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## Detection of Learning Styles in the Focus Group

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### Abstract

The report presents pilot part findings of the research aimed on the detection of learning styles among selected university students. The fundamental question of the research was to find out which learning styles university students prefer especially in the current period filled with modern technologies. The pilot part of the research is based on quantitative evaluation of the findings from standardized questionnaire ILS (Index of Learning Styles) from prof. Felder (USA).

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### 1. Introduction

The following text summarizes partial conclusions of the research focused on university students' learning styles.

The term learning styles was first used in 1954 by Herb Thelen. Currently there is a wide range of different definitions of the term learning styles, some of them are as an illustration stated below:

The pedagogical dictionary defines learning styles as: “Learning procedures used by the individual in particular period of his or her life in most situations of the pedagogical type. To a certain extent they are independent of the subject matter. They are established on congenital basis (cognitive style) and they develop with the concurrence of inside and outside influences“ (Průcha, Walterová, Mareš, 2009).

Jiří Mareš later describes the term learning styles as: “learning styles have the character of meta-strategy which

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incorporates peculiar learning strategies, learning tactics and learning operations. This meta-strategy monitors, evaluates, directs in certain course and regulates with regard to learning conditions, to learning progression itself, to achieved learning results and to the social context of learning process. Styles lead the individual towards the learning results of certain type, but make difficult achievements of other results (often better ones)“ (Mareš, 1998).

Reifová defines the term learning styles as: “learning style is a way in which a person deals with terms, with everyday situations, with what he or she prefers during learning, with natural tendencies and furthermore it is a way in which the person approaches thinking and in which he or she best perceives and processes the information“ (Reifová, 2005).

Švec describes the learning styles in this way: “Learning styles as the individual ways of acquiring of pieces of knowledge express the tendencies of the pupils to proceed in a certain way during the learning process. Thus these are not only learning abilities, experience and skills, but also the attitudes and inner motives for learning of the given subject matter as well as hereditary predispositions for cognition and learning“ (Švec, 2005).

According to Mareš and Skalská learning styles can be characterized as (Švec, 2005) :

- Peculiar procedures when learning (peculiar by their structure, consecution, quality, flexibility of application) that have got the character of learning meta-strategy (strategies exerted by the pupil during the learning process and especially during planning, observing and evaluating of his or her own learning procedures).
- Procedures exerted by the pupil in majority of pedagogical situations during a certain period of school attendance.
- Partially dependent on subject matter (learning content) and school subject.
- Leading to specific results, for example to a mere remembering of pieces of knowledge or to their understanding, which is exhibited by the ability to apply these pieces of knowledge.
- Originating from congenital base, it means growing out of cognitive styles.
- Evolving by a concurrence of internal and external conditions (effects), thus to a certain extent they can be affected and changed.
- We do not overly realize the learning styles, they are obvious and suitable for majority of individuals who do not usually try to improve them in any way, we can definitely influence our learning styles, even though the change is not so easy.
- Factors influencing the change of the learning style are heavily related to a change of the surroundings and to the extent of individual's ability for adaptation to the new surroundings. They are also connected with the natural maturing of the individual, with congenital conditions, physical factors (light, noise, day-time, etc.), but also with so called obtained factors (social and cultural influences). Thus the learning styles are influenced by: congenital sensory orientation, age, sex, dominant type of intelligence, particular school subject or subject matter, anticipated kind of cognitive thinking, his or her psycho-cognitive development, but also by the family background and cultural influences.

## 2. Materials and Methods

Altogether 35 students (including 30 women and 5 men) took part in the pilot research survey, the age structure ranged from 20 to 26 years, see Table 1. The respondents are full-time education students from the University of Hradec Králové. Currently 26 of them study bachelor studies, it means their highest achieved education level is the school-leaving exam, 9 students with the achieved education level “bachelor“ study follow-up master's degree programme. 32 respondents study the Pedagogical Faculty and 3 students attend the Faculty of Natural Sciences.

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