

Learning Against the Algorithm: AI, Gender, and the New Frontiers of Education

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ABSTRACT

The advent of AI and popularisation of generative AI in UK higher education classrooms has been as rapid as the ascent of AI into mainstream. Questions around access, equity, and digital fluency are taking on new urgency – especially in the context of lifelong learning.

As the digital gender gap in the UK narrows, women are taking charge of economic and career stability. There is a case to be made in favour of an AI-integrated curriculum for women in the UK for lifelong learning practices, enhanced student satisfaction and career progression.

This paper explores the impact that Generative AI platforms like ChatGPT and Gemini can have on the lived experiences of mature women returning to education, particularly those over the age of 35, navigating business and education in the UK. Drawing on classroom-based reflections and over years of teaching, I examine how generative AI can serve as a barrier but also as a bridge for women learners with diverse digital literacy levels and nonlinear educational journeys.

The uses of generative AI rely heavily on the algorithmic systems which assumes all learners have surplus time as well as technological understanding. The socio-cultural nuances, existing gendered norms around use and access to technology, and factors as care responsibilities of women are not factored. Yet, generative AI can be easily ‘conditioned’ to scaffold confidence, support academic writing, customise feedback and ‘buddy’ up in the independent learning system.

This paper seeks to explore an altered role of AI, one of a co-learner and an active participant in inclusive education. To provide practical insights into AI-integrated learning environments focussing on gendered and age-specific experiences that empower, rather than exclude, the lifelong learner.

Keywords: Generative AI, Lifelong Learning, Women in Higher Education, Digital Literacy, AI in Pedagogy, Educational Equity, Algorithmic Bias, Mature Students, Feminist Pedagogy