Discussion Paper **22**

Title: **Evaluating the collaborative development of pedagogic interventions based on learning analytics**

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Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Explore the tensions between work in learning analytics on big data and provision of human support for students
- Evaluate student experiences of designing and delivering pedagogic interventions to support those in need.
- Reflect upon the application of personal pedagogic interventions driven by impersonal data.
- Consider the implications for their own practice.

Session Outline

Learning analytics holds out the possibility of applying the 'magic' of the black box to big data in order to address issues of student retention. Through the analysis of large-scale historic student engagement data – mapping attendance, library use, VLE engagement and other 'background' metrics to student assessed outcomes – learning analytics holds out the promise of being able to target personalised support to 'at risk' students. (Gordon, 2014) However there are serious ethical issues involved in the gathering, manipulation and deployment of such data. (Slade 2014) There is a very real risk of labelling students as 'high risk', 'hard to reach' or 'vulnerable' on the basis of their personal backgrounds, in the way some well-meaning recent widening participation projects have done (Cook-Sather and Porte, 2017)

Thomas' influential *What Works?* research (2012), identified the importance of human relations to retention work and the need for students to develop a sense of belonging. The challenge, then, is to provide a meaningful human interaction which 'reaches across' (Cook-Sather and Porte, 2017) to students identified as requiring some support through learning analytics. This project engaged groups of students from the humanities and social sciences to design, implement and evaluate pedagogic interventions *they* thought would be able to support such students, holding out the possibility that student partnership working can help us achieve an inclusive approach to the deployment of learning from learning analytics.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The outline of the workshop is a follows;

10 minutes	An introduction to the project and the way student designed, implemented and evaluated interventions were intended to provide human–scale support on the basis of big data.
5 minute discussion	What is your experience of learning analytics? What are the issues of using it to drive personalised support?
15 minutes	An outline of the interventions at Newman University, and a sharing of the findings of the evaluations of the project.
10 minute discussion	Have the interventions achieved their aim of providing human support for those identified by learning analytics without labelling or imposing a deficit model?
5 minute discussion	How does this practice relate to your institution? What lessons would you take from our experiences?

References

Cook-Sather, A. and Porte, O. (2017) Reviving humanity: grasping within and beyond our reach, *The Journal of Education Innovation Partnership and Change*, 3, 1, 299-302. Available at: https://journals.gre.ac.uk/index.php/studentchangeagents/article/view/638
Gordon, N (2014) *Using pedagogy and learning analytics to manage our students*, HEA
Slade, S. (2014) *Learning analytics: ethical issues and policy challenges*, HEA.
Thomas, L. (2012) *Building student engagement and belonging in higher education at a time of change: Final Report from the What Works? Student Retention and Success Programme* Available at: https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/what_works_final_report_0.pdf