability	Business Outcome Reflection	
8		Risk Management	
9	Overall manager’s perception of implementation effectiveness		

(Source: Yap, 2012. Created by Author for this study)

### *Objectivity in implementation effectiveness evaluation*

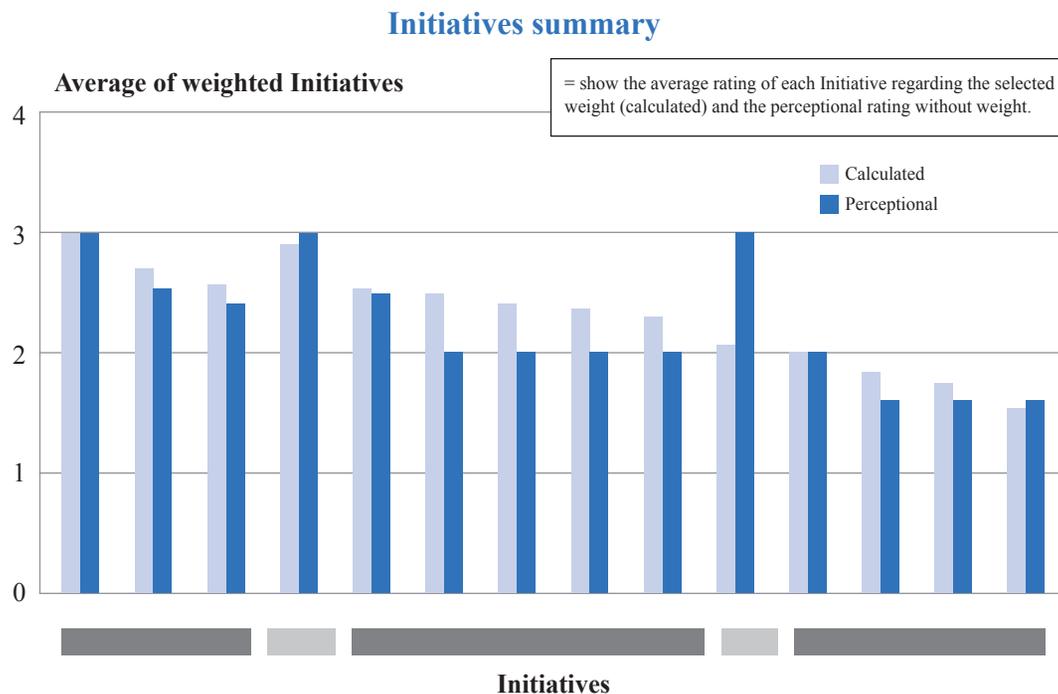
The managers’ qualitative feedback was that the maturity matrix was useful in guiding them to exercise objectivity when “evaluating” the various factors.

Statistically, it is easy to calculate an average for the effectiveness rating, based on the eight individual ratings (cOEI- Calculated Overall Effectiveness Index). This measurement is an objective measurement. The manager’s own perception of the overall implementation effectiveness is the pOEI (Perceived Overall Effectiveness Index) which is more subjective.

As the cOEI is calculated, based on individual factor evaluations, the difference between the pOEI and the cOEI, is a measurement of the difference between perceived and objective evaluation.

The managers were unaware that their objective assessment (cOEI) would be compared to their own perceived evaluation, and therefore, this delta (pOEI-cOEI) provided insights into the consistency of the managers’ perception as well as their objective guided evaluation using the factor elements.

**Table 5: Guided Evaluation compared to perceived evaluation by project**



Perceived evaluation is better  
 Guided evaluation scores higher than perceived

(Source: Yap, 2012. Created by Author for this study)

Other observation:

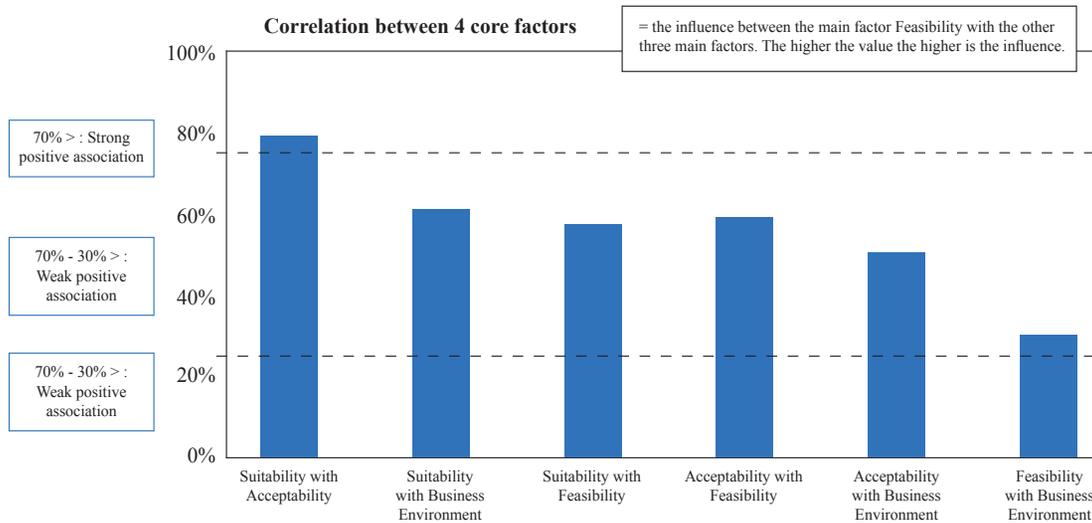
Managers find that projects which are supported by business cases measured by quantitative benefits (easier to track and measure) rate their implementation effort in a guided evaluation as better, than how they perceived the overall effort.

Taken across all fourteen projects, the managers proved to be quite accurate and consistent in determining the OEI. The average pOEI was 2.2 against cOEI at 2.3. The difference was negligible in this case supporting the use of matrix as a guide to help the manager think through the effectiveness of the effort when rating the project. At the individual project level, there were differences and the analysis of these differences provided other insights.

***Knowledge of the right strategy (suitability) helps in gaining acceptance***

The analysis showed a strong correlation (>70%) between suitability and acceptability (82% in fig 5.2). This indicated that the organisation was more willing to work on the strategy (acceptability) when they were convinced that the strategy was appropriate (suitability – will it work?). This reinforced the finding that better performers are those with clear strategies (Gonzalez-Benito et al 2010)

**Table 6: Project feedback on 4 evaluation criteria in SIEE**



(Source: Yap, 2012. Created by Author for this study)

***Both strategy and implementation effectiveness are important***

Whilst the analysis supporting strategy effectiveness is crucial, the analysis also showed a close correlation between suitability and feasibility (59%) and acceptability and feasibility (62%). This suggested that once the organisations understood the rationale of the strategy and believed that it was the right thing to do, they were more willing to work with it. Implementation was then more effective when the project was supported by the right skills (competency, and know-how) and the right resources (capability). Work by Hrebiniak (2008) and Ali and Hadi (2012) list the similar issues of individual and staff obstacles as barriers to successful implementation. Remedial actions therefore include designing programmes aimed at improving staff capability, resource capacity and change management which are “feasibility” issues to address these concerns.

**Conclusion**

It is clear that rigor and discipline brought about by management governance is crucial to implementation success. This thus brings us back to the project intent which questions if it is the effectiveness of the business strategy itself, the implementation or the combination of both that impact targeted business performance.

As discussed above, businesses operate in a competitive landscape and, therefore, evaluating implementation in the context of its business environment together with other evaluation criteria is of utmost importance. Past failures and challenges encountered have often also been attributed to “people” issues (acceptability). These factors raised an increased awareness of having to manage risks. Mitigation is done through monitoring and addressing identified risks throughout the implementation cycle. This discipline should be incorporated as part of the implementation governance process. This, which has not been present in implementation methodologies, is built into the SIEE model as an explicit task. Part of the research done in this study also found that early intervention on weak or resistant leadership risks is another success factor in improving implementation effectiveness.

Lessons drawn from using this SIEE model further underscore the need for introducing an evaluation methodology during the implementation planning stage. There is sufficient evidence that the implementation team that consciously applies this model perform better than those that react sporadically, thus adding to the efficiency of this model in strategy implementation and evaluation.

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**“Effective leadership is putting first things first. Effective management is discipline, carrying it out.”**

*– Stephen Covey*

# Industry Types, Managerial Levels and Strategic HR Interventions: Exploring Total SHRI Scores in the ‘ASHRIMP’ Scale in India

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## Abstract

The study questions whether Strategic Human Resource Interventions (SHRIs), when introduced and implemented at work, can help organisations reap benefits as desired in process, quality and cost to reach global standards in the long run. The study seeks to identify this variation in terms of industry types and managerial levels in real-life contexts. A structured scale “ASHRIMP” was developed based on a set of broad domains of SHRIs. The analysis focuses on the total SHRI scores in the ASHRIMP scale. The study also investigates the moot element underlying managerial perception of SHRIs and its implementation in select Indian firms in Kolkata city, West Bengal, Eastern India.

**Keywords:** Strategic Human Resource Interventions, Managerial Perception, ASHRIMP, Industry Types

## Introduction

The modern day industrial economy calls for one to take a proactive role in bringing about the globalisation of business. The organisations' search for competitive advantage focuses primarily on the people factor via 'Strategic Human Resource Interventions' (SHRI) at work. The rudimentary question is to what extent and how neatly, in the opinion of the management, does SHRIs, when introduced and implemented in business premises, reap organisational benefits in the real sense of the term. The aim of this present study is therefore to identify and study the variations in managerial perception towards the introduction of the various forms of SHRIs in corporate premises. This would be done –

- (a) across industry types i.e. between private sector and public sector manufacturing organisations; and
- (b) across levels of managers i.e. between middle level and senior level managers.

## Strategic HR Interventions – A Literature Appraisal

The subject matter of Human Resource Management (HRM) revolves around the range of themes and practices involved in managing people at work. It is concerned with getting results through people. People at work are essential ingredients in every organisation that can constructively and maximally use the other physical resources for the profits of the organisation and themselves. Management of human resources is therefore essentially a central activity to business organisations (Rao, 2000).

People strategy fundamentally points out two broad categories of human resource activities – primary or core activities and support activities. Primary activities are generally identified as recruitment and selection, induction and familiarisation, on-the-job experience, performance management and career planning. The key support activities are communication, training and management development, compensation management and administration, etc. These activities aim at outlining a lucid coherent people strategy and enable an effective integration of the same with business strategy as a whole for attaining performance excellence at large (Rao, 1991).

Strategic human resource management, also known as SHRM as such plays a pivotal role within the canvas of a firm's strategy-building exercise. SHRM is concerned with the relationship between human resource management and strategic management in a business process. It stands as a means to formulate and implement effective decisions, focusing on all human resource aspects of an organisation viz.: manpower planning, recruitment, training, deployment, employment relation, performance management, reward structure, employee relations, policies and practices, etc (Armstrong, 2003).

The notion of people strategy hovers around the basic understanding of the functional priorities of the human resource department. The human resource function consists of a collection of activities, which help employees to settle down in an organisation and perform to the fullest of their capabilities. An accurate understanding of these activities therefore allows for a distinct and clear development of a set of employee-friendly human resource strategies in particular, one that is aligned with an equally comprehensive and focused business strategy in general.

In today's business world, HRM remains not just a mere functional domain; rather a key aspect in business enhancement and growth in the macro perspective. HRM from a strategic perspective includes manpower practices and their relation to employment relationships (Geare et al, 2006); the ideologies underlying HRM practices (Hutchinson et al, 2000). HRM is also a way forward towards fostering innovation and creativity at work (West, 2002) (Roper and Love, 2004) (Shipton et al, 2006); the linking pathway between HRM competencies and organisational effectiveness (Han et al, 2006); professional HR competencies (Bell et al, 2006); the size and composition of the HR function (Brewster et al, 2006); the art of deciding why businesses adopt certain HR practices and reject others (Subramony, 2006); HR for knowledge management and creating human and social capital (Hatch & Dyer, 2004) and the basis of configuring HRM practices for organisational development at large (Verburg et al, 2007).

The strategic understanding of HRM aims at delineating the strategic mandate for new age HRM; outlining the significance of HRM in enhancing business performance; spelling out the role of the HR leader in a changing business environment; designing the HR competency map for business development with its strategic implications and finally understanding the conceptual perspective for strategising the new age HRM (Chaudhuri, 2006). Within management literature, HRM encompasses the underlying notion of strategy in business management, the relevance of strategy in HRM, strategising business culture through people, strategic leadership for people management and strategic performance management, competency and business scorecard (Ray Chaudhuri, 2007).

## Research Hypotheses

In order to estimate the effects of Type of Industry, Managerial Level and interaction of Type of Industry and Managerial Level on the total score of SHRI, the study aims to test the following hypotheses:

1. There will be significant effect of Type of Industry on the total score of SHRI
2. There will be significant effect of Managerial Level on the total score of SHRI
3. There will be significant effect of interaction of Type of Industry and Managerial Level on the total score of SHRI

## Selection of Variables

### Dependent Variable –

The Dependent Variable in this study is the Managerial Perception of the significance and criticality of SHRIs in practice in business organisations. This is reflected in the total scores of SHRI in the study.

### *The Dependent Variables and the Rationale*

Managerial Perception of Strategic HR Interventions (SHRIs) is the dependent variable in the study. By definition, perception is the process through which people receive, organise and interpret information from their environment (Robbins & Sanghi, 2005). Human perception of a certain specific situation or context is related to his or her own understanding of the situation in terms of estimating how critical it is to achieve a certain set of objectives associated with the context. Such an understanding of a specific situation varies between individual to individual because of their differences in their cognitive judgment of a given context or the situation in question (Newstrom, 2007).

The study is thus focused on identifying how this dependent variable varies between individuals / managers based on the independent variables under consideration.

### Independent Variables –

There were two independent variables in this study, and they include; Type of Industry– Public and Private, Manufacturing Industry and Level of Managers–Senior and Middle Level Managers

### *The Independent Variables and the Rationale*

The study considers the above-mentioned two groups of independent variables, which affect the variation in the dependent variable under consideration.

1. Type of Industry: Industry refers to a formal organisation which moves along a formal structure of hierarchy and operational process. An industry can be identified as manufacturing, service, etc depending on the pattern of business that it undertakes, the product or goods and services that it produces and caters to the market at large. This present study is focused on manufacturing industries. By definition, manufacturing industries refer to industrial houses that produce tangible products, either perishable or non-perishable for the consumption and utilisation of consumers who require such products or goods. Such manufacturing industries may be of two types based on their pattern of management and control – Public Sector Manufacturing Industries and Private Sector Manufacturing Industries. (Sekaran, 2004).

Public sector manufacturing industries are those manufacturing industries that are wholly-owned and managed by the government of the nation. These industries need to follow all government regulations, rules and clauses for employment and management of employees and the business. Private sector manufacturing industries refer to manufacturing industries that are owned and managed by a private entity. The private entity may be a trust, a board, a group of individuals or a single individual entrepreneur. The government generally has no say in the procedural delineation of such businesses. The nature and functioning of public sector undertakings are generally strictly determined by government norms without any scope for flexibility. On the contrary, private sector businesses are generally more flexible and adaptable to changing demands of times that call for short and long terms alterations in their process and operations.

This study considers both the public as well as private sector manufacturing undertakings in order to clearly highlight the variations in managerial perception of SHRIs in relation to these two specific contexts.

2. Level of Managers: Managerial level refers to the position an individual member of the management team holds in the organisational hierarchy of the business. This study considers two broad categories of managers in terms of their position in the organisational chart mainly Middle Level Managers and Senior Level Managers.

Middle level managers generally have the responsibility of functional management and monitoring of their functional teams on a regular day-to-day basis in most or all of their day-to-day operations. These employees are early graduates from junior managerial positions entrusted with the task of management of regular operations in the business. Middle managers are expected to have operational expertise to effectively monitor and facilitate junior management staff as well as non-managerial employees on their regular day-to-day work. Middle managers however, are generally not a part of the decision-making process in the business. (Robbins & Sanghi, 2005; Sekaran, 2004)

Senior managers are the members of the management team who are positioned at the top-most hierarchy of the organisation. They are not only responsible for overall monitoring of managerial and non-managerial staff and business functioning, but are also greatly involved in the decision-making and idea generation process in the organisation. Senior managers are therefore expected to have conceptual clarity and expertise coupled with the skills of innovation, creativity and risk management to facilitate the entire business to operate smoothly towards building organisational enhancement at large. (Robbins and Sanghi, 2005; Sekaran, 2004)

There has been a constant debate on how to define a middle level manager or senior level manager. Theoretically, management in most organisations operates at three distinct levels; Top or Senior level, Middle level and Operational or Junior level. Junior managers are generally involved with the operational process of the business on a day-to-day basis. Middle managers are generally supervisors or team leaders of operational teams. They are involved in monitoring, control and facilitation of Junior level management and non-managerial staff in their day-to-day functions. Top management belongs to the top most tier of the organisational hierarchy with more involvement in decision-making and conceptualisation and management of all activities on a long term basis. (Sekaran, 2004)

This study considers both middle as well as senior level management staff to illustrate the degree and extent of variation of managerial perception of SHRIs between the levels in relation to these specific natures of employee categories. Since the responsibility, competencies, experience, age, etc of the two groups differ considerably, such variation needs to be identified in clear terms.

Demographic Variables: These have been controlled in the present study and include aspects of Gender, Age, Related experience, Family type, Number of family members and Approximate gross pay per month.

## Scope of the Study

The study was focused on selected manufacturing industries in the private and public sectors in the Kolkata region in the state of West Bengal in India.

## Sample of the Study

The selection of the samples of managers and enterprises/business was guided by the following general inclusion criteria.

1. Middle Level Manager – < 40 years of age and <10 years of experience
2. Senior Level Manager – > 40 years of age and > 10 years of experience
3. Private Sector Manufacturing Industry – Privately owned manufacturing business by any individual, collective body, group or trust without any government sponsorship or aid.
4. Public Sector Manufacturing Industry – Public Manufacturing enterprise owned and funded by the Government.

## Measures used in the Study

There were two main measures used in the study, one that included detailed information to obtain personal, occupational and familial information of the respondents and the other which was a Likert type Scale, ‘Assessment of SHRIs in

Managerial Perception' (ASHRIMP), which was previously developed by Chaudhuri and Basu (2012).

## **Development of ASHRIMP**

The development of the 'Assessment of SHRIs in Managerial Perception' (ASHRIMP) scale (Ray Chaudhuri and Basu, 2012) followed the steps listed below.

Step – 1: Domain Definition

Step – 2: Sub-domain and item definitions

Step – 3: Expert/Judges opinion and Item Language Construction

Step – 4: Assessing the Applicability of the Items through rating by experts and item analysis

Step – 5: Pilot Study I : Preliminary administration and Item analysis

Step – 6: Selecting Final Items

Step – 7: Pilot Study II : Reliability study and Factorial validity.

Step – 8: Pilot Study III: Test of discrimination to ensure construct validity.

Step – 9: Final Run: Main Study

In order to define the domains in Step 1, a detailed study of literature with interactions and discussions with experts in the Human Resource (HR) functional area had been considered. The sub-domains (sub-scales) under each domain and items relating to the sub-domains were consequently defined through further literature review and expert's help. In this particular step, 265 items were collected and edited. In Step 3 of the construction of the ASHRIMP, the scale was then circulated among 25 experts/judges in the field of HRM comprising of both academicians and practising managers in the industry in Kolkata and nationally, and thereafter, edited in tune with the 14 classical criteria stated by Edwards (1957). The total number of items at this stage was 236.

To assess the applicability of these 236 items for inclusion in the final scale, two techniques were then adopted; rating by experts, and item analysis. For rating by experts, the applicability and suitability of each item in the scale was judged and assessed on the basis of the expert opinion (N=10) using a five-point scale. The items were also assessed by item analysis where the total correlations had to be computed between each item and their respective totals. Only those items that correlated highly and significantly ( $p < 0.01$ ) with their respective sub domains were considered for inclusion. For this purpose, the draft scale was administered to the Pilot sample I.

In Step 5, the scale was administered for testing and item analysis. The sample for pilot study I consisted of 50 practising middle and senior managers from different public and private sectors of Kolkata. These participants were asked to respond on their perception of the criticality of each sub-domain (SHRIs) in relation to each of the items mentioned on a five-point scale. The correlation of each item with the respective subtotal were calculated. Those items that had a correlation below .35 ( $p > 0.05$ ) were

then excluded. The selection of the final items were then considered. For this, the total scale comprised of 116 items having experts' relevance judgment over 3 (on a 5 point scale) and item-subtotal correlation significant at least at 0.05 level was subjected to reliability estimation.

A second pilot study was then conducted to ensure reliability and factorial validity. The sample for Pilot Study II consisted of 100 practising middle and senior managers (78 from private and 22 from public sector) of manufacturing organisation in Kolkata responded to the 116 - item ASHRIMP scale. Split half reliability with Spearman-Brown correction was 0.79 and Cronbach's Alpha was 0.84. Subsequently the same data was subjected to factorial validity to verify whether the grouping of the subscales under each of the 5 domains is justified. The findings indicate that the presence of the 5 factors is roughly corroborated.

Pilot Study III was subsequently conducted to ensure whether the ASHRIMP scale truly discriminated between those managers who were habituated to deal with SHRM techniques and those who were unacquainted with it. 30 managers from private industries, well-acquainted with the concept, were compared with 30 managers from public industries who operated on the traditional basis. For selection of this sample, it was ensured through personal investigation that the selected private organisations differed from the selected public organisations in terms of:

- a) having greater participatory style of management
- b) allowing the managers to frame their own strategic policies
- c) have regular formal and informal discussion on process related and structure related strategic responses

Mean, Standard Deviations and t-tests were computed revealing that the managers more acquainted with SHRM in their daily work lives had a significantly higher score on the ASHRIMP scale.

The final step was to conduct the main study which saw a sample size of 300 including 240 middle and 60 senior level managers in private and public sector manufacturing organisations. The study employed purposive sampling in which 12 Private Sector Manufacturing Industries and 5 Public Sector Manufacturing Industries were chosen to participate in the study. Data was collected in 4 ways which were by:

1. Primarily face-to-face interaction with the individual respondents
2. Face-to-face interaction with management representatives
3. Telephonic interaction with the respondents.
4. Email communication with the respondents.

The broad domains and the sub-domains for each domain of SHRI in the ASHRIMP Scale arrived at in the study are –

[A] Employment of Human Resources

A.1 Human Resource Planning as an SHRI

A.2 Job Analysis and Job Description as an SHRI

A.3 Recruitment and Selection as an SHRI

[B] Management and Development of Human Resources

B.1 Employee Training and Development as an SHRI

B.2 Career Planning for employees as an SHRI

B.3 Performance Management as an SHRI

[C] Measurement and Acknowledgement of Human Resources

C.1 Job Evaluation as an SHRI

C.2 Compensation and Reward Management and Employee Benefit as an SHRI

[D] Building Organisational Culture and Environment

D.1 Building Organisational Structure Communication Pattern as an SHRI

D.2 Creating a Transparent and Professional Work Culture as an SHRI

D.3 Organisational Development and Management of Change as an SHRI

[E] Nurturing Human Relations at Work

E.1 Discipline Management as an SHRI

E.2 Effective Collective Bargaining as an SHRI

## Descriptive Statistics

The Means and Standard Deviations of the Dependent Variables - DVs (SHRI variables) for men and women and the Independent Samples t-tests were used to determine the significance of sex difference for the Dependent (SHRI) variables were computed (Table 1).

**Table 1:**  
**Means and Standard Deviations of all SHRI variables for men and women**

SHRI variables	Gender M/F	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
SHRI A.1	M	209	14.02	3.06	.21
	F	91	13.37	3.22	.34
SHRI A.2	M	209	27.76	4.01	.28
	F	91	27.92	4.31	.45
SHRI A.3	M	209	19.44	3.37	.23

	F	91	19.18	3.28	.34
SHRI A	M	209	61.22	8.15	.56
	F	91	60.47	8.59	.90
SHRI B.1	M	209	27.61	3.96	.27
	F	91	27.88	4.09	.43
SHRI B.2	M	209	14.04	2.84	.20
	F	91	14.11	2.69	.28
SHRI B.3	M	209	16.82	3.45	.24
	F	91	17.05	3.58	.38
SHRI B	M	209	58.47	7.51	.52
	F	91	59.04	8.13	.85
SHRI C.1	M	209	21.66	3.45	.24
	F	91	21.77	3.84	.40
SHRI C.2	M	209	25.22	3.65	.25
	F	91	25.51	4.06	.43
SHRI C	M	209	46.88	6.15	.43
	F	91	47.27	7.01	.73
SHRI D.1	M	209	30.68	4.51	.31
	F	91	30.13	4.62	.48
SHRI D.2	M	209	25.07	3.25	.23
	F	91	25.29	3.87	.41
SHRI D.3	M	209	33.35	4.22	.29
	F	91	32.38	5.33	.56
SHRI D	M	209	88.96	9.78	.68
	F	91	87.80	11.52	1.21
SHRI E.1	M	209	34.07	4.55	.31
	F	91	34.24	4.64	.49
SHRI E.2	M	209	33.93	4.85	.34
	F	91	33.38	4.71	.49
SHRI E	M	209	68.00	8.11	.56
	F	91	67.63	8.18	.86
SHRI TOTAL	M	209	323.53	32.47	2.25
	F	91	318.45	49.30	5.17

The Independent Samples t-tests, to examine the significance of difference for the Dependent variables - DVs (SHRI variables), in terms of gender are presented in Table-2.

**Table 2:**  
**Independent Samples t-test to examine the significance of**  
**sex difference with df 298**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means
	F	T
SHRI variables		
A.1	.722	1.666
A.2	.608	-.315
A.3	.041	.618
A	.328	.718
B.1	.188	-.541
B.2	.872	-.191
B.3	1.239	-.540
B	1.873	-.595
C.1	1.432	-.243
C.2	1.652	-.611
C	2.275*	-.495
D.1	.015	.968
D.2	5.653**	-.505
D.3	6.506**	1.676
D	4.494**	.889
E.1	.331	-.296
E.2	.648	.908
E	.037	.371
TOTAL	5.680**	1.054

\* refers to 'p' < 0.5

\*\* refers to 'p' < 0.1

Levene's F tests were done before conducting the t-test to test the equality of variance of the compared groups. For significant values of F, corrections for unequal variances were used in the t-test. None of the t values was significant. Hence, there was no significant difference in terms of gender in any of the DVs.

Since there were no statistically significant sex differences in any of the Dependent Variables, the scores of the two categories of gender were treated jointly in all subsequent calculations.

## Hypothesis Testing and Inferential Statistics

The testing of hypotheses was done using inferential techniques. For each research hypothesis, the statistical hypotheses were framed and tested accordingly.

This section explores the effect of Type of Industry, Managerial level and their interaction on the SHRI variables on the total score of SHRI in the ASHRIMP scale. The hypotheses were then framed accordingly.

*Research Hypothesis 1:* There will be significant effect of type of Industry on total score of SHRI

Statistical Hypothesis 1. There will be statistically significant difference between the means of total SHRI score of Private and Public domains

*Research Hypothesis 2:* There will be significant effect of Managerial level on total score of SHRI

Statistical Hypothesis 2. There will be statistically significant difference between the means of total SHRI score of Middle and Senior managers

*Research Hypothesis 3:* There will be significant effect of interaction of Type of Industry and Managerial level on total score of SHRI

Statistical Hypothesis 3. The interaction of type of Industry (Private vs. Public) and managerial Level (Middle and Senior) will have a significant effect on the total SHRI score of Private and Public domains

Subsequently Univariate ANOVA was done to determine the effects of Industry type and Managerial level and their interaction on the total SHRI score. The results are presented in Table-3 and Table-4. Levene's Test of equality of variances was done as a prerequisite.

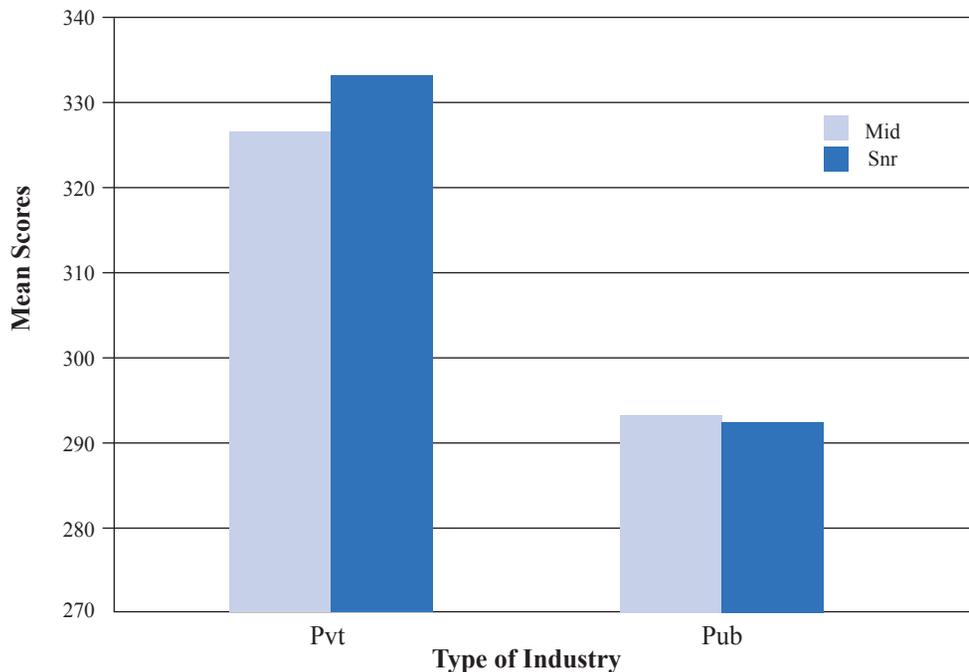
**Table-3:**  
**Means and Standard Deviations of total SHRI score in terms of**  
**Industry Type and Managerial Level**

Industry Type (Pvt / Pub)	Managerial Level (Mid / Snr)	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pvt	Mid	327.15	36.76	156
	Snr	333.55	32.59	82
	Total	329.35	35.44	238
Pub	Mid	293.82	35.61	45
	Snr	293.41	38.54	17
	Total	293.71	36.12	62
Total	Mid	319.69	38.99	201
	Snr	326.66	36.77	99
	Total	321.99	38.35	300

From the table above, the mean score of Total SHRI for Private and Public manufacturing organisations for Middle and Senior managers may be graphically illustrated in Table 3.

From all the following graphical illustration, it may be noted that the mean scores of private manufacturing industries are much higher than that of public manufacturing firms.

**Figure A: Mean Scores of Total SHRI for Private and Public Manufacturing Industries for Middle and Senior Managers**



**Table-4:**  
**To determine the effect of Industry Type and Managerial Level and their interaction on total SHRI, the 2x2 ANOVA test was used.**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Eta Squared
Industry Type	54155.925	1	54155.925	42.745**	.126
Managerial Level	360.164	1	360.164	.284	.001
Interaction of Industry Type and Managerial Level	465.631	1	465.631	.368	.001
Corrected Total	439713.947	299			

\* refers to 'p' < 0.5

\*\* refers to 'p' < 0.1

Based on the findings, the Type of Industry was significant for the total SHRI score.

It also appears as indicated in Table-3 that the total mean for Pvt. is significantly higher than that of Pub.

It can be found from Table-4 that the F values are significant only in the case of Type of Industry. Hence, it can be stated that, there exists a significant effect of type of industry on the total score of SHRI and that there is no effect of managerial level and the interaction of type of industry and managerial level on the total score of SHRI.

As a result, Statistical Hypothesis No. 1 was accepted and Statistical Hypothesis No. 2 was rejected and Statistical Hypothesis No. 3 was rejected.

## Findings and Conclusions

The study thus highlights that only Type of Industry has an effect on managerial perception of SHRIs. Managerial Level and interaction of Type of Industry and Managerial Level do not affect perception of SHRIs in respect of the total scores of SHRI in the ASHRIMP scale. It is also found in this study that managers' perceptions towards SHRIs in the private manufacturing industries are generally more positive than their counterparts in the public manufacturing industries. This may be due to greater visibility of the HRM function, evolving identification of the strategic role of HR, relative flexibility of rules and regulations, participative style of management, proactive decision making as oppose to traditional management, greater emphasis on experiential-learning, more and more initiatives to align people strategy with the

overall business strategy, emphasis on process-related and structure-related strategic responses, greater emphasis on risk taking in the private sector in comparison to their public counterpart.

Managerial Level does not affect Managerial Perception of SHRI in terms of the total SHRI scores in the ASHRIMP scale. This is generally because SHRM and SHRI is an orientation that needs to be backed and supported by the organisation culture and philosophy, vision and mission. Irrespective of whichever level of management, middle or senior, an individual comes from a specific organisation, by way of its operative strategies and policies, which has a capacity to mentor its managers towards its own values, systems and ideologies.

The study clearly shows that industry types affect total SHRI scores in the ASHRIMP scale, while managerial level does not. This present study has been conducted within the scope of selected manufacturing private and public sector organisations in Kolkata region in India. Future research should be undertaken to extend both the scope as well as the geographical region of coverage.

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**“The paradox of education is precisely this, that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated.”**

*– James Baldwin*

# Impact of Cultural Diversity on Learning Style Preferences among Hospitality and Tourism Students

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## Abstract

Educational researchers postulate that the increased rate of migration of students to other countries underscores the importance of sustaining academic excellence irrespective of cultural background. Many authors and researchers derived learning theories and styles based on the fact that students have different learning style preferences and are influenced by several factors. Culture is one of the major influencing factors that have determined the need to analyse the impact on learning style preferences. Thus, this study aims to investigate the relationship between cultural diversity and learning style preferences of business students. One hundred and twenty one samples were selected by non-probability convenient sampling technique. The Cultural Diversity Self Assessment Inventory and Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire were used. Descriptive analysis using Spearman Rank correlation was employed to determine the relationship between the variables and ANOVA was utilized to identify the association between cultural diversity and learning style preferences. The results found that there is a strong correlation between cultural diversity and learning style preferences. These preferences are also found to be affected by cultural values. The findings have drawn attention to facets of learning, curriculum and cultivation of advanced instructional technology in which teachers and managers play a vital role in the development of individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

**Keywords** - Culture, Cultural Diversity, Cultural Competence, Learning, Learning Style Preferences, Hospitality and Tourism Students.

## Introduction

With expanding immigration, globalisation and minority population growth, there is a need to enrich diversity within the student society or professional education to better meet the needs of our changing society (Bednarz et al 2010). In this era, students are likely to migrate to other countries for their higher studies. Similarly in industries and organisations, workers from diverse cultures also recognize the need to enhance their cultural competence. Culture is defined as “shared motives, values, beliefs, identities and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of the members of collectives that are transmitted across generations”. (House et al 2004)

Nyantanga (2007) claimed that culture is neither static nor visible and is characterised by individual appearance, behaviours and practices. So, culture can be seen as an abstract concept. According to Periac (2009), diversity is a state of dissimilarity which may include ethnicity, race, place of birth, nationality, mother tongue, immigrant status, gender, age, organisation tenure and others. Collectively, cultural diversity can be the main vehicle to achieve the organisational and educational goal of creating a collaborative, virtual, active, challenging environment and creating awareness of advanced information literacy skills. (Henninger and Hurlbert 2006)

Berkova (2013) indicated that one’s culture influences learning style preference. Increasing cultural diversity in the classroom challenges the educators to identify the issues that complicate teaching and to analyze the barriers for themselves and their students that will aid in the selection of new strategies for working with non-traditional students. The need to prepare and assist educators to meet the needs of a culturally diverse population has in recent years, taken on a sense of urgency. This study will analyse the impact of cultural diversity on learning preferences among Hospitality and Tourism students.

## Need for the Study

Singapore is a multicultural society experiencing increasing enrolment of students in Mass Communication, Hospitality and Training, Engineering, Medicine and Nursing courses (Singapore Cultural Statistics 2011). In particular, Hospitality and Tourism courses, in response to the availability of employment opportunities in the sector, is estimated to offer around 235 million jobs globally (International Labour Organisation 2011). It is also found that students enrolled in these courses come from diverse cultures. Therefore, Hospitality and Tourism students can appropriately represent the

global population in this study to determine cultural diversity in relation to learning style preferences.

Edwards (2011) reiterated that the impact of modernisation and globalisation increases the growing awareness of diversity among human population. The needs and preferences of students have to be taken into consideration to ensure that they achieve excellence in their education.

The Singapore arts and cultural scene is a very active one. Students' participation in arts and cultural events increased from 27% in 2002 to 40% in 2009 according to Singapore Cultural Statistics (2011). These cultural activities help to bridge the cultural differences among people especially among the student population. Ultimately, understanding cultural diversity is important to help students become culturally competent as well as to improve their academic skills and excellence. Lowe and Archihald (2009) noted the term culture refers to "the act of bridging, linking or radiating between groups or persons through the process of reducing conflict or producing change".

According to Goode et.al. (2002), the National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC) assesses attitudes, practices, policies, structures that are necessary to incorporate cultural competences effectively and systematically. Hinchliff (2010) further identified that culture plays a vital role in students' learning which can be influenced by perception, language, social class and culture based on evidence-based practice.

Individuals differ in their learning depending on their innate personality and motivation. Learning is a process of acquiring new information, knowledge, skills and behaviours and involves the synthesis of information (Quinnin and Hughes 2007). Effective learning can take place through appropriate learning style preferences influenced by learning theories. A learning style, otherwise termed as a cognitive style, refers to the way a student acquires information, appreciate and understand. An appropriate learning style is usually chosen based on the individual's preferences.

Educators select an appropriate teaching methodology based on the assessment of the students' learning style preferences. Few faculty members have received formal training on how to teach effectively and as a result have found themselves incompetent in managing difficult student situations, including disruptive behaviour and inaccessibility (Clark et al 2010). There is a need to formulate standard guidelines for the teaching of the learning process.

Extensive guidelines on how to deal with various challenging student situations will be useful in helping to enhance the level of cultural competence that will facilitate learning (Broome 2010). Although cultural sensitivity is a core element, effective

learning can be developed among students by implementing educational strategies based on research evidence (Sanner et al 2010). On the whole, a growing professional challenge is to develop a culturally specific teaching learning process relevant to an increasing culturally diverse population (Broome 2010).

## Purpose of the Study

The study is therefore aimed at:

1. Assessing the cultural diversity and learning style preferences among Hospitality and Tourism students.
2. Determining the correlation between the cultural diversity and learning style preferences.
3. Determining the association between selected cultural background variable and learning style preferences.

## Literature Review on Cultural Diversity and Learning Style

As defined by Hofstede (1984, in Periac 2009), “Culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another”. It offers a theoretical base to understand why people engage in the things or rituals they do (Nyatanga 2007). Theories are developed based on the concept. Similarly, theories and generalisations across different cultural groups have been developed through comparative focus on the clear view of cultural practices (Lowe and Archihald 2009). Many theories have evolved from the culture-based concepts of cultural marginality and acculturative stress (Buscemic 2011).

Muzychenko (2007) studied the important issue of how to systematically relate learning style preferences to curriculum development and delivery in a culturally modern diverse classroom. One specific issue arising out of cultural diversity and cultural incompetence involves academic incivility (rude or disruptive behaviour) which results in psychological and physiological distress. (Clark et al 2010).

Dotson and Nuru-Jeter (2012) identified three effective strategies for leveraging on diversity to promote constructive and productive business practices. Cultural competence is used as a performance measure and organisational metrics of success. At the institutional level, different education systems among various countries necessitate the need to assess the different learning styles (Ramayah et al 2011). Educational innovation is needed to formulate integrated curriculum that will connect the students

connaturally and allow them to share their views and promote deep analytical thinking. Although education is a personal experience, it is also a collective of social and cultural experience. Culture is crucial, when students from different countries in a classroom work as a team towards the accomplishment of an educational goal. Educational tasks can be accomplished and team performance is facilitated through individuals operating according to their effective learning styles. Teacher's instructions reach the students in different ways according to their own perception and perceptual differences affect a task outcome by an individual. The concrete person depends on the senses for information whereas the abstract person depends on indirect sources of knowledge (Guild 2012). Moreover, some people prefer to learn by experiencing "doing in action" (Lowe and Archihald 2009). This clearly states that individual differences are evident even within cultural groups.

Educators have argued that learning style preferences differ among individuals and it affects the teaching learning process (Wilson et al 2010). There is a broad range of learning styles where each style is based on a particular concept: right-brain/left-brain & whole brain thinking (Sperry, 1977; Herman, 1988); field-independent/field-dependent embedded figures test (Witkin & Associates, 1971); Dunn & Dunn Learning Style Elements based on senses; Myers-Briggs Type Indicator's focus on personality; Kolb's learning style inventory based on experience; 4-MAT System based on experience and skill; Gardner's seven types of intelligence; Honey and Mumford's learning style based on role of learners and Reid's perceptual learning style preferences are all ways to measure learning style preferences (Quinnin and Hughes 2007).

Vaseghi et al. (2012) showed that a learner's learning style has been one of the most important factors in discussing the pedagogical implications. Bennet (1986) emphasised the importance of learning style as a value-neutral approach for understanding the individual differences of students from different cultural groups.

## Hypothesis

Following the literature review, the hypotheses of this study are formulated as follows:

Ho- There is no significant relation between Cultural Diversity and Learning Process.

H1- There is a significant relation between Cultural Diversity and Learning Process.

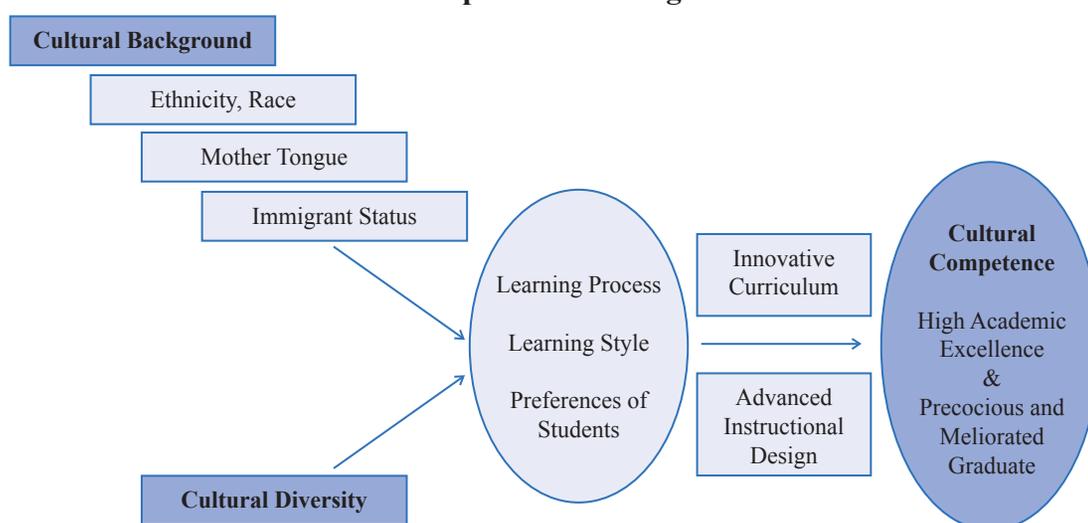
Ho- There is no association between Learning Style Preference and Cultural Background.

H1- There is a significant association between Learning Style Preference and Cultural Background.

## Conceptual Model

A model is based on the conceptual underpinnings of the variables in the study and the representation of their interrelationships (Polit and Beck 2010). In this study, the researcher developed the model to explain the interrelationships among the variables. Cultural diversity is the independent variable which has influence on the dependent variable learning style which further explains the alternatives to enhance cultural competence.

**Figure-1: Conceptual Model for Cultural Diversity relationship with Learning Process**



(Created by author, 2013)

## Methodology

Non-experimental quantitative research methodology was used to understand the phenomena (Polit and Beck 2010). A descriptive research design was used to test the hypotheses and analyse the relationship between the variables (Schneider et al 2005). 121 respondents from year 3 Hospitality and Tourism in a leading private educational institute in Singapore were selected by non probability convenient sampling technique. Students who speak and write English were included in the study. Students who are pursuing global education for the first time were included in the study. Two categories of students enrolled in year 3 Hospitality and Tourism Programme were excluded:

1. those who have enrolled less than 3 months.
2. those who received diploma / degree level of education in Singapore prior to joining the institute.

## Description of the Instrument

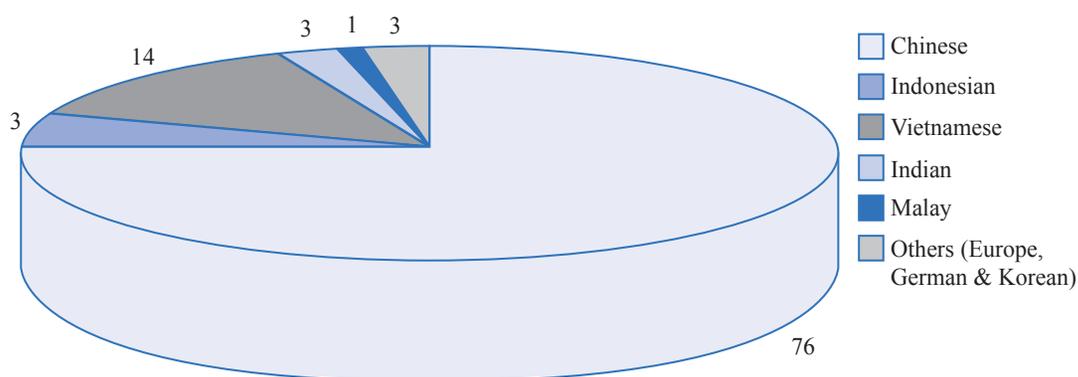
The Cultural Diversity Self-Assessment Inventory is a tool used to create greater self-awareness on issues of intercultural communication, acceptance and cultural understanding. This inventory is formulated by the National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC). Findings of this approach can be used in the systematic incorporation of the culturally competent values, policy, structures and practices within organisations (Goode et al 2002).

The Perceptual Learning Style Questionnaire devised by Joy Reid (1987) was used to assess the learning style preferences of the students by multitude methods through four sensory perceptions such as Visual, Auditory, Kinaesthetic, Tactile including Group and Individual method. The total Score was interpreted into three categories of learning styles as Major, Minor and Negligible group of learners in each learning style method. It was used to investigate the cognitive and environmental dimensions of student learning. Based on these preferences, strategies can be formulated to achieve academic excellence irrespective of the cultural context. The reliability of these instruments was examined by split-half technique method. Cronbach's alpha value of Cultural diversity self-assessment inventory and Perceptual learning style questionnaire were 0.79 and 0.86 respectively which led to the conclusion that these two tools are strongly reliable because of the high reliability score.

Self assessment questionnaires were administered to the students on an individual basis to prevent cross contamination after obtaining informed consent. Students were asked to respond based on a 5 point Likert scale indicating 5 as Strongly Agree to 1 as Strongly Disagree. Students answered the questionnaire within 30-45 minutes. Collected data was then analysed by descriptive and inferential statistics such as mean, standard deviation, correlation and chi-square test.

### Results

Figure-2: Distribution of Races



Cultural background variables included aspects such as age, sex, education, accommodation, duration of stay in Singapore and cultural background. Among the 121 respondents, 85% are aged between 22-24 years and 14% are aged between 20-22 years. On the basis of cultural background, (refer Figure 2) 76% of them are from China, 14% of them are from Vietnam, 3% from Indonesia, India and others (Germany, Korea and other parts of Europe). 78% of the respondents' mother tongue is Chinese and 13% of the respondents' mother tongue is Vietnamese. 79% of respondents were brought up in China, 12% were brought up in Vietnam whereas other ethnic group of respondents' were brought up in their own respective countries. Students from these different culture actively participated in extracurricular activities. 49% participate in Sports, 23% enjoy performing Arts, 12% dance and 4% actively participate in Toast masters.

**Table-1: Distribution of Cultural Diversity Score among Year 3 students**

Understanding of Cultural Diversity	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)
Value Diversity-Able to work in multicultural setting- >80	52	43	90	6.18
Moving in Right Direction-Able to work and room for improvement- 50 to 80	68	56	70	5.06
Difficulty to work in multicultural setting- <50	01	01	--	--

Table-1 shows that 43% of learners who valued diversity were also those who were able to learn with different people in their environment. 56% of respondents were deemed as heading in the right direction in a teaching and learning environment in which they felt there was still room for improvement, particularly with training sessions by educators.

**Figure-3: Distribution of Learning Style Preferences Score among Year 3 students**

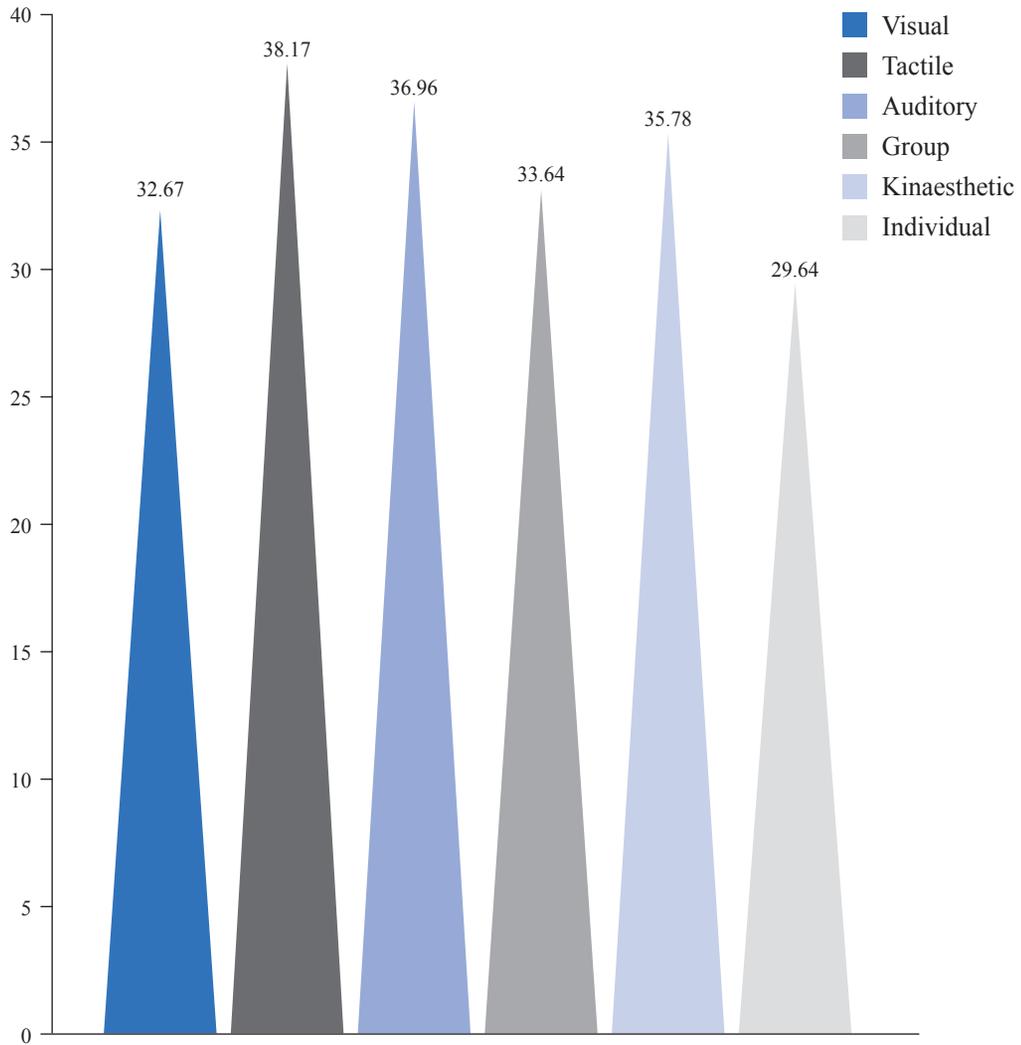


Figure 3 shows that tactile learning style preference was ranked as first with the mean score of 38.17 and this was closely followed by auditory learning style preference (36.96). Kinaesthetic learning style was preferred as third (35.78) and Group learning style as fourth with the mean score of 33.64. Lastly, visual and individual learning style preferences had a mean score of 32.67 and 29.64.

**Figure-4: Distribution of Learning Style Preferences**

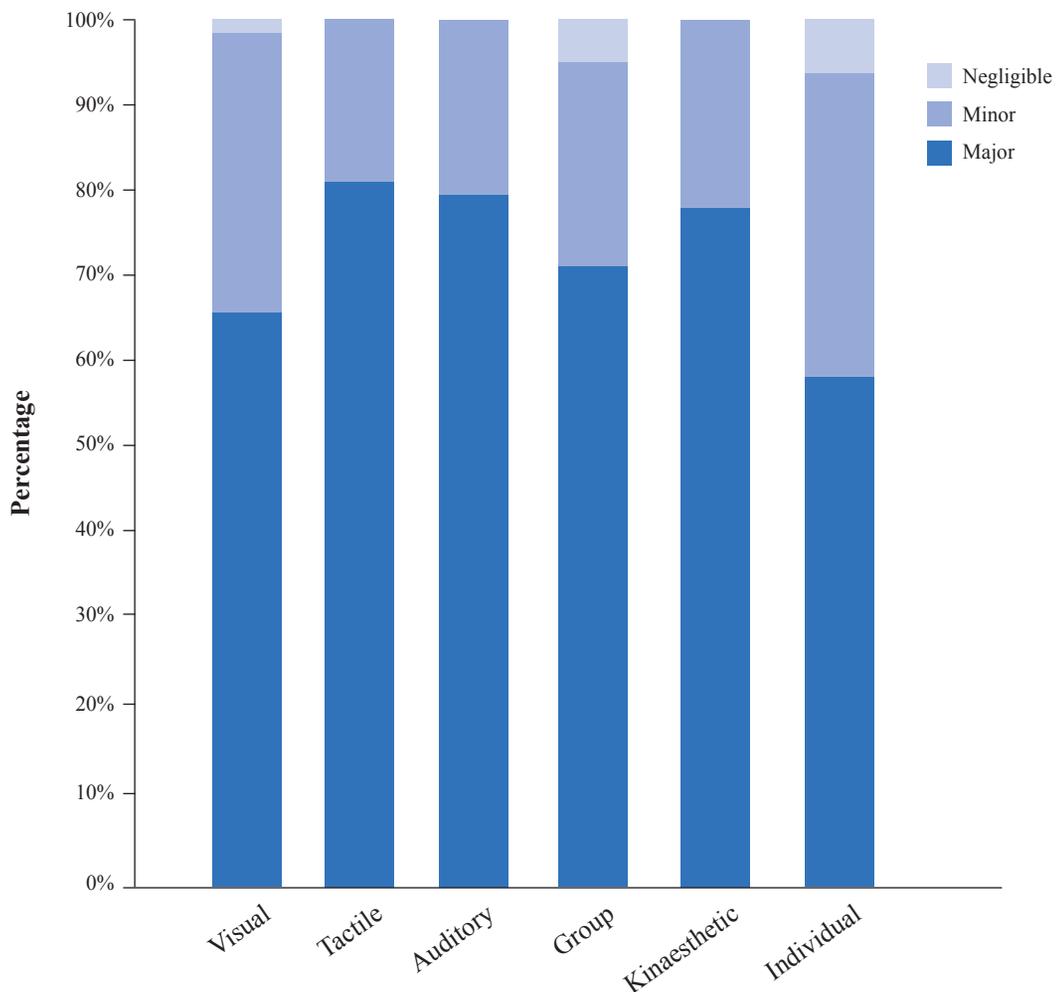


Figure-4 shows the percentage distribution of the different learning style preferences of the respondents. Among 121 respondents, 81% preferred to learn by the tactile learning style such as “hands-on” experiences with materials, 79% preferred the auditory style like hearing audio tapes, lectures, and class discussions, and 76% preferred active participation in activities, such as field trips, and role-play in the classroom. 71% opted for group learning where they valued group interaction whereas 66% and 59% preferred visual and individual learning style.

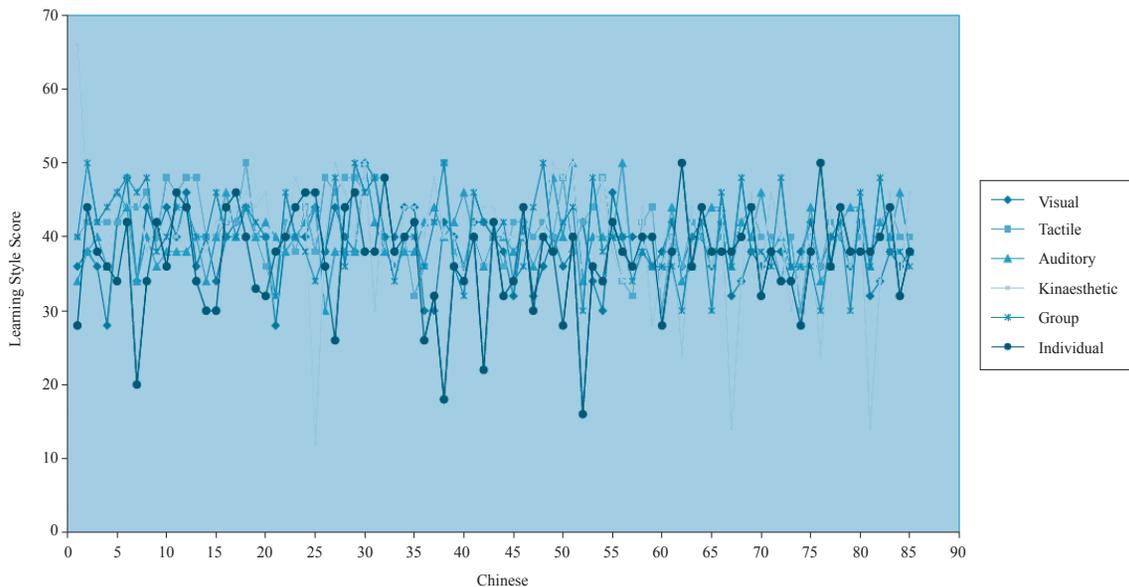
On the other hand, the minor learning style preferences through visual, tactile, auditory, group, kinaesthetic and individual were 33%, 19%, 21%, 24%, 24% and 35% indicating that they could function well as a learner with a proper guidance and direction. They were likely to be very successful learners as they were able to learn in several different ways. However, only 1-6% of respondents had difficulty in learning.

**Table-2: Correlation between Learning style preferences and Cultural Diversity  
N=121**

Cultural Diversity vs Learning Style Preferences	Statistical Test	Visual	Tactile	Auditory	Group	Kinaesthetic	Individual
Cultural Diversity	rs Value	0.94	0.90	0.84	0.92	0.96	0.86
	Z Value	10.2	9.8	9.1	7.8	10.4	8.2
Level of Significance		Critical table value is 3.29; P>.000. Statistically Significant***					

Table-2 represents the correlation between understanding of cultural diversity and learning style preferences which was analysed using Spearman rank correlation coefficient. The sample size was larger than 100 hence the Z value was used to examine the statistical significance. The Spearman's rho is a non-parametric test that determines evidence of direct positive relation and statistically significant relationship between understanding of cultural diversity and learning style preferences of the learners.

**Figure-5: Distribution of Learning Style Score among Chinese Students**



This Figure 5 shows that Chinese students preferred learning styles in the order of visual, tactile, auditory, kinaesthetic, group, and individual.

**Figure-6: Distribution of Learning Style Score among Vietnamese Students**

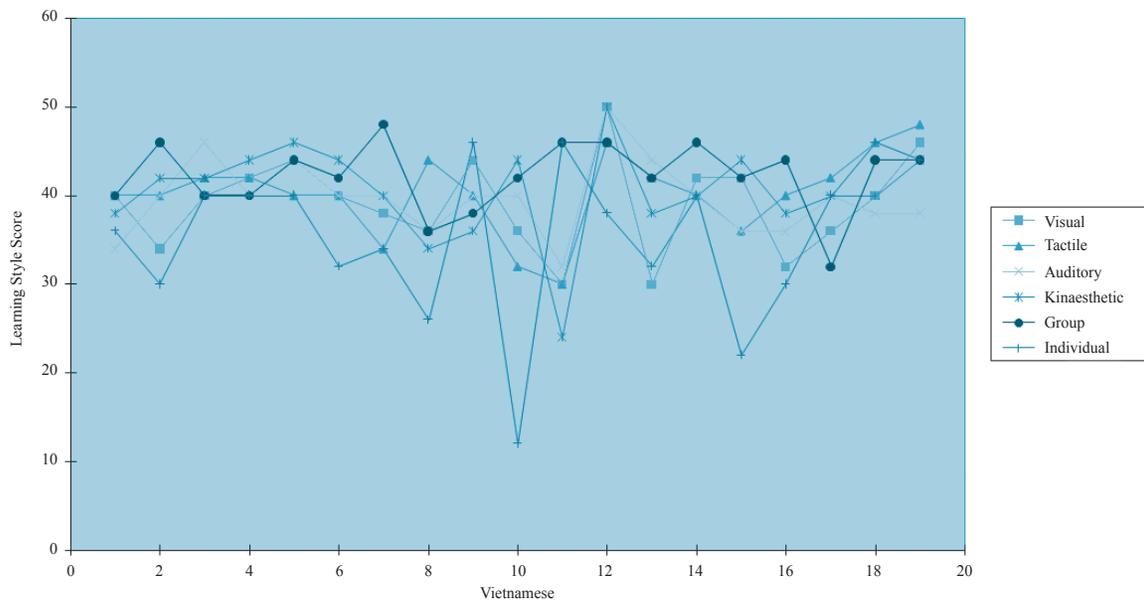


Figure 6 demonstrates that Vietnamese preferred learning styles in the following order, auditory, visual, tactile, individual and kinaesthetic but the learning style preferences also fluctuated and varied among individuals.

**Figure-7: Distribution of Learning Style Score among Indonesians, Indian, Malay and other nationality students**

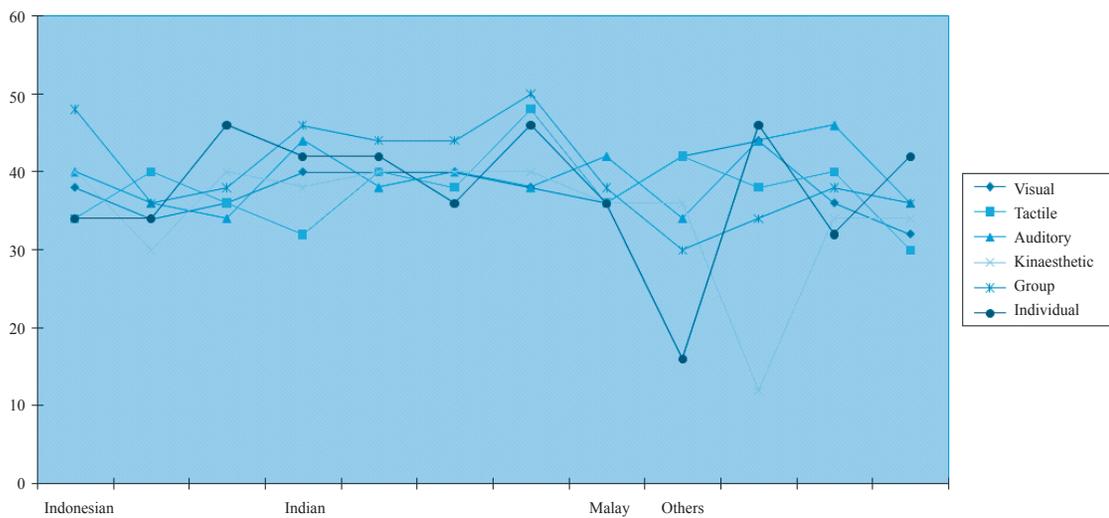


Figure 7 illustrates that Indonesians preferred group, individual, tactile, auditory, visual and listed kinaesthetic as a last style of preference. Comparatively Indians noted a preference for group, followed by individual, tactile, visual and kinaesthetic and lastly auditory method. However, the evidence of the preference of learning style methods could not be generalised as the smaller number of sample represented by nationality. These findings may be further explored in future research by selecting a more appropriate sample size with respect to the nationality.

European, German and Korean students preferred auditory, tactile, visual, individual and group and listed kinaesthetic as the least preferred.

**Table-3: Association between Cultural background variable with Learning Style Preferences among Year 3 students  
N=121**

Learning Style Preferences vs Races	Visual	Tactile	Auditory	Group	Kinaesthetic	Individual
X2 Value	39.79	16.84	25.04	24.08	15.96	35.05
Significant Level	P<0.05 SS**	NS	P<0.01 SS**	P<0.01 SS**	NS	P<0.05 SS**

NS-Non significant: SS-Statistically Significant

Table-3 shows that there is a significant association between races and visual, auditory, group and individual learning style preferences.

**Visual learning.** Of all nationalities, Chinese students were visual in their learning style. Vietnamese were also found to be visual in their learning though it was not the preferred learning style. The visual learning style was opted as a minor learning style by Indians and other races (European, German and Korean). Overall, the visual learning style had a significant association with all nationalities at  $P < .05$

**Auditory learning.** Indian students were the least auditory of all learners. The Chinese, Vietnamese and Indonesians students all opted for the auditory learning style as a second or third choice. It is evident that there is a significant association with auditory learning style and all nationalities at  $p < .01$ .

**Kinaesthetic and Tactile learning.** Though the students of all nationalities strongly preferred kinaesthetic and tactile learning (i.e., experiential including laboratory work, total physical involvement in learning), the kinaesthetic and tactile learning style with

all the races was non- significant. Additional research might focus on association of tactile and kinaesthetic learning style with different races.

**Group learning.** Group work is preferred by all nationalities as a major preference style and is significant at  $p < .01$ . Therefore, it is important to consider how much group work is done in university classes.

**Individual learning.** Individual learning was the least preferred by all nationalities. It was probable that culture in particular, previous educational experience had affected students' learning style preferences for individual learning. Additional research will help to identify those cultural and educational differences.

## Discussion

Globalisation in education is evident in the increased student enrolment from different countries. An individual is influenced by his or her own cultural behaviour, learning style, and educational experience. When students migrate to another country for higher education, they face problems when confronted by new cultures, new education systems and new teaching-learning environments. Hence, there is a need to help them to establish and adapt new strategies to overcome learning style differences and sustain academic excellence (Manikutty et al 2007).

The results of this study showed that there was strong correlation between cultural diversity and learning style preferences and a significant association between the cultural background and leaning style preferences. As a result of this outcome, deep understanding of culture and learning style preference was important to produce an effective learner.

A majority of the respondents suggested that tactile, auditory, kinaesthetic and group learning styles would involve the information transferred through experience, listening and action. A majority of the respondents preferred Major learning style preference in all different learning methods which emphasised that educators need to provide instruction with close consideration of the cultural background of the learners.

Among 121 respondents, 19-35% preferred Minor Learning Style preference which implied that these students are likely to misunderstand or misinterpret the information delivered in the classroom. Guild (2012) cited Ramirez (1989) quote as “The greatest care must be taken to use the concepts as tools for growth and individualisation”. Subsequently, Cox and Ramirez (1981) have suggested that learning of these groups can be facilitated by appropriate guidance.

One of the ways to improve the understanding of the minority learning style preferred group is to develop methodological support for cultural diversity using the Multicultural Centrum. Multiculturalism can be defined as “an ideological, political and societal ideal with a demand for equality and justice for all people, regardless of origin and right of groups to their own roots”. The main work of this centrum is therefore to create structures and criteria for cultural institutions in their work on diversity (Hamde 2008).

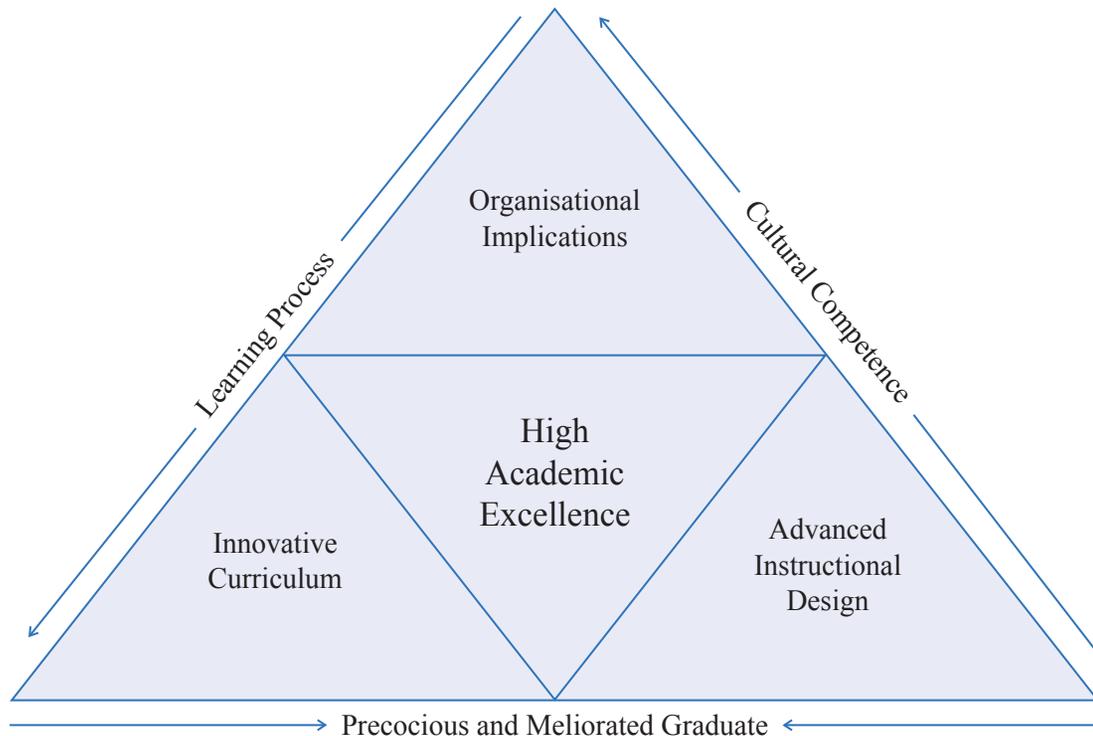
Multiculturalistic effects among this hospitality group of respondents are seen through their participation in extracurricular activities such as Sports, Performing Arts and Dance, Toastmasters and Club de Cuisine. These kind of activities promote a friendly and diverse campus and the students feel secure and safe. These activities facilitate cross-cultural relationship among students even though they live in a foreign country. These results indicate that cultural diversity has a positive impact on students’ learning style preferences and overall level of satisfaction. A multiculturalistic environment can be further enhanced by implementing creative, innovative co-curricular and extracurricular activities.

On the other hand, an educator as a leader can leverage on diversity by influencing cultural diversity and promoting good interaction among the students to build positive relationships (Summer et al 2011). Hence, educators must facilitate structure and successful learning for every learner. This can be achieved through the understanding of learning style preferences. As an outcome of this, minority and negligible group learners can achieve the major learning style through a multitude of methods irrespective of cultural backgrounds.

## Implications

Learning style research based on cultural background helps in the formulation of an innovative curriculum as well as the adoption of different approaches to a teaching–learning process that is focused on the senses of information and different perception. Strategic models can be used to enhance the cultural competence at the institutional or organisational level. Organisational implications in relation to innovative curriculum and advanced instructional design are necessary to achieve high academic excellence (refer figure-8). Through these strategies, learners can achieve academic excellence and succeed in their learning with an in- depth understanding of the subject and can be highly competent in their discipline (Guild 1994).

**Figure-8: Strategic model to nourish Cultural Competence**



(Created by author, 2013)

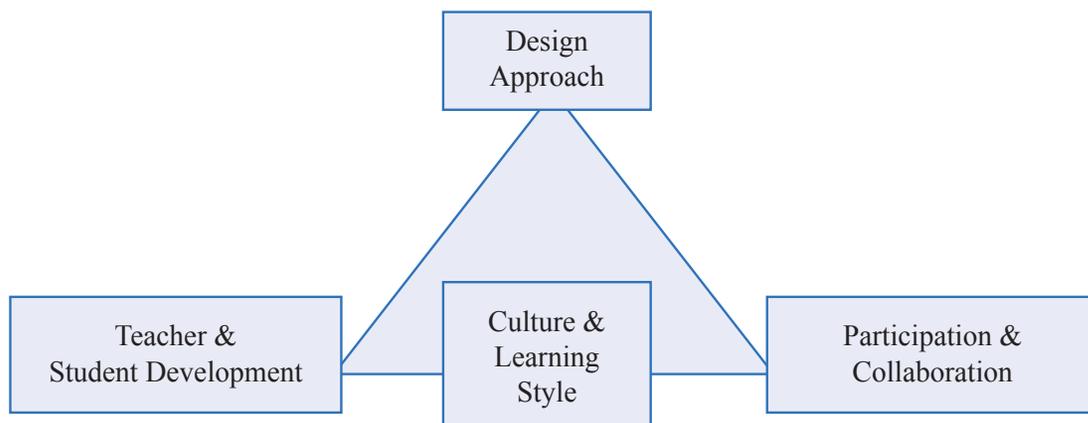
## **Innovative Curriculum and Advanced Instructional Design**

Implementation of an innovative curriculum involves the application of three aspects - curriculum design, teacher development and participation and collaboration (refer figure-9). Educators play a major role in designing the curriculum. Curriculum design is based on the learning theories and styles including the methodology of blended learning. Educators take into consideration the diverse learning styles of individuals to produce a good curricular product which will promote academic achievement (Vaseghi et al 2012). Blended learning incorporates both e-learning and face to face learning equally. The benefits of this learning method include cost reduction, comfort of the learner, and efficiency of time, as it facilitates face to face instruction with personal understanding (Akkoyunlu and Soylu 2008). Conjointly, specific cognitive style can be added into the curriculum to include analytical and synergetic styles which will promote students' cooperation, and prepare them to be independent learners in a competitive environment (Teach for America 2011).

Through the implementation of this curricular design, students can achieve high academic excellence and are empowered by the teachers' pedagogical content knowledge and professional competence. In addition to this, another determinant to alleviate learning difficulties arising from cultural difference is to encourage students' participation in extracurricular activities (Ramayah et al 2011).

In view of this, an innovative curriculum will help to narrow the gap between theory and practice by creating effective teaching and learning environments in which the learning needs of a learner will be accomplished. Innovative curriculum implementation requires the involvement of educators, to varying degrees, in shaping curricular products and learning scenarios in the classrooms.

**Figure-9: Innovative Curriculum Model** (University of Twente,n.d)



In the learning process, cultural diversity and learning style is a core aspect of an individual. Educators currently do not generally consider culture as a major consideration in curriculum development and therefore do not appreciate its important role in building students' academic excellence. It is thus important that in this competitive globalised world, educators utilise a comprehensive and holistic approach in curriculum development that matches with the benefits of an advanced technology installed classroom environment. Benefits of this learning methodology include cost reduction, comfort of the learner, and efficiency of time, face to face instruction with personal understanding (Akkoyunlu and Soylu 2008).

Vaseghi et al. (2012) has rightly pointed out that an educator plays a vital role in the teaching-learning process. Educator must use a range of instructional methods to provide systematic information through knowledge of each and every individual learning style preferences. Ramayah et al (2011) argued that educators must optimise teaching learning styles by using advanced technology learning tools.

A culturally sensitive teaching method must incorporate learning activities that include community work, field trip, co-curricular activities, role play, simulation, and hands on training. Team work encourages the students to actively participate and to build a new relationship as well as strengthening the existing relationship among the students (Ramayah et al 2011).

Other differentiated learning methodologies include reflective learning and cooperative learning (Narver and Russell 2010). There are also effective strategies like cross-racial learning, peer teaching and role modelling which could successfully prepare the student to be an academic achiever. We need to consider all these innovative strategies to promote student self esteem and the ability to empathise (Teach for America 2011).

In a nutshell, innovative curriculum and advance instructional design provides net-benefits to the students. Collectively, they contribute to the development of positive attitudes, more interracial friendship and academic gains among the students (Teach for America 2011).

## Limitations

The limitations of this study can be addressed as follows:

1. The samples could have been selected from across the three year undergraduate programme instead of just being confined to year three students.
2. The study could have also involved Masters level business students.
3. This study can be replicated in various student societies.

## Conclusion

The results of this study suggest that there is a strong and significant relationship between cultural diversity and the learning process. The majority of Hospitality and Tourism students had major learning style preferences whereas minority students preferred minor and negligible learning style preferences. This indicates that information delivery which involves all perceptual learning activities such as visual, auditory, tactile, kinaesthetic, group and individual must be utilised in the classroom. For minor and negligible group learners to achieve as much as those with major learning style preference, the delivery of information must consider their nationality or race. Furthermore, the effectiveness of curricular and instructional strategies can be examined.

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## Guide for Authors Submitting Articles to Singapore Management Journal

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