EXPLORATIVE RESEARCH OF ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING PATHS AS INTERPLAY BETWEEN COGNITIVE, CONATIVE AND AFFECTIVE PROCESSES (SUMMARY)

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Principal Topic
Recent entrepreneurship education research underlines the need to better understand affective and conative aspects of learning entrepreneurial behaviour. However, this research has not succeeded in defining how the interplay between the cognitive, conative and affective aspects take place in learning processes. To better understand these differences we adopt the three-partite constructs of the personality and intelligence originally introduced by Snow, Corno and Jackson (1996). This helps to differentiate the cognitive, conative and affective aspects of learning.

Method
By adopting an explorative research approach we investigate students’ reflections during their two year learning processes and analyse them with the Self-Organising Map algorithm (SOM) (Kohonen, 2001). The reflection data set consists of 263 reflections of 90 university students with an average length of 730 words. Then 18 two-year learning paths were projected to this data-set.

The SOM method makes it possible to cluster and project complex data sets by creating a two-dimensional display where the documents that are similar in the original data space are generally placed near each other on the two-dimensional map display. The basic approach here was to encode the reflections as document vectors, using the WEBSOM document map set-up as a baseline. Then with a theory-driven approach we examine specifically the constructions that students utilise with respect to the affective, conative and cognitive processes active during their learning. By looking at the progress of a student on the map display in the form of a “developmental path”, and in the context of the other students and their individual paths, we were able to observe both typical patterns as well as individual variation in the students’ use of cognitive, conative and affective processes during their learning process.

Results and Implications
The results indicated that it is possible to identify both general learning patterns and individual variations and their changes during the learning process. It was also possible to identify different categories of learning modes during the learning process. These categories demonstrated different patterns in learning paths with respect to the cognitive, conative and affective constructs. Both the theoretical contribution and methodological ideas are promising and together give a new insight and concrete tools to extend our understanding of entrepreneurial learning process. This helps us to better understand how to conduct entrepreneurial learning interventions.

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