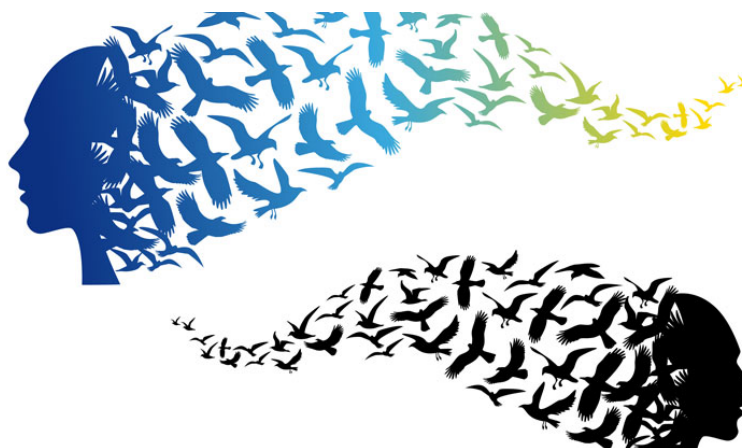


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Learning Patterns of Higher Education Students from Spain and Latin-America



In this paper, the authors analyse and discuss the learning patterns of higher education students from Spain and three Latin-American countries (Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela). The study is based on Vermunt's model about learning processes, which claimed that there exist four learning patterns. In this respect, the authors consider that there are four main components (learning conceptions, learning orientations, regulation strategies and processing strategies) that explain the learning behaviour (learning patterns).

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In his seminal work, Vermunt (1998) claimed that there exist four learning patterns oriented to: construction of knowledge (Meaning Directed, MD), memorizing (Reproduction Directed, RD), applying (Application Directed, AD), and Undirected (UD). The MD and AD patterns are the best in relation to academic performance in higher education. Conversely, RD and UD are more related to failure.

However, there are still few studies tackling the analysis of cultural differences and their impact on the configuration of learning patterns. For that reason, the aim of this study was to analyse the patterns of learning in a sample of Latin-American and Spanish undergraduates within a cross-cultural discussion.

The results show that these Latin-American (LA) and Spanish students are more meaning- and application-directed (MD and AD) with *external regulation*. It means that these students need an external help to improve their learning activities (for example: help from teachers, peers, or their parents). In this respect, our students need more opportunities across their tertiary education to foster their *self-regulation* strategies (responsibility, autonomy, and abilities to learn from own mistakes, revision and re-definition as learner). However, we think that LA and Spanish learners do not see self-regulation and external regulation as opposite strategies (*the Latin-American and Spanish paradox*). They believe that learning is more adaptive in uncertain contexts and more useful for successful academic behaviour, particularly in the case of Latin-American undergraduates.



Finally, the authors found three possible routes to engage deep processing:

- a) Through external regulation and intake of knowledge with a certain level of self-regulation (similar to *Asian* learners),
- b) From the construction of knowledge and external regulation with a certain level of self-regulation (more specifically linked with LA and Spanish learners),
- c) Through self-regulation strategies from the construction of knowledge (similar to Western learners).

To conclude, the authors claim that we need to increase our shared knowledge about teaching and learning around the world for a more integrated theoretical, methodological and cultural view of the learning patterns.

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