

Chapter # 16

REFLECTIONS IN ACCELERATION: How GenAI Technologies Impact Educational Practice

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ABSTRACT

In an accelerating world where generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) significantly influences the daily operations of education, it is pertinent to discuss how this format can be integrated to balance and support students in working reflectively with the complex array of available knowledge and its interconnections. This chapter will explore the future of education through the lens of reflective practice learning, proposing how higher education can be reimagined to embrace GenAI as an opportunity to develop reflective competence. The discussion is grounded in Hartmut Rosa's (2021) mapping of the accelerating society, Donald Schön's work on reflection and learning (1991; 1990), and Hannah Arendt's elaboration on professional judgment. The chapter argues that future education must increasingly support the development of students' ability to learn how to learn and their capacity to critically reflect in their qualification of actions.

Keywords: reflection, learning, professional judgment, higher education, technology.

1. INTRODUCTION

The advent of GenAI in education marks a significant shift in the landscape of teaching and learning. GenAI's capacity to create original content, as defined by Gao, López-Pérez, Melero-Polo, and Trifu (2024), demonstrates a potential for both enriching and complicating educational practices. GenAI refers to systems that can create new, original content such as images, text, video, or music by learning patterns from existing data. Danish policy document highlights the need to adopt these new technologies and accelerate the speed of technological development and implementations to increase productivity and rethink workflow (Vestergaard, 2021). Thus, higher education is facing disruption created by generative AI, challenging existing teaching and learning practices and pedagogical values, while simultaneously adding promising resources. On the one hand, GenAI can transform education by opening new avenues for creativity, personalization, and access to knowledge by providing endless opportunities for adjustable knowledge. Yet it also introduces new demands on students and educators to navigate ethical considerations, critical judgment, and the potential impact of accelerated technology on human experience (Upadhyaya & Vrinda, 2021). According to Gao et al. (2024), GenAI is already transforming our education system by giving students the opportunity to condense knowledge and get help with writing processes through formulations and condensations of texts, etc. This places new demands not only on educators but also on students. Using GenAI in education requires both students and educators to develop critical reflection and judgment to evaluate information from GenAI. This includes consideration of ethical and moral issues. Students need to be able to assess the reliability and relevance of information in their learning processes. However, some students face technostress characterized by invasion, overload, complexity, uncertainty, and insecurity

in relation to the technological competence demands and demand for productivity, which can be seen as a part of the accelerating society (Rosa, 2021).

Reflection, judgment, and ethical awareness are essential skills in a world transformed by GenAI and rapid technological advancements, as they enable students to navigate the increasing complexity of knowledge. GenAI introduces an increased amount of information and new ways of interacting with knowledge, yet it also brings challenges around reliability, relevance, and ethical considerations.

It is, therefore, important that the student develops both professional judgment on a practical level as well as an ethical and reflective awareness on a metacognitive level. Arendt addresses this duality in her work on the human condition (1963) through the concept of *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*. *Vita activa* centers on interactions and is an action-oriented judgment between people that creates new beginnings and shapes society. In an educational context, *vita activa* refers to the social dimension of learning—debates, discussions, and collaboration among students and educators where technological acceleration and societal disruptions from GenAI can either enhance or reduce human interaction and actions (Arendt, 1963). The concept of *vita contemplativa* is opposite to *vita activa* as it focuses on thinking and reflection as an inner process of thought aimed at understanding deeper truths and philosophical insights (Arendt, 1958; Arendt, 1963).

In times of continuous accelerations and disruptions, when it comes to emerging technologies, advantages in knowledge production, and changes in society, it becomes essential to look at how new technologies change the learning processes and the duality of *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* (Biesta, 2021; Rosa 2021). Contemporary studies on educational practice address these perspectives and point to the need to foster a critical reflection among higher education students in relation to AI (e.g., McGuire, 2023, Walter, 2024; Oliveira, 2024). To address the challenges posed by rapid technological acceleration and societal disruptions from GenAI, this chapter draws on a pedagogical approach rooted in reflective practice-based learning (RPL). RPL is an educational model rooted in experience-based, pragmatic philosophies, drawing on thinkers such as Schön and Dewey (Dewey 1938; Horn et al., 2020; Bundgaard, 2024). By developing reflection, critical judgment, and ethical awareness through RPL, students are better prepared to engage meaningfully in their educational and professional landscapes, enabling them to thrive in rapidly evolving, ethically complex environments.

This brings us to the central research question of this chapter, which aims to investigate how reflective practice and professional judgment can contribute to sustainable and qualified learning processes in an accelerating digital society. As GenAI continues to reshape both the tools and methods of learning, educational practices must evolve to foster critical reflection and professional judgment among students, enabling them to navigate the ethical and cognitive challenges introduced by new technologies. By examining these themes through the framework of RPL, this chapter seeks to address the dual objectives of equipping students with reflective skills while fostering an ethically grounded educational environment.

How can reflective practice and professional judgment enhance sustainable and qualified educational practices in the context of an accelerating digital society influenced by generative artificial intelligence?

This question allows for an exploration of how reflective practice and professional judgment not only foster critical skills necessary for navigating the complexities of GenAI in education but also contribute to developing sustainable educational practices that adapt to the rapidly changing digital landscape.

2. REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AND PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT

Arendt's ideas highlight the need for both active engagement and reflective thought within education, framing the discussion around how students can navigate accelerated technological and social changes. Schön's concept of reflective practice complements Arendt's framework by providing practical tools for developing judgment, adaptability, and critical reflection within the *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*. Schön defines reflection as a critical process for professionals to improve their practice by combining experience, thinking, and action, and divides reflection into two types of reflection: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Schön, 1991). By incorporating Schön's idea of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, this section explores how students can meaningfully bridge theory and practice and enhance their capacity to act thoughtfully to AI-generated content. Schön's model thus fills out Arendt's framework, adding a structured approach for fostering critical thinking and ethical awareness that enables students to engage deeply with their learning processes and respond with professional judgment to ongoing change.

2.1. Reflection-In- and On-Action

When trying to qualify judgment and create stepping stones for lifelong learning within higher education, it is relevant to become aware of how this can be supported through education. To work with students' awareness of their own learning and development, Donald Schön's concept of *deutero-learning*, which emphasizes the importance of learning to learn, is introduced. In higher education, this concept brings a metacognitive focus on the ability to improve one's own learning process through reflection (Schön, 1991). From this perspective, higher education must not only focus on the knowledge base of the profession but also work with a didactic framework that helps students learn to reflect and become curious about their own ways of learning. Here, the combination of theoretical thinking and practical action, which can be approached through reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, is essential. By working with the temporal displacement of the relationship between action and reflection, it is possible to adapt and qualify actions. This process opens the exploration of professional practice through actions involving experimentation and improvisation, which supports critical reflection on the given profession. Thus, reflection from this understanding opens for the development and deeper understanding of practice (Schön, 1990). These elements combine to create an educational model that not only focuses on transferring knowledge but also on developing students' ability to think critically and reflect on their own practice.

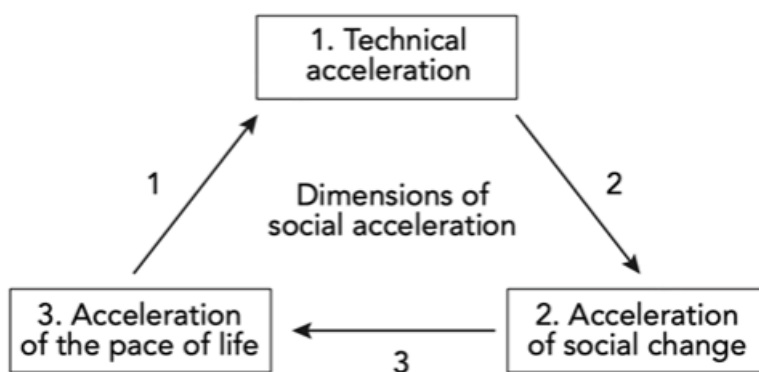
In the highly accelerated society characterized by high complexity and rapid change, it perhaps makes more sense than ever to incorporate reflection as an opportunity to give actions and experiences space. Schön's perspective on reflection is based on the idea that the education of professionals must emulate and reflect creative learning environments where students work closely with professional practitioners. Furthermore, higher education must support social learning communities where students can share experiences and learn from each other's questions (Schön, 1990).

2.2. The Accelerating Society

When we connect these concepts to Hartmut Rosa's resonance theory, which focuses on the quality of relationships and experiences in our lives, we can see how reflection and resonance can enrich each other (Rosa, 2021). Resonance involves a deep connection and mutual influence between the individual and the world, which can foster more meaningful reflection and thus deeper learning.

For the future of professional education, the integration of Schön's and Rosa's theories is crucial. By promoting a resonant practice where RPL is a central element, educational programs can create learning environments that support continuous development and adaptation. This will not only enhance students' professional competencies but also their ability to navigate and thrive in a complex and ever-changing world. Rosa (2013, p. 97) stresses that human beings in the world have fundamentally changed due to technological acceleration, coupled with an eagerness to accelerate profit and capitalism, making time akin to money (*ibid.*, p. 309). Rosa (2013, p. 156) illustrates the interplay between technical acceleration, acceleration of social change, and acceleration of the pace of life as dimensions of social acceleration, illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1.
The interplay between dimensions of social acceleration, retrieved from Rosa (2013, p. 153).



Students in higher education face the pressure of performing well to meet the expectations of society and thus their own ambitions. Higher education becomes subject to these pressures, and students' academic life at the campus has become an arena for these accelerations (Zapp, Marques, & Powell, 2021), aiming at producing skilled work-ready graduates. The focus on producing skilled, work-ready graduates places students in an environment that often mirrors the rapid pace of technological, social, and cultural change. In the following, the above model will serve as a guideline for insights into higher education from the perspective of reflective practice, combined with Schön's perspectives on educating the reflective practitioner as a socially conditioned process. This pressure underscores the importance of Schön's perspective on educating the reflective practitioner. His approach views reflection as a socially conditioned process, emphasizing the integration of theory and practice through critical reflection.

2.3. The Role of Technology

The rapid evolution of technology over the past 30 years is unmatched in human history. This evolution has increased demands on the workforce, reshaping the educational landscape. Workers are now expected to navigate complex, rapidly changing technological environments, making lifelong learning and skill acquisition essential. Educational systems must adapt to these realities by preparing students not only with foundational knowledge but also with the ability to continuously learn and remain relevant in their fields.

By situating Schön's reflective practice within Rosa's framework of resonance and social acceleration, we can better understand how to address these challenges. The increasing complexity of the modern world demands an education system that fosters reflection, critical thinking, and adaptability—skills that are vital for navigating the accelerated pace of contemporary life. Integrating Schön's and Rosa's theories offers a pathway to develop professional education programs that align with the demands of an accelerating society. This approach focuses on reflection as an opportunity to explore the combination of theory and practice and to engage in critical reflection.

3. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

According to Rosa (2021), society's acceleration processes and performance pressures can cause individuals to feel alienated. The technological acceleration through GenAI can lead to a feeling of alienation. When technology takes over tasks that previously required human thinking and critical reflection, students may feel that they lose the ability to analyze and understand complex issues and reflect on their own actions. The alienation in education through GenAI thus points to a need for a balance between technological use and human judgment to maintain a meaningful and engaging learning process. The use of GenAI as part of education can create a sense of alienation for the individual, leaving them feeling detached from the world and themselves. To meet the challenges of the 21st century, students need to be empowered and feel that they can help create a world of well-being and sustainability—both for themselves and for others (OECD, 2023). It is therefore necessary to support a sense of resonance by ensuring that GenAI is used to support, rather than replace, meaningful relationships between educators and students.

If we consider GenAI as an opportunity for practice and reflection, we position it as a chance for further exploration of specific theories or ideals within the profession, or as an additional qualification and exploration of concrete courses of action (Schön, 1990). In this context, GenAI can serve to combine complex forms of knowledge, which imposes new demands on students to be critically reflective and evaluative. Adopting this perspective places different demands on educators' work with learning, and it opens a broader view of students' ability to reflect on how they arrived at their results or how they, by examining practical dilemmas, combine theory as a basis for qualifying actions. Thus, the technical acceleration is seen as an opportunity to delve into the evaluative and reflective aspects rather than the acquisition process, which has been the focal point of taxonomic thinking and evaluation of learning that dominates education worldwide (e.g., Biggs & Collis, 1982).

If we focus on the acceleration of societal change as a way of approaching the understanding of future higher education, it will in this context necessitate a dynamic relationship between theory and practice, where experiential learning tests and refines theoretical frameworks, ensuring that both remain relevant and responsive to evolving societal contexts. Again, this perspective demands a focus on how we incorporate space for reflection and professional judgment within the didactical frameworks as well as in the assessment of the students learning. The acceleration of social change compels critical thinking to adapt theoretical frameworks to new realities, ensuring that theory effectively informs practice in response to rapidly evolving societal dynamics.

3.1. Reflection-in-Action in Vita Activa

Schön's perspective on reflection is based on the idea that the education of professionals must emulate and reflect creative learning environments where students work closely with professional practitioners. Vita activa concerns interactions among people that

create new beginnings and shape society through different kinds of action. It involves the development of knowledge and skills that endure over time. *Vita activa* refers to the daily academic task students perform to maintain their learning and understanding. GenAI here can be seen as a tool that streamlines and automatizes routine tasks, such as by performing quick information searches, text rephrasing and summarization, or automating repetitive learning activities. In the highly accelerated society based on GenAI, students need to incorporate reflection-in-action to develop knowledge, theories, or products that have lasting significance and contribute to a broader intellectual or cultural landscape based on these daily academic routine tasks. This could be a well-developed analysis, thorough research, or a creative solution to a complex problem. In this process, AI can serve as a valuable tool, assisting students in refining their work by organizing and analyzing large amounts of data and literature that would otherwise demand significant resources and time.

Schön's perspective on reflection is based on the idea that the education of professionals must emulate and reflect creative learning environments where students work closely with professional practitioners. Furthermore, higher education must support social learning communities where students can share experiences and learn from each other's questions (Schön, 1990). Debates, discussions, and collaboration among students and educators are a part of *vita activa*.

Action in *vita activa* is tied to freedom and individuality as it is through social learning communities that people reveal their unique identities and contribute to the public sphere with knowledge, products, or thoughts (Arendt, 1963; Yarbrough & Stern, 1981). GenAI can enhance these social learning communities by promoting new forms of collaboration and idea exchange through digital platforms. On the other hand, an excessive reliance on GenAI may reduce human interaction and thus weaken the unique element of a shared human reflection-in-action (Arendt, 1963). When we connect these perspectives to Hartmut Rosa's resonance theory, which focuses on the quality of relationships and experiences in our lives, we can see how reflection and resonance can enrich each other in *vita activa* (Rosa, 2021). Resonance involves a deep connection and mutual influence between the individual and the world, which can foster more meaningful reflection and thus deeper learning. Through professional judgment, it is essential to ensure that technology acts as a tool for intellectual and personal growth rather than replacing critical thinking and creativity. By fostering reflection-in-action and embedding it within social learning communities, education systems can support students in navigating the complexities of accelerated digital environments while preserving the freedom, individuality, and meaningful engagement central to Arendt's *vita activa*.

3.2. Temporal Displacement in Vita Contemplativa

Technological acceleration and societal disruptions from GenAI have the potential to support the contemplative life by providing students with more time for deeper reflection when certain learning processes are automated. However, there is a risk that these technologies might replace or diminish the necessary human reflection if students rely too heavily on technology to perform tasks without critically engaging with the material themselves. This could lead to a superficial understanding of academic content, reducing the contemplative element in learning (Arendt, 2005; Yarbrough & Stern, 1981). These tendencies call for attention to the pedagogical practice in higher education and how it becomes necessary to not only focus on the knowledge base of the profession but also work with a didactic framework that helps students learn to reflect and become curious about their own ways of learning. Here, the combination of theoretical thinking in *vita contemplativa*

and practical action in *vita activa* can be approached through Schön's notion of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action.

By working with the temporal displacement of the relationship between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, it is possible to adapt and qualify the student learning process within *vita contemplativa* and to support the development of a reflective mindset that supports the balance in the acceleration of the pace of life. If GenAI supports the student in routine tasks and daily academic tasks, it will free up time and mental resources that can be used to create a temporal displacement in the student learning process. Thus, the use of GenAI becomes the tool for strengthening *vita contemplativa* with the purpose of reaching deeper learning where students not only complete tasks but also reflect on their significance, ask questions, and explore complex theoretical issues. With this understanding, it is important that pedagogical considerations aim to create a balance between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*. The introduction of GenAI in the educational sector can thus be viewed as an opportunity to revitalize the contemplative life in academic settings, by recognizing and utilizing GenAI's potential to ease the workload and promote deeper reflection.

4. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The advent of GenAI in education marks a significant shift in the landscape of teaching and learning where the goal is to maintain an educational model that not only focuses on transferring knowledge but also develops students' ability to think critically and reflect to develop a nuanced understanding of their field. Additionally, value-based perspectives on how algorithms and AI-created experiences transform teaching and student learning processes are relevant and need to be addressed in future empirical research. By establishing a trust-based alignment of expectations for AI use, a more authentic learning experience can be promoted. Furthermore, transparency plays a key role in building trust between students and educators in relation to the use of GenAI.

Applying different theoretical perspectives adds a nuanced understanding of how reflective practice and professional judgment enhance sustainable and qualified educational practices in the context of an accelerating digital society influenced by generative artificial intelligence.

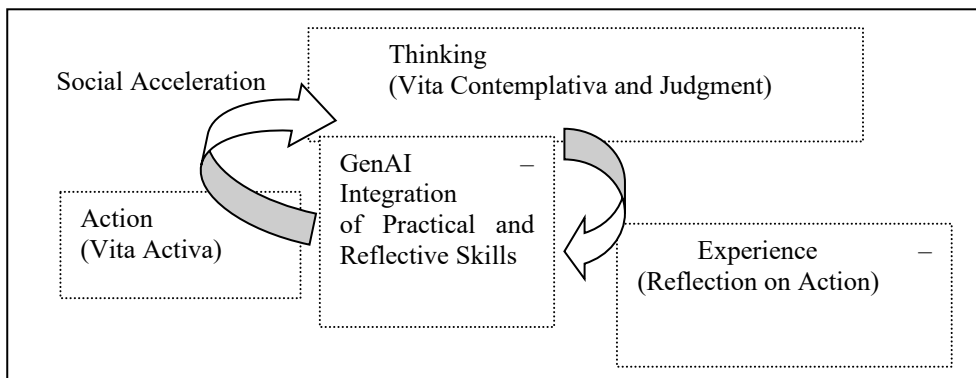
- **Reflective Practice:** Emphasizes the need for students to engage in reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action to bridge theory and practice, enhancing their capacity to act thoughtfully in response to AI-generated content
- **Professional Judgment:** Highlights the importance of developing students' ability to critically evaluate and ethically engage with information provided by GenAI
- **Social Acceleration:** Discusses the pressures of technological and social acceleration on students and the need for educational practices that support meaningful reflection and resonance
- **Vita activa and vita contemplativa:** Explores the balance between action-oriented learning (*vita activa*) and reflective, contemplative learning (*vita contemplativa*) in the context of GenAI

This chapter thus argues that it is important to understand how AI-based teaching becomes a balance between practical, often routine tasks and deeper reflection. When students use GenAI to handle routine tasks such as information retrieval, text reformulation, and data analysis, it frees up time and mental resources, allowing them to engage in reflection and critical thinking. Thus, GenAI can be the means to create a reflective space where the

students can delve more deeply into the contemplative side of learning. In this way of thinking, AI becomes not only a tool for easing the workload in *vita activa* but also a support for *vita contemplativa*. This balance between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* emphasizes the importance of educational institutions focusing not only on productive work but also on creating opportunities for reflection and deeper understanding. In this context, AI's role is not only to optimize practical tasks but also to support a deeper intellectual engagement, which places demands on the didactic framework for AI usage. The findings highlight the importance of integrating GenAI in education to balance and support students in developing critical reflection and ethical awareness. The study draws on Hartmut Rosa's theory of social acceleration, Donald Schön's reflective practice, and Hannah Arendt's concepts of *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* to propose a pedagogical framework that fosters both practical and reflective skills.

Based on the findings from the discussion, a framework for sustainable educational practice has been developed to support higher education in embracing new technologies and combining experience, thinking, and actions inspired by the foundation of RPL. Figure 2 below illustrates how technologies such as generative AI must be embraced but also in the interplay between testing it out (action), professional judgment of the use of gen AI and the ethical implications (thinking) and reflection on the experience gained through actions (experience). The integration of practical and reflective skills must be added to give students the ability to gain AI literacy skills based on experimentation, testing, thinking experiences, and experiences, thereby allowing them to embrace the technology in a proper manner despite the different dimensions of social acceleration.

Figure 2.
A conceptual framework for sustainable and qualified educational practices when integrating reflective and practical skills in embracing generative AI.



The framework illustrated in Figure 2 can act as a foundation for working with any technological or practical disruption in higher education, replacing the content of matter in the middle of the figure. The conceptual framework also illustrates the need for both thinking and action and prior experience in interplay, meaning that only embracing one of the dimensions will not be sufficient in meeting the need for proper and ethical navigation in a society under continuous technological and social acceleration.

However, further empirical studies are needed to support the evidence of the conceptual framework in different higher educations.

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