

## **ChatGPT and the (re-)organization of relations in higher education:**

### ***A Case Study at the University of Innsbruck***

Katharina Marie Mischke ([Katharina.Mischke@uibk.ac.at](mailto:Katharina.Mischke@uibk.ac.at))

*Universität Innsbruck, Institut für Organisation und Lernen*

In recent years, the usage and familiarity with Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies, especially Generative AI (GAI) tools such as ChatGPT, has grown rapidly in higher education (Yusuf, Pervin, & Román-González, 2024). Complex academic content can now be retrieved and distilled into simplified summaries in seconds. Such new opportunities significantly transform the experiences of students and educators, reshaping their self-relation, interpersonal relations and practices. Further it also raises ethical implications and discussions about educational norms, performance, authorship, critical thinking and academic integrity (Michel-Villarreal, et al., 2023), (Eke, 2023). In other words, it affects how individuals relate to themselves and others, how knowledge is accessed, and how academic work is performed.

While previous research focuses primarily on ChatGPTs performance across disciplines and the emerging possibilities for teachers and students (Lo, 2023), (Baidoo-Anu & Owusu Ansah, 2023). A noticeable gap in the existing research is that studies predominantly focus on potential consequences rather than examining actual outcomes and realities of students and professors (Kiryakova & Angelova, 2023), (Bower, Torrington, Lai, Peter, & Alfano, 2024), (McElroy & Girdharry, 2024). Consequently, it is highly relevant to get a clearer and realistic picture of dynamics in a practical context. Therefore, the focus of this research endeavor is to examine:

RQ1: How does ChatGPT influence and shape relations (self-relation, between students, between students and professors)?

RQ2: How does the usage of ChatGPT impact the relation to knowledge?

These questions are explored through a qualitative Case Study conducted at the University of Innsbruck, using narrative Interviews. Although the study is still ongoing, a brief overview of the status can be provided. So far, interviews have been conducted with five Bachelor's students, nine Master's students, and four Teachers/Professors. The interviews lasted between 35 and 60 minutes. Participants were selected based on their involvement in the field of business and management at the university of Innsbruck. Moreover, only individuals in the final stages of their studies were chosen, as their experience prior to the emergence of ChatGPT was considered essential for the narrative interview format.

Since the research is still in progress, definitive results cannot yet be presented. However, certain trends are already emerging. One notable observation is a shift in the relationship between students and professors. With the rise of ChatGPT, initial reactions were marked by mutual mistrust, fear, and uncertainty. Over time, however, this dynamic appears to have evolved into a more trustful interaction, facilitated by transparent and open communication.

In regard to the second research question, an emphasis on efficiency and outsourcing of cognitive tasks has become apparent. There seems to be a motivational shift to process and understand complex and abstract content as quickly as possible, rather than engaging deeply with the provided content and topics discussed in lectures or seminars. This raises critical questions about future consequences: If students engage only superficially in abstract topics, could essential skills such as critical thinking be lost?

Extending these reflections, the usage of ChatGPT challenges the very foundation of the universities' traditional value system. Forcing universities to redefine their norms, values and assessment systems to ensure an education that is legitimate.

Within the broader context of the congress theme this leads to further implications:

Education is a cornerstone of social and economic prosperity. If students increasingly rely on simplified, AI-generated content, while deep, original engagement becomes secondary, the foundation for a knowledge-based society may be undermined. Particularly in times of widespread misinformation, the capacity for critical thinking and independent judgment remains more important than ever.

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