2024 Teaching & Learning Conference

Integrating Educational Thinking

Discussion Paper - Wednesday 10th July, Parallel Session Strand 3, 13.30-14.00

Conference Abstract

Unveiling Academic Boredom: Leveraging Generative AI for Ethical and Engaging Learning Experiences in Higher Education

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The integration of emerging technologies, such as Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI), are increasingly embedded into the learning, teaching and assessment strategies of undergraduate programmes with a view to instilling a more lively and dynamic learning experience for students.

Students generally respond positively to this and the novelty of such digital tools aid in holding the attention of students by comparison to the more traditional teaching and learning methods. Whilst the exposure to these engaging teaching tools brings about positive results in student engagement metrics, the upskilling of students in the use of GenAI also poses a threat. It examples the perfect storm: GenAI is presented as a teaching tool which erases the tedium of more traditional teaching methods, and students – in turn – engage with these same tools to overcome the tedium of traditional assessment methods. There is a known increase in academic misconduct cases as a result and proving such cases are incredibly challenging for Higher Education institutions.

This paper explores the concept of academic boredom, a phenomenon on which there is only limited attention paid in the existing body of literature until recently. It is proposed that, whilst attention spans are no shorter than before according to scientific research, teachers integrate GenAI into teaching in an effort to deliver a more dynamic and lively learning experience to try and optimise the students' attention and that students look to shortcut the learning process by engaging in the use of GenAI for the completion of their assessments, so as to deliver faster results.

Recent outputs from researchers across the globe shed light on the complexities of academic boredom, unveiling its profound effects on student engagement, learning outcomes, and overall educational experiences. This paper reviews some of these findings and considers how leveraging Gen AI technologies effectively can address some of the concerns that are emerging around student's ethical and appropriate use of AI.

By recognising Gen AI's capacity to positively reshape traditional pedagogical methods, this paper addresses the potential to create inclusive learning environments, characterised by ethical and appropriate use of AI, that empower learners to thrive in the digital age in a way that reduces academic boredom.

Conference themes: Inclusive education, Generative AI