

Reconfiguring Learning in the Age of Generative AI:

A Global Review of Emerging Perspectives

Research Overview

This study examines how generative AI is reshaping the meaning of learning in higher education. Through a mixed-methods literature review combining correspondence analysis and close reading, it identifies four emerging perspectives on learning and argues that these perspectives collectively reorient the question of what counts as learning.

Purpose of Study

Generative AI is often presented as a technology that enhances efficiency, expands access to knowledge, and improves learning outcomes in higher education. Such accounts typically assume that learning remains conceptually stable, merely supported or accelerated by technological tools. However, an expanding body of research suggests that the integration of generative AI is not only transforming educational practices but also destabilizing the underlying meaning of learning itself.

This study aims to examine how learning is conceptualized across recent research on generative AI in higher education and to identify emerging patterns in these

conceptualizations. Rather than asking whether AI improves learning outcomes, this study addresses a more fundamental question: what counts as learning in the age of generative AI? By synthesizing research published primarily in English-language journals, the study contributes to global discussions on higher education by offering a structured account of how learning is being reconfigured across different strands of inquiry.

Research Methods

This study employs a mixed-methods literature review that combines quantitative text analysis with qualitative close reading. First, a corpus of peer-reviewed articles on generative AI in higher education was constructed through database searches and screened for relevance to learning processes and educational theory. The dataset focuses on research published during the early phase of widespread generative AI adoption.

Second, correspondence analysis was conducted to map relationships among key terms and to identify clusters of research reflecting different orientations toward learning. This method allows for the visualization of structural patterns in the literature while preserving the complexity of conceptual differences across studies.

Third, representative articles from each cluster were selected for close reading. This qualitative analysis examined how learning is defined, what forms of learner activity are

emphasized, and how the role of AI is conceptualized. By integrating these approaches, the study moves between macro-level pattern identification and micro-level interpretation.

Results and Discussion

The analysis identifies four emerging perspectives on learning in the age of generative AI.

First, learning as coping and adaptation. In this perspective, learning is understood as a process of navigating uncertainty and managing cognitive and emotional demands. Generative AI functions as a source of immediacy, reassurance, and a judgment-free environment that enables learners to test ideas and address gaps in understanding.

Second, learning as performance enhancement. Here, learning is framed in terms of measurable outcomes such as improved writing quality, academic performance, and efficiency. AI is positioned as a tool that optimizes learning processes through feedback, content generation, and task support.

Third, learning as normative and accountable practice. This perspective focuses on what constitutes legitimate learning in the presence of AI. Issues such as academic integrity, assessment design, and ethical use become central, and learning is defined

through adherence to evolving norms and responsibilities.

Fourth, learning as generative sense-making and subject formation. In this emerging perspective, learning is conceptualized as a process of constructing meaning through interaction with AI. Learners engage in dialogue, reflection, and self-regulation, with AI functioning as a sociotechnical partner in meaning-making.

These perspectives do not converge into a single unified model. Instead, they reflect different responses to the same transformation. However, taken together, they indicate a broader shift: diverse lines of inquiry are being reoriented toward fundamental questions about the nature of learning, knowledge, and subjectivity. In this sense, generative AI does not simply introduce new challenges but reconfigures what counts as learning in higher education.

Keywords

higher education, generative AI, learning, sense-making, assessment