

Editorial:

Artificial Intelligence in educational research: beyond the hype

Inteligência Artificial na pesquisa educacional: para além das hipérboles

Giselle Ferreira

Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro/RJ, Brazil
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8498-5390>
giselle-ferreira@puc-rio.br

Magda Pischetola

University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6697-2118>
m.pischetola@hum.ku.dk

The integration of technologies generally labeled as “Artificial Intelligence” (AI) into all types of digital systems is far from being a novelty. The internet itself has been awashed with AI methods for decades, albeit without much attention being drawn to their presence. More recently, we’ve begun to see a rapid increase in their adoption in the educational sector, specifically, since the advent of Large Language Models (LLMs) that support systems like ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude and many others that are now part of everyday life for a growing number of academics and students across the globe.

In Higher Education, a lot is being promised by the industry, generating enthusiasm and fear alike. Of particular concern are issues that pertain to research — knowledge construction and dissemination —, including concerns with originality and authorship (Lund & Naheem, 2024; Luo, 2024), data security (Ghiurău; Popescu, 2026; Winograd, 2023), confidentiality (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2023), information and factual accuracy (Dierickx *et al.*, 2026), potential impacts on cognition, critical thinking and creativity (Atkinson; Flanagan, 2024; Yu, 2023), as well as reading and writing skills (Warschauer *et al.*, 2023). Researchers strive to keep abreast of novelties and institutional guidelines for use of AI in research that, at times,

resemble attempts at disciplining what seems to be a genie fresh out of the bottle (Driessens; Pischetola, 2024; Nguyen *et al.*, 2025), in contrast with more straightforward opposition to AI in research that varies in degrees of caution and pessimism (Guest *et al.*, 2025; Wieczorek, 2025).

In this convoluted context, some key questions need to be asked: Is AI to be approached as friend or foe to educational research, and, crucially, on what grounds? Can we envisage alternatives that escape the good-bad dichotomy that has, for a long while, marked discussions on the presence of digital technologies in education? In what ways can AI be incorporated into research processes without compromising the quality of the knowledge being created?

This special collection gathers texts that examine issues pertaining to the uses of AI in educational research in ways that escape the characteristic hype of hegemonic discourses. The perspectives here presented do not peddle AI as “inevitable”, a mere “tool”, or a “must-have” to which researchers cannot but adhere to. Instead, arguments are specific, and argumentation involves clear articulation with empirical data and theoretical foundations from different traditions. The texts illustrate how AI is affecting different aspects of educational research, including research training, research design and development and dissemination of research findings. Research approaches to AI in education as well as cognitive, affective and ethical implications of AI use in research are also addressed, with a focus on concerns that go beyond mainstream takes on the consequences of AI for academic integrity and plagiarism.

The first piece is a conversation of the editors with Ben Williamson, co-director of the Centre for Research in Digital Education, Edinburgh Futures Institute, University of Edinburgh. The conversation explores issues that arise from the advent of new infrastructures which support educational research as “big science”, including the trend towards large-scale projects conducted in educational settings by industry in search of evidence for their claims regarding benefits and gains brought about by AI use. The authors discuss the issue of live testing, that is, tests of AI-based technologies carried out with children and youth in public school systems, but with dubious purposes and despite parental concerns, and consider questions related to educational policy and research training, which are themes picked up by other contributions in the collection. They also touch upon the current situation in the area of educational knowledge production and dissemination, which is being gradually taken over by automation at basically all stages — from research training to publication, including peer reviewing.

The first article, “Scientific Research and Misuses of Generative AIs: lightning in blue sky?”, by Edgar Lyra, contributes a philosophical perspective on a key issue: epistemic authority. Lyra considers the current debacle surrounding the exponential growth of submissions and significant number of retractions by journals of recently published texts, and discusses the contributions of AI use to this state of affairs. The author addresses what he terms “conditions of possibility” for these phenomena, which pre-date the appearance of GenAI. Specifically, he points to the existence of questionable practices in academia that are, indeed, guided by a rationale of productivity largely considered acceptable.

Expanding on an issue touched upon by Lyra, in “The Author in the Voracious Night: Educating Researchers in the Age of Generative Artificial Intelligence”, Jaciara Carvalho, Adriana Bruno and João Couto explore the question of authorship in the context of research training. Drawing upon Walter Benjamin’s reflection on experience and Plato’s allegory of the cave, the authors discuss the limits of “content” created by GenAI, advocating that research training should foster creative and narrative skills through engagement with writing.

Complementing the previous articles, Bruna Heinsfeld’s “Productivity, efficiency, and optimization: Research through the lens of AI Marketing” critiques the ideas of productivity, efficiency and optimization embedded in promotional discourses of GenAI. Drawing upon critical discourse studies to approach empirical data, Heinsfeld highlights the ways in which these discourses obscure issues of power, bias and dependency.

Giota Alevizou’s “Unsettling AI Literacies: Ethics, Power and the Pedagogies of Critical Research” draws upon critical and education technology studies to propose a “reorientation from AI literacy to critical AI socio-technical practices”. In agreement with all of the contributions included in this collection, the author argues against the commonsensical treatment of AI as a “neutral tool”, suggesting a refocusing of concerns from general types of AI literacy to critical AI socio-technical practices. Drawing on her experiences in the design of two modules of an online MA programme, the author advocates for pedagogies which foreground power asymmetries, thus allowing for educational research to overcome the good-bad dichotomy that tends to characterise discussions on AI in education. Crucially, Alevizou suggests the need to reframe ethics as a politics of value production and infrastructural power.

Consistently with this suggestion, in “Artificial intelligence in educational research: beyond the ethical-liberal critique”, Joana Peixoto, Tamara Dantas, Yuri Martins, Phoebe Moore and Adda Echalar discuss the need for questions concerning AI uses in education to

look beyond what is highlighted in ethical-liberal critiques, which tend to focus on guaranteeing “ethical” and “responsible” uses. In “Artificial intelligence in educational research: beyond the ethical-liberal critique”, the authors argue that this type of critique obfuscates the extent to which the industry of AI is based on the expropriation of work and thus contributes to the reproduction of significant social issues globally. Adopting Marx’s historical-dialectical materialism as theoretical grounding, the authors suggest the ideas of fetishism and alienation of labour as foundational concepts upon which critiques may be developed with the purpose of fostering educational research that is committed to tackling questions of inequality.

The following piece, “Pause, reflect and realign: Ubuntu, digital degrowth and the future of technology in education”, by Tendayi Dzinoreva, draws upon Critical Pedagogy and Ubuntu Philosophy to address power imbalances between the Global North and the Global South. Proposing a fresh perspective on AI in educational research, the author raises a series of questions regarding the impact of AI-based tools and wonders: “are we adopting AI or is it adopting us?”. Also exploring issues concerning inequality, Francesca Peruzzo and Marina Avelar’s piece, “From excitement to refusal: affective entanglements with Generative AI in academic research”, draws upon an autoethnographic dialogue between the authors that traces affect in AI use, in their case, ranging from excitement, through disillusionment, to refusal, which may echo with many a reader. The authors contend that this trajectory reflects the colonial matrix of power that shapes AI development, therefore advocating AI policy enactment as an affective, situated and power-laden process.

The final two pieces in the collection report on work that, like Peruzzo and Avelar’s text, stems from direct engagement with AI. In “Educational Research in Hybrid Ecosystems: the Role of Generative AI as a Sparring Partner”, Francesca Capolla, Francesca Gratani, Maila Pentucci, Lorella Giannandrea and Pier Giuseppe Rossi explore ways in which AI use can reconfigure knowledge production and agency. The authors argue that, whilst AI may reinforce specific epistemic regimes, it can be used to support critical inquiry, exploring the metaphor of AI as a “sparring partner” with examples that illustrate the ways in which AI may help to expand the dialogical spaces required for knowledge production. Rounding off the collection, “What youth imagine, what AI reproduces: Sociotechnical imaginaries in education futures research”, by George Veletsianos and Shandell Houlden, reports on a case-study focused on youth socio-technical imaginaries regarding the role of AI in education. The piece illustrates how AI can be productively integrated into research methodology.

A point of agreement across all contributions is that the good-bad dichotomy is a simplistic and reductionist way of trying to make sense of the presence of AI in educational research. With this in mind, we hope readers will find the collection informative, thought-provoking and, above all, inspiring. Good reading!

References

- ATKINSON, P.; FLANAGAN, T. Humanities on demand and the demands on the humanities: between technological and lived time. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, v. 43, n. 2, p. 143-160, 2024. DOI: 10.1007/s11217-023-09912-5.
- DIERICKX, L.; OPDAHL, A. L.; BJERKNES, F.; LINDÉN, C. G. What is a fact in the age of generative AI? Fact-checking as an epistemological lens. *Information, Communication & Society*, p. 1-18, 2026. DOI: 10.1080/1369118X.2026.2630697.
- DRIESSENS, O.; PISCHETOLA, M. Danish university policies on generative AI: Problems, assumptions and sustainability blind spots. *MedieKultur: Journal of media and communication research*, v. 40, n. 76, p. 31-52, 2024. DOI: 10.7146/mk.v40i76.143595.
- DWIVEDI, Y. K.; KSHETRI, N.; HUGHES, L.; SLADE, E. L.; JEYARAJ, A.; KAR, A. K.; ... WRIGHT, R. "So what if ChatGPT wrote it?" Multidisciplinary perspectives on opportunities, challenges and implications of generative conversational AI for research, practice and policy. *International Journal of Information Management*, v. 71, 102642. 2023. DOI: 10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2023.102642.
- GHIURĂU, D.; POPESCU, D. E. Data Security and Privacy in GPT Models: Techniques and Challenges. *Applied Sciences*, v. 16, n. 4, 1900, 2026. DOI: 10.3390/app16041900.
- GUEST, O.; SUAREZ, M.; MÜLLER, B.; VAN MEERKERK, E.; BEVERBORG, A. O. G.; DE HAAN, R.; ... VAN ROOIJ, I. (2025). Against the Uncritical Adoption of 'AI' Technologies in Academia. *Digital Culture & Education*, v. 16, n. 2, p. 85-118, 2026. Available at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5cf15af7a259990001706378/t/6a0301dc32a58d2314b067d5/1778581980273/Guestetal+2026.pdf>. Accessed: 20 set. 2026.
- LUND, B. D.; NAHEEM, K. T. Can ChatGPT be an author? A study of Artificial Intelligence author-ship policies in top academic journals. *Learned Publishing*, v. 37, n. 1, p. 13-21, 2024. DOI: 10.1002/leap.1582
- LUO, J. A critical review of GenAI policies in higher education assessment: A call to reconsider the "originality" of students' work. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, v. 49, n. 5, p. 1-14, 2024. DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2024.2309963.
- NGUYEN, A.; KISHORE, S.; HONG, Y.; QUTAB, S.; DANG, B. Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education: from organizing visions to official guidelines. *Information Technology & People*, v. 38, n. 8, p. 172-199, 2025. DOI: 10.1108/ITP-08-2024-1026.
- WARSCHAUER, M.; TSENG, W.; YIM, S.; WEBSTER, T.; JACOB, S.; DU, Q.; TATE, T. The affordances and contradictions of AI-generated text for second language writers. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, v. 62, p. 1-24, 2023. DOI: 10.2139/ssrn.4404380.

WIECZOREK, M. Why AI will not Democratize Education: a Critical Pragmatist Perspective. *Philosophy & Technology*, v. 38, n. 2, 53, 2025. DOI: 10.1007/s13347-025-00883-8.

WINOGRAD, A. Loose-lipped large language models spill your secrets: The privacy implications of large language models. *Harvard Journal of Law & Technology*, v. 36, n. 2, p. 616-656, 2023. Available at:

<https://jolt.law.harvard.edu/assets/articlePDFs/v36/Winograd-Loose-Lipped-LLMs.pdf>.

Acessed: 20 set. 2026.

YU, H. Reflection on whether Chat GPT should be banned by academia from the perspective of education and teaching. *Frontiers in Psychology*, v. 14, p. 1-12, 2023. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1181712.