Chapter 5
AI Shaming Among Teacher Education Students:
A Reflection on Acceptance and Identity in the Age of Generative Tools

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ABSTRACT

As generative AI tools become increasingly integrated into educational practice, its use among pre-service teachers is often accompanied by hesitation and discomfort. This chapter examines the phenomenon of AI shaming among teacher education students—the stigma and reluctance to disclose AI tool use due to perceived threats to academic authenticity. Drawing on classroom insights and student reflections, it explores how social norms, institutional pressures, and identity formation shape this behavior. These experiences reveal the deep tension between embracing technological innovation and maintaining traditional standards of academic merit. The chapter highlights the implications for digital literacy, professional development, and ethical technology integration. It calls for a shift in narrative, framing AI not as a shortcut but as a tool for innovation. Actionable strategies for educators and institutions are proposed to foster open, reflective, and supportive environments for responsible AI use in teacher education.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the rapid development of generative AI tools like ChatGPT, DALL·E, and Bard has begun reshaping various sectors, including education (Bozkurt et al., 2024; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). These tools, powered by advanced machine learning algorithms, can generate coherent text, realistic images, and creative content based on user input, making them invaluable for tasks ranging from ideation to conceptualization (Adetayo, 2024; da Silva & Ulbricht, 2024; Kamalov et al., 2023). For educators and students alike, generative AI offers new ways to approach problem-solving, streamline administrative tasks, and enhance creativity in learning environments (Garcia et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024). In the context of teacher education, where future educators are expected to develop both pedagogical adaptability and digital competence, the integration of AI tools represents a transformative yet controversial shift.

Despite the potential benefits of these AI tools, their adoption is not without controversy. Among students—particularly those preparing for teaching professions—there is an emerging socio-academic phenomenon known as AI shaming. This concept refers to the reluctance or embarrassment students feel when admitting to using AI tools, stemming from fears that their reliance on such technology may be perceived as undermining their creativity, critical thinking, or academic integrity (Acut et al., 2024; Garcia, 2024; Giray, 2024). As highlighted in recent studies, AI shaming reflects internalized stigma around perceived "inauthentic" digital labor, and is particularly prevalent among students who feel pressure to conform to traditional notions of academic rigor and authorship (E. & A., 2024). In many cases, students may view the use of AI as a form of intellectual shortcutting, leading to a sense of guilt or shame—even when AI tools are used to support legitimate learning objectives (Zhai et al., 2024).

Such stigma surrounding AI use has deeper implications beyond personal discomfort; it can shape how future educators relate to emerging technologies in their professional lives. AI shaming may deter students from fully exploring the capabilities of these tools, limiting their potential to develop essential digital literacy and technological fluency—skills that are increasingly critical for success in the 21st-century workforce (Gantalao et al., 2025; Walter, 2024). This concern is particularly urgent in teacher education programs, where students are not only learning content but also internalizing beliefs and practices they will later model in classrooms. If teacher candidates feel shame or fear regarding AI use, they may resist integrating these tools into their future pedagogical practices—thereby perpetuating outdated norms around technology avoidance or resistance (Akgun & Greenhow, 2021). This not only undermines their development as digitally competent educators but also sustains a cycle of discomfort and silence around technological integration that could otherwise enhance learning.

The concept of AI shaming intersects with broader discussions of digital identity, educational authenticity, and professional development. Research suggests that students' attitudes toward technology are heavily influenced by their perceptions of what constitutes "real" or "legitimate" work (Wu et al., 2022). When students believe that using AI diminishes their intellectual efforts, they may experience a dissonance between their self-concept as capable learners and societal expectations for originality. As highlighted by Khlaif et al. (2022), such internal conflict can have long-term effects on how teacher candidates view their role in the classroom and their comfort level with integrating emerging technologies.

Hence, this chapter explores the lived realities, social narratives, and institutional conditions that contribute to AI shaming in teacher education. It also aims to provide a framework and practical strategies for educators and institutions to shift from a punitive culture of shame to one of responsible engagement, transparency, and digital empowerment. By addressing AI shaming head-on, we aim to