

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

Exploring the Concept of Learning Agility

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Business Studies

in

Human Resource Management

at Massey University, Manawatu, New Zealand

Simon Miller

2018

Abstract

Continuous learning and employee adaptation have become increasingly important within modern organisational environments categorised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. In turn, this has resulted in a growing body of literature supporting a construct known as learning agility.

This study sought to determine the underlying psychological variables that support individual learning agility. In doing so, cognitive ability, personality, and emotional intelligence assessments distributed by OPRA Psychology Group were administered to a random sample of Scenic Hotel Group employees to obtain quantifiable data. Alongside this, a validated learning agility questionnaire was administered to participants and their managers to obtain a measure of each employee's learning agility. Participants' learning agility scores were then correlated with their personality, cognitive ability, and emotional intelligence assessment results.

Results of this study indicate that learning agility is significantly positively correlated with overall cognitive ability. Furthermore, learning agility shows a significantly positive relationship with personality factors associated with openness to experience, extraversion, and the neuroticism sub-trait, tense-driven. As an outcome, this has provided for a tentative model of learning agility comprising of:

1. Cognitive ability
2. Learning mindset and behaviour
3. Contribution to the social learning environment

This research adds to the current body of literature available into a construct known as a key determinant of employee performance and potential (Eichinger & Lombardo, 2000; McCauley, 2001). Furthermore, it provides the foundations for the development of a derived measure of learning agility that can be determined using existing psychometric assessments.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the support of Dr Phil Ramsey and Dr David Tweed in providing supervision over the course of writing this thesis document. Your time, advice, and recommendations were much appreciated.

In addition, I would like to thank Dr Sarah Burke and Dr Paul Englert from OPRA Psychology Group for supporting my studies and for the ongoing coaching and mentoring that you provide in the course of my employment.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge my wife. Many evening and weekend hours were spent working on this thesis at the sacrifice of my family. Your love and support in helping me achieve my goal will never be forgotten.

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Acknowledgments	3
Introduction.....	6
Literature Review	11
Research Method	30
Results	42
Discussion	49
Conclusion	57
References.....	61
Appendices	67

List of Tables

Table 1 - Choices Architect Instrument Factors	19
Table 2 - Burke Learning Agility Inventory Dimensions	21
Table 3 - Bedford Learning Agility Question Items.....	22
Table 4 - viaEdge, Burke LAI, and Bedford Questionnaire Factor Comparisons	23
Table 5 - 15FQ+ Openness to Experience Scales	24
Table 6 - 15FQ+ Conscientiousness Scales	25
Table 7 - 15FQ+ Extraversion Scales.....	25
Table 8 - 15FQ+ Agreeableness Scales	26
Table 9 - 15FQ+ Neuroticism Scales	26
Table 10 - Internal Consistency Coefficients (15FQ+, Adapt-g, Genos Emotional Intelligence Select)	33
Table 11 - 15FQ+ Impression Management Scales	35
Table 12 - Genos Emotional Intelligence Assessment Validity Scales	38
Table 13 - Participant Tenure Demographic Information	39
Table 14 - Participant Position Demographic Information.....	40
Table 15 - Bedford Learning Agility Questionnaire (BLAQ) Range and Means	43
Table 16 - Learning Agility and Cognitive Ability Results.....	44
Table 17 - Learning Agility and The Big Five Results.....	45
Table 18 - Learning Agility and Emotional Intelligence Results.....	45
Table 19 - Learning Agility and Openness Sub-Traits	46
Table 20 - Learning Agility and Conscientiousness Sub-Traits	47
Table 21 - Learning Agility and Extraversion Sub-Traits.....	47
Table 22 – Learning Agility and Agreeableness Sub-Traits.....	48
Table 23 - Learning Agility and Neuroticism Sub-Traits	48
Table 24 - Organisational Learning Principles and Learning Agility	54