

## Book Review

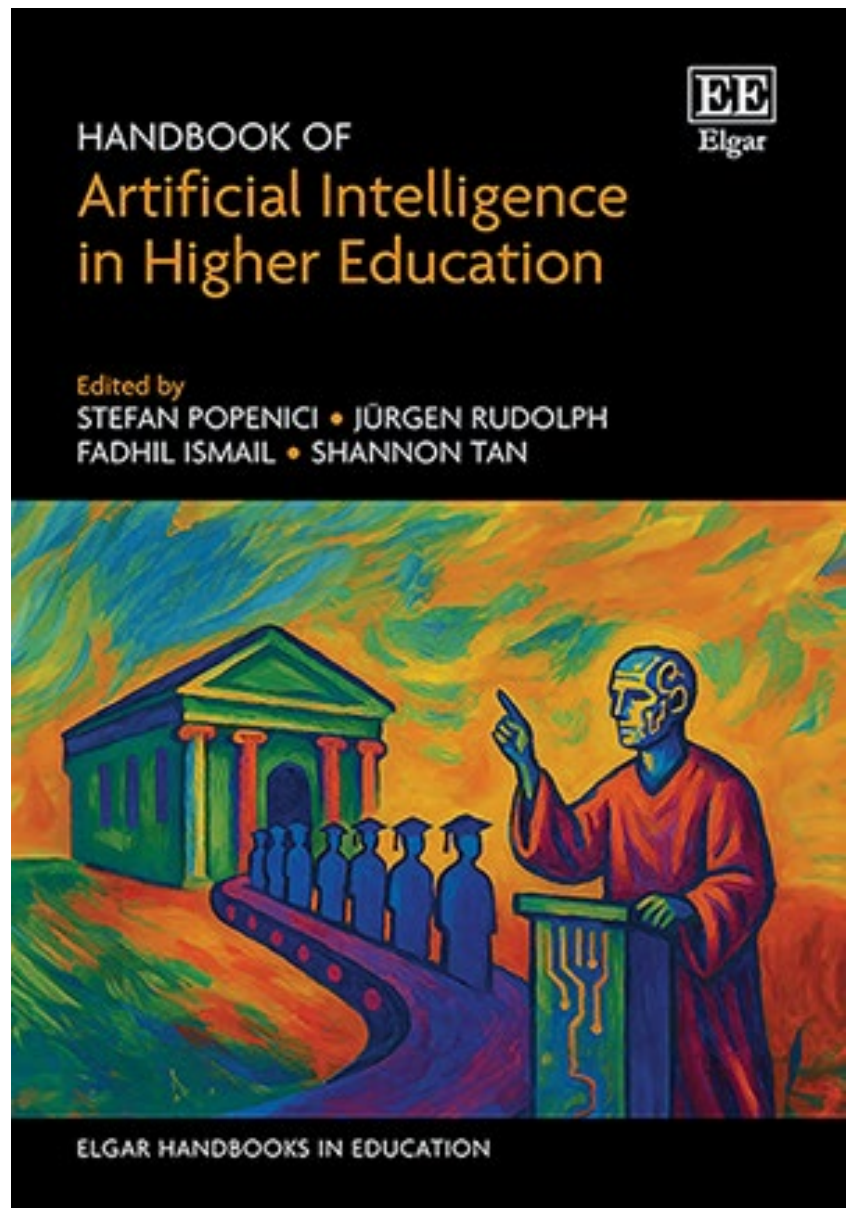
### ***Handbook of Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education.* Edited by Stefan Popenici, Jürgen Rudolph, Fadhil Ismail, and Shannon Tan. Elgar Handbooks in Education. Edward Elgar Publishing**

Pauline Seah<sup>1</sup>

#### INTRODUCTION

Recent scholarship has seen a surge in literature addressing the integration of Artificial Intelligence within higher education. Mollick (2024) explores the concept of “co-intelligence,” framing AI as a collaborative partner for educators (Lim, 2024), while Bowen and Watson (2024) provide a pedagogical roadmap for classroom application and human-centred learning. Complementing these works, Carrigan (2025) offers a specialised resource for the research community, focusing on the implications of generative tools for scholarly production.

The *Handbook of Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education* takes a different stance from these publications, bringing both critical rigour and unusual geographic breadth to the topic of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in higher education. Spanning 632 pages and 39 chapters organised into five parts, the Handbook is structured to move from institutional strategy through



<sup>1</sup> Amity Global Institute, Singapore - [paulinengsg@gmail.com](mailto:paulinengsg@gmail.com)

pedagogical application, critical ethics, workforce preparation, and finally teacher development.

This review evaluates the volume against the two foundational objectives articulated by the editors in their Introduction: first, to empower higher education stakeholders with strategic knowledge to navigate AI's transformative potential and inherent risks; and second, to address a critical void in scholarship through rigorous analysis and a profound critique of the ethical and societal implications of AI adoption. The Handbook arrives at a crucial moment in the field — a contribution that rewards engagement, even as its critical ambitions find more fertile ground in some parts than others.

## **COVERAGE AND FRAMING**

The Handbook spans an ambitious range — adaptive learning, research, admissions, chatbots, and gamification — and this breadth is one of its key strengths. Part 1 establishes the institutional stakes of AI integration, opening with the fundamental question of how universities should position AI within their core functions. Drawing on Guest et al. (2025) and Al-Zahrani (2024), it strikes a welcome cautionary note, urging readers to interrogate the assumptions underlying AI implementation rather than adopt these technologies uncritically.

The volume draws on a genuinely wide disciplinary range — spanning STEM and the humanities, from Chapter 5's qualitative and quantitative research methods (Perkins and Roe) to Chapter 18 on political theory (Weber and Heidelmann), Chapter 11 on environmental humanities and postcolonial (Tan), and Chapter 12's critical race scholarship (Ismail). Some disciplines, such as religious study and social work, have room to be more fully represented, which would further strengthen the collection's breadth.

The handbook's perspectives are drawn largely from educational leaders, researchers, and administrators. However, students do feature meaningfully — as subjects of analysis (Chapter 4 by Crawford et al.), in testimony on AI and admissions (Chapter 7 by Faherty), in discussions of graduate attributes (Chapter 13 by Gamage and Dehideniya), and across Chapter 14 (Forsyth et al.), Chapter 15 (Kerr and Popenici), Chapter 16 (van Gorp and Ker) and Chapter 17 (Tan and Kaldenbach) in relation to disability and neurodiversity. Greater integration of student voices throughout would further enrich the collection.

On the first editorial objective — empowering stakeholders with strategic knowledge — the Handbook largely delivers. The work would benefit from a wider disciplinary scope and greater prominence given to student perspectives.

## **EVALUATING THE CRITICAL AMBITION**

It is against this second objective that the Handbook is most ambitious, and its geographic and intellectual diversity is one of its most distinctive achievements. Contributors hail from across Africa, Asia, Australasia, Europe, North America, and South America — a breadth of representation that is uncommon in academic publishing and allows the volume to extend well beyond the conventional Anglophone conversations about AI in education.

Part 2 is where the Handbook's critical ambition is most visible. Opening with large language models applied to modern slavery statements, probing corporate accountability for human rights abuses

(Chapter 9 by Poon et al.), and exposing the precarious labour conditions of AI data workers — so-called “ghost work” (Chapter 10 by Rudolph) — these chapters signal a refusal to treat AI as ethically neutral infrastructure, connecting the micro-level concerns of classroom practice to the macro-level forces of global capital, policy, and power. In doing so, Part 2 comes closest to fulfilling the Handbook’s second editorial objective, setting a standard that the rest of the volume strives, with mixed results, to match.

Part 3 covers teaching, learning, and assessment with genuine breadth — ranging from work-integrated learning and doctoral pedagogy to academic integrity, assessment reform, and serious gaming in healthcare education. The inclusion of Chapter 24 (Sullivan) on academic integrity is particularly valuable, offering a more nuanced critique of how institutions have simply retrofitted AI misconduct into existing plagiarism and collusion frameworks rather than developing genuinely new approaches. And while each chapter brings its own emphasis, a stronger editorial thread connecting the contributions would help the part build towards a more cumulative argument about pedagogy in the AI era.

Part 4’s cross-sectoral analysis of healthcare, legal services, and education risks glosses over consequential differences in professional obligations across those fields. For higher education readers, the compression is particularly significant: unlike clinical or legal frameworks, the educator’s obligations are shaped by a relational context in which the very process of learning carries ethical weight. Conflating them risks producing recommendations that are technically transferable but pedagogically hollow — valuable ground is covered, but the more generative questions are left in the margins.

Part 5’s most compelling contributions are the localised case studies from Turkey and the UAE, which resist the universalist tendencies of much AI-in-education discourse, though both contexts warrant more sustained critical engagement with their distinct implications for academic freedom and governance. Chapter 37 (Kohnke)’s use of ‘best practices’ might sit more comfortably with the Handbook’s critical aims if accompanied by greater attention to contextual difference — the term can sometimes obscure the conditions that make certain practices less accessible in other settings — and a more contextually sensitive approach would give space to locally shaped frameworks that reflect the particular policy, cultural, and infrastructural contexts in which AI literacy is developed.

Underpinning the Handbook is a core assumption that human-AI coexistence, if managed with sufficient care, can serve as a meaningful driver of inclusivity, diversity, equity, and accessibility (Zallio et al., 2025). This is a deliberate stance rather than an impartial one — it treats AI’s risks as navigable while positioning its benefits as dependent on how strategically it is deployed.

Thus, the Handbook is at its most distinctive and ambitious in its commitment to geographic and intellectual diversity, bringing together contributors from across six continents in ways that genuinely extend the conversation beyond its conventional Anglophone boundaries. Where it is most fully realised — particularly in Part 2’s unflinching ethical scrutiny — it sets a high standard; and while the volume does not always sustain that standard across every section, it remains a significant and timely contribution to the field.

## CONCLUSION

The *Handbook of Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education* arrives at a defining moment — when the question is no longer whether AI will reshape higher education, but whether institutions possess the critical frameworks, ethical literacy, and pedagogical imagination to shape that transformation on their own terms. At its most ambitious, it functions as a critical cartography of AI in higher education — charting not just the terrain but the contested ground beneath it — tracing a progression from institutional choice to strategic action, from pedagogical collaboration to structural critique, and from localised practice to global perspective. Its greatest strengths are its geographic and disciplinary breadth, its willingness to situate AI within structures of labour, power, and equity, and its modular accessibility for a wide range of readers.

On that measure, this handbook is essential reading for any scholar or practitioner seeking to navigate AI's transformative impact on higher education with both rigour and nuance. Ultimately, the Handbook is a reminder that the most important questions about AI in education are not technical, but political, ethical, and profoundly human.

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