AI in Higher Education

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The Governance Obsession: How Higher Education Lost Its Way with AI

Higher education's response to artificial intelligence reveals more about institutional anxieties than educational possibilities. Across 1,926 articles analyzed, a striking pattern emerges: one-third fixate on governance and control, while pedagogical considerations barely register. This imbalance exposes a fundamental misunderstanding of what's at stake as AI transforms the educational landscape.

The governance fixation reaches extreme proportions, as documented by [1], which offers comprehensive guidelines without any data on actual institutional adoption. Meanwhile, evidence from [21] reveals that prohibition strategies consistently fail across jurisdictions. The harder institutions try to control AI through policy alone, the more they drive underground usage and widen the gap between official doctrine and educational reality.

[1] Australian Framework for Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education

[21] Where there's a will there's a way: ChatGPT is used more in countries where it is banned

This governance obsession manifests in elaborate policy frameworks that multiply faster than their effectiveness can be measured. Universities draft intricate AI policies while students navigate the technology with or without institutional blessing, creating parallel educational universes where official policy and lived practice rarely intersect. The result is a higher education system speaking past its own constituents, crafting rules for a world that exists primarily in committee meetings and administrative imaginations.

The Architecture of Surveillance

The institutional response to AI has birthed an unprecedented surveillance apparatus in higher education. Remote proctoring systems, AI detection tools, and monitoring software promise to preserve academic integrity while fundamentally altering the educational relationship. As [15] demonstrates, these technologies introduce significant psychological burdens that may outweigh their purported benefits.

[15] The fear of big brother:The potential negative side-effects of proctored exams

The surveillance infrastructure extends beyond exam monitoring.

[14] documents how AI monitoring systems generate false positives that lead to serious real-world consequences, including student arrests and disciplinary actions. These aren't isolated incidents but symptoms of a broader pattern where technological solutionism meets educational complexity with predictably problematic results.

[14] Students have been arrested for AI surveillance false alarms - NBC Chicago

What's particularly troubling is how surveillance technologies transform the fundamental nature of education. [22] reveals how these systems reshape power dynamics, turning education from a collaborative endeavor into an adversarial relationship. Students become suspects first, learners second. Faculty transform from mentors into enforcement agents. The technology that promises to preserve academic integrity may instead be dismantling the trust relationships that make meaningful education possible.

[22] Who will watch the watchmen? The ethico-political arrangements of algorithmic proctoring for academic integrity

The economics of educational surveillance deserve scrutiny. [16] exposes significant institutional investments in detection technologies despite mounting evidence of their ineffectiveness. Universities pour resources into technological arms races while pedagogical innovation languishes. The irony is palpable: institutions spend more on detecting AI use than on teaching students how to use it thoughtfully.

[16] The Truth About AI Detection in College Admissions: What Universities Actually Spend

The Pedagogical Desert

Perhaps the starkest finding in the landscape analysis is the pedagogical void at the heart of higher education's AI response. Only 91 of 1,926 articles even mention pedagogy—a shocking absence given that teaching and learning ostensibly define the educational mission. This gap between institutional energy and pedagogical attention reveals a system more concerned with control than transformation.

Faculty face impossible choices, as [5] makes clear. They must simultaneously master new technologies, redesign assessments, maintain academic standards, and navigate institutional policies that change faster than semester syllabi. Yet institutional support focuses overwhelmingly on compliance rather than pedagogical innovation. The message to faculty is clear: figure out how to teach with AI, but make sure you follow the rules.

[5] Examining Teaching Competencies and Challenges While Integrating Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education

Some educators attempt to fill this void through grassroots innovation. [20] presents a compelling model for empowering students to critically engage with AI tools. Similarly, [9] demonstrates how thoughtful pedagogical design can transform AI from a threat to critical thinking into a catalyst for deeper intellectual engagement. These examples remain exceptions in a landscape dominated by defensive postures.

[20] Towards a Pedagogy of Self-Determination: Teaching with Generative AI in the Library Classroom

[9] L'IAG : Alliée de la Pensée Critique ou Tentation de la Substitution

The pedagogical poverty extends to assessment, where panic overshadows possibility. Instead of reimagining evaluation in an AI-enabled world, institutions double down on surveillance and detection. [6] offers comprehensive frameworks for assessment innovation, yet such constructive approaches remain marginalized in favor of technological cat-and-mouse games that benefit neither students nor educators.

[6] Generative AI in Higher Education

Students in the Crossfire

While committees debate and administrators regulate, students navigate AI's educational possibilities and perils largely alone. The discourse reveals a troubling disconnect between institutional assumptions about student AI use and actual student experiences and needs. [18] provides crucial empirical evidence about how students actually engage with AI tools, revealing nuanced usage patterns that defy simplistic policy responses.

[18] To adopt or to ban? Student perceptions and use of generative AI in higher education

The stakes for students are immediate and material. [4] documents cognitive costs of AI reliance that institutions rarely address. Students report decreased critical thinking capacity and increased difficulty with independent analysis after extended AI use. Yet institutional responses focus on prohibition rather than education, leaving students to discover these pitfalls through painful experience.

[4] El costo oculto de usar ChatGPT en la universidad: lo que los estudiantes deben saber

Equity concerns compound these challenges. [17] reveals how AI tools can provide crucial accessibility support, yet blanket prohibition policies often fail to account for these legitimate needs. The digital divide takes new forms as some students gain sophisticated AI literacy through resources outside the classroom while others encounter these tools only through institutional warnings about academic misconduct.

[17] The use of generative AI by students with disabilities in higher education

International students face particular challenges navigating culturally specific AI policies. What constitutes appropriate collaboration with AI varies dramatically across educational contexts, yet institutions rarely provide clear guidance that acknowledges these differences. Students become casualties of policy confusion, penalized for practices that might be encouraged elsewhere or simply for seeking the support they need to succeed in a second language.

The Missing Partnership Model

Among the most revealing findings is what's absent from the discourse: only 7.1% of articles frame AI as a collaborative partner in education. This conceptual poverty limits institutional imagination

and perpetuates adversarial dynamics. While [2] demonstrates the transformative potential of human-AI collaboration in creative fields, such partnership models remain marginalized in mainstream educational discourse.

[2] Creative Applications of Artificial Intelligence in Education

The collaborative framework offers pathways beyond the current impasse. [7] provides institutional guidance that frames AI as a tool for enhancing rather than replacing human intelligence. This shift from substitution to augmentation opens new pedagogical possibilities while maintaining educational integrity. Yet such approaches require fundamental reimagining of educational relationships and outcomes that many institutions seem unwilling to undertake.

[7] Generative Artificial Intelligence in Teaching and Learning at McMaster University

The absence of partnership thinking reflects deeper anxieties about human uniqueness and educational purpose. If AI can generate essays and solve problems, what remains distinctly human about education? Rather than grappling with this fundamental question, institutions retreat into rule-making and surveillance. [3] confronts these existential questions directly, offering frameworks for maintaining human agency while leveraging AI capabilities.

[3] Do AI tutors empower or enslave learners? Toward a critical use of AI

Global Variations and Cultural Tensions

The international landscape reveals striking variations in how different educational systems approach AI integration. [11], UNESCO's comprehensive guidance, emphasizes human-centered approaches and cultural sensitivity, contrasting sharply with the surveillance-heavy responses documented in many Anglo-American contexts.

[11] Orientations pour l'intelligence artificielle générative dans l'éducation et la recherche

Francophone institutions demonstrate notably different priorities. [8] from Quebec's education authorities provides 20 detailed recommendations that balance innovation with ethical considerations, emphasizing collective benefit over individual control. This cultural difference in framing—from threat management to opportunity optimization—produces remarkably different institutional responses and student experiences.

[8] Intelligence artificielle générative en enseignement supérieur

Asian educational contexts present another contrast. [12] analyzes social media discussions revealing how different cultural values shape AI reception and integration strategies. Where Western institutions often emphasize individual academic integrity, Asian contexts may prioritize collective learning and technological advancement, leading to fundamentally different policy approaches.

[12] Perceptions of Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education

These global variations expose the contingency of dominant governance approaches. What seems inevitable or necessary in one context

appears arbitrary or counterproductive in another. [10] maps these moral frameworks across jurisdictions, revealing how cultural values shape seemingly technical policy decisions. The diversity of approaches suggests that current dominant models are choices, not inevitabilities.

[10] Moral Diversity in Institutional Policies Governing the Student Usage of Generative AI

The Path Forward: Beyond Control

The comprehensive survey reveals an educational system at a crossroads. The current trajectory—ever-more-elaborate governance structures, expanding surveillance apparatus, pedagogical neglect—serves neither educational mission nor student needs. Yet alternative paths exist, glimpsed in marginalized discourses and international variations.

Successful integration requires fundamental shifts in institutional mindset. [19] demonstrates what comprehensive institutional transformation might entail: not just new policies but new capacities, partnerships, and educational visions. The report's emphasis on building AI fluency across all institutional levels contrasts sharply with the detection-and-prohibition focus dominating current discourse.

[19] Toward an AI-Ready University - University of Toronto

The evidence suggests several critical reorientations. First, institutions must shift from governance to pedagogy, investing in teaching innovation at least as heavily as in control mechanisms. Second, the partnership model deserves centering rather than marginalization, acknowledging AI as a collaborator rather than threat. Third, student voice and experience must inform policy, replacing top-down proclamations with responsive adaptation. Finally, international dialogue and cultural exchange could break the grip of dominant but failing approaches.

[13] provides a framework for this transformation, emphasizing how institutions might move from reactive control to proactive innovation. The transition requires courage—acknowledging that perfect control is neither possible nor desirable, that educational values must evolve, that students and faculty deserve trust rather than surveillance.

[13] Reimagining higher education: Navigating the challenges of Generative AI adoption

The hour is late but not too late. As AI capabilities expand and student adoption accelerates, institutions face a choice: double down on failing control strategies or embrace transformational possibilities. The comprehensive evidence reveals the poverty of current approaches and the promise of alternatives. Whether higher education seizes this opportunity or squanders it in committee meetings and compliance frameworks remains an open question—one whose answer will shape educational futures for generations to come.

References

1. Australian Framework for Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education

2. Creative Applications of Artificial Intelligence in Education

3. Do AI tutors empower or enslave learners? Toward a critical use of AI

4. El costo oculto de usar ChatGPT en la universidad: lo que los estudiantes deben saber

5. Examining Teaching Competencies and Challenges While Integrating Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education

6. Generative AI in Higher Education

7. Generative Artificial Intelligence in Teaching and Learning at McMaster University

8. Intelligence artificielle générative en enseignement supérieur

9. L'IAG : Alliée de la Pensée Critique ou Tentation de la Substitution

10. Moral Diversity in Institutional Policies Governing the Student Usage of Generative AI

11. Orientations pour l'intelligence artificielle générative dans l'éducation et la recherche

12. Perceptions of Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education

13. Reimagining higher education: Navigating the challenges of Generative AI adoption

14. Students have been arrested for AI surveillance false alarms - NBC Chicago

15. The fear of big brother:The potential negative side-effects of proctored exams

16. The Truth About AI Detection in College Admissions: What Universities Actually Spend

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