

GenAI-infused adult learning in the digital era. A conceptual framework for higher education

Monday 4 November 2024 16:15 (30 minutes)

Adult learners are a neglected species in the generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) era. GenAI in education will usher in a world of adult learning that will be radically different from its predecessor. However, how adult learners will apply GenAI technologies to achieve their educational and professional goals remains blurred. To address this gap, it is crucial to examine essential principles for integrating GenAI into adult learning. GenAI should optimize adult learning and ensure the safety of adult learners. This study proposes a “GenAI adult learning ecology” framework (GenAI-ALE) for higher education institutions in this digital era permeated by GenAI. The GenAI-ALE considers eight (8) essential principles categorized into two main themes; institutional factors (GenAI curriculum design, GenAI divide, GenAI policy, GenAI ethics) and interpersonal factors (GenAI human-centered andragogy, GenAI literacy, GenAI interest, and GenAI virtual learning). Malcolm Knowles’ andragogical model is used to provide a context for integrating GenAI into adult learning. Applying the framework in a real-world context follows four iterative systematic steps; pre-perception & perception, GenAI readiness, assessment, and outcome. Reimagining new forms of adult learning in the GenAI revolution calls for higher education institutions to develop education systems where there is a synergy between humans (adult learners) and GenAI.

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Session Classification: Impulssession #2

Track Classification: Künstliche Intelligenz