Chapter 8

Use of Learning Analytics in China: A Benchmarking Model for Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This chapter per the authors examines the feasibility of a learning analytics tool in the Chinese Higher Institutions educational environment. At first, the general definition of learning analytics is examined. Additionally, the authors shed light on case studies of universities that have already implemented learning analytics. Moreover, the Chinese educational environment is examined through a thorough analysis of the learning analytics necessity. Based on the literature review, a learning analytics tool is proposed. In a technical basis, the tool is a combination of ELLI or Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory, a dispositional learning analytics tool and a recommender system. The ultimate function of the tool is that it links students with a specific educational profile with successful students with similar profiles. Finally, the author identified the key limitations of the prototype and performed a general analysis on the tools goals and expectations in the Chinese Higher Education Institutions.

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Use of Learning Analytics in China

INTRODUCTION

As the Knowledge Era has succeeded the Industrial Era, the investment in the knowledge domain is an immediate consequence. Inevitably a big portion of this investment heads towards higher education. This can be shown by students’ increased demand for participation in higher education (Gaševic, Dawson, & Siemens, 2014). This tendency is no different also for China. From early 70s, China has faced a great success in its economic functionality by increasing its GDP more than 9% (Li, Morgan & Ding, 2008). The prosperous economic activity favored workers to assume education as an essential investment (Li, Morgan & Ding, 2008). More precisely, from 1990 to 2004, the number of students attending universities has increased around 160% (Li, Morgan & Ding, 2008). Since then, each year nearly 1 million students enroll to higher education institution (“China: Number Of Students At Universities 2017 | Statistic”). Consequently, the increased amount of student enrollment creates a corresponding increase on the students demand towards a better academic environment, while the academic performance competition between students increases as well (Abugabah, Sanzogni, 2010). China’s high population in combination with the introduction of technology-enhanced learning since the 2010, promises a new opportunity in the area for higher education to be digitalized and personalized. The vast amount of Chinese students creates a need for Institutions to adjust to a more personalized environment, since otherwise could hardly recognize students’ personal needs (Lynch, 2017). Learning Analytics satisfy this need by personalizing the academic through a digital medium (Ferguson & Schum 2012). Following that guideline, we proposed a custom-made prototype for personalized learning in the Chinese higher institution system that incorporates a learning analytics tool and a recommender system. The proposed concept takes into consideration various aspects of the Chinese Educational system as well as successful case studies of universities that have already integrated learning analytics in the learning arsenal.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper bases its research primarily on secondary sources. The main focus is to present and analyze a literature review of contemporary sources that explore not only the socioeconomic background of China but also the current application of learning analytics in higher education institutions. In addition, the research is conducted based on the already established Chinese higher education institutional
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