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**Abstract**

The article describes a study that attempted to characterise Portuguese students' conceptions of learning and approaches to learning. A sample of university students answered open questions on the meaning, process and context of learning. Results, derived from content analysis, replicate most conceptions of learning described by phenomenographical research (i.e. distinction between learning as memorisation and learning as comprehension). Moreover, new variants of known conceptions of learning emerged (e.g. learning occurs through: exploratory practice; learning to learn; motivation) and an apparently new conception (i.e. learning as understanding and application). The same sample answered a questionnaire which attempted to measure motivation and learning strategies. Through factorial analysis of results it was possible to confirm the presence of three well-known approaches to learning: surface, deep and achieving. HRK / Abstract übernommen, Duarte, António M., E-Mail: antonio.duarte@fpce.ul.pt