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RESEARCH

Finishing Each Other's Futures: Collaborative Education Fiction Writing as Postdigital Inquiry into AI and Education

Iosif Gidiotis[1] · Roaa Al Ghadban[2,3] · Imen Boujmil[3] · Anneli Lorenz[4] · Roger J. Young[5]

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Abstract

This article presents a collaborative speculative writing exercise in which international educators and researchers imagined the future of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in education through three fictional scenarios. The exercise employed a relay structure: one participant began each story, and a different participant completed it. After the stories were finished, all participants read the scenarios they had not written and responded to a set of reflective questions. We treat the resulting scenarios and reflections as a qualitative, multi-voiced dataset and read them through a light analytical framework centred on postdigital temporality, relay discontinuity and recurring thematic tensions. The scenarios explore a GenAI-free Reset Day in a corporate training centre, a family navigating educational choices with the help of a GenAI assistant, and an underground school resisting a fully automated world. Situated within the postdigital condition, the article engages education fiction as a mode of collective inquiry that enacts the entanglement of human and technological agency it seeks to explore. The relay handoff introduced productive friction, and the reflections surfaced recurring questions about dependency, listening, measurement and the difficulty of translating situated, story-based imaginaries into policy recommendations. The contribution is both methodological, in theorising relay-based education fiction writing, and analytical, in showing how familiar postdigital concerns are reassembled through collaborative fictional handoffs.

Keywords Education fiction · Postdigital · Artificial intelligence in education · Collaborative writing

Extended author information available on the last page of the article

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Imagining Together

Education researchers are increasingly turning to speculative fiction as a method for engaging with possible futures. This turn is driven by a recognition that the act of imagining, of constructing scenarios that do not yet exist, is itself a form of inquiry into what we value, fear and take for granted about teaching and learning (Ross 2017; Selwyn et al. 2020). In a moment when Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping educational discourse at a pace quicker than our collective capacity to make sense of it, the need for such imaginative work feels particularly relevant. In the article, the term Artificial Intelligence is understood as the example of an underlying technology powering learning analytics dashboards or intelligent operations of learning management systems (Gidiotis 2026), while Generative AI (GenAI) relates more to the everyday use of chatbots or similar generative tools that teachers or students encounter in their everyday tasks. The article usually retains AI as a vernacular umbrella, but the analytical prose uses GenAI where the reference is to conversational or generative systems.

Speculative fiction in education research has taken various forms. Selwyn et al. (2020) imagined what a school might look like in 2030, using vignettes to explore the realities of datafied education. Macgilchrist et al. (2020) wrote three speculative 'histories' set in 2040, each tracing a different sociotechnical trajectory for students and society. Teräs et al. (2022) presented the digitalisation of higher education as a six-act classical tragedy. Suoranta et al. (2022) combined future workshops with empathy-based stories to explore how teachers imagine digital futures.

More recently, Hrastinski (2024) has called for fiction as a legitimate method in higher education research, distinguishing between informed fiction (grounded in empirical data or professional experience) and purely speculative fiction, which imagines what could be in freer and more creative ways. As Hrastinski (2025) argues, all education fiction exists on a spectrum between these poles, and the creative latitude of the speculative end is a feature, not a limitation. Recent GenAI-centred examples extend this trajectory: Pastore (2025) unpacks the sociotechnical imaginary of an Artificial Intelligence in Education (AIED) classroom, while Lindell and Stöhr (2025) use near-future scenarios to explore GenAI in higher education.

Within the postdigital (publishing) tradition, this line of work also has a more specific genealogy in postdigital fiction and speculation. Hrastinski and Jandrić (2023) frame researchers as fiction authors, while Hrastinski (2024) describes postdigital fiction as a way of conducting and presenting research into education futures; Ross (2023) similarly treats postdigital speculation as processual, emergent and experimental. A collection of education futures stories (Hrastinski and Jandrić 2023), including fictional commentaries such as Curcher's (2023) 'The Pseudo Uni', shows that speculative fiction is already part of postdigital inquiry rather than an external borrowing. Our relay design extends this tradition by distributing authorship across handoffs rather than locating the future scenario in one authorial voice.

Much speculative education fiction to date has been written by individual researchers or small research teams (Hrastinski 2023), and recent reviews suggest that the resulting stories, while valuable, tend to illustrate or extend rather

than fundamentally challenge established ideas about the future of AI in education (Gidiotis and Hrastinski 2024). Even though it is not suggested that previous work has been exclusively solitary or uncollaborative (many studies draw on workshops, empirical materials or multiple authors), a point can be made that fictional scenarios found in the literature are often drafted and then analysed by single authors. There are, of course, exceptions: Suoranta et al. (2022) asked teachers to write empathy-based stories, and Teräs et al. (2023) engaged student teachers in imagining digitalised futures. The dominant mode nevertheless remains one in which researchers write the fiction and then analyse it or present it as a provocation for discussion. Less prevalent in the literature are distributed acts of speculative writing in which multiple authors from different professional contexts, countries or disciplinary traditions sequentially co-create stories they could not have written in the same way alone.

This article responds to that gap by asking these questions: (1) What kinds of GenAI-in-education futures emerge when speculative education fiction is written through relay rather than by a single author? (2) How do participants reflect stories that they did not write, but that were produced by collaborators who inherited and redirected each other's fictional worlds? The two questions serve as organisational blocks for how this paper presents its contribution, which is deliberately modest but twofold. The contribution is methodological, in experimenting with relay-based collaborative fiction writing as a form of postdigital inquiry; and analytical, in showing how this method recomposes established concerns in the GenAI and postdigital education literature through multi-voiced fiction handoffs.

To explore these questions, we, a group of five educators, researchers and practitioners based in four countries, engaged in a collaborative speculative writing exercise about the future of (Gen)AI in education. The exercise was structured around a logic of relay or chain writing (Madeira 2015): one participant began a story from a given prompt, and a different participant, who had no involvement in the opening, was asked to continue and complete it. After the stories were finished, all participants read the scenarios they had not written and responded to a set of reflective questions. The resulting texts (the scenarios and the reflections together) form the basis for this article.

This design draws on, and extends, several established approaches. The relay structure adapts the Method of Empathy-Based Stories (MEBS), developed by Wallin et al. (2019) and applied to education futures by Teräs et al. (2023), in which participants write freely from a structured prompt. In our variant, the prompt serves both as a textual frame and as a half-written situation in a world created by someone else, which the second writer must inhabit and extend. The collective reading-and-reflecting phase draws on the tradition of collective writing that has been developed extensively within the postdigital community, where individual voices contribute to a shared text without being homogenised into a single argument, as described by Jandrić et al. (2023a, b, c). The scenarios themselves participate in the growing body of education fiction that uses speculative storytelling to explore *what could be*, rather than reporting on *what is* (Houlden and Veletsianos 2022; Hrastinski 2024; Ross 2025).

The article is broadly situated within the postdigital condition, viewed as the messy, ongoing entanglement of digital technologies with human practices, identities and institutions (Jandrić et al. 2018). We engage the postdigital as both a topic in the backdrop of speculation and a mode of inquiry. Our collaborative scenarios imagine education futures where AI, and often GenAI, is neither separate from nor reducible to human agency. The Reset Day framing, for example, explores what is revealed when the sociotechnical fabric of education is temporarily torn. The family-based scenario traces how a GenAI conversation facilitates a human insight that institutional systems had failed to produce. The underground school scenario asks what forms of knowing become invisible when efficiency becomes the governing logic of learning. In each case, the digital and the non-digital are entangled rather than opposed: this is not a set of stories about technology versus humanity, but about the postdigital condition as it is lived, negotiated and resisted. In this sense, the stories also align with recent postdigital AI literacy work in which agency and authorship are treated as more-than-digital relations co-produced across human and machine activity rather than as properties held by either side alone (Jiang et al. 2024).

The temporal framing of the stories also matters. Following Lindberg and Johansson (2023), we acknowledge that postdigital education futures are operating across several temporalities, including futures in the present, near futures, far futures and alternative futures. The three scenarios in this article deliberately occupy different points on that continuum. The Kitchen Table story is closest to a future-in-the-present or near future, because AI-supported guidance already feels recognisable. Reset Day is a near-future interruption that makes present dependencies visible. The Glitch moves toward a far or alternative future in which automation has hardened into educational infrastructure. This range helps clarify that education fiction need not always be distant futurism; it can also estrange or inspire from the present.

Postdigital futures work therefore treats imagination as political rather than focusing on its descriptive or exploratory function. Recent postdigital (re)imagination scholarship argues that education futures are not simply to be anticipated or predicted, but collectively imagined and actively shaped through critique, method and intervention (Jandrić et al. 2025; Suoranta et al. 2024). This matters for the present article because the relay stories both ask what GenAI might do to education and who gets to imagine education futures, whose forms of knowing become system-legible, and how imaginaries might be carried into policy, practice or refusal.

This article also relates to discussions of postdigital research praxis and scholarly knowledge (Jandrić and Forsler 2026). Forsler and Jandrić directly oppose the traditional view that the scholarly article as we know it can encompass all forms of new knowledge production. This agrees with the way speculative work has been implemented in (published) education research, often challenging the strict layout or content conventions of mainstream publishing. When it comes to collective work, collective imagination and reflection have been taken up and experimented with by the postdigital community (Jandrić et al. 2023a), allowing authors to further push the boundaries of traditional academic publishing and, with that, the boundaries of what is traditionally seen as communication and/or production of knowledge. By collaboratively producing an unusual form of knowledge (such as collective insights

based on imagination) which then finds its home in the usual place (such as an academic journal), we help push those boundaries and perhaps help expand the space for experimentation within academic publishing (Jandrić and Forsler 2026), a point which has been taken elsewhere as well (Horvath et al. 2026).

Our method, too, then, is postdigital in practice. We wrote across countries using shared digital documents, handed off half-finished fictional worlds, and reflected asynchronously on each other's imaginaries. The writing process enacted the kind of distributed, platform-mediated, yet deeply human meaning-making that characterises postdigital knowledge work. And this article itself performs postdigital academic writing by refusing clean separations between fiction and analysis, between individual voice and collective text, between creative speculation and scholarly discussion (Jandrić and Forsler 2026; Jandrić et al. 2023a).

Another important acknowledgement for the current moment of writing and publishing includes a consideration of GenAI. A mandatory statement is included towards the end of this article with regard to the use (or not) of GenAI during writing or revising this work, but it is also important to devote a few more words to how this has informed our writing experiment (Jandrić 2026). When we embarked on this writing journey, the authors of this article agreed that *no* GenAI interference would prevent our voices from being heard in the original fictional scenarios included here. The only exception was the translation of single passages with the assistance of traditional or GenAI-enabled translation services, which are commonly found on the web. This meant that our views and opinions, masked by fictional accounts of imaginary characters, would shine through the scenarios. We (as authors, or researchers in general) could give a lot up to GenAI, but if we were also to give our imagination away, what would be left?

Below, we offer three scenarios and their accompanying reflections as provocations and sites of collective meaning-making about GenAI in education that resist the temptations of uncritical optimism and paralysing dystopia. Reading Houlden and Veletsianos (2022), who have argued that speculative education fiction needs to move beyond pessimistic visions toward more hopeful and generative futures, our scenarios attempt to sit in the more ambiguous space between: futures that are neither utopian nor dystopian, but that surface real tensions and open real questions, leaving important room for reflection.

How We Wrote

The exercise began with a shared document containing a set of starting points: a brief timeline of possible AI and GenAI developments in education stretching from the present day to an unspecified future, intended as loose scaffolding that the collaborators could draw on, adapt or ignore. The first author, who initiated this collaborative effort, divided the other authors into the three thematic squads, after they had ranked their writing and thematic preferences in the first stages of communication for this project. Each writing squad corresponded to a different perspective on AI and GenAI in education: pedagogy and practice (*the frontline*), the student and family experience (*the lived experience*) and critical resistance (*the glitch*). A fourth

squad (*policy*) was planned but ultimately could not be completed, a fact we return to in our closing reflections.

Each squad received two or three writing prompts as suggestions from the first author. These were designed to be evocative rather than prescriptive, allowing the author of the first half of each squad to 'set the tone' for what will follow. The pedagogy squad, for instance, chose Reset Day, a distinctive future 24-h period without GenAI. The student squad focused on a prompt centred on a family conversation about educational choices. The resistance squad started with an underground school in a world where traditional teaching had been largely replaced.

We use collaborative writing as an umbrella term, but the specific procedure used here was relay writing. In some collaborative (academic) writing, responsibility for planning, drafting, revising and editing is shared throughout the whole process. In a relay design, by contrast, collaboration is sequential and asymmetric: the second writer does not co-plan the opening, but receives an unfinished text as a constraint, provocation and invitation. This distinction is methodologically important within education fiction because the relay creates inherited interpretive freedom. The second writer must decide what to preserve, what to redirect and what to leave unresolved.

This adaptation extends the Method of Empathy-Based Stories (MEBS). In MEBS, participants respond imaginatively to a frame story or prompt, enabling researchers to examine expectations, assumptions, values and affective orientations around a situation (Wallin et al. 2019). Our variant keeps the prompt-based and empathy-oriented logic, but changes the status of the generated text: the first response becomes the second writer's prompt. This makes the method less a collection of parallel individual stories and more a chain of interpretive decisions. It is this chain that sets this contribution apart from most published education fiction at the moment.

The writing parameters were intentionally sparse. Contributors were asked to write one part of a complete scenario and then hand it to the next writer, but were not given instructions about tone, ending, genre or argument. Loose instructions about length were provided (with the traditional journal article scope in mind), but these were not prioritised over creative freedom.

After all three scenarios were completed, they were shared with the full group. Each participant was asked to read the stories they had not written and respond in writing to four reflective questions: How does the imagined situation make you feel about your current role and the future of education? What aspects of the story did you empathise with or recognise as familiar? What ethical implications or pedagogical insights can be drawn? And what policy recommendations would you give after reading this story? The inclusion of a policy question was deliberate; given the failure of the policy squad due to a last-minute co-author dropout, the reflective questions served as an alternative pathway for policy thinking to enter the text through the other perspectives.

The participants who contributed to this exercise bring a range of professional positions and geographical contexts: a doctoral candidate within education futures in Sweden (IG), an education innovation researcher (IB) and a doctoral candidate within AI-enhanced gamified learning environments (RAG) in Italy, a lecturer of entrepreneurship

(AL) in Estonia, and a professor of genetics and biochemistry (RJY) from the USA. The group was geographically diverse, but we do not claim it was otherwise sociologically or professionally representative. All contributors share an academic or educational orientation and a prior interest in AI and GenAI in education, which may have shaped the futures imagined here. We therefore treat the stories as situated imaginaries produced by a particular group rather than as evidence of what educators, students, families or policy actors more generally think.

What follows are the three completed scenarios and their reflections, presented as integral components of the article. Each scenario section is introduced with a brief editorial note from the first author that draws attention to what the relay produced: tonal shifts, narrative choices or gaps between the two halves. The reflections are then treated as interpretive material through which the authors identify tensions, make sense of the scenarios through professional experience, and articulate implications. The first author has collated and lightly edited the reflections for readability while preserving each contributor's voice and perspective in the text.

Analytical Status and Reading Strategy

Analytically, we treat the scenarios and reflections as qualitative research artefacts rather than as representative accounts of a population. The knowledge claim is that these scenarios make visible how a group of educators and researchers imagine, interrupt and reinterpret postdigital education futures. This places the article in a hybrid genre: it is both a methodological experiment in education fiction and a thematic reflection on the artefacts generated by that experiment.

Our reading strategy used three sensitising lenses. First, postdigital entanglement guided attention to the ways human agency, educational institutions and digital systems appeared as co-constituted rather than separate (Jandrić et al. 2018; Knox 2019). Second, postdigital temporality guided attention to whether each story worked as a future-in-the-present, near future, far future or alternative future (Lindberg and Johansson 2023). Third, relay discontinuity guided attention to what changed at the handoff between writers: tone, scale, problem framing and implied resolution.

This third lens treats disagreement and incompletion as analytically valuable, echoing recent postdigital work that frames AI-related higher education futures as plural and unresolved rather than as problems to be closed by consensus (Rasa 2025). After the individual participant reflections, the first author loosely grouped recurring concerns into four themes: dependency and presence; listening and guidance; measurement, silence and what resists optimisation; and the difficulty of policy translation.

Squad A: The Frontline (Pedagogy and Practice)

The first half of this story, written by [RAG], builds tension through sensory detail and the physical absence of AI avatars, while the second half, written by [IB], shifts register toward recovery, suggesting that human capacity had not disappeared with the technology but had simply been waiting in standby.

[RAG] Reset Day started quietly. It was like the world was just waking up; all of a sudden there was this tiny sound. It started in the air and spread everywhere, like a soft chime.
At midnight, the avatars disappeared.
Don't worry, it's not crashed! Don't worry, it hasn't been deleted! It's like they just... disappeared!
Luckily, Maya (an educator) was still at the training centre when it happened. The room felt bigger without them. Empty corners appeared where guidance figures usually stood, waiting to speak.
On Reset Day, no AI was allowed. For twenty-four hours, learning had to happen without help, without suggestions and without the voices that usually stopped people's thoughts.
Maya opened her bag and took out some special cards. The cards were made from real paper and it got a little bit of bend at the corners. She had secretly prepared them, copying the scenarios by hand so that the system wouldn't be able to track or identify them.
When the employees arrived, they looked nervous, shaking and worried.
One man reached for the space next to him, where his avatar usually appeared. Another man said quietly: 'Mine always helps me to remember what to say.'
'I'm sorry, but it won't be the case today' replied Maya. 'Today, it's up to you.'
The exercise was straightforward and too simple. Talking about a difficult situation you have had at work, like a risk to safety, a problem with doing the right thing (ethical issues), or something you did not want to do.
No model has been loaded. There were no visible options.
People were waiting.
They were used to the avatars taking charge of the conversation, asking the first question and making sure there was always something to say. Without the avatars, the room fell silent.
Then someone laughed but they were very nervous. Another one spoke up. The story was not correct, unstructured and unfinished, it was just a mess!
Something changed.
Voices were all mixed up. There were disagreements. People tried to find the words instead of just selecting them.
Maya felt exhausted. Her training was focused on dashboards, not bodies. Now she had to read the room and understand the situation. To know when to guide and when to let things happen.
Time went on. Time seemed to go on and on.
[IB] Some employees decided to ask for a day off, each inventing a different excuse so they could go back home. The situation was so stressful that it felt like showing up to an exam completely unprepared. Maya tried to persuade them to stay. Of course, she couldn't hold them hostage or deny them the right to take leave, but she didn't want them to give up; after all, it was only a few hours.
She told them, 'I understand that we're no longer used to being without our avatars, but this isn't an exam! Think of it as a game. There's no need for per-

formance anxiety, we're just testing ourselves. Are we still able to live and work without our avatars?'
Every employee would have wanted to answer NO, but Maya's words helped them relax, and they continued the activity. It was hard to admit, but it was necessary to relearn how to think with their own minds. It was Maya's first Reset Day as an educator, and the first one experienced at the training centre by the employees as well; no one knew exactly how it would end.
Despite the scattered and at times incomprehensible stories, a slight improvement in their expression was evident. Little by little, the employees regained the confidence to express themselves and started doing so. The potential had not really disappeared with the avatars. It had remained in standby, waiting to be reactivated.

Squad B: The Lived Experience (Student and Family)

The first half, written by [AL], adopts the quick exchanges of live speech and centres on a family's frustration and circularity, while the second half, written by [IG], moves the story inward, into a quiet late-night exchange between Jordan and an AI that asks him what he does rather than what he likes.

[AL] Mother calls from the kitchen:
'Jordan, where are you! Do you know that very soon you'll have to make a decision about where you're going to study or what will become of you next?'
Jordan: 'What am I supposed to become?'
Mother: 'Do you want to live with us for the rest of your life?'
Jordan: 'Of course I don't, but I'll deal with that later. I don't have to start making choices right now — there's still half a year until I finish school.'
Father: 'You should have started thinking about this a long time ago.'
Sister: 'Do you remember how it was for me with my choices? I knew quite early which direction I wanted to go in and what I wanted to do.'
Jordan: 'Stop getting on my nerves. I know what I'm doing.'
Jordan goes to his room and slams the door.
Everyone is getting on my nerves. I don't know yet. At the same time, I like computers, I kind of like sports too, and I want to earn a lot of money so I can buy my own place. But do I want to go to work every day? Probably not. I've been to career counselling, done all kinds of tests, and I know I'm more of an independent type than a team player.
The parents and sister sit in the kitchen discussing what Jordan could do next and how to support him.
Both the parents and the sister have higher education, and of course the family has a strong wish that Jordan would make choices that help him become independent, successful, and open to opportunities in life.
Ten minutes later, Jordan comes out of his room and is ready to start a discussion.

Mother: 'What have all those counselling sessions and tests shown? Do you have any thoughts of your own already?'
Jordan: 'Well, yeah, lots of things have been done, but I haven't really gone deep into them, and no one has really talked through the results with me in a very goal-oriented way either.'
Mother (to everyone): 'Damn it — the same old story. The opportunities are there, everything has developed so much, and still there's no clear way to support a learner's journey. But okay, let's go through everything ourselves — what you've done and what answers you got.'
Father: 'Looking at the results of all those tests and questionnaires, I really don't see any reason why you couldn't consider the opportunities offered by higher education. At the same time, today the choices are so broad and good that you can actually put together something that interests you yourself. For example, you could take different courses just to understand what really speaks to you. And you can do that both from home and by choosing options where you go on site. By going in person, you get to know the real conditions and the people as well. You can expand your network and also understand how things actually work in those institutions. What do you think?'
Jordan: 'But I already see all kinds of overviews of educational institutions right now — videos, materials — there's already too much of it, and I can't get through it all. And of course everything looks great everywhere, as always. It's so hard to make a choice.'
Mother: 'We want you to get a very good education and to have good opportunities later in life, and to manage well. At the same time, you have to consider that we can't afford to pay for an overseas university. You'd have to be exceptionally good to get in and also receive a scholarship. But in your case, that seems unlikely, because studying hasn't really been a priority. What do you think yourself?'
Jordan: 'Well, yeah, but sports are my passion. Maybe we should look at what's offered in connection with that? I'll do some research and then we'll talk again.'
And he goes back to his room.
Mother and father sit in the kitchen and discuss how opportunities are expanding, but finding them — despite all technological advances — is just as difficult. Making choices, especially. Nothing has really become easier compared to 30 years ago.
[IG] Jordan sits on his bed, opens his laptop, and stares at the screen for a moment. Then, almost without thinking, he types into the chat window he has had open for weeks but barely used for anything serious: 'I like sports. I like computers. I don't know what to study. Help.'
The response comes quickly; not a list of programs, not a quiz, but a question: 'When you say you like computers, what do you mean exactly? Playing games, building things, understanding how they work, or something else?'
Jordan frowns. Nobody had asked him that before. The career counsellor at school had given him a personality test result, and told him he was 'analyti-

cally independent'. His parents had nodded at that when they had heard, like it explained something.

He types back: 'I don't know. I just… I fix stuff. My friend's laptop, my sister's phone. And I've been messing around with building a stats tracker for our football team. Nobody asked me to, I just did it.'

'That sounds like someone who solves problems they care about. Do you know what sports analytics is?'

He didn't, not really. He opens a new tab and starts reading. Twenty minutes pass. Then thirty. He finds a program, not the most prestigious university, not abroad, that combines data science with sports performance. It's three cities away. There's a student interview on YouTube, a guy who now works with a professional football club, tracking player load and injury risk.

Jordan watches it twice.

When he comes back to the kitchen, it's past ten. His parents look up, surprised he's emerged at all.

'I found something,' he says, and sits down.

His mother leans forward. His father puts down his cup.

'It's not a traditional degree,' Jordan says, almost apologetically. 'It's newer. Sports analytics. Data science combined with performance and coaching. There's a program that…'

'How did you find this?' his father asks.

Jordan hesitates. 'I just… talked it through. With the AI assistant. It asked me stuff and I started thinking differently about what I actually do, not just what I like.'

His mother is quiet for a moment. There's something complicated in her expression, relief mixed with something she can't quite name. She thinks about her own choices at 18, made in a guidance counsellor's office with a single photocopied list of approved programs. She thinks about Jordan sitting in three sessions with a school counsellor who never once asked what he built in his spare time.

'So the AI understood you better than we did?' she asks, genuinely.

'No,' Jordan says, after thinking about it. 'It just asked better questions. And I think it didn't care if the answer was weird.'

His father nods slowly. 'And what did you find out about the program? Entry requirements, costs, what kind of work you'd actually do?'

'That's what I want to go through now,' Jordan says. 'With you. But I wanted to show you these results first.'

His sister, who has been quiet in the corner with her own phone, looks up. She completed a traditional business degree four years ago, followed a clear path, and has spent the last two years wondering if she chose it or if the degree chose her.

'You know what's strange,' she says, 'is that you found this in half an hour and none of the people who should have done that ever pointed you there. Not school, not the counselor, not the university job fairs.'

'They couldn't,' Jordan says, and he sounds surprised by his own certainty. 'They don't know enough about me. And there's too much stuff out there. Someone, or something, has to actually listen first.'

His parents look at each other across the table. Outside, the city takes its usual late-night form, nothing extraordinary happening. Nothing is resolved yet. The program needs investigating, the entry requirements are unclear, there may be obstacles they haven't thought of. But something has shifted in the room. The question is no longer what will become of Jordan. The question, which nobody quite puts into words, is something harder: why did it take this long for anyone to ask him the right questions? And what does it mean that the thing that finally did wasn't a person at all? Or was it?

His mother gets up to make more tea. His father pulls Jordan's laptop closer to look at the program together.

They stay at the kitchen table until midnight.

Squad C: The Glitch (Critical and Resistance)

The first half, written by [RJY], constructs a world in decay, with broken windows, polluted water, and a school that exists in the margins of legality, while the second half, written by [IG], narrows the focus to a single object, a badly drawn tree in a handmade sketchbook, and to the silence that the approved system would have hardly permitted.

[RJY] Her father dropped her off at the edge of the abandoned industrial estate. Sarah gave him a hug and headed off across the wasteland, dodging puddles of polluted water that had an unnatural sheen to them. Her dad disappeared back into the undergrowth along the path that they had been walking every day together for the past year since her parents decided that Sarah should be taught at an old-fashioned school: one of those ones from the past, with real human teachers, and books and desks, except they only had a few old books, and the desks were made from discarded lumber, but at least they had real human teachers.

She eventually came to the old warehouse with its broken windows and faded paint. Ironically this used to be a textbook repository for the school district many years ago, and that's how they found a few mislaid real paper books among the rubble and forgotten back rooms. Books on geography, chemistry, a few literary novels, and the most valued of all, a history book, that told of times that were all but forgotten, or erased, in today's modern, automated, and approved schools.

The push to improve global education was such that new technologies had been adopted so quickly with next to no oversight to see if they were effective, or indeed, correct! Very quickly traditional schools became hybrid schools with online and AI-driven courses. With ever-tightening resources, one by one, real physical human teachers who left their teaching careers were replaced by AI-driven educational models as they were almost free to

create and use. Soon, actually being in a real classroom was replaced by virtual reality and holograms, so learning from home became the norm and brick-and-mortar schools started closing.

Sarah's parents had followed along with this for a while, but after they began seeing a detrimental change in Sarah's personality after her spending six hours a day in a virtual environment, they decided to take action before Sarah became another academically sufficient, but socially deficient school graduate. They had heard that there were still some real, old-style schools around, and while they weren't technically illegal, they would be disbanded if the local government found them. Something about not teaching to approved standards.

Sarah entered the building and took her place in a small semi-circle of children, and was greeted by her teacher. They only had one now. They used to have two teachers who would alternate each day, but suddenly they were down to one. No reasons were given, and no questions were asked. It was as if they all knew that this was something that shouldn't be talked about.

The lesson began, and this was the part that Sarah enjoyed the most because she never knew what the subject would be and finding out was all part of the fun. The teacher started by describing a place, or a thing, or an activity and he would then ask the assembled semi-circle of listeners to ask questions about it, or add to it and say why they thought that was right or wrong. Sometimes it became obvious that they were talking about geography, or math, and sometimes it was more of a discussion where you explained your thoughts to others and answered questions about why you thought that way.

Sarah frequently sat next to a younger boy who had recently joined them after being AI educated for a number of years. He spent the first week head down, covering his eyes and only rarely furtively looking at his classmates. Sarah had sat next to him and smiled kindly when he looked her way. Gently she encouraged him to talk to the others and eventually he was contributing a little to the everyday discussions.

One day, not long after the younger boy, David, joined their group. He had brought with him an object that captured the attention of all the students. Their teacher looked on wistfully as David held the object gingerly in his hands. The students all crowded around David to see the object better. They looked to their teacher, waiting to hear more about what this could be. In a world where AI controlled what humans see and hear, from education to marketing, children of a certain age had never lived in a world that wasn't AI produced. Humankind hadn't participated in the creation or development of their physical surroundings in nearly two decades. And much of what AI didn't consider a benefit to its own understanding of life on the planet was no longer produced and often destroyed. And when dealing with an artificial lifeform, that understanding was very narrow.

[IG] The teacher walked over slowly and kneeled down to David's level.

'Where did you find it?' he asked.

'In my grandmother's house,' David said. 'She kept a lot of things. Before she died, she told me to hide it and protect it.'

It was a sketchbook. Handmade, or something that looked like it. The cover was cardboard, the pages thick and mostly uneven. Every page was filled with drawings. Not generated images, not fake landscapes. Drawings made by a hand, with a pencil, imperfect and alive with mistakes that seemed to have been scratched out and tried again.

Nobody said anything for a while.

The teacher took it carefully and turned a few pages, religiously, as if they were touching something in a museum. There were drawings of buildings, of faces, of what looked like a garden. On one page was what was clearly meant to be a tree, and it was a bad drawing of a tree. The trunk was too thick, the leaves like green clouds. But it was unmistakably made by someone who had looked at a tree and tried to put it down on paper.

'What is it for?' one of the students asked enthusiastically.

The teacher looked up. 'It's not for anything,' he said. 'That's the point.'

Sarah watched David's face while the teacher spoke. He was frowning, not rudely, but like someone trying to understand a sentence in a language he half-knew. David had spent four years in the approved system. He was nine years old. In his experience, everything produced had a purpose that could be measured. You completed a module. You passed a checkpoint. The system logged your progress and adjusted the next task accordingly. It was efficient. It was, by every official metric, effective.

The teacher set the sketchbook down on the lumber table at the centre of their circle.

'I want to ask you all something,' he said. 'What did you learn this morning before you came here?'

Some of them had done nothing. Walked, eaten breakfast, helped a sibling. Sarah had helped her father fix a fence post, which had gone wrong twice before they figured out the ground was too soft. A girl named Priya had argued with her mother about something she had read and hadn't understood. Another boy said he'd been watching birds.

David said he had completed two modules before his father brought him here. He said it quickly and looked at the floor.

'What were they about?' the teacher asked.

'Ecosystem management. And conflict resolution strategies.' He paused. 'I got ninety-four percent on the first one and eighty-eight on the second. The system said I should revisit section three of the conflict module.'

'Do you know what a conflict is?' the teacher asked. 'Have you been in one?'

David went to open his mouth but then hesitated.

The teacher wasn't being cruel. His voice was patient. But the question sat in the room, and nobody rushed to fill the silence, which was itself something the children in that warehouse had learned that the approved system never allowed. Silence equalled inefficiency. A pause in the learning flow was a problem to be corrected with a prompt, a suggestion, a helpfully generated next step.

Here, silence was just part of thinking.

Sarah picked up the sketchbook and looked at the bad drawing of the tree again. She thought about her six months in the virtual school, the rendered

forests she had walked through in geography, the photorealistic biodiversity simulations. She had learned the names of more tree species than she could count. She had never, in any of those lessons, tried to draw one.
'Why did his grandmother hide it?' Priya asked.
'Because it was made by a person,' the teacher said. 'And it didn't teach anything. And it wasn't approved.'
He left that sitting there too.
After a while, David reached out and took the sketchbook back. He held it the same way he had when he came in, carefully, like it might break, but something in his expression had shifted. He was still frowning. But now it looked less like confusion and more like the beginning of a question he hadn't yet found words for.
Outside, somewhere across the wasteland, a drone flew on its usual route. They all heard it. Nobody moved. It passed, as it always did, without stopping.
The lesson continued.

Reading Across: What We Heard in Each Other's Stories

This section functions as a thematic synthesis of the reflections in lieu of a typical article discussion. It remains organised by scenario so that readers can move between fiction and interpretation, but each subsection also names a cross-cutting theme identified across the responses. The aim is to show that reflecting on education fiction can produce analytically significant concerns without formally looking for patterns of meaning in 'data'. This is why this section often switches between collective thoughts (marked by plural 'we' formulations) and traditional literature-informed observations, attempting to create a bridge between informal reflection and formal academic discussion.

Reset Day: Dependency, Presence and Relearning Expression

The current Artificial Intelligence in Education (AIED) situation creates a feeling that enormous chaos lies ahead, bringing both challenge and excitement. This affective uncertainty can be read as an instance of postdigital dissensus, where debate about educational technology is less a problem to be resolved than a condition through which futures are negotiated (Rasa 2025). As educators, we are required to teach the latest information, yet we need to be smarter and think two steps ahead. The difficulty is that we cannot truly think ahead if we do not fully understand what is happening right now. Because time is always in short supply, education tends to focus on results rather than on the processes and foundational knowledge that produced those results.

There is a great deal of anxiety among lecturers today. Many still seem to hope that they will remain the smartest person in the room and that everything will continue as before. The real question, however, is whether educators can move with the chaos and truly be present in supporting students, or whether students are already

ahead of us. If learners are ahead, it becomes a question of collaboration and of understanding what a lecturer can still offer. We are currently constrained to a linear model of teaching, often restricted by premade slides instead of using the creative expanse of a whiteboard to develop a storyline. This linear constraint is precisely what you want to avoid if your goal is to encourage students to think, adapt and innovate.

We are so dependent on our handheld and wearable technologies that they have become part of who we are, which aligns with postdigital accounts of digital technologies as entangled with identity, agency and everyday educational practice (Jandrić et al. 2018; Jiang et al. 2024). This dependence is highly visible in the classroom, where teaching and learning rely heavily on laptops and tablets. Very few students take written notes, and the removal of this simple yet critical step diminishes the processing of information and learning itself. To preserve human value in teaching, educators must look beyond surface-level events and understand the deeper logic of human behaviour and ways of thinking. A rudimentary knowledge of the basics remains essential to our ability to adapt and evolve as circumstances change.

Ethics and accepted codes of conduct depend on the society in question, making them inherently subjective. The core ethical question is whether we should allow individuals to become so dependent on technology that they are functionally incapable without it. Humans are enthusiastic about adopting new technology, whether the wheel, mobile phones or AI avatars, and tend to do so without adequately considering the possible negative consequences.

Despite this, fear must not drive our response. Clarity about why we use something provides confidence and helps ensure ethical practice. To understand what something truly means, we have to try it; experimentation and testing are necessary through a process-based approach. This requires openness in expressing ideas, a critical mind and the ability to justify one's choices, all in order to provide students with the possibility of doing something more meaningful with their lives. While society likely cannot curb technological adoption through bans alone, it does have a responsibility to monitor effects and raise the alarm when negative outcomes become apparent.

Rather than focusing on broad university or government policies, the most effective action happens at the individual level, moving into practice much more quickly. The practical recommendations that emerged included: interrogating one's motivations by asking repeated 'why' questions before initiating any change; agreeing on processes collaboratively with learners; treating experimentation as inherently valuable since every failure produces forward movement; working collaboratively on the assumption that shared effort produces better results; and maintaining the capacity to critically justify one's choices throughout. This turns the response to AIED from a matter of abstract prescription into a situated design question about which futures are being made, by whom and for whom (Macgilchrist et al. 2024).

Read through the postdigital lens, Reset Day makes dependency visible by interrupting what has become ordinary. The point is the avatars' temporary absence reveals how educational agency, confidence and expression have become distributed across people, interfaces, routines and institutional expectations. This resonates with

postdigital work that treats digital technology not as an external tool added to education, but as part of the sociotechnical conditions through which educational purposes and governance are organised (Knox 2019).

The Kitchen Table: Better Questions, Guidance and the Problem of Too Much Information

When it comes to the future of education, we are witnessing a profound shift. Decades ago, teachers were almost the only resource students had. Then came the Internet and search engines, followed by mobile phones and, eventually, GenAI: a seemingly omni-talented resource that can explain any subject in a personalised manner. Because GenAI is encroaching on the skills of a classroom teacher, we must recognise that if you are looking for a 'product', GenAI can provide it faster and cheaper. True teaching, however, is an artform; if you are looking for an 'experience', the human component remains the way to go.

We live in an age of informational overload, and the real educational challenge is helping students navigate this complexity and transform curiosity into a meaningful path. GenAI is a powerful tool that can guide, suggest and personalise, yet it cannot replace the complex, nuanced and subjective process of human meaning-making. Learning is becoming more dialogical and driven by questions, and the future of education will therefore be defined by the prioritisation of reflection and self-awareness. The value of GenAI lies in thoughtful questioning: acting as a catalyst for reflection while humans retain their role as guides, mentors and facilitators. This is where the story's postdigital tension lies: agency is distributed across learner, family, interface, and institution, rather than held by GenAI alone (Jiang et al. 2024).

Jordan's perplexity mirrors our own collective experiences of grappling with overwhelming choices and information. Young people today live in a world rich in opportunities and educational resources, yet they often feel disoriented by the sheer number of possible paths. An increase in choice does not necessarily produce greater clarity, and choosing a path is never purely rational; it is also a process of personal discovery. The family dynamic resonated strongly among the authors. The parents represent a generation that seeks stability and security for their child, genuinely constrained by financial limitations, while the younger generation lives in a much more fluid and unpredictable context. This fluidity also situates the story alongside recent near-future scenario work on generative AI in higher education, where uncertainty is part of the educational condition rather than the background to it (Lindell and Stöhr 2025).

It was reassuring, one of us noted, that Jordan had the self-determination to pursue his own research and that his conversation with GenAI proved easier and more productive than the traditional counselling path. The statement 'It just asked better questions' captures a fundamental principle of learning: learners often do not require more information; they need something that will help them reflect more deeply and see things from a different perspective. From an ethical standpoint, if GenAI can help recognise patterns in students' interests and identify educational connections more effectively than institutions, it indicates a significant gap in current systems.

At the same time, with such friendly interfaces it is extremely easy to forget that GenAI is code, and that we tend to associate human characteristics with inanimate objects. We might for example accept GenAI-generated advice as more valid than it really is. However, algorithms reflect the data, biases and sometimes the business interests of those who design them, and may subtly influence learners toward specific economic paths. This is why critical GenAI literacy cannot be treated only as competence in using tools, but also as epistemological, ethical, relational and sociopolitical judgement (Rapanta et al. 2025).

Pedagogically, the story demonstrates that meaningful education requires dialogue. Traditional systems still tend to prioritise evaluation and classification, and standardised tests, reports and occasional counselling sessions are insufficient for guiding students through major life decisions. Career guidance should instead be a continuous process of structured reflection and supportive conversation. When used appropriately, GenAI can become a tool for stimulating metacognition: its value lies in facilitating a process of reflection about what truly motivates the learner, rather than in delivering a ready-made answer. In this sense, Jordan's exchange resembles AI-mediated sensemaking rather than simple recommendation, because the AI is assigned a role in helping the learner articulate purposes, tensions and next steps (Silvola et al. 2025).

To adapt to this shifting landscape, the authors offer several recommendations. Universities should redesign career guidance systems to be more interactive, personalised and reflective, integrating GenAI tools while maintaining human oversight so that technology facilitates exploration rather than substituting for human interaction. Educational institutions should promote flexible interdisciplinary pathways, since many emerging professions arise at the intersection of different fields. Students should be educated to treat GenAI as a knowledgeable yet sometimes inaccurate resource, understanding how these tools work, what their limitations are and how to critically evaluate the information they generate. Public policy should prioritise equitable access to innovative educational opportunities for students from diverse financial backgrounds, and education policies should shift their emphasis from employability metrics toward self-discovery and critical thinking. Framed this way, GenAI guidance becomes part of a broader postdigital social-contract question about what higher education owes learners in the age of artificial intelligence (Hayes et al. 2024). Ultimately, the real mission of future education systems is to create environments capable of listening to students and helping them build meaningful paths.

The Kitchen Table story is therefore less a simple endorsement of GenAI guidance than a near-future investigation of listening. In the terms offered by Lindberg and Johansson (2023), it belongs closer to the future-in-the-present: it extrapolates from already recognisable guidance systems, information overload and family anxieties. Its analytical tension lies in the fact that the GenAI interface appears educationally valuable mainly because it asks questions that the human system had failed to ask. This complicates familiar debates about automation by showing that the problem may be neither 'human versus machine' nor 'school versus platform', but the uneven distribution of attention, care and interpretive time.

The Sketchbook: Humanity, Making and Resistance to Full Automation

This imagined situation is a bit uncomfortable, in a good way. It prompts the immediate question: what is going to happen, how are we going to act, and how can we preserve our humanity and what we are able to do with our hands, our hearts and our minds? In today's world, where efficiency and cost reduction are top priorities, it is easy to see how teachers might have slowly disappeared because AI was cheaper. Many of us found ourselves interrogating our own roles: when we introduce new technologies, are we helping design systems that empower humans, or systems that gradually replace them? Read alongside work on the hidden curricula of educational automation, the danger becomes the normalisation of values such as efficiency, scalability and standardisation as if they were educational goods in themselves (Gallagher and Breines 2023).

Education is about relationships, experience and curiosity alongside information and optimisation. The human touch and an understanding of human potential are profoundly important. Being human and truly noticing one another are among the key ideas of future education. The future should be a blend of human and automated approaches, recognising that education concerns who we are, how we grow as a community and what we can achieve together.

The paradoxical image of a group of children sitting in an old warehouse with a few books and one teacher, while outside lies a completely automated world, is deeply evocative and closer to certain dynamics we are already beginning to see. The sketchbook and the drawing of the tree in particular felt symbolic, embodying both resilience and vulnerability. A poorly drawn tree, with a trunk that is too thick and leaves that look like green clouds, is a simple yet powerful image. In a world surrounded by perfect simulations and automatically generated content, this imperfect drawing is the result of a human gaze trying to understand the world. It serves as a reminder that some of the most valuable things resist measurement, and that some learning experiences are valuable precisely because they are imperfect.

The sketchbook therefore functions as a small refusal of system-legibility: it matters because it cannot be easily converted into a metric, dashboard or optimised learning signal (Gourlay 2025). In highly digitalised learning systems, where every moment must be filled with activity, feedback and indicators of progress, silence is often perceived as a sign of inefficiency. In reality, silence is an integral part of forming thoughts.

From an ethical perspective, the story raises significant questions regarding control: who decides what is worth learning? If 'approved' knowledge or filtered standards are the only kind considered valid, education risks becoming too uniform, a means of regulation rather than liberation. While AI has the capability to track performance metrics, it lacks the capacity to fully comprehend emotion, context and moral development. There are real risks associated with replacing human judgment with algorithmic logic.

Pedagogically, learning should include uncertainty, exploration and even inefficiency. It means experiencing, asking questions, discussing with others and sometimes sitting with the absence of an immediate answer. Creativity, critical thinking and the ability to understand others are best cultivated in open spaces rather than

in optimised systems. The story demonstrates that while knowledge matters, lived experience is equally essential. In this sense, the story's insistence on inefficiency can be read both as resistance to automation and as a hopeful education future in which value cannot only be captured through optimisation (Houlden and Veletsianos 2022; Macgilchrist et al. 2024).

The first principle of any policy response could be this: the human being as the central subject, and only then knowledge built around that. The answer does not lie in limiting technological innovation, nor in simply imposing strict rules about what is banned or allowed. Universities and governments should establish clear ethical frameworks built on recommendations, strong methodologies and thoughtful practices. Human educators must maintain a central role in learning environments, with technology supporting that relationship. Educational policies should safeguard creative subjects, practical laboratories and open-ended learning activities whose outcomes are not immediately measurable. Transparency should be a requirement: students and families deserve a comprehensive understanding of how AI systems work and the assumptions on which they are built. Ultimately, education policy should seek a balance between innovation and human dignity, ensuring that efficiency does not displace compassion.

The Sketchbook scenario pushes the analysis toward the question of whose futures are being designed and for whom. Macgilchrist et al. (2024) argue that designing postdigital futures is politically and affectively charged, because educational futures are always shaped by particular assumptions about what counts as valuable, efficient and desirable. In this story, the sketchbook matters because it refuses that logic: it is not useful, measurable or optimised, yet it becomes educational. The theme of silence similarly challenges systems in which every pause must be converted into data, feedback or progress. Recent postdigital work on learning analytics makes a related point: dashboarded and visualised student data can render learners into documents that are expected to act in particular, system-legible ways (Gourlay 2025). The story therefore extends the article's concern with GenAI in education from tool use to the deeper question of what kinds of educational life automated systems make more or less thinkable.

What This Exercise Surfaced: Synthesis and Contribution

Across the stories and reflections, four linked themes emerged. First, interruption made dependency visible: Reset Day showed that the absence of GenAI removed convenience and exposed altered habits of attention, expression and confidence. Second, guidance depended on listening rather than information: Jordan's story showed that more data about educational options did not produce clarity until someone, or something, asked a better question. Third, measurement excluded important forms of learning: the sketchbook and the silence around it showed that making, waiting, wondering and imperfection can be educational precisely because they resist optimisation. Fourth, policy translation remained difficult: participants could narrate situated tensions more readily than they could transform those tensions into formal recommendations. These themes are not wholly new to (postdigital)

education scholarship; their contribution here lies in how relay fiction reassembled them through discontinuity, inheritance and response.

The relay structure, where one person starts a story and another collaborator finishes it, turned out to be generative in ways that a single-author fiction would not have been. In each scenario, the handoff introduced a shift. The Reset Day story began in a tense, cinematic register, with avatars vanishing at midnight and employees reaching for empty space, and landed in a gentler resolution, where the potential 'had not disappeared with the avatars' but had 'remained in standby, waiting to be reactivated'. The Kitchen Table scenario moved from a family's frustration, written in the style of live speech, into a quieter narrative about a late-night conversation between a teenager and a chatbot that asked him what he actually does rather than what he likes. The underground school scenario shifted into a meditation on a badly drawn tree and what it means to make something that serves no measurable purpose. In each case, the second writer redirected the first writer's trajectory, often toward something more ambiguous and less resolved. And while the continuation of a story might be able to tell more about the author's background or emotional connection to the theme than what is being shown here, the relay enacted the very uncertainty the stories were about.

This points to how relay-based education fiction may be useful for other researchers and practitioners. Because the second writer inherits a fictional world rather than jointly planning it from the beginning, assumptions become visible at the point of continuation: what seems necessary to one writer may become optional, questionable or ethically charged for the next. The method therefore creates a small but productive methodological disturbance. It can support workshops, professional development or research encounters where the aim is to surface tacit values, test the consequences of imagined systems, and notice which futures become easier or harder to continue.

The reflections also revealed something we had not designed for: a recurring discomfort with the policy question. When asked what recommendations they would give to their university or government, some of the authors here either deflected ('I do not want to give policy recommendations', wrote one, preferring practical reflections for individual action), offered broad aspirational statements or reframed the question entirely. This pattern is worth pausing on. The policy squad, which was meant to produce its own scenario, did not materialise for operational reasons (due to a participant dropping out). When policy imagination was redistributed to the other participants through the reflection questions, it remained the thinnest register across all three scenarios.

This may indicate a real boundary between story-based educational imagination and institutional recommendation: the people closest to educational practice may find it easier to imagine situated futures than to translate those imaginaries into the language of governance. Hayes et al. (2024) frame this problem at the level of a postdigital social contract for higher education in the age of AI, calling for policy debate that is richer, more reflexive and less driven by short-term technological hype. Our small exercise cannot provide such a contract, but it suggests why the translation from story to policy remains difficult. If speculation through education fiction is to inform policy thinking, future work should study this translation more

directly, perhaps by bringing practitioners, learners, families and policy actors into the same (relay) process.

Finally, a word about what this kind of exercise can and cannot do. The scenarios presented here are not predictions, and the reflections are not evidence from which one could generalise about all educators, learners or institutions. They are, however, data in the limited qualitative sense of crafted textual artefacts produced by identifiable participants within a designed writing situation. We therefore frame knowledge claims cautiously. Relay writing does not claim that collective thinking is inaccessible to other methods, but it can make assumptions, discontinuities and interpretive negotiations visible in a compact form. Its limitations here include the small and academically oriented participant group, the absence of pure learners, families and policy actors from the author group, and the lack of direct comparison with other methods such as interviews or workshops. The questions that surfaced across these scenarios, about dependency, listening, what resists measurement and who decides what counts as knowledge, are therefore offered as situated provocations for further (postdigital) inquiry.

For postdigital theory, this exercise contributes a small argument about how futures are made in and through discontinuous sociotechnical writing practices. Rather than treating GenAI as an external force acting upon education, relay fiction shows futures as co-produced through inherited prompts, human hesitations, platformed writing environments, fictional technologies and interpretive responses. This supports postdigital inquiry's refusal to read technology apart from wider relations of agency, policy, economy and care (Jandrić et al. 2023b, c), but it also points to another 'political' stance; the participants' difficulty with policy translation therefore becomes a political finding. Our inability (or unwillingness) to shape a policy agenda or start a policy conversation as a result of this exercise becomes an argument in itself. When considered in retrospect, the participants denied taking up the policy question from the beginning of the formation of squads, showing that stakeholders in postdigital education appear more willing to imagine GenAI futures than to legislate them, and more willing to write about technologies than to contribute to their governance.

For postdigital research, relay-based education fiction surfaces a modest, reproducible method for studying how imaginaries move among people rather than only what any single person imagines. It complements postdigital research understood as critical praxis, where theory and practice, method and emancipation, and knowledge and writing are inseparable (Jandrić et al. 2023b, c; Jandrić and Forsler 2026). Future studies using this method could deliberately include other types of actors or stakeholders in the same relay chain, making the move from imagination to governance an object of inquiry instead of a final recommendation. In that sense, this paper contributes a way of researching how postdigital futures are collectively written, interrupted and perhaps realised.

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narrative scenarios and IG combined those reflections for the text of the Discussion in the article. IG wrote the other parts of the manuscript. All authors reviewed the manuscript submitted to the journal.

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Authors and Affiliations

Iosif Gidiotis[1] · Roaa Al Ghadban[2,3] · Imen Boujmil[3] · Anneli Lorenz[4] · Roger J. Young[5]

✉ Iosif Gidiotis
gidiotis@kth.se

Roaa Al Ghadban
r.alghadban@campus.unimib.it

Imen Boujmil
imen.boujmil@uniroma3.it

Anneli Lorenz
anneli.lorenz@ut.ee

Roger J. Young
ryoung@drury.edu

[1] KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden

[2] Roma Tre University, Rome, Italy

[3] University of Padua, Padova, Italy

[4] University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia

[5] Drury University, Springfield, United States