

Today's Educational War: Artificial Intelligence vs. Academic Integrity

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a powerful tool increasingly utilized across professional fields. As software that mimics human thinking, AI has the potential to assist individuals in various aspects of daily life. However, an important question arises when applying AI in education: Will students use AI ethically? While AI offers valuable support in education, it also presents challenges, particularly in relation to academic integrity.

This paper explores the ongoing tension between the use of AI and the principles of academic honesty. As society continues to shift toward more computer assisted education and online education, understanding the integration of AI in learning environments becomes increasingly important. This research aims to expose the complexities of AI integration in education and highlights the need for clear guidelines and policies. Drawing on the insights gained from this research; educators can make better informed decisions about the effective and ethical integration of AI in educational environments.

Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is here to stay and is ever-present in students' lives. As a result, AI has become increasingly embedded in school systems. Educators must recognize that this technological advancement can be used both ethically and unethically. The key question we must now address is: *Will students use AI ethically?* Ideally, AI should serve as a supportive tool that enhances the educational experience rather than undermine it.

A useful analogy is the introduction of calculators into education. When first introduced, calculators sparked significant controversy. The use of calculators in education gained popularity in the 1970s, as the decreasing cost of pocket calculators made them more accessible to students. At the time, many educators viewed this emerging technology as a threat to students' mathematical understanding and development. However, a segment of the educational community recognized the potential benefits calculators could offer in enhancing mathematics instruction (Banks, 2011).

Over time, calculators evolved from a controversial tool to an essential element in education. In 1986, Connecticut became the first state to require calculators on a state examination (Banks, 2011). By 1994, the College Board allowed calculator use on the SAT math section (Banks). There were widespread concerns that calculators would inhibit students' ability to develop foundational math skills (Banks). While some of these fears proved to be partially valid, calculators are now widely accepted as powerful educational tools. Importantly, their adoption opened the door to exploring higher-order thinking skills, as calculators were integrated not as crutches, but as tools to deepen learning (Sheets, 2007). Today, calculators are recognized as vital educational tools in classrooms, reflecting broader trends in how technology can be thoughtfully integrated into pedagogy to enrich student learning.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, as personal computers became increasingly accessible in educational settings, the introduction of word processors began to significantly transform the writing process in schools (Streibel, 1986). These tools shifted students' attention away from the mechanical constraints of writing, such as legibility and spelling, and toward the development of content, structure, and expression. Research has shown that the use of word processors supported more extensive revision, encouraged longer and more complex compositions, and improved overall writing quality, particularly when paired with instruction on effective drafting and editing strategies. Although some educators initially voiced concerns about students becoming overly dependent on technology, the prevailing consensus emerged that word processors enriched the writing experience by making it more fluid, interactive, and engaging (Snyder, 1993).

The evolution of educational technologies, such as the calculator and the word processor, illustrates how innovations initially met with skepticism can transform into important tools in education. Both were once criticized for potentially undermining foundational skills, but now they are widely recognized for enhancing instruction and supporting higher-order thinking. In a similar way, artificial intelligence (AI) should not be viewed as a device to shortcut or to avoid learning, but as a powerful tool to support it. This paper examines the complex relationship between AI and academic integrity, asking: Will students utilize artificial intelligence (AI) as a constructive tool to enhance their educational interactions, or will they use it in ways that raise ethical concerns?

Artificial Intelligence vs. Academic Integrity

Defining the War

In essence, artificial intelligence (AI) is a technology designed to simulate human intelligence. The rising popularity of tools like ChatGPT marks the beginning of a new phase in AI development; one that has the potential to significantly disrupt traditional educational processes. ChatGPT's widespread adoption has inspired other companies to create their own generative AI platforms. While AI can be misused, it also has the potential to be a powerful educational resource. For

example, students can use ChatGPT as a virtual coach to improve writing, grammar, and comprehension. It can also help explain complex topics and support deeper understanding in challenging subjects (Hulick, 2023). With responsible use, AI offers promising opportunities for teaching and learning, both now and in the future, by enhancing education and improving access to knowledge (Hulick).

Academic integrity involves adhering to ethical principles such as honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. The roots of AI trace back to 1955, when John McCarthy introduced the term (McCarthy et al., 1955). Just four years later, AI was being used in educational programs at Stanford, including PLATO, a system that taught basic math and science (Ray, 2023).

At its inception, AI was embraced as a valuable educational tool. Today, however, educators using AI as a tool for learning is viewed as both a helpful resource and, by some, as an unfair advantage for students who rely on it to bypass genuine learning (Currie, 2023). Some individuals perceive the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in academic settings as equivalent to contract cheating promoting the opportunity to violate academic integrity (Baarlaer, 2023). When evaluating the relationship between artificial intelligence (AI) and academic integrity, it is essential to examine the different methods by which AI is used unethically in academic settings. The chart below outlines the most common violations of academic conduct associated with AI tools.

Common Violations of Academic Integrity using AI (Balalle & Pannilage, 2025)	
Plagiarism	Students using AI to generate essays, research papers, or other assignments without proper attribution. This is the most common abuse of AI in education.
Cheating on Assessments	Students using AI to answer questions during exams, potentially compromising the fairness of assessments.
Data Fabrication	Students generate fake data or research findings using AI, which can lead to inaccurate conclusions and compromise the integrity of academic research
Unfair Advantages	Students having access to AI tools while others do not, potentially creating an unequal learning environment.

Ongoing research continues to evaluate the prevalence of academic dishonesty involving AI among students in online classes versus those in face-to-face settings is continuing. One study summarized findings from eight separate investigations on this issue. Of these, two studies reported that online students engaged in more cheating, two found no significant difference, and four indicated that online students cheated less frequently than their in-person counterparts (Adzima, 2020). The study concludes that further research is needed to better understand academic behaviors between the use of AI as a form of dishonesty with interaction to the delivery modality of online. Students enrolled in online courses are often perceived to have greater opportunities to misuse AI, largely due to reduced supervision during assessments compared to face-to-face

environments. This perception, identified in this study raises important concerns regarding equity and academic integrity across different instructional modalities (Adzima, 2020).

Despite these concerns, AI will continue to play a constructive role in education. It can function as a tutor, a supplemental resource, or a personalized support tool. For online learners, who may have less real-time interactions with educators, AI can help bridge the gap by providing supplemental guidance, similar to what a teacher might offer in a live classroom (Alqahtani, 2023).

At the same time, students receive messages that AI is a good tool to use to compose and use in many non-academic settings. Combined with the ease of use for academic tasks, student use of AI for assignments contributes to academic misconduct in educational settings. Many students now inappropriately use AI to write essays, solve mathematical problems, and complete assignments, sometimes in violation of academic standards (Xie et al., 2023). Without clear guidelines, students may continue to misuse these tools, not out of malice, but due to unclear boundaries (Balalle & Pannilage, 2025). While AI was developed to assist with thinking, it can prevent students from developing critical thinking skills if used improperly. It is essential for educators and institutions to set clear policies and promote responsible use to ensure that AI remains a tool for learning, not eliminating the learning process.

The Battlefield, Spies, and Inside Sources

A recent study examining academic dishonesty across various types of high schools (public, private, and charter) focused on the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) tools, particularly following the global release of ChatGPT in 2022. The findings indicated a significant increase in academic dishonesty after ChatGPT became widely accessible. According to the study, between 60% and 70% of students admitted to engaging in some form of cheating both before and after the introduction of ChatGPT. Prior to its release, 45% of students reported collaborating with peers on assessments or assignments in ways that violated academic policies. In ChatGPT's first year, 7% of students admitted to using AI tools in ways that breached academic integrity rules. Interestingly, after a short period of time, the use of AI for academic dishonesty rose to 15%, the rate of peer-to-peer information sharing decreased from 45% to 15% (Lee et al., 2024).

Another case study conducted at the higher education level further explored the prevalence of academic dishonesty in the context of AI. The percentage of students who admitted to cheating ranged from 40% to 80%, with male students reporting higher rates of cheating than their female classmates (Lee et al., 2024). The study found that one of the primary reasons students engaged in dishonest behavior was the low perceived risk of being caught (Nartgün & Kennedy, 2024). Additionally, faculty members were observed to exhibit low effort in preventing cheating, which contributed to the issue. Other contributing factors included poorly designed examinations, inadequate proctoring procedures, and overcrowded classrooms, all of which created conditions

that made it easier for students to exploit AI tools to gain an unfair academic advantage (Nartgün & Kennedy, 2024).

Declaring War

The invention of dynamite had a profound impact on the world, enabling civil engineers to construct monumental structures previously thought impossible. However, dynamite also facilitated the development of destructive methods used to harm others (Sachs, 2024). Similarly, artificial intelligence (AI) presents its dual nature. It can be harnessed for constructive educational purposes or used in ways that may be harmful. Tech-savvy educators tend to view AI as a valuable tool for enhancing education, while more experienced educators argue that it has diminished the quality of education (Johanek, 2024). Both perspectives raise valid concerns.

A critical question arises: when does the use of AI in education cross the line into cheating or unethical behavior? To ensure that AI is utilized appropriately in educational settings, clear and concise rules, and policies (referred later in this research as “treaties of the war”) must be established.

Currently, educators grapple with the challenge of determining whether a student's work or assessment is original or if it was completed with AI assistance (Nazaretsky et al., 2022). This growing conflict between viewing AI as a helpful tool and as a potential means of cheating is becoming increasingly prominent. Moreover, teachers who are unfamiliar with the full capabilities of AI may continue to be deceived by students, underscoring the need for educators to gain a deeper understanding of AI (Fleckenstein et al., 2024). The ongoing tension between intelligence and integrity is emerging as a significant issue in education worldwide.

Weapons of the War

A growing abundance of generative AI tools are available to our students today. Online educators must remain vigilant and aware of the various "opportunities" these tools present for student use for both constructive and otherwise. While most AI tools are developed with positive intentions, their misuse poses challenges to academic integrity. For example, *Khanmigo*, an AI chatbot developed by Khan Academy, is intentionally designed the AI to not provide direct answers, but rather to support students in their learning processes and promote deeper understanding (Khan Academy, n.d.). Many AI-based educational tools aim to enhance students' critical thinking skills and foster independent learning. Ideally, this reflects the core principle of how AI should be integrated into educational settings.

However, conflict arises when students use AI to bypass the learning process rather than engage with it. Relying on AI in this manner can lead to a decline in students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. This paper seeks to expose the "weapons of the war" in academic integrity. Therefore, the "weapon" needs to expose the academic integrity violation. The table below highlights both the generative AI programs commonly used by students to engage in dishonest practices and the AI detection tools / defensive measures employed by educators to maintain fairness and academic standards. The following table present a comparative overview of these tools, illustrating the most popular programs used offensively (by students) and defensively (by educators) in the context of AI in education.

The Offensive: Popular Devices used for Academic Dishonesty		The Defense: Popular AI Detectors	
ChatGPT (OpenAI)	A conversational AI that can generate essays, summaries, and answers, often used by students to complete assignments or exams dishonestly.	Turnitin	A plagiarism detection and academic integrity tool. It compares a student work to published works, websites, and other students' work.
CheatGPT	A tool designed specifically for cheating, it auto-generates answers for a wide range of subjects, helping students bypass academic tasks.	Originality AI	A tool primarily used by content creators to detect AI generated content. Turnitin is gear towards an educational setting. This tool is focused towards professional writing.
QuillBot	An AI writing assistant that paraphrases text to avoid plagiarism detection, allowing students to rewrite existing content to appear as their own work.	GPTZero	An AI tool to identify text generated by large language models, such as ChatGPT.
Copy.ai	AI-based tool that generates content like essays, summaries, and reports, making it easy for students to complete assignments without doing the actual work.	CopyLeaks	A plagiarism and content authenticity detection tool. Used in education, businesses and content creators.
Jasper (formerly Jarvis)	An AI writing assistant used to generate essays, articles, and other academic content, often utilized by students for completing assignments.	Winston AI	An AI content detection tool designed to identify AI generated text with high accuracy.
Scribbr (AI Essay Generator)	Known for helping students generate essays or parts of essays by using AI, which may be misused for cheating.	Smodin AI Detector	A tool use to detect AI generated content. Uniquely, it can support over 100 languages.
Writesonic	An AI content generator used by students to quickly produce written material for assignments or projects.	GPT-2 Detector	Designed by OpenAI, it is a tool used to distinguish between human written content and GPT-2 generated content.

Simplified AI Writer	A tool that generates high-quality writing automatically, which students can use for essays, summaries, and other academic work.	GLTR	Developed by researchers at Harvard and MIT to detect AI generated content. This provides a color-coded visual analysis of the text pattern generated by AI.
EssayBot	This AI-powered tool assists in writing essays by generating content based on provided topics and keywords, often misused for cheating.	Sapling AI Detector	An AI content detection tool designed by researchers from Berkeley and Stanford.
Rytr	Another AI content generation tool that helps students generate essays, articles, and more by inputting brief prompts or ideas.	DetectGPT	Designed by researchers from Stanford, an AI content detection tool that identifies text generated by large language models by analyzing the statistical properties of the text.

* This chart was created using information from ChatGPT and Google Search (OpenAI, 2025).

No magic wand exists for detecting AI-generated content. Despite the availability of AI detection tools, students often find ways to manipulate AI-generated material to evade these systems. Once a method of academic dishonesty is identified and addressed, students often develop new strategies to circumvent these preventive measures, reflecting a continuous cycle of adaptation in response to detection.

A recent case study, evaluating five prominent AI detectors, revealed significant limitations in their effectiveness (Nartgün & Kennedy, 2024). According to a recent study, detection accuracy ranged from just 48% to 77%, highlighting considerable variability and an urgent need for more reliable and sophisticated detection technologies. The limitations of AI detection tools encompass several key areas. First, there is the issue of detection accuracy. These tools often produce high rates of both false positives and false negatives. Another critical limitation is the lack of specificity; many detection systems struggle to reliably differentiate between human-written and AI-generated code. This challenge becomes more pronounced when AI-generated code closely mimics human coding styles. Additionally, error rates tend to increase when the AI-generated code is derived from diverse domains or programming contexts. These findings challenge the assumption that technological solutions can uphold academic integrity alone (Pan et al., 2024).

William Kerney of Clovis Community College published a paper titled *Treachery and Deceit: Detecting and Dissuading AI Cheating*, in which he outlines four strategies used to combat AI-facilitated academic dishonesty in his classroom environment (*). The methods he describes are: (1) exploiting the weaknesses of AI, (2) embedding traps for AI, (3) implementing a "Nega-Grade" disciplinary system, and (4) detecting stealth AI use.

Exploiting the weaknesses of AI involves leveraging the predetermined errors that AI may generate. Educators can identify common incorrect responses produced by AI and embed these

responses as distractors in assessment items. When a student selects such a distractor, it signals potential AI use, serving as a form of detection.

Dropping traps for AI is a creative method that involves inserting hidden text into assignments or assessments using extremely small font sizes, sometimes even a font size of zero. This text is invisible to human readers but detectable by AI programs. When an AI processes the hidden text and incorporates it into a response, it reveals that the tool was used, therefore triggering suspicion of misconduct.

The Nega-Grade Disciplinary System is a policy designed to create strong deterrents against AI cheating. Under this system, students caught using AI dishonestly receive a negative score, typically a deduction of 10%, which is worse than not attempting the assignment at all. Kerney reports that after implementing this system, the incidence of cheating in his online courses dropped to below 2%.

Detecting stealth AI use, the fourth method, involves using AI-detection software such as GPTZero. While this approach is less effective than the other three, it still serves as an example of how technology can be employed in efforts to preserve academic integrity.

Kerney's framework demonstrates that educators must proactively respond to the evolving challenges presented by generative AI. A wide range of innovative strategies has emerged, and with proper training and a deeper understanding of AI tools, instructors can foster more equitable and honest learning environments (Kerney, 2025).

Ultimately, maintaining integrity in the educational environment cannot depend only on AI detection tools, but on the proactive role of educators. Instructors have the responsibility to develop a culture of honesty and design assessments that discourage misuse of AI (Oravec, 2023). Furthermore, institutions must implement clear and enforceable standards, policies, and ethical guidelines regarding AI use in academic work (Oravec, 2023). By doing so, the potential for academic dishonesty can be minimized.

Battles won and Battles lost

This examination of AI use in education uses the ideologies inspired by *The Art of War*, highlighting the ongoing "battle" between the constructive and destructive uses of artificial intelligence (AI) in education. On one side, AI serves as a powerful learning tool, and on the other, it can be misused as a mechanism for academic dishonesty. The rapid emergence of AI technologies has created a significant gap in understanding among educators, many of whom are experienced in pedagogy but unfamiliar with the capabilities of AI (Langreo, 2024). In contrast, students, often more technologically savvy, are quick to recognize and exploit these gaps to their advantage (Jane et al., 2024).

ChatGPT was introduced in November 2022 (Gordijn & Have, 2023), prompting immediate reactions from educational institutions. Initially, several schools and school districts implemented immediate bans on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools, such as ChatGPT, due to uncertainties surrounding their impact on student learning and concerns about academic integrity (Williamson et al., 2024). Notable institutions that imposed such bans include the University of Hong Kong, Sciences Po in France, New York City Public Schools, Seattle Public Schools, and the Los Angeles Unified School District (Marr, 2023; Vincent, 2023). At the time, AI was perceived more as a threat to academic development, potentially encouraging plagiarism and reducing critical thinking, rather than as a tool for enhancing learning (Williamson et al., 2024).

However, as understanding of AI's educational potential evolved, many of the mentioned institutions revisited their initial positions. The bans were eventually released, often replaced with carefully crafted policies and guidelines aimed at promoting ethical and constructive use of AI in teaching and learning (Williamson & Eynon, 2023). This shift reflects a broader recognition of AI's capacity to support personalized learning, improve student engagement, and streamline administrative tasks, provided that its use is aligned with clear educational objectives.

These rapid responses were largely driven by uncertainty and concern, as many educators had not received training on the appropriate or effective use of AI tools in academic settings (Dunnigan et al., 2023). At the time ChatGPT was introduced, significant number of faculty members lacked both the technical knowledge and awareness of the potential educational benefits AI could offer. Rather than exploring the constructive applications of AI, some institutions chose to prohibit its use entirely, effectively removing it from the learning environment without fully examining its academic potential (Williamson et al., 2024).

The War Treaty

Today, most educational institutions have established policies or guidelines regarding the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in academic settings. While some institutions implement centralized, institution-wide policies, others delegate the responsibility to individual educators, allowing them to set their own classroom rules on AI use (Schiff, 2022). If the ongoing conflict between the ethical and unethical uses of AI is to reach resolution, a unified policy or agreement must be developed and implemented (Ghimire & Edwards, 2024). This "treaty" may take various forms: some institutions require students to adhere to a technology use agreement (Nartgün & Kennedy, 2024), while others integrate these expectations into syllabus quizzes or classroom policies (Beardsley et al., 2024). Regardless of the method, a few foundational elements are essential to minimizing academic dishonesty. First, a culture of honesty must be fostered (Nartgün & Kennedy). Second, rules regarding the acceptable use of AI should be clearly stated. Third, consequences for misuse must be communicated (Xie et al., 2023). Lastly, both educators and students should be educated on how to use AI responsibly and effectively within academic contexts

Discussion

The primary focus of this paper has been on the negative implications of artificial intelligence (AI) in education, mainly its misuse in academic dishonesty. However, it is important to acknowledge that, when used ethically, AI has the potential to significantly enhance learning and promote educational growth. The studies reviewed in this research have illustrated various methods and techniques by which AI can be misused, ultimately hindering student learning and development. In the absence of clear rules, institutional policies, and well-defined consequences, many students are unlikely to follow proper academic practices.

Conversely, the research also identified a range of strategies that institutions have implemented to ensure AI is integrated into education responsibly. These include policy frameworks, student agreements, and faculty-led initiatives that establish boundaries and expectations for AI use. As AI remains in its early stages within educational settings, it is imperative that educators should become familiar with its capabilities and develop an understanding of how to utilize it as a constructive educational tool. Without careful guidance and purposeful integration, a risk exists that students will prioritize convenience and efficiency over deep, critical thinking, potentially evolving into good information retrievers rather than skilled thinkers and researchers. This is a direction that educators and institutions must work actively to avoid.

Conclusion

Artificial intelligence will undoubtedly continue to serve as a powerful tool in education. However, as with any advancing technology, great power demands great responsibility. Similar to the invention of dynamite, which is capable of both creation and destruction, the ethical and unethical uses of AI must be addressed simultaneously. This research, guided by the conceptual framework of *The Art of War*, emphasizes the importance of preparation and strategic planning in integrating AI into educational systems.

The evidence presented highlights the dual nature of AI: it offers immense potential for enhancing learning, yet it can just as easily be misused for academic dishonesty. Current AI detection tools have proven to be unreliable, reinforcing the need for proactive, rather than reactive, measures. The most effective way to "win" this battle is through preparation. This is done by establishing clear rules, consistent policies, and meaningful consequences before issues arise. Equally important is the creation of an academic culture that embraces AI as a positive force for learning.

In the future, the focus must shift from viewing AI as a threat to academic integrity toward building a future centered on *Academic Intelligence* where students, educators, and institutions alike harness AI ethically to foster deeper thinking, creativity, and lifelong learning.

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