

# Chapter 16

## Greater Diversification of Activities, Greater Integration of Student Profiles

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Experiential pedagogical interventions offer the possibility to develop deep learning approaches. The objective of the study was to identify the factors that help to understand the reason why some students develop an approach to deep learning and others superficial, as well as to identify the strategies that best suit each student profile. To this end, a quasi-experimental pedagogical intervention was used with a mixed methodology. As main results, the response of students in terms of approaches to learning can be described as students who reinforce the initial deep approach, students who maintain the initial deep approach level, and others who change from one emphasis on the deep approach to one closer to the superficial. The result of the investigation suggests the inclusion of pedagogical activities and an integrative didactic of different motivations and initial strategies, leading to a possible adoption of deep approaches.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Learning through real experience dealing with problems faced in real context helps learners develop the skills needed for their future work, such as creative and analytical thinking, problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills, and teamwork (Sangpikul, 2020). In addition, reflective thinking can also motivate an individual to solve a problem by exploring divergent paths (Can, 2015). In this sense, problem-solving skills and reflective thinking are closely associated. Although several studies have (at least implicit) the assumption that learners' approaches to learning develop into deeper approaches in higher education (Asikainen & Gijbels, 2017), there appears to be no clear theoretical basis for this assumption nor empirical evidence. The reason behind this assumption seems to be largely based on the idea that higher education requires (and works in the sense of) graduates prepared for a life as lifelong learners and that,

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given the academic nature of higher education, part of this it would be the development of deep learning approaches (Lake & Boyd, 2015). The aim of this study was to describe and analyze the results of a pedagogical intervention on students' learning, on the adoption of an approach described as deep or superficial. Specifically, to identify the factors that help to understand the reason why some students, after a pedagogical intervention, within the scope of a specific curricular unit, develop an approach to deep learning and others superficial, as well as, to identify the strategies that are best suited to each student profile to encourage everyone to adopt a deep approach rather than a superficial one. Thus, the following two research questions are answered: does an experiential pedagogical intervention affect the learning approaches of Marketing students? How do the purposes of student involvement (motivations) and the types of self-regulated action (strategies) in an experiential group learning environment allow us to understand the evolution and adoption of different approaches to learning?

## **BACKGROUND**

Learning implies the integration of two processes: a process of external interaction between the learner and his social, cultural, or material environment, and an internal psychological process of elaboration and acquisition (Illeris, 2018). However, school activities are concentrated and often aimed only at assimilation (Illeris, 2018). Today, this understanding is insufficient, and generic competences can only be built through a combination of assimilation, accommodation and, eventually, transformative learning processes. Experience alone does not produce learning, requiring the reconstruction or reorganization of the experience that contributes to its meaning, increasing the ability to direct the course of subsequent experience (Austin & Rust, 2015). Therefore, the reflective aspect of experiential learning to create knowledge is emphasized. If this did not happen, these two groups of activities would be so separated that the benefits of reflection and conceptual analysis carried out in a classroom would not be integrated with the actions that promote the change and improvement that students will find in their future professional activity.

Reflection is essential in the process and can act as a mediator in the construction of meaning (Morris, 2019). It is not surprising, therefore, that experiential learning encourages reflective thinking (Scogin, Kruger, Jekkals & Steinfeldt, 2017). The suggestion that a student who achieves good results may perceive the learning environment in a certain way does not necessarily mean that manipulating the environment will change the way another student will interpret it. In fact, the example often given to introduce the idea of deep and superficial approaches (Marton & Säljö, 1984; Biggs, 2003) emphasizes that two learners with the two different approaches will do so within the same context of teaching and learning. In these cases, it is the individual's personal views and understanding of the context that are considered to create their final approach and learning outcome, not the context itself. Since the early work of Marton & Säljö (1976), the two approaches to learning have been described as different in the degree of motivation and strategy involved in the learning process. These two elements are interrelated: motivation refers to the reasons why learners approach their learning tasks; strategy refers to the way they approach carrying out the learning task (Biggs, 2003). Therefore, new studies are required in order to understand deeply how these two elements contribute to have different approaches to learning.

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