To: Agnieszka Szplit, ATEE President

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Proposal for the Establishment of an ATEE Research and Development Community (RDC): AI in Education

1. Introduction and Rationale

Research and Development Communities (RDCs), as defined in Article 27 of the ATEE Statute, constitute the intellectual core of ATEE. They bring together teacher educators and researchers across institutions and countries to address key challenges in teacher education through sustained collaboration, research exchange, conference symposia, and scholarly publication.

The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into education represents precisely such a challenge. AI is not simply another digital tool; it is a general-purpose technology reshaping assessment practices, feedback processes, curriculum design, academic integrity, knowledge production, and the professional identity of teachers and teacher educators.

Recent research demonstrates both the scale and urgency of this transformation. Over 95% of students report regular use of AI in academic activities (Vieriu & Petrea, 2025). Systematic reviews show that AI tools such as ChatGPT are already influencing writing processes, lesson planning, assessment practices, and institutional governance (Salih et al., 2025; Henukh et al., 2025). At the same time, scholars warn that AI risks reinforcing bias, narrowing epistemic diversity, and reorganising education around machine-readability rather than human development (Selwyn, 2024; Tuomi, 2018).

While digital technologies are addressed within existing RDCs, AI introduces qualitatively new epistemological, ethical, and pedagogical questions that require dedicated, interdisciplinary attention. We therefore propose the establishment of a new ATEE Research and Development Community:

RDC – AI in Education

2. The Duality of AI: Transformative Opportunities and Structural Risks

Transformative Opportunities

Research confirms that AI offers significant pedagogical affordances. AI systems can support personalised learning pathways, adaptive feedback, and formative assessment at scale (Krstić et al., 2022; Hopfenbeck et al., 2023). AI-enhanced systems can reduce teacher workload and allow greater focus on relational and dialogical dimensions of teaching (Lee, 2025).

Moreover, emerging scholarship argues that AI literacy, prompt literacy, and critical engagement with AI should be considered foundational competencies for modern education

(Walter, 2024). When embedded within pedagogically grounded frameworks, AI can augment rather than replace human intellectual activity.

Structural Risks

However, literature equally documents serious concerns. AI systems often rely on narrow statistical pattern recognition rather than socially mediated understanding (Tuomi, 2018). Selwyn (2024) warns that AI may subtly reorganise educational practice to fit the needs of computational systems.

Crucially, empirical evidence from multilingual and minoritised educational contexts demonstrates that AI tools may reproduce linguistic hierarchies and epistemic injustice. Research in Sámi, Māori, and Basque schooling systems shows that AI-based platforms can penalise authentic linguistic expression, privilege dominant languages, and function as mechanisms of "soft assimilation." Such findings underscore that AI in education is not neutral technology, but a sociotechnical system embedded in power relations, data politics, and commercial infrastructures.

3. Epistemological and Ontological Shifts

Beyond pedagogical technique, AI challenges foundational assumptions about knowledge and intelligence.

Levant (2025) argues that contemporary discourse often treats AI as an autonomous "thinking agent," a phenomenon he terms *AI fetishism*. This obscures the reality that AI systems are crystallisations of collective human labour embedded within economic and technological infrastructures. In educational contexts, this raises questions about authorship, intellectual ownership, and the privatisation of collective intelligence.

Furthermore, AI reifies semantic space by representing meaning as high-dimensional vectors, potentially alienating language from its historical and social grounding. In teacher education, this raises urgent questions about how future educators conceptualise meaning, agency, and knowledge production.

Henukh et al. (2025) note that while AI is increasingly discussed in relation to transformative learning, robust theoretical integration remains underdeveloped. ATEE is uniquely positioned to address this gap through collaborative, theory-informed inquiry within a structured RDC framework.

4. The Urgency: Scale, Speed, and Structural Change

The pace of AI development frequently outstrips policy and pedagogical response. Institutions worldwide oscillate between bans and uncritical adoption (Salih et al., 2025). Without coordinated scholarly leadership, implementation risks being driven by commercial vendors rather than educational values.

Teacher education cannot remain reactive. It must articulate proactive frameworks for:

- Ethical AI governance
- Human-centred formative assessment
- Linguistic justice and multilingual equity
- AI literacy as a core component of professional formation
- Critical engagement with automation and datafication
- Potential inequalities that different levels of AI literacy can impose

An RDC **AI in Education** provides precisely the sustained and structured platform required for this work.

Policy and Ethical Frameworks for AI in Education

Recent European policy developments underscore the urgency of addressing Artificial Intelligence in education through coordinated scholarly engagement. A growing body of regulatory and policy documents highlights both the transformative potential of AI and the need for robust ethical and governance frameworks in educational contexts.

At the regulatory level, the **European Union Artificial Intelligence Act** classifies several AI applications used in education as **"high-risk systems."** These include AI systems used for admissions decisions, evaluation of learning outcomes, and student monitoring during assessments. The Act also emphasises the responsibility of institutions to ensure that educators and staff possess an adequate level of **AI literacy** to responsibly use such technologies in educational settings (European Commission, 2022).

In parallel, European policy strategies such as **AI for Europe (2018)** and the **Digital Education Action Plan (2021–2027)** emphasise the need to modernise education systems, promote interdisciplinary AI knowledge, and support educators in developing the competencies required to use AI responsibly. These initiatives have also led to the development of practical ethical guidance for educators using AI and data in teaching and learning.

A recent mapping of policy frameworks for AI in Higher Education further highlights that although many guidelines exist, they often fail to address the **specific institutional and epistemic conditions of universities**, such as academic autonomy, research integrity, and the governance of knowledge production. The analysis concludes that Europe currently lacks a coherent, sector-specific policy framework tailored to Higher Education institutions (European AI Alliance, 2024).

To address this gap, several organisations have begun developing targeted guidance. The **European University Association (EUA)** emphasises that universities should not simply prohibit AI tools but must instead develop strategies for responsible adaptation. Similarly,

UNESCO has issued guidance supporting institutional capacity building and responsible use of generative AI systems such as ChatGPT in academic contexts.

At the level of professional practice, the **European Digital Education Hub** proposes that educators' engagement with AI should be conceptualised across three complementary dimensions: **teaching about AI, teaching with AI, and teaching for AI**, highlighting the need for both technological understanding and pedagogical integration.

Together, these policy developments demonstrate that AI in education is not only a technological issue but also a matter of **ethical governance, professional competence, and institutional responsibility**. A dedicated Research and Development Community within ATEE would provide an important platform for teacher educators to critically engage with these developments and contribute to the development of ethically grounded and pedagogically informed AI practices in teacher education.

These developments signal a clear need for **discipline-informed scholarly communities capable of interpreting AI policy, critically examining its implications for pedagogy, and translating regulatory principles into teacher education practice**. ATEE, as an international association of teacher educators, is uniquely positioned to contribute to this work.

5. Proposed Objectives and Activities of the RDC: AI in Education

In accordance with Article 27 of the ATEE Statute, the proposed RDC will serve as an interdisciplinary research community dedicated to advancing critical, pedagogically grounded, and ethically responsible approaches to AI in teacher education. The community will foster sustained scholarly collaboration across institutions and countries while contributing to research, policy dialogue, and professional development in the field.The proposed activities include:

1. Scholarly Collaboration and Research Exchange

- Regular online seminars and annual symposia at ATEE conferences
- Joint research projects across member institutions
- Cross-national comparative studies on AI integration in teacher education

2. Theoretical Development

- Advancing pedagogically grounded frameworks linking AI to agency, formative assessment, cultural-historical and other perspectives (Tuomi, 2018; Hopfenbeck, 2023)
- Interrogating AI through lenses of critical algorithm studies and linguistic justice

3. Policy and Governance Engagement

- Developing ethical guidelines for AI use in teacher education
- Addressing algorithmic bias and equity concerns

- Contributing to European and international policy discussions

4. Capacity Building and AI Literacy

- Exploring AI literacy as a foundational competence (Walter, 2024)
- Designing pedagogical interventions that prevent superficial "parroting" and promote higher-order critical thinking

5. Dissemination

- Organising thematic strands at the 50th Annual ATEE Conference (2026)
- Contributing to special issues in the *European Journal of Teacher Education (EJTE)*
- Developing position papers on AI and teacher education

The RDC will comply with the Internal Rules concerning leadership designation, member participation, and annual reporting to the Administrative Council.

6. Strategic Alignment with ATEE

ATEE's mission emphasises research-informed teacher education, international collaboration, and the advancement of pedagogical quality. AI intersects with all three.

An RDC on AI in Education would:

- Strengthen ATEE's intellectual leadership in a rapidly evolving field
- Provide a structured space for interdisciplinary dialogue
- Ensure that teacher educators shape AI integration rather than merely respond to it

AI will reshape teacher education regardless. The question is whether that reshaping will be driven by pedagogical values, ethical commitments, and scholarly rigour, or by efficiency logics and commercial imperatives.

The establishment of an RDC on AI in Education would also align ATEE's work with emerging European policy initiatives, including ethical guidelines for AI use in education and regulatory frameworks addressing high-risk AI systems in learning and assessment contexts.

By establishing an RDC on AI in Education, ATEE would position itself as a leading scholarly platform for examining the educational implications of artificial intelligence in Europe and beyond. The RDC would enable ATEE members to contribute actively to emerging international debates on AI governance, digital competence, and the future of teacher education.

7. Conclusion

The research base clearly demonstrates:

- Widespread student adoption and institutional integration of AI (Vieriu & Petrea, 2025; Salih et al., 2025)
- Transformative but uneven pedagogical potential (Henukh et al., 2025; Hopfenbeck et al., 2023)
- Structural risks of algorithmic bias and linguistic injustice
- The need for ethically grounded, human-centred governance frameworks (Selwyn, 2024; Tuomi, 2018)

Given the scale, speed, and epistemological implications of AI developments, the establishment of an ATEE Research and Development Community on AI in Education is both timely and strategically important.

Such a community would enable teacher educators to collaborate internationally, critically examine the pedagogical and ethical implications of AI, and contribute to the development of responsible frameworks for integrating AI into teacher education and educational practice.

We look forward to collaborating with the ATEE Administrative Council and the General Assembly to establish this important scholarly community.

Sincerely,

Irina Engeness, Professor, Østfold University of Applied Sciences, Norway

Marianne Hagelia, Associate Professor, Østfold University of Applied Sciences, Norway

Kseniia Markhortova, PhD Candidate, Østfold University of Applied Sciences, Norway

Ana Luísa Rodrigues, Assistant Professor, Institute of Education of University of Lisbon

Eleanor Byrne, PhD Candidate, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

Davide Parmigiani, Associate Professor, University of Genoa, Italy

Elisabetta Nicchia, PhD Candidate, University of Genoa, Italy

Myrna Pario, PhD Candidate, University of Genoa, Italy

Neuza Pedro, Assistant Professor with Tenure, Institute of Education of University of Lisbon

João Piedade, Assistant Professor, Institute of Education of University of Lisbon

Nuno Dorotea, Assistant Professor, Institute of Education of University of Lisbon

Ana Barradas, PhD Student, Institute of Education of University of Lisbon

Rui Romão, PhD Student, Institute of Education of University of Lisbon

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