

## Group Differences in Learning between Students and Employees

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**Abstract.** Our research focuses on learning styles and experiences and preferences for learning method and media in the Chinese cultural context. Based on 302 questionnaires collected from three group—Employees, graduate students, and undergraduate students, we found that the dominant Chinese learning style is “Diverging” and then “Assimilating”, based on Kolb’s (1984) theory of learning styles. Learning style is stable across different demographic groups in our sample, including gender, occupation, major, and educational experience. We also found that there was a higher level of consistency between frequency and preference for learning media and methods in employee group than for graduate student group and for undergraduate student group. Cross-group comparison showed that there is little difference in preference for learning method and media across three groups; however, in terms of experiences (i.e., frequency of use), there is a higher degree of differences across the three groups, with employees reporting a wider range and more frequent use in general. Possible explanations will be discussed.

Key word: learning style, learning method, learning media, Chinese culture, employee, student

**Abstrak.** Penelitian kami terfokus pada gaya belajar dan pengalaman serta pilihan metode dan media belajar dalam konteks budaya China. Berdasarkan 302 kuesioner yang dikumpulkan dari 3 kelompok—karyawan, mahasiswa S-2, dan mahasiswa S-1, kami menemukan bahwa berdasarkan teori Kolb (1984) gaya belajar China yang dominan adalah “menyimpang” dan kemudian “mengasimilasi.” Gaya belajar pada sampel kami cukup stabil lintas kelompok demografik yang berbeda, termasuk gender, pekerjaan, pilihan utama (*major*) dan pengalaman pendidikan. Kami juga menemukan adanya tingkat konsistensi yang tinggi antara frekuensi dan pilihan media dan metode belajar pada kelompok pekerja daripada pada kelompok mahasiswa S-2 dan S-1. Perbandingan lintas-kelompok menunjukkan bahwa terdapat sedikit perbedaan dalam pilihan metode dan media belajar lintas ketiga kelompok tersebut; namun, dalam kaitan pengalaman (misalnya frekuensi penggunaan), terdapat derajat perbedaan yang lebih tinggi lintas ketiga kelompok, yaitu para pekerja melaporkan rentang yang lebih lebar dan secara umum lebih sering menggunakan metode dan media. Dibahas berbagai kemungkinan penjelasannya.

Kata kunci: gaya belajar, metode belajar, budaya China, pekerja, mahasiswa

As China becomes the world’s “new lab,” more and more multinational companies have started building their research and development hubs in China. According to the statistics of Business Bureau of China last year there were, more than 750 R&D centers have been established in China by multinational companies, a drastic change from a little more than 100 in 2000. As these R&D centers grow at a fast-moving pace, there are also increasingly higher expectations for R&D employees’ high level technical skills. This demand pressures

the training units within these multinational companies, and they find themselves facing the challenge of effectively and efficiently changing their employees into competent performers in a short period of time. Part of the challenge is rooted in the unique cultural context of China. Hofstede (1997) argued that a country’s culture shapes its peoples’ preferred modes of learning through their socialization experiences.

More recently, De Vita (2001) suggests that there is little room for doubt about cultural effects upon the development of learning styles. The current research is therefore situated in such a context where the Chinese learner’s unique characteristics are being investigated. Specifically, we first explore the

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