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Faster, better, yet less useful?

Evidence from a GenAI pilot with 159 higher education staff

By Dr. Manika Garg (The Hague University of Applied Sciences)

Many decisions about EdTech in education are based on enthusiasm, vendor claims or first impressions. In this session, Manika shares what happened when The Hague University of Applied Sciences tested a generative AI platform with teachers, researchers and support staff, and measured the effects instead of assuming them. She will present the main insights from the Pilot GenAI project and discuss what they mean for how we evaluate EdTech: which evidence counts, why user perceptions and measured outcomes can tell different stories, and how teachers and researchers can build stronger evidence into their own practice.

Background information:

Generative AI is quickly finding its way into teaching, research and support work in higher education. Most studies on its value rely on one-off self-reports, and little is known about what actually changes once staff use these tools in their daily work. In the Pilot GenAI project, 159 staff members of The Hague University of Applied Sciences used an institutional GenAI platform for four weeks. The study combined surveys, interviews and a randomized controlled trial in which staff completed a work task with or without GenAI support.

The results show a clear gap between performance and perception. Staff with GenAI support completed tasks faster, and their outputs received higher quality ratings from automated evaluators. At the same time, staff rated GenAI as less useful after four weeks of use, because they became more aware of its limitations and of the effort needed to check its output. Researchers showed the largest productivity gains, and support staff the sharpest drop in perceived usefulness. These findings show why EdTech decisions need evidence that goes beyond early user impressions, and why conditions such as digital literacy, task fit and domain-specific support matter for adoption.

Pilot GenAI: <https://www.thu.nl/research/centre-expertise/pilot-genai>