

*Learning profiles of Master Students*  
*– support or barrier for lifelong learning?*

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Abstract:

Master education as a part of lifelong learning/education has over the last years increased in Denmark. Danish Universities now offer more than 110 different programmes.

One of the characteristics of the master education is that the students get credits for their prior learning and practical work experiences, and during the study/education theory and practise is combined.

At the Master of Adult Learning and Human Resource Development, one of DPU's master programmes, the students have a very diverse background and have many different experiences and practises.

Since the first programme was introduced at DPU in 2001 several evaluations and research have been carried out on several topics relating to form, content, and didactics, but one important focus is missing: the research about the psychological profile and learning style of the master student. Knowledge is lacking on how teaching methods and programme designs relate to and support the learning profiles and learning styles of the master students. In other words: What are the consequences of the students' learning styles in terms of planning and teaching in the master programme?

This paper will present a pilot study that examines the following hypotheses:

- Despite their diverse work background, do the master students show a similar learning style profile, which is reflected in the teaching and course design?
- There is a discrepancy between the way the master students act as very self-directed and autonomous managers, adult educators, or consultants in their working life and the way the master students act as students.

The research in this pilot study will be carried out as semi-structured interviews with 9 students enrolled in the first semester. The questions in the interview focus on successful learning experiences in the workplace and in the master programme, as well as the interviewee's self-perception of learning style(s). These findings are triangulated with statements on how faculty conduct teaching and with evaluations and prior research.

## **Introduction**

Denmark has a long tradition of adult education, best known through the folk high school movement. During the last century, the adult education has predominantly been represented through general adult education and vocational education, as well as through other forms. During the last years, many changes have occurred in the adult educational system due to a more liberalistic trend and politics related to the movement from an information society to a knowledge society. These politics have been based on the politics of lifelong learning (Delors & Others, 1998; EU Memorandum, 2000; Longworth & Davies, 1996). P.E. Ellström (1997) suggested that the interest for lifelong education has influenced the production economy and the demands for development of competencies for the workplace. Globalisation has had an impact on education, in that education is viewed as a part of growth of management competition and of occupation salience (Telhauge, 1990). During the last 30 years, the education system in general has expanded, and the individuals in society have sought higher levels of education and have in general participated in greater numbers in the academies. Further, university education has developed from elite education to an *egalitarian* and mass education and from a focus on liberal to vocational education (Jarvis, 2002). Another change is that the university system in Denmark, originally based on the Humboltarian tradition, has undergone a change towards a more Anglo-Saxon tradition (Korsgaard, 1999). These changes, among others, have had the consequences that more of the higher education efforts have focused on a closer connection to the vocational workers (enterprises), that education has become more modularised, and that user payment (tuition fees paid by student rather than the government) have been implemented.

## **The master programme**

In 2000, a reform in the adult education system was implemented and this reform established a parallel adult education system (Undervisningsministeriet, 2002). In this new education structure, the adult is offered the possibility to participate in adult education to the highest academic level and can receive credit for her experiences from current working life. The master programme at the Danish University of Education is a part of that new system. (Denmark did not previously have policy supporting graduate education through master programmes). Over 100 new master programmes in Denmark have been implemented during the last 5 years. The aim of the master programme (ministry order 2002) is a vocational,

research-based education with the aim to develop and improve adults' vocational competencies and their personal and professional competencies (Undervisningsministeriet, 2002).

An important characteristic of the master programme compared to an ordinary academic education is that the students get credit for their prior experiences in their working life. Admission to these Master of Education programmes (MEd) require that students have at least 2 years of relevant professional experience prior to admission, as well as a bachelor's degree, a postgraduate diploma, a master degree, or have completed another medium-length course of further education.

### **The master programme at the Danish University of Education**

The Danish University of Education was established in 2000, and in September 2001 the master program was established with three Master of Education (MEd) programmes: Adult Learning and Human Resource Development, Health Promotion and Education, and Educational ICT. During the years several others master programs had been added, and in 2005 the University offers 11 master programmes

The MEd (Adult Learning and Human Resource Development) is normally part-time education and lasts 2 years. It is however possible to take the education in one year as a full time student. The education is structured into 4 modules, one in each term. The three first modules have a special focus each; module 1: adult learning and adult psychology, module 2: learning in the organization and the work place, module 3: competence development seen in a sociological and political context. Module 4 is the master project where the student works with her own project with focus on a voluntarily chosen topic. Each module ends with an exam, where the students writes a thesis and afterwards is examined in this thesis. Each module gives the credit of 15 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) points. The full programme gives the credit of 60 ECTS points.

The first three modules have the same structure: 2- 3 two-day seminars, and one master week (5 days). At the MEd (Adult Learning and Human Resource Development), the module is structured into 10 themes. Each module includes 60 hours of lectures and 7 hours of guidance per student. In total the student is expected to work with her thesis and study for approximately 400 hours a term. Most of the seminars are placed outside normal working hours to make it possible for the students to attend classes beside their fulltime job.

### ***The characteristics of the programme***

There are several key characteristics distinguishing the master programme from other academic education. This education must combine the practical and the theoretical aspect, so that issues from the students' practice should be connected to theory (and vice versa). This combination shall be the case both during the seminars, and in the students' thesis for their exams. An example of this application is a student from the health sector, who works with the issue of how the more experienced nurses view newcomers with more academic knowledge than experience. The master programme also qualifies the student to undertake complex tasks in organizations and institutions.

Another characteristic is that the students are divided in study groups, which in the MEd (Adult Learning and Human Resource Development) at DPU is a must. According to the experience from the first year, the students are divided into study group before they start the term. The formation of the study group is based on two principles: First, that the students in the group should have some things in common; for example, individuals working in the same field and at the same time have had different challenging experiences. Second, they at the same time are put in a group with students from quite different fields; for example students from the public sector are in group with students from the private sector.

Another characteristic is the focus on guidance. Each student has the possibility of up to 7 hours of guidance in each term on the first three modules. At the fourth module (the final master project) the guidance is 25 hours. The idea is that the guidance is an important part of the students' learning process and that the guidance gives a possibility to combine theory and practice.

A final characteristic of the program is the e-learning system (Blackboard), used as a means of communication between the students themselves and the faculty.

### **The Profile of the Master Student**

At the MEd (Adult Learning and Human Resource Development) two-thirds of the students are women and one-third men. The approximate average age is 40 years and the students generally have occupations in the public or the private sector, where they work with different types of training, education, or human resource development.

Many of the students have family commitments and children. Most of the students have a full-time occupation beside their study, and about half of them get the education paid by their employer. Some also have reduced work time of some kind so they have time to study.

The master programme has been evaluated several times since the beginning of the programme in 2001. (Blom Andersen & Hemmingsen, 2001; Hemmingsen, 2004; Carlsson & Hemmingsen, 2004).

The results of these evaluations show that about 25 % of the students find that their leader or colleagues at their workplace are very interested in their master education. And after completion of the master education, the students find that they have had the possibility to use their competencies and have been able to use their newly developed competencies in their work.

About 50% of the students in the master programmes come from the educational fields and work with educational planning or teaching. The students' motivation for a Master's degree is to develop their competencies for their job function or to gain the possibility to change their position, but continue to work in the same field.

The evaluations find that the students feel that it is a lonely process to be a master student, and thus feel that the study group is an important part of the programme. However, during the last years, the faculty has experienced that many of the study groups just do not function on their own. This situation is despite of the fact that the students are very experienced in teamwork.

Another issue is the connection between the theory and the practice. How is this done and who shall make the connection? The evaluations show that the students are able to make connection themselves and that this process gives a deeper understanding of their profession as well as methods to develop their field.

### **Our hypotheses**

The MEd (Adult Learning and Human Resource Development) programme is now entering a new phase. It has reached a level with a stable enrolment, a stable core group of teachers and a stable curriculum. So, one can argue that it is time to move on and look beyond these "practical" matters and try to develop the course even further. This is the reason for turning towards gaining a deeper insight in the relationship between the master student and the programme. Based on our own experiences as organisers and teachers in this particular

programme, we have proposed two hypotheses, which we will try to investigate further in this pilot study.

Our first hypothesis is:

- Despite the diverse work background, do the master students show a similar learning style profile, which is reflected in the teaching and course design?

This hypothesis relates to the organisation of the course. The different teachers show a remarkably similar approach to teaching, and the students apparently seem to accept the mode of teaching and express satisfaction with both the way things are organised and their learning outcome. The questions we need to ask are: how are teaching approaches suited to meet the learning styles of the students? Do a variety of learning styles call for a change of teaching methods? Should university teachers try to make learners 'complete learners'?

Our second hypothesis is:

- There is a discrepancy between the way the master students act as very self-directed and autonomous managers, adult educators, or consultants in their working life and the way the master students act as students.

Evaluations show that our master students carry very autonomous positions in their working life, and hence should be able to act self-directed and independently in order to obtain and process information. But in their student life there seems to be a tendency toward a dependent behaviour, and students are not proactive in the way, we expect. The subsequent questions are: To what extent does their learning style match our expectations of self-directedness? Do we as teachers support and maybe even enhance their dependent behaviour? And what can we do in order to make them self-directed and support them in that process?

### **Learning styles**

Several scholars have tried to measure and classify learning styles (Kolb, 1984; Honey & Mumford, Zwanenberg et.al., 2000), and there seem to be a general agreement that individuals differ in the way they approach learning. This view is explicated by Kolb, who elaborates the basic assumption that the learning process is not identical for all learners, and that different psychological structures guide our learning processes (Kolb, 1984). Research suggests that motivation and performance, and hence learning, improve when teaching style is suited to fit the student's learning style (Miller, 2001; Armstrong, 2000). In a research report,

Miller (2001) concludes that educators are responsible for trying to understand the diversity of their students and to teach accordingly in order to optimise learning.

This calls for a closer look on what could classify as a learning style, the nature of such style(s) and the consequences for learning and teaching. As Tennant note (1998) learning style, conceptual style and cognitive style are all related by the way they refer to individual's consistent approach to organising and processing knowledge. The possibility of discriminating between different cognitive styles is supported by other research; most well known is perhaps Witkin's terms field-dependent and field-independent learners. (Tennant, 1998; Armstrong, 2000). J.P Das (1988) tries to sum up another differentiation between learning style and cognitive style. Drawing on Schmeck, Das describes a cognitive style as a 'general, habitual mode of processing information', whereas learning style is the cognitive style applied in a learning environment (Das, 1988:102). In order to avoid too many misunderstandings, Das introduces yet another distinction. Although similar in nature, cognitive strategy and cognitive style is defined by the first being manifest and the latter being latent (Das, 1988). The same distinction could probably be made between learning strategy and learning style.

Adopting Kolb's theoretical framework, learning styles can be seen as relative stable states that govern the way we 'grasp reality' (Kolb, 1984:64). Kolb illustrates how most people develop learning styles that emphasize some learning abilities over others.

This means that learners have different orientations in the learning process. Kolb divides the learning process into 4 modes: concrete experience (CE), reflective observation (RO), abstract conceptualising (AC) and active experimentation (AE). Based on his Learning Style Inventory, Kolb claims to be able to define the individual's learning style based on how the learner learns in relation to the 4 modes. This results in four distinct learning styles, each of which is in opposition to the others. The *convergent* learning style is characterised by an orientation towards abstract conceptualising and active experimentation, whereas the *divergent* learning style is characterized by the need for concrete experience and reflective observation. In the *assimilative* learning style, the dominant orientations are abstract conceptualising and reflective observation, in opposition to the *accommodative* learning style, where the dominant features are concrete experiences and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984:78).

Key characteristics for the learning styles can be summarized the following way. The convergent learning style involves a strong practical application of ideas, a narrow interest and a strong specialisation in the physical sciences. The convergent learner prefers to deal with technical problems rather than emotions and personal relations.

The divergent learner is characterised by an imaginative ability, the ability to generating ideas and seeing things from new perspectives. Contrary to the convergent learner, the divergent learner is more interested in cultural and interpersonal issues.

The assimilative learning style involves a strong ability to create theoretical models, and an ability to assimilate disparate ideas into an integrated explanation. The assimilative learner is more concerned with abstract concepts, rather than the practical use of theories.

The accommodative learning style is characterised by an orientation towards doing things, taking risks, and carrying out plans and tasks. The accommodative learner performs well when required to adapt quickly to changes, and he/she solves problems intuitively. The accommodative learner relies on others for information (Kolb, 1984:90).

Being what Kolb calls a complete learner means the ability to integrate and operate within the bipolar dimensions of each learning style.

Even though Kolb has won considerable recognition and practical propagation, his theory is subject to severe criticisms. Besides questioning Kolb's theoretical framework, Garner (2000) points out that misunderstandings are generated because Kolb fails to state clearly whether learning styles must be seen as traits (and therefore stable) or as states (and therefore flexible). This distinction is important if teachers also are required to help learners become 'complete learners' by investing more time and effort in less developed learning modes (Brown, 2003). We, as teachers, simply need to know whether or not it is worth trying to change inexpedient orientations to learning. And we need the discussion about whether or not it is our job to try to do so.

Another discussion point described by Tennant (1998) is the question of matching the learning style and the teaching style. This is rooted in a discussion about what kind of environment that is optimal for learning. A learning environment meeting the expectations of the students is not giving the same opportunities for trigger events, disjunctures or disorientation dilemmas (Brookfield, 1987; Jarvis, 1992; Mezirow, 2000), and might fail to create a fertile learning situation. The main question in relation to the master program is how

much “nursing” of the students is required, and how we create the optimal conditions for learning.

### **Learning as a metaphor**

In the history of education metaphors are not unfamiliar and have been used to express different educational and learning phenomena as for example; education as gardening, man as an empty vessel where the content in form of knowledge is poured in, the tabula rasa (one of the best known metaphors), learning as banking, the teacher as a midwife, and several others. Bullough (1991) thinks that the use of metaphors can help teachers to investigate and adjust their conception of their own teaching, as well as their conception of themselves as teachers. Through the metaphor tacit knowledge and some of the conception of the professional identity, what Pajak (1986) calls the teachers’ professional identities, can get expressed. Leino and Drakenberg (1993) who have done research on metaphors in teaching have used Soskice’s definition on metaphors: “Metaphors is that figure of speech whereby we speak about one thing in terms which are seen to be suggestive of another” (Soskice, 1985). The expression “speech” is not just a verbal expression and “thing” is not just a physical object but can also be a phenomenon. In addition “seen to be suggestive” means, seen so by a competent speaker of the language.

The use of metaphors is a construction of comprehension to facilitate the understanding of the unknown through a structure that is known.

Lakoff and Johnson (2002), who are inspired of Sapir and Worff among others, write, that a language can reflect the user of a particular language system and the concepts of that language.

Lakoff and Johnson write that our system of concepts is shaped through our constant activity in the physical and cultural surroundings. Thus a metaphor is not just a verbal act, but also acts in thoughts and action, and that the concepts guide our actions and the way in which we think and experience something. The metaphors simply structure our conceptions.

Lakoff and Johnson find that there are two kinds of metaphors: a systematic metaphor and a structural metaphor. The systematic metaphor helps us to understand one aspect of a concept through another aspect, but on the same hand hide others aspects of the concept, e.g. understanding the concept of discussion by referring to the concept of battle.

The structural metaphor helps to organise a whole system of concepts that are interrelated to one another. This is grounded in our kinaesthetic experiences and spatial orientation. This could be illustrated by “I’m in high spirit today”.

## **Design**

The design of this pilot study reflects the fact that we are entering new grounds, at least in our context at The Danish University of Education (DPU). There is a need for developing this area further, so this study is designed to give some preliminary knowledge on how to move on and where to look.

We have carried out semi-structured interviews with 8 students (5 women and 3 men) of out the 31 students enrolled in the first module of the Master of Adult Learning and Human Resource development program in the spring term 2005. Of these students one-third are men and two-thirds women, and the average age is 42. The students taking part in this pilot study are all parts of the same two study groups and receive guidance from either of us. The students are initially assigned to those study groups at random.

The interviewed students are aged between 31 and 52 reflecting the age distribution in the classroom. The students have diverse backgrounds, with 1 person working in the Health Sector, 2 persons working in the military or civil defence, 4 persons working as leaders in public institutions<sup>1</sup> and 1 in the financial sector in a private company. This also reflects the job distribution in the class where nearly half of the students work in different educational institutions or organisations, one third in private enterprises or organisations and half of the rest in the health sector.

The interview questions were designed to give information about learning experiences that the students perceived as giving a high outcome, both in their work place and in the master program. The students were asked to describe the form, the content, and their learning outcome. Building on Lakoff and Johnson among others, we asked the students to describe with a metaphor, when they learn the best, in the hope that they then would be able to give alternative descriptions of their learning experiences without using their newly acquired adult learning vocabulary. The final section of the interview was a very small-scale inventory based on Kolb’s Learning Style Inventory (Kolb, 1984). The students were asked to score

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<sup>1</sup> One is currently in between jobs.

statements about learning according to how well the statement fitted their own interpretation of learning.

The interviews were carried out by a single interviewer and are all (except one due to a technical problem) recorded. The following analysis work is done first by either of us alone, and then these findings are analysed jointly.

## **Analysis**

As stated in our first hypothesis, we set out to investigate whether or not our students have the same learning style.

Based on the mini learning style inventory we find that the master students have no similar learning style. 3 of our 8 respondents can be characterised as divergent learners emphasizing concrete experiences and reflective observations. 2 of the respondents show an orientation towards concrete experiences and active experimentations, which makes them accommodative learners in Kolbs theoretical framework. 1 shows a clear assimilative learning style, describing reflective observations and abstract conceptualising as important means of learning. 2 respondents do not display a clear learning style profile, emphasizing both the concrete experiences and the abstract conceptualisation, thus focusing on contrasting modes of learning. It is interesting to note that the convergent learning style is absent in our study. This fact could be related to the nature of the master programme with its emphasis on personal relations and a “humanistic” approach whereas the convergent learner has a more technical and practical orientation.

Another part of our study was to analyse whether these learning styles based on a fixed inventory is supported by the respondents’ own metaphorical interpretation of their learning style and their interpretation of high outcome learning experiences in their workplace and in the master programme.

Our analysis shows that 6 of the 8 metaphors can be interpreted in correspondence with the learning style proposed by the mini learning style inventory. The respondent with the assimilative learning style describes learning metaphorically as “I am one who has to sleep on it...”, illustrating a strong reflective orientation and a need for time to assimilate disparate ideas into a logically sound theoretical complex. One divergent learner describes the learning process as: “...a coat rack. I need to have some pegs to hang the theory on...some practice/praxis examples”, and another divergent learner describes the learning process as:

“...a jigsaw puzzle; little bits that invites to at bigger understanding”. We interpret this as an ability to see things from different perspectives, as well as an interest in other people’s views and perspectives on one’s own matters.

In 1 of the cases we are unable to interpret the metaphor in relation to learning, and in 1 of the cases the metaphor is directly opposite the mini learning style inventory. The latter could be an example of a discrepancy between how you describe yourself as a learner, and how you are able, or rather unable, to capture it and conceptualise it into an alternative image.

When we try to group our findings in relation to the respondents’ job function, we are not able to see an immediate relationship between job and learning style. 3 of the 4 respondents employed in the institutional field emphasize concrete experiences as the most important means of learning. A similar pattern was found in the case of the two military persons. Also the one person employed in the health sector value concrete experiences. The same tendency was found when asked about high outcome learning situations in the master programme. The same respondents described the most rewarding learning situations as the ones where concrete examples were given in relation to specific theories. The opposite was found in relation to the person employed in the financial sector. Here the emphasis was places on reflective orientation and abstract conceptualising. The high outcome learning situations were also described as ones where time to reflect and “think” was present. However thought about the nature of the involved work fields can be seen in line with our findings. The financial sector has a reputation of being more analytic and introvert, and maybe therefore attracts people with an assimilative learning style. On the other hand, the other professions represented in our study, are known to have a focus on immediate action and practical experience attracting people with a different orientation towards learning.

According to our second hypothesis we want to analyse the discrepancy between the ways the master students act as very self-directed and autonomous in their work place, and the way they act as students in the master programme.

As our main focus in this pilot study is learning style we want to analyse if the way the students act in their work place can be an expression of a learning style, based on Tennant’s (1998) notion of learning style, conceptual style and cognitive style as being related. Another point is, that we understand learning to take place, not just in formalised settings as education or courses, but also in the work place or in every day life in non-formalised settings.

This hypothesis has had a minor focus in this study, with the hope to work more deeply with this area in the future.

In our interview in the pilot study we haven't asked directly to the students ways of acting in their work place, but have asked the students to describe a learning situation in relation with their work that have had a high learning outcome. We have also asked the students to describe a learning situation with a high learning outcome from the master module.

All the students' answers were related to learning in a formal setting, a course or an educational programme, and not to the non-formal learning opportunities at their work place. This can raise the question about how the students comprehend learning style. Is their definition of learning style depending on the context, i.e. do they comprehend learning style only in relation to formalised learning settings?

In five of the responses we find that there were similarities between what we interpreted as learning style in relation with the work place and in the master study. These similarities are in different contexts, but we have to point out that there were similarities between the contexts; the learning situations were all formalised setting.

Comparing these findings with some of the responses from previous evaluations of the master programmes (Blom Andersen & Hemmingsen, 2002; Hemmingsen, 2003; Hemmingsen, 2004; Carlsson & Hemmingsen, 2004) we could get a closer view on the hypotheses and of what barriers and/or support the work in the study groups could give to the students' self-directedness. Previous evaluations show that about one fifth of the students find that the work in the study groups is not satisfactory. As one of the specific features of the master programme is the study group, we set forward the proposition that the study group is one of the places where the student's self-directedness can be expressed. A part of this analysis would be to analyse if the students self-directedness can be expressed in the way they work in their study group.

The evaluations show that the student's expectations to the work in the study group are very similar to the way they work at their work place. The students expect openness, engagement, knowledge sharing, sparring, inspiration, co-operation and feedback. They also expect the other members in the group to be well prepared, and that the study group is a safe place to show their ignorance and uncertainty. The same expectation as we find, is expected in the students' work place as a base for self-directedness. However, according to the evaluations the study group do not provide this ground/base for self-directedness for all students.

The students' dissatisfaction occur especially in the first module and lesser in the third module – so the questions are; do the students learn to cope with the work in the study group; do they get more self-directed later on in the study; do the faculty structure, teach or guide the new students in such a way that it is not optimal to support/facilitate the self-directedness?

### **Discussion, conclusion and future research**

Several questions have been posed throughout the paper. Some of them can get an immediate answer, some of them are subject to discussion, and some of them will need further investigation. To our first hypothesis the answer is clearly negative. It has not been possible to detect a similar learning style profile, what we could call a “master learning style”. However, we find a clear orientation towards concrete experiences as important factors for learning. This is based both on the mini learning style inventory, the metaphors describing the learning process and the respondents' answers about high outcome learning situations in the programme. There is some evidence that the teachers try to make sure that concrete experiences are taken into consideration in the classroom, but it would be too much to say, that this particular learning mode is clearly reflected in the teaching method. This aspect could certainly need some more attention in the future, which will increase the chances of a positive learning result.

Some other questions asked in relation to the students' learning styles are whether or not it is possible to change a learning style, and whether or not it is our job as university teachers to do so. The findings from our study show that there is a similarity between type of job and learning orientation, suggesting that the learning style is more or less permanent. This suggests that there is no point in trying to change teaching methods to include other forms, as it is impossible to make learners ‘complete learners’ anyhow. On the other hand, Perry's (1968) work is based on the conviction that cognition can be developed and changed, proposing that a change in learning style is possible. However, this aspect would need a further investigation, and could be addressed by interviewing the same students again at later points in their study, in order to find out if they perceive their high outcome learning experiences differently. Another point is that the content of the master programme might structure the way teaching is carried out. Emphasis in the curriculum is laid on humanistic and personal issues, leaving convergent learners with very little attention and very little recognition.

In relation to the second part of our study we find that there seems to be a discrepancy between how the students act as self-directed learners in the university and how they hold autonomous positions in their working life. This is illustrated by the way students perceive the work in study groups as being dissatisfactory, despite the fact that this way of approaching learning situations should be familiar. Contrary the students seem to describe learning situations with high outcome similar in the two different settings. This could be due to the fact that we ask them about formal learning settings in both cases.

Our pilot study has until now only provided us with a few limited answers, but has on the other hand raised a lot of important issues and questions to investigate in the future

The main ones concentrate around:

- Are learning styles changeable?
- What is the role of the university teacher in that respect?
- What is the relationship between learning at work and learning at university?

These questions could be generalised to cover other MEd programmes at DPU in order to see if programmes with more similar students show the same characteristics. However, we are convinced that the use of metaphors is a fruitful way forward, as the respondents become forced to look at their own learning practice and experience without using a pedagogical vocabulary and their newly acquired knowledge. The use of learning style inventories also provide us with a conceptual framework that is usable to categorise learners and understand how they relate to specific teaching methods.

But to conclude on the question posed in the headline of this paper, we find that students with certain learning styles have a greater chance of success within the MEd (Adult Learning and Human Resource Development). This is due to the fact that the content of the course as well as the methods of teaching seem to be more appealing to learners with accommodative and divergent learning styles, making students with a convergent learning style less likely to find the MEd programme supporting for lifelong learning. So if valid learning style profiles can be produced, we have a greater chance of optimising the learning process.

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