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BETWEEN USE AND RESISTANCE: PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' ENGAGEMENT WITH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AT A SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This article reports on a qualitative case study examining pre-service teachers' engagement with generative artificial intelligence (AI) and academic integrity at a South African university during a period of institutional policy transition. Fifteen Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students participated in an open-ended questionnaire and a focus group discussion exploring their use of AI in university coursework and their perceptions of learners' AI use during teaching practice. Data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Findings reveal a persistent tension: while participants relied on AI for clarity, efficiency, and academic support, most expressed concern about its impact on critical thinking and originality and discouraged learners from using AI for school assignments. When interpreted through transition pedagogy, these contradictions are understood not as individual ethical failure but as evidence of curriculum-embedded gaps in AI literacy. The study highlights the need for intentional, scaffolded integration of ethical and pedagogical AI literacy within teacher education programmes to align institutional policy, curriculum design, and emerging professional identities.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, higher education, teacher education, pre-service teachers, academic integrity, South Africa