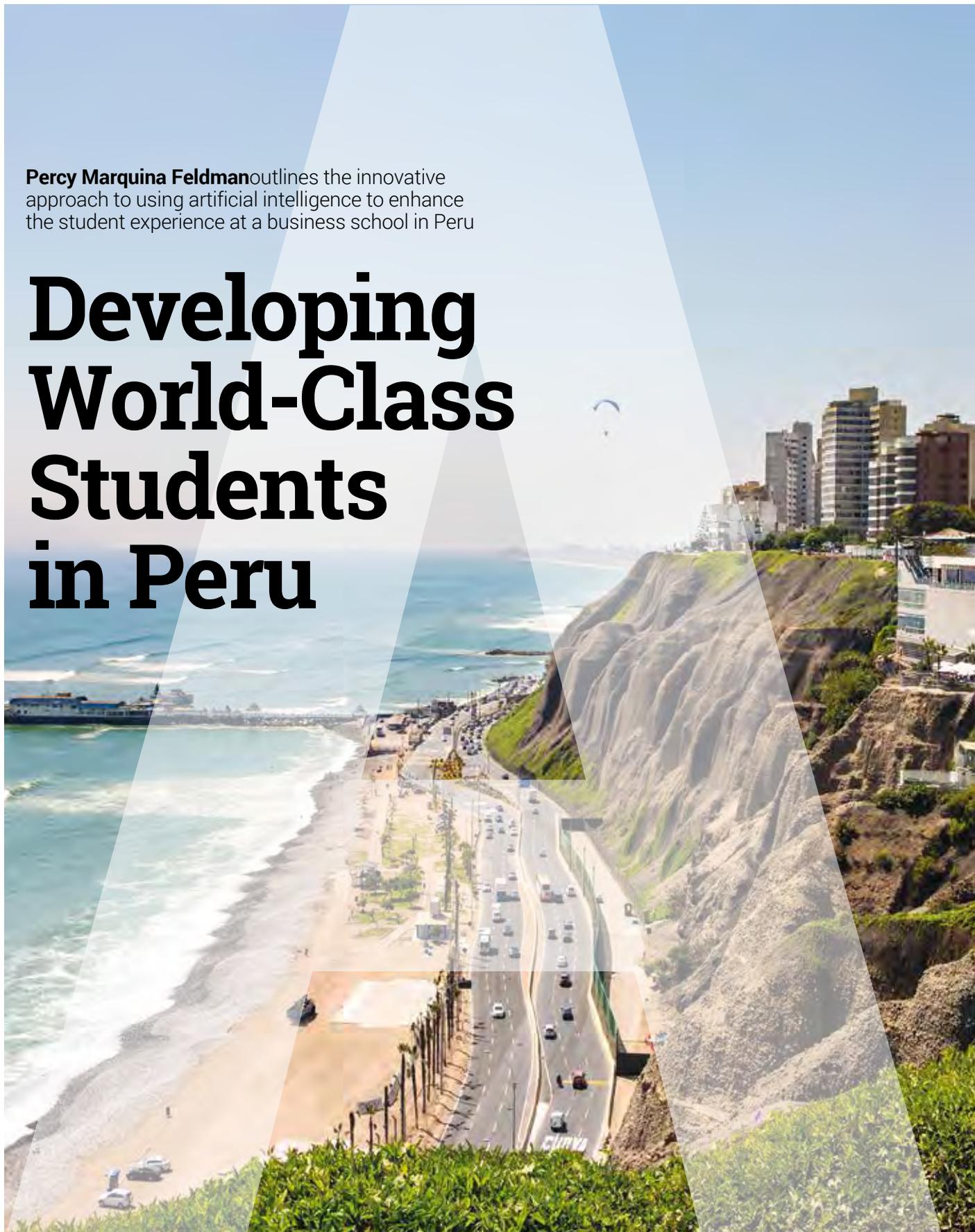


Percy Marquina Feldman outlines the innovative approach to using artificial intelligence to enhance the student experience at a business school in Peru

Developing World-Class Students in Peru





Peru is one of Latin America’s top economic performers, classified as an upper-middle economy with a *per capita* of \$US6,150 according to the World Bank. Its capital, Lima, is a city where internal and external (such as Venezuelan) migrants look for business opportunities.

Understanding this business context requires a scientific approach and La Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (founded in 1917) decided to take up the challenge in 2000 with the opening of CENTRUM Católica Graduate Business School. By the 2017 CENTRUM’s online MBA was ranked at an impressive 17th position worldwide.

Higher education is not a new phenomenon in Peru; the oldest continuous education in the western hemisphere was established in Lima in 1551. And although years of economic crisis have left their mark on the quality of its institutions, they are rising again.

Today, new technologies increasingly question how we perceive and process information – and not just in academia. Renowned technology and banking corporations such as Amazon and Citigroup are embracing artificial intelligence (AI) to match their needs and stay ahead in their fields.

The internet era has brought us all together and knowledge is now easily accessible. A researcher no longer has to travel hundreds (or even thousands) of kilometers to visit key archives; most are available at the click of a mouse button.

CENTRUM seeks to adapt and capitalise on the latest advances in technology in order to continue positioning itself as one of the top institutions locally and globally.

Our institution opened the Neuromanager Lab and its leading programme “Personality Insights for Education (PIE)” in July 2017, in order to understand and apply AI for the benefit of our students.

PIE revolves around the idea that AI has the ability to equip us with a “third eye”, taking patterns and trends from a subject’s writing in order to analyse it by extracting the user’s cognitive and social characteristics. PIE uses data analysis algorithms following three models: Big Five, Needs and Values. The objective is to have a final product where the study participant can observe previously unknown traces of his or her personality.

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The Big Five model includes five categories:

- a)** Extraversion refers to the interaction of individuals in their interpersonal relationships such characteristics as assertiveness, enthusiasm and outgoingness
- b)** Agreeableness addresses the tendency to be co-operative and compassionate with other people
- c)** Conscientiousness relates to the predisposition to be organised; for example people who are efficient and structured
- d)** Neuroticism refers to emotions; sensitivity to the surroundings, anxiousness, mental instability
- e)** Openness relates to people who are predisposed to experience diversity within their choice of activities; such as artistic curiosity and creativity.

CENTRUM is a regional pioneer in using AI to serve its students. Within the educational field, one of the main uses of this technology is to scientifically analyse the students' personality beyond traditional methods.

Personality tests are commonly used in many areas, such as executive training courses, career counselling, conflict resolution, team management, organisation development, negotiation and so on. CENTRUM believes that this tool will enhance our students' awareness, translating into personal and professional development.

The students have acknowledged the initiative positively. Initially its use was optional for students, professors and the administrative body but starting in November 2017 PIE was incorporated into the curricula of two of our MBAs programmes. Eighty per cent of the students who took the PIE test requested an appointment to discuss the results with a staff member. The results obtained by each student are used to work on a personality improvement plan.

In a period of six months, students' satisfaction with the programme was boosted by 100%, from a total of 243 participating students. Students have the freedom to come back to take the test more than once; each time they will receive feedback from our professional experts.

Throughout the implementation of PIE our experts identify the following aspects as key in the students' responses and attention is focused on them:

a) Knowing yourself:

Self-concept encompasses a diverse set of beliefs and ideas about the self that influences people's action either in a positive or negative way. It includes self-esteem, self-control and self-efficacy among others. When students know more about themselves in regard to their interests, cognitive and socio-emotional competences, social skills, emotions, attitudes, values and beliefs, he or she can start the improvement process of personality development. Why? Because they learn how to manage conflicts, to take into consideration the consequences of their actions, to consider their personal needs and to strive to listen to what other people really mean. Furthermore, they are able to improve their learning skills.

b) Understanding own strengths and weaknesses:

With a clearer vision of their personality students can determine their best and worst traits in both personal and professional life. Since every personality has strong and weak points, through the test insights the students will be able to address their weaknesses and reinforce their strong points in order to achieve a successful life.

c) Making career decisions:

Individuals value certain aspects of their jobs. They are divided between extrinsic and intrinsic preferences. Extrinsic preferences are valued according to potential material rewards whereas intrinsic ones are valued according to a person's opportunity to use his or her potential. People with high intrinsic orientation see their jobs as an opportunity to experience a sense of achievement and to be fulfilled; people with extrinsic tendencies see their jobs as tools to obtain material gains and social status.

There are students with well-paid jobs who would prefer to be doing something else more in line with their personality and/or preferences. PIE tests provides them with a clearer map to show them how to make more informed decisions. People whose work preferences are in line with their personal traits tend to be more satisfied with their lives and are more productive.

The implementation of PIE at our institution brings benefits, as described above, to the student body and to the school. Based on the results, students are able to be more focused and to



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243

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CENTRUM is very proud to be at the forefront in applying artificial intelligence in the academic world, and with the same enthusiasm we are open to share our experience, and learn from colleagues around the world

make smarter decisions based on logical and environmental analysis. Having cutting-edge tools to generate successful students provides the school with an intrinsic added value.

We at CENTRUM understand that students are aware that the world presents an increasingly challenging environment and we are looking to make the educational experience as constructive as possible. For example, PIE can cope with the stress developed whenever students have the feeling of needing more knowledge and not having enough time to obtain it (educational stress); if the student is aware of experiencing this type of stress he or she will be more capable of addressing it successfully.

Even though CENTRUM prides itself of having reached high marks with its world-class business masters' programmes we are also very honoured to be part of a 100-year humanistic tradition via our institution La Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú.

It is in that spirit that we seek to enhance, and blend, not only business-related capabilities, but the human component of our masters and doctorate students with the help of AI. With PIE we expect the students to learn more about their academic and personal profile and how data can interact with the ever-changing requirements of the labour market.

The data produced by PIE can have many applications such as tailored syllabus and academic literary production, which can benefit the students and the institution. CENTRUM is very proud to be at the forefront in applying AI in the academic world, and with the same enthusiasm I am open to share our experience and learn from colleagues around the world.

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About the Author

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