



Generative AI and the Reconfiguration of Student Learning: A Conceptual and Science-Mapping Synthesis of Capabilities, Risks, and Educational Transformations

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Abstract—Generative Artificial Intelligence has emerged as an important force in education and has started changing the way students learn, write, think, and complete academic work. This study examines how generative AI is reconfiguring student learning through a conceptual and science-mapping synthesis focused on three main dimensions: capabilities, risks, and educational transformations. The study uses processed bibliometric and science-mapping files, including keyword maps, co-citation maps, keyword networks, co-citation networks, and bibliographic coupling networks, to analyse the thematic structure, intellectual base, and research-front structure of the field. The findings show that the literature is strongly centered on terms such as ChatGPT, artificial intelligence, large language models, generative AI, and higher education. Thematic analysis highlights capabilities such as adaptive learning, feedback, personalized learning, and student engagement; risks such as academic integrity, plagiarism, ethics, and critical thinking; and transformations related to assessment, digital literacy, technology adoption, and institutional change in higher education. Overall, the study concludes that generative AI should be understood as a transformative force that is reshaping student learning, assessment practices, and institutional responses in higher education.

Index Terms—Generative Artificial Intelligence, ChatGPT, Student Learning, Higher Education, Academic Integrity, Science Mapping, Co-citation Analysis, Bibliographic Coupling, Educational Transformation, Large Language Models

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background and Rationale

Artificial intelligence has developed from a specialized computational field into a transformative force affecting communication, decision-making, creative production, and knowledge work. Foundational advances in deep learning and transformer architectures, particularly the shift initiated

by Attention Is All You Need and later large language model developments, enabled systems that can generate human-like text, code, summaries, explanations, and,

dialogue at scale. In educational contexts, this transition has accelerated with the public diffusion of ChatGPT and related generative AI tools, which have made advanced AI capabilities directly available to students, teachers, and institutions.

The educational significance of this shift lies not only in automation, but in the fact that these systems now participate in core academic activities such as writing, explaining, searching, problem-solving,

coding, and revising. The co-citation structure in the source dataset confirms that the field is intellectually grounded in technical AI foundations alongside educational and behavioral frameworks.

The entry of generative AI into education has prompted both enthusiasm and concern. Scholars have described ChatGPT and related tools as promising educational resources capable of supporting writing assistance, communication, feedback, idea generation, and individualized learning experiences. Studies in second-language writing, science education, and programming education suggest that generative AI may extend access to explanations, accelerate formative support, and help students interact with difficult material in more dialogic ways.

At the same time, major concerns have emerged regarding plagiarism, academic misconduct, reduced critical engagement, unreliable outputs, and the weakening of conventional assessment mechanisms. The keyword co-occurrence map supports this duality, showing strong thematic concentration around both pedagogical affordances such as feedback, adaptive learning, personalized learning, and student engagement, and risk-oriented terms such as academic integrity, plagiarism, ethics, assessment, and critical thinking.

This combination of opportunity and disruption indicates that generative AI is not simply another digital tool in education. Rather, it is reshaping the conditions under which learning takes place. The educational issue is no longer limited to whether students can use AI tools, but extends to how such tools alter cognition, academic practices, classroom norms, assessment validity, and the teacher's role in the learning process.

The rapid adoption of generative AI in education has outpaced the development of stable conceptual and evaluative frameworks. A growing body of studies examines isolated aspects of the phenomenon, such as student attitudes, academic integrity, writing assistance, technology acceptance, and policy response. Broader integrative works indicate that the field is still in a phase of rapid consolidation rather than conceptual maturity.

B. Problem Statement, Aim, and Scope

Generative AI has entered student learning environments at a pace faster than educational institutions have been able to regulate, theorize, and assess. Existing studies frequently examine separate dimensions of the issue, such as opportunities for learning support, risks of misconduct, or student acceptance of AI tools. However, fewer studies synthesize these strands into a unified framework that explains how generative AI is reconfiguring student learning itself.

The aim of this study is to examine how generative AI is reconfiguring student learning by developing a conceptual and science-mapping synthesis of its educational capabilities, risks, and transformative implications. The study focuses especially on higher education contexts where the adoption and debate around ChatGPT and related tools have been most visible.

The objectives are to identify and analyze the major thematic areas in the literature with particular focus on capabilities, associated risks, and emerging transformations in teaching, assessment, and learner practices, and to map the intellectual and research structure of the field through keyword co-occurrence, co-citation analysis, and bibliographic coupling.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Davis introduced the Technology Acceptance Model and argued that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use play a decisive role in technology adoption. Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior later became useful for studies examining students' willingness to use generative AI in academic work. Their presence in the mapped structure shows that the field is influenced by behavioral adoption theory as well as pedagogy.

Vaswani et al. provided the transformer architecture that became the technical foundation for modern large language models. Devlin advanced natural language processing through BERT, and Brown demonstrated the power of large language models in few-shot learning. Together, these works laid the conceptual and technical foundation for general-purpose conversational systems later used in education.

Chen reviewed artificial intelligence in education and highlighted the broader educational potential of AI systems

for personalization, adaptive learning, and intelligent tutoring. Alafnan discussed ChatGPT as an educational tool in communication and writing. Alasadi and Bahroun framed generative AI as both a promising innovation and a source of ethical and academic uncertainty. These studies formed the early educational interpretation layer of the field.

Barrot investigated the use of ChatGPT for second-language writing and highlighted both the potentials and pitfalls of AI-assisted writing. Becker examined AI code generation in educational settings and argued that programming education was being significantly affected by new AI systems. Cooper extended the discussion into science education, showing that disciplinary context matters in understanding the educational impact of generative AI.

Chan proposed an AI policy education framework for university teaching and learning, recognizing that universities need policies on acceptable use, assessment redesign, student guidance, and ethical AI integration. Crompton described the state of the field of artificial intelligence in higher education, emphasizing that institutions were still trying to understand how to adapt pedagogy, policy, and support systems. Dwivedi presented multidisciplinary perspectives on opportunities, challenges, and implications of generative conversational AI for research, practice, and policy.

Lo's rapid review on the impact of ChatGPT on education found that the emerging literature was already divided between supportive and cautionary positions. Acosta-Enriquez later analyzed college students' attitudes toward the use of ChatGPT and emphasized responsible use, verification, and trust. Cotton placed academic integrity at the center of the debate by arguing that generative AI poses a major challenge to traditional notions of cheating, originality, and authorship.

Three important gaps remain visible across the literature. First, much of the work is fragmented, with studies focusing on one dimension at a time rather than explaining how generative AI is reshaping student learning as a whole. Second, a large proportion of the literature is descriptive or exploratory and often stops at identifying opportunities and challenges without explaining how these relate to deeper educational transformation. Third, there remains a need for a synthesis that connects the thematic structure, the intellectual base, and the emerging research front of the field.

A. Summary table of the mapped literature

Theme	Core anchors	Key concerns	Interpretive value
Capabilities	Feedback, adaptive learning, personalized learning	Support for explanation, revision, engagement	AI is framed as a learning-support tool.
Risks	Academic integrity, plagiarism, ethics, critical thinking	Misuse, unreliable output, reduced originality	Governance and assessment remain central.
Educational transformations	Assessment, digital literacy, higher education, technology adoption	Institutional policy, redesign of pedagogy, responsible use	AI is treated as a force of educational change.

Table I. Objective-linked synthesis of the literature.

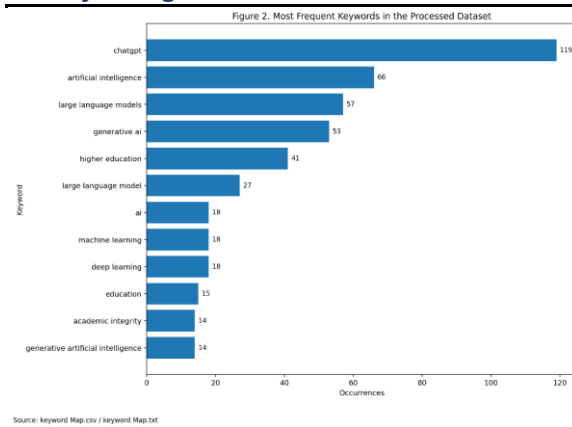


Fig. 1. Most frequent keywords in the processed dataset.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study follows a descriptive, analytical, and science-mapping research design. It is descriptive because it identifies the major concepts, patterns, and structures present in the literature. It is analytical because it interprets the relationships among keywords, cited references, and research clusters. It is a science-mapping study because it uses processed bibliometric maps and network files to understand how the field is organized.

The study is based on secondary data. It does not involve surveys, experiments, interviews, or direct classroom observation. Instead, it uses processed bibliometric and science-mapping files prepared from the literature database. The raw database export was not used directly for interpretation. Rather, the study relied on cleaned and generated outputs that are more suitable for thematic, intellectual, and network-level analysis.

The main files used were the keyword map, keyword network, co-citation map, co-citation network, bibliographic coupling network, and the summary workbook. The keyword files were used for thematic analysis, the co-citation files were used for intellectual-structure analysis, and the bibliographic coupling file was used for research-front analysis.

Descriptive bibliometric analysis was used to understand the general nature of the processed dataset. Keyword co-occurrence analysis was used to identify dominant concepts, high-frequency keywords, major thematic clusters, capability-related concepts, risk-related concepts, educational-transformation concepts, and recent emerging themes. Keyword network analysis was used to examine whether the field is fragmented or conceptually integrated.

Co-citation analysis was used to identify the most influential references, major knowledge clusters, the technical foundation of the field, the educational and policy foundation of the field, and the role of adoption theory in the literature. Bibliographic coupling analysis was used to examine the structural connectedness of recent studies and interpret the maturity of the emerging research front.

After identifying clusters through keyword and co-citation mapping, interpretive analysis was used to assign meaning to each cluster. Clusters related to feedback, adaptive learning, student engagement, and personalized learning were interpreted as capability-oriented. Clusters related to academic integrity, plagiarism, ethics, and critical thinking

were interpreted as risk-oriented. Clusters related to assessment, digital literacy, higher education, and technology adoption were interpreted as educational-transformation clusters.

The methodology directly supports the research objectives. Keyword co-occurrence and keyword network analysis support Objective 1 because they identify the major themes of the field and show how these themes are connected. Co-citation analysis and bibliographic coupling support Objective 2 because they identify the intellectual base and the current research front of the field. This structure ensures that the project remains focused and logically tied to the title of the paper.

The methodology is appropriate because the topic is new, fast growing, and interdisciplinary. At the same time, it has limitations. The study depends on processed mapping files, so interpretation is limited to the structure represented in those files. The bibliographic coupling file is an unlabeled edge list, and the study does not include primary data such as interviews, questionnaires, or experiments.

A. Analytical use of processed files

File group	Primary use	Output supported
Keyword files	Occurrences, link strength, clusters, average year	Thematic analysis of capabilities, risks, and transformations
Co-citation files	Reference links, clusters, intellectual anchors	Mapping of the field's knowledge base
Bibliographic coupling file	Shared-reference structure of recent studies	Interpretation of the current research front

Table II. Mapping of processed files to analytical purpose.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The keyword map shows that the literature is strongly centered on a small set of dominant concepts. The most frequent keywords are ChatGPT with 119 occurrences, artificial intelligence with 66 occurrences, large language models with 57 occurrences, generative AI with 53 occurrences, and higher education with 41 occurrences. Other important terms include academic integrity, assessment, critical thinking, digital literacy, and personalized learning. These results show that the field is not limited to technology itself; it is equally connected with student learning, evaluation, and responsible educational use.

The first objective-linked theme is capabilities. This theme includes adaptive learning, feedback, personalized learning, student engagement, learning, teaching, and educational technology. These terms suggest that a major part of the literature views generative AI as a useful educational support tool. In simple words, AI is being studied as a tool that can provide fast feedback, support personalized learning, improve student engagement, and help students in academic tasks such as writing, explanation, and task completion.

The second theme is risks. This theme includes academic integrity, academic misconduct, plagiarism, ethics, and critical thinking. Researchers are not only asking how AI can help students, but also how it may reduce originality, make misconduct easier, create ethical confusion, and

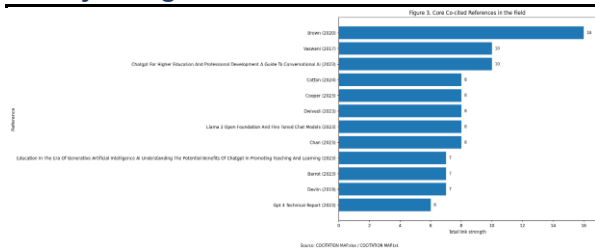


Fig. 5. Top cited studies in the processed source set.

V. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE SCOPE

The present study was conducted to understand how generative AI is changing student learning. The results clearly show that generative AI is no longer seen only as a new digital tool. Instead, it is becoming an important force that is changing how students learn, how teachers assess student work, and how higher education institutions respond to new technology.

The first major conclusion is that the literature is strongly organized around educational capabilities. Many studies connect generative AI with adaptive learning, feedback, personalized learning, student engagement, learning, and teaching. This means that a large part of the literature sees generative AI as helpful for learning support.

The second major conclusion is that the literature is equally shaped by risks and challenges. The processed keyword files show strong attention to academic integrity, academic misconduct, plagiarism, ethics, and critical thinking. Therefore, while generative AI has educational benefits, it also creates serious concerns related to originality, deep learning, and assessment reliability.

The third major conclusion is that generative AI is leading to educational transformation. Terms such as assessment, authentic assessment, digital literacy, higher education, technology adoption, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use show that universities need to rethink assignment design, student skills, responsible AI use, and teacher roles. In other words, generative AI is not just affecting student tasks; it is changing the wider educational system.

Co-citation analysis shows that the field is built on a hybrid intellectual base that brings together technology, education, ethics, and behavioral theory. Bibliographic coupling suggests that recent studies are already linked in a connected structure, indicating that the field has moved beyond random early discussion and is becoming a more organized area of research.

The findings are practically relevant for students, teachers, institutions, and policy makers. Students should use generative AI as a support tool and not as a full replacement for their own thinking. Teachers should redesign teaching and assessment practices in ways that reduce misuse and increase meaningful learning, including oral presentations, in-class tasks, reflective work, viva, case-based responses, and applied problem-solving.

Educational institutions should develop clear institutional policies for the use of generative AI in teaching, learning, and assessment. Instead of only banning these tools, institutions should create balanced rules that explain when

AI use is acceptable, how it should be disclosed, and how fairness in assessment can be maintained. Institutions should also invest in AI literacy programs for both students and faculty members.

Future research can extend the present work through surveys, interviews, case studies, and longitudinal designs that examine how awareness, use, and institutional response evolve over time. More discipline-specific studies, more work on school education, and more research on authentic assessment in the AI era are also needed. Overall, the synthesis shows that generative AI has already become a significant and organized field of inquiry in higher education research.

A. Selected practical implications

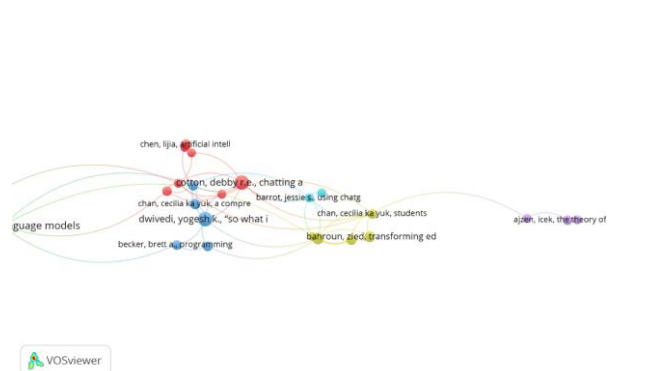
Students should be trained to verify AI-generated information before using it in assignments or academic activities. Since the field is strongly connected with responsible use and academic honesty, learners must know how to check correctness, identify unreliable output, and avoid blind dependence on AI tools.

Teachers should guide students on how to use AI ethically. Since the literature is strongly shaped by academic integrity, ethics, and critical thinking, it is important to make students aware of acceptable and unacceptable uses of AI in academic work.

Institutions should regularly review their policies because the keyword map shows the emergence of newer themes such as prompt engineering, e-learning, UTAUT, and learning performance, indicating that the field is evolving rapidly. A fixed policy may become outdated very quickly, so regular updates are necessary.

A complementary VOSviewer visualization further reinforces the clustering logic identified in the thematic and intellectual analyses. It shows how ChatGPT, education, large language models, academic integrity, digital literacy, and related terms are positioned within an interconnected field rather than as isolated nodes. This additional visualization confirms that the domain is already structured around shared conceptual anchors.

Fig. 6. Additional VOSviewer network perspective from the source mapping.



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