

LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND LEARNING ANALYTICS – A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

'Learning Analytics' is currently jockeying with 'MOOC' for the title of '2012 Buzzword of the Year' throughout the Higher Education sector, with all manner of discussions, arguments, products and philosophies flooding headlines around the world in the search for the always elusive silver bullet. In parallel, Moodle has become one of the most prolific Learning Management Systems (LMS) used around the world, across all sectors, including almost half of Australian universities using Moodle as their Enterprise LMS Moodle (and with many of the others using Moodle in smaller roles within the organisation). In spite of Moodle collecting a large amount of information which can be viewed, downloaded and analysed as part of an educational data mining project, it is often called to account in terms of its support for 'analytics', with some arguing that the development team at Moodle, the broader community, and vendors should be doing more in this space to allow consumers to draw further inferences from Moodle's data.

But is it really that simple to just 'add analytics' to an LMS like Moodle?

Even agreeing on a definitive term of 'learning analytics' in the context of an LMS (or, more accurately, 'educational data mining') is enough to get many academics and decision makers into a heated debate – let alone whether or not the information gained from an 'analytics' tool give any meaningful insight into the education process. With this in mind, how can any single product satisfy the needs of a highly diverse range of perspectives?

Through considering a range of existing tools, client requests, vendor products and research projects (both formal and informal) we can gain an insight into the many different perspectives being taken in the higher education community on what information is being sought via the concept of 'analytics'. Through this process, we can construct an evaluation model for some of the common perspectives taken when attempting to analyse educational data, and use this as a mechanism to guide the decision making process when investing in projects aimed at analysing information sourced from learning technologies.

In this session we will introduce the classification model for perspectives on educational data mining efforts, use this model to map some of the current and future projects occurring (centred around the Moodle LMS), and consider the current gaps and potential futures within the space.

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