

Academic analytics or learning analytics: is that the question?

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The STELA Erasmus+ project, Successful Transition from secondary to higher Education using Learning Analytics (562167-EPP-1-2015-1-BE-EPPKA3-PI-FORWARD) aims at exploring how learning analytics can be used to support the transition from secondary to higher education.

Within the project, KU Leuven focuses on the development of learning dashboards that provide actionable feedback within a traditional first-year bachelor program. The additional focus on scalability introduces the challenge to primarily focus on data that is or could easily be made available in any higher education institute.

So far, three learning dashboards were deployed within the first-year of twelve bachelor programs at KU Leuven. The first learning dashboard provides students feedback on their learning and study strategies based on a paper-and-pencil questionnaire. The second and third learning dashboard provides feedback after the first and second examination period. The student-facing dashboards have some characteristics in common:

- a visualization of the individual scores with respect to the scores of their peers in the program,
- a “predictive” part that shows the study progress of a similar norm group in previous years,
- specific tips and recommendations and referral to counseling services.

The learning dashboards have been well-received by students and staff. Next academic year the dashboard will be deployed at more than 20 programs within KU Leuven and one program at TU Delft. The decision to use easily available grade and survey data for the learning dashboards has resulted in high acceptance among students and staff. The attitude of students and staff toward learning analytics has evolved from skeptical to demanding more wider application. We therefore argue that such “low-level” analytics creates essential buy-in and acceptance for later extension and further application of learning analytics. Additionally, the interaction with the learning dashboards themselves creates additional learning traces that can serve as input data for future learning analytics interventions.

Biography presenters

Tom Broos: Tom is a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Engineering Science, Tutorial Services & Department of Computer Science at KU Leuven, where he focusses on scalable learning analytics interventions.