

Conference Abstract

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Accommodating learning style differences in a culturally diverse classroom – A New Zealand and Australian viewpoint

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The purpose of our study is twofold. First, to examine the extent of learning style differences between international and domestic students at Australian and New Zealand higher education providers and second to comment on innovative practices in place that are being successfully used to accommodate learning style differences. Previous research has suggested that university students' learning styles may vary across cultures (Katz,1988). Auyeung & Sands (1996) extended this research to examine the implications of cultural differences for the learning styles of accounting students. Our study extends Auyeung & Sands (1996) research by surveying students studying first year accounting at Australian and New Zealand institutions to determine the difference in learning styles in relation to the cultural background of the students. Specifically, we aim to identify whether the number of years spent in Australia or New Zealand (i.e. less than 2 years, 2-5 years and more than 5 years) impacts on the learning styles of international students. To determine learning style differences we distribute a learning styles questionnaire (adapted from Kolb, 1984) with accompanying demographic information to first-year students at two Australian and two New Zealand institutions.

The second part of our study will explore the innovative practices in place to determine how learning style differences are accommodated. The study specifically comments on strategies such as the use of on-line learning materials, DVD case studies and student role plays and how such strategies can be used successfully in the classroom.

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