From Prohibitions to Partnership: Navigating Student Needs and Teacher Fears to Build an Ethical AI Culture in Higher Education

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Abstract:
As generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) becomes a ubiquitous force in higher education, a significant reality gap has emerged between rapid student adoption and the lagging development of institutional frameworks. Drawing on cross-country research conducted in Poland, Greece, Lithuania, and Slovenia, this presentation analyzes the diverging perspectives of two key stakeholders: students, who express a strong demand for guidelines, and educators, whose adoption is often hindered by a reluctance to adapt due to fears of diminished critical thinking. Our findings indicate a critical mismatch: while students feel moderately proficient in AI, they report that curricula fail to develop essential AI literacy, such as understanding algorithmic decision-making or recognizing bias. Furthermore, a lack of clear institutional policies leaves a high percentage of students uncertain about what constitutes unacceptable versus permissible behavior. This presentation introduces the AI-THOS model, an innovative pedagogical framework designed to bridge this gap by shifting from a culture of restriction to one of participatory joint creation. We showcase how moving toward classroom protocols through scenarios like Setting up the Setup empowers students to define ethical boundaries alongside faculty, fostering a culture of trust rather than surveillance. To address the fear of cognitive shortcutting, we present the development of a Socratic Virtual Assistant that utilizes the maieutic method to stimulate, rather than replace, human reasoning by engaging students in a dynamic, question-based dialogue. Additionally, we highlight the effectiveness of gamified ethics, such as the Catastrophic Manipulations scenario, which uses creative storytelling and engaging consequences to internalize the gravity of data manipulation and research misconduct. Ultimately, we argue that fostering an ethical AI culture is not a static goal but an ongoing process of lifelong learning.

Attendees will gain a roadmap for implementing transparent AI policies and interactive teaching methods that align with the digital-native reality of today's students while safeguarding the core values of academic integrity.

Keywords:
Ethics, Artificial Intelligence, Research Integrity, AI Literacy, Innovative Learning, Reflection, Co-design.