

BEYOND CODE AND CURRICULUM: REIMAGINING EDUCATION THROUGH AI AND SOCIAL SCIENCE LENSES

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Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping education. And it is here to stay. In classrooms, from elementary schools to universities, algorithms are increasingly making decisions about what, how, and when we learn. Yet, the debate about AI in education has too often been polarized by technical solutions, overlooking the social, cultural and ethical dimensions that equally shape its impact. This special issue (SI) of the Fulbright Chronicles brings together Fulbright alumni from many different fields to imagine a future where AI in education is not only efficient but also fair, inclusive, and culturally responsive.

This SI was motivated by our belief that technological progress alone cannot guarantee better education for all. Without considering a social science lens, AI risks reinforcing inequalities, perpetuating biases, and privileging dominant cultural narratives. Understanding how AI tools are adopted and adapted in diverse educational scenarios is as critical as building more efficient algorithms. No doubt, AI can capture that even experts overlook. Yet, it lacks the ethical sensitivity, cultural awareness, and critical inquiry that are essential to human learning. And perhaps that is its most important limitation. It reminds us that education is not just about processing information but about nurturing creativity, empathy, and agency. We must resist the temptation to reduce learning to what AI can calculate, without losing sight of the messy, inspiring, and deeply human aspects of knowledge-making. This SI is therefore an invitation to move beyond code and curriculum, toward the lived realities of students and the educators navigating AI-driven systems worldwide.

Our Fulbright alumni contributors examine AI in education from multiple vantage points. This SI brings together diverse perspectives from Fulbright alumni whose work spans multiple continents. Writing from the United States, Aldan Creo interrogates how AI can either bridge or deepen socio-economic divides in education. He focuses on AI bias, arguing for a more inclusive and deployment of AI tools, resisting punitive and exclusionary approaches. From the Philippines, Aliza Racelis situates the conversation in the global regulatory landscape, analyzing how different regions are adopting AI policies. Bethany Gowan reflects on how AI-enhanced learning can help students and teachers cultivate ethical literacy across cultures, equipping them to navigate complex information ecosystems. Elizabeth Radday reminds us of the hidden dangers of generative AI (GenAI), from bias to emotional dependence, and calls for ethical education starting in elementary schools. Drawing on his Fulbright experience in Thailand, Kuldeep Nagi offers a compelling perspective on

privacy and digital inclusion in contexts where face-to-face learning still dominates. Finally, Narun Pat demonstrates how cognitive neuroscience and computer science converge in AI-enabled learning, underscoring the power of global collaborations, such as those facilitated by Fulbright, in shaping equitable futures of education.

The richness of these contributions demonstrates that AI in education is not a single story, it is a tapestry woven from diverse experiences, contexts, and disciplines. By bringing together theoretical reflections, empirical studies, case-based insights, and critical commentaries, this SI highlights the urgent need for interdisciplinary dialogue. As Fulbright alumni, our contributors embody the value of crossing borders, intellectual, cultural, and geographical, in order to reimagine what education can and should be in the age of AI.

Looking ahead, the central question is not if AI will change education, but how we will guide and govern that change. The articles in this issue invite teachers, researchers, policymakers, and students to embrace critical AI literacy, to question dominant narratives, and to build systems that reflect shared values of justice, equity, and inclusion. We hope this collection sparks discussion and inspires readers to play an active role in shaping the educational landscapes of tomorrow.

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“Technology drives change; humanity defines direction.”

“Beyond innovation, we need imagination.”

As guest editors, we extend our gratitude to the contributors whose voices animate this SI, and to our readers, who will carry these conversations into classrooms, policy forums, and communities around the world. The future of education with AI is unwritten. Let us write it together, with courage, creativity, and conscience...