

From Technological Demands to Pedagogical Agency: A Reflective Faculty Community Confronting GenAI

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Abstract

The study explores how an intensive workshop on Generative AI influences the beliefs and professional agency of university professors who are part of an expert peer-learning community known as the Mentor Project at an Italian university.

The research uses a pre-post design (N= 25) combining quantitative questionnaires with qualitative feedback analysis.

The findings reveal that significant changes in beliefs occur only when the use of Generative AI aligns with the professors' existing pedagogical values, such as knowledge construction, personalized teaching, and the teacher's role as a learning facilitator. Concerns related to plagiarism and students' passive role remained unchanged, but privacy concerns increased unexpectedly after the workshop, indicating that engaging with AI in an informed way heightens awareness about data issues.

Qualitatively, a practice gap is observed: while professors recognize the potential of Generative AI to enhance teaching, they have not yet been able to incorporate it into their daily work. Addressing this gap requires discipline-specific support and a stable professional community.

The study highlights that successful integration of AI in higher education depends on the quality of the professional learning community, rather than just the availability of technology. This finding has interesting implications for how faculty development programs are designed.