LEARNING ANALYTICS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: SCOPE, USE, AND IMPLICATIONS

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March 28, 2019
ABOUT ME

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Research:
• NSF Big Data Grant (2015-2018)
• NSF IUSE Grant (2019-2020)
• CGS Summer Researcher (2017)

AERA Division J Graduate Representative (2017-2019)

Writing (Analytics-Related):
• 2 published peer-review articles (first author) The Review of Higher Education & Journal of Computing in Higher Education
• 3 articles under review (2, first author)
• Edited book (co-editor)
• Monograph (second author)
• 2 edited book chapters (first author)
• Forthcoming NACUBO Business Officer Magazine article
• 1 (in progress) dissertation
Today’s Agenda

- Learning Analytics and Big Data Definitions and Overview
- How Learning Analytics Technologies Work
- Context and Potential of Analytics
- Examples of Current Technologies and Outcomes
- Complexities and Implications in Use
“Learning analytics is the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of data about learners and their contexts, for the purposes of understanding and optimizing learning and the environments in which it occurs.”

(Siemens, 2013, p. 3).
VOLUME
Huge amount of data

VERACITY
Inconsistencies and uncertainty in data

VARIETY
Different formats of data from various sources

VELOCITY
High speed of accumulation of data

VALUE
Extract useful data
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF ANALYTICS</th>
<th>LEVEL OR OBJECT OF ANALYSIS</th>
<th>WHO BENEFITS?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Analytics</td>
<td><strong>Course-level</strong>: social networks, conceptual development, discourse analysis, “intelligent curriculum”</td>
<td>Learners, faculty</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Departmental</strong>: predictive modeling, patterns of success/failure</td>
<td>Learners, faculty</td>
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<td>Academic Analytics</td>
<td><strong>Institutional</strong>: learner profiles, performance of academics, knowledge flow</td>
<td>Administrators, funders, marketing</td>
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<td><strong>Regional</strong> (state/provincial): comparisons between systems</td>
<td>Funders, administrators</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>National and International</strong></td>
<td>National governments, education authorities</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: Siemens and Long (2011)
HOW LEARNING ANALYTICS WORK

• Large variable datasets

• Underlying algorithms make correlations and predictions based on weighted variables (demographic, performance, interaction & historical and contemporaneous)

• Visualized data interventions sent to faculty, advisors, and (sometimes) students via dashboards to identify students at risk of dropping or failing a course or not registering or completing
EDUCATION AND LEARNING ANALYTICS MARKET, BY REGION (USD BILLION)

- 2016
- 2017
- 2018-e
- 2019
- 2020
- 2021
- 2022
- 2023-p

Legend:
- North America
- Europe
- APAC
- Latin America
- MEA

Notes:
e: estimated; p: projected
Source: MarketsandMarkets Analysis
<table>
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<tr>
<th>WHY THE EXPONENTIAL GROWTH?</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ENVIRONMENT</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Increased oversight and accountability</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Decreased funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Completion agenda</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Shifting models of higher education</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Technological advancements</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
EXAMPLES OF LEARNING ANALYTICS TECHNOLOGIES
Georgia State University

800+ Analytics-Based Alerts

10 Years of Data | 2.5 Million Grades

144,000 Student Records

30,000 Students Tracked Daily
COMPLEXITIES IN USE

• Organizational
• Technological
• Individual
• Ethical
• Limited empirical evidence of effectiveness (learning assessment)
• Unclear if retention/completion gains for EWS are a result of tech or associated structural changes (combination of factors)
• Lack of integration across systems (LMS, EWS, SIS, etc.)
• Lack of transparency/clarity of black box systems and their algorithms
• Lack of user inclusion and perspective in development and design
• Scalability within and across higher education organizations
• Correlation ≠ causation (and higher probability of spurious correlation with big data)
ORGANIZATIONAL

• Organizational capacity and readiness
  • Infrastructure, resources, culture, context, and commitment
• Lack of clearly defined policies, frameworks, communications for use
• Lack of training and professional development for users
• Uneven buy-in or inclusion in organizational decision making
• Limited resources and infrastructure limit efficacy of learning analytics
INDIVIDUAL

- Variability in interest, desire, or need (or willingness to change)
- Variability in incentives and rewards
  - Institutional roles and socialization have a large influence
- Variability in trust of data
  - Usually based on prior experience
  - Data visualizations influence
  - For students, interventions must come from a trusted source
- Time to incorporate into practice is a major barrier (especially for faculty)
- Concerns about riskiness or accuracy of predictive data
• Algorithmic bias and opacity
  • ’Baked-in’ and hidden bias has the potential to discriminate and reaffirm structural inequities
  • What variables are being used to determine which outcomes and for whom?
• Unclear data use and ownership in MOUs/contracts between tech and orgs
• Limited or antiquated data governance and use policies and practices in organizations
  • Needed updates in data security, access, and management policies
  • Unclear parameters for general or repurposed data use or data use after affiliation ends
IMPLICATIONS FOR ETHICAL & EQUITABLE USE

- Improved data governance and use policies
  - Acknowledge and account for nature of big data
  - MOUs that require transparency of tech and data ownership
- Improved training and development
  - For all users on how to interpret and use analytics data
  - Graduate programs in computer science & data science must include a greater focus on ethics and equity (not just privacy protection)
- Understand optimal data, delivery, structure, support, & resources for analytics success
- Inclusive framework for equitable use of learning analytics data and research
  - Rooted in data justice, care, and agency
  - Centers student inclusion, rights, education, and empowerment over their data