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Disruption of Student Graduation Requirements and Academic Rank Advancement for Lecturers in the Era of Generative AI: A Critical Analysis

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A R T I C L E I N F O

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A B S T R A C T

This study aims to examine the requirements for student graduation and the advancement of faculty functional ranks specifically those involving the writing of scholarly papers and publication in Sinta-indexed or Scopus-indexed journals within the current era of generative artificial intelligence. Employing a descriptive evaluative research design, this study utilizes a literature review approach alongside the author's own experience as a faculty member (passive participation). The findings indicate that the mandate to produce scholarly papers—both as a graduation requirement for students and as a criterion for faculty rank advancement—has become obsolete due to the widespread use of generative artificial intelligence by both students and faculty. For students, this requirement should be replaced by alternatives such as the demonstration of innovative projects, comprehensive oral examinations that directly assess logical reasoning, or the development of functional technological products that provide solutions for local industries. For faculty, the requirements for rank advancement could instead be based on innovation patents adopted by industry, measurable outcomes from community service initiatives, successful research commercialization (hilirisasi), and a documented track record of humanistic, contextual teaching. This research is intended to provide new insights and expand the knowledge base for decision-makers in the higher education sector

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INTRODUCTION

Global higher education and the systems for fostering academic careers are currently facing the most significant technological disruption of the century: the emergence of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), such as ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini. For decades, the publication of scholarly work in reputable journals those accredited by SINTA or indexed in Scopus has been held in high regard as the primary metric for assessing competence, a requirement for graduation (for undergraduate, master's, and doctoral students), and an absolute prerequisite for the advancement of faculty members' professional ranks (Chien, C. W., Lin, C. H., & Tsai, 2024).

However, current developments reveal a radical shift: AI technology is now capable of generating drafts of scientific articles, conducting data analysis, and even compiling comprehensive literature reviews in a matter of seconds. This extreme ease of production has triggered a surge in the volume of manuscripts often associated with "paper mills" placing an immense strain on peer-review systems across academic journals worldwide. This raises existential questions regarding the essence of originality and the integrity of the academic process the very foundations upon which higher education is built. Throughout history, transformative technologies have often been met with initial skepticism before eventually becoming an integral part of daily life (Farag, 2026).

A primary issue that has emerged is the degradation of the substantive function of scientific publication itself. As higher education regulations in various countries including Indonesia continue to treat publication as an absolute, non-negotiable requirement for graduation and academic promotion, institutions face uncertainty in distinguishing between genuine human intellectual contributions and outputs synthesized by algorithms. This instructional and administrative challenge is compounded by the inadequacy of conventional plagiarism detection tools, which often fail to accurately and fairly identify AI-generated text. Consequently, rather than fostering critical thinking and scientific novelty, this mandatory publication policy risks devolving into a mere bureaucratic formality one that breeds new forms of academic dishonesty (Choo & Tan, 2023), ethical breaches regarding authorship, and the proliferation of predatory journals that exploit the desperation of academics striving to meet regulatory demands. Research (Sejdiu & Sejdiu, 2026) highlights how AI challenges traditional academic practices while simultaneously creating opportunities for innovation.

This phenomenon is occurring at nearly every higher education institution in Indonesia, where many lecturers and students use AI to complete final academic projects such as undergraduate theses, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations from scratch to completion in a matter of minutes. This is deeply concerning for the educational landscape, as the purpose of requiring students to complete these final projects is to assess the extent to which they have mastered the knowledge they were taught. Such practices significantly impact the quality of bachelor's, master's, and even doctoral graduates in Indonesia. Ultimately, this leads to a proliferation of "sham" graduates individuals holding bachelor's,

master's, or doctoral degrees who lack the actual skills and knowledge corresponding to their stated education and field of study.

Indonesia is a developing nation striving to eradicate ignorance among its population. According to the 2026 World Top 20 Education rankings, Indonesia holds the 67th position globally out of 203 countries (Nusantara TV, 2026). South Korea occupies the top spot, followed by Japan in second place, which places Indonesia in the middle tier of global education systems. Meanwhile, regarding the latest global IQ rankings for 2026, the average IQ score for Indonesians is recorded at approximately 89.96 (ranking 126th out of 137 countries), while other online testing databases place the figure at around 78.49 (Hallodoc, 2026).

Within Southeast Asia, Indonesia's score remains lower than those of several neighboring countries, such as Singapore (105.9), Malaysia (87.58), and Thailand (88.87). Nevertheless, it is important to understand that a population's average IQ score does not definitively reflect the absolute intellectual limits of any given individual. Regarding students' fundamental literacy skills specifically in reading, mathematics, and science international standards, as referenced globally through the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), place Indonesia at 365 points, with the country ranking 74th out of 90 nations worldwide in reading literacy (Raihan Immaduddi, 2026).

The key to improving the quality of education and the intellect of a nation lies in fostering a habit of reading and writing among its people. Through reading, we gain knowledge from others, while the ability to write emerges once we develop a fondness for reading material that enhances our capacity for thought. I often liken writing to reading something over and over again; to become a writer, one must be diligent in reading the works of others. Unfortunately, this reading habit is currently on the decline within Indonesian society, where people often prefer listening to others speak rather than reading what others have written.

If the primary objective behind mandating the completion of a thesis, dissertation, or scholarly publication as a requirement for graduation or academic promotion is to assess intellectual merit, then is the massive use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) consistent with the ethical standards and accountability expected of students and faculty? This study offers a novel contribution by providing a comparative-philosophical analysis of whether written academic work remains a valid, sole proxy for determining the intellectual quality of students and faculty in an era where such texts can be produced en masse by AI.

LITERATURE RIVIEW

Goodhart's Law in Public Policy:

This theory posits that "when a metric or measure is turned into a target for achievement, it ceases to be a good metric" (Chien, et all., 2024). When the publication of articles in Scopus or SINTA indexed journals is transformed into a bureaucratic, mechanical requirement for graduation or faculty promotion, the focus of the academic community shifts destructively away from the essential pursuit of scientific truth toward the mere fulfillment of quantitative credit-point targets.

The requirement for students (at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels) to publish scientific articles as an absolute condition for graduation has triggered complex ethical and instructional dilemmas in today's classrooms. Rather than fostering critical reasoning and a culture of research, these regulatory demands unsupported by equitable digital literacy or adequate campus facilities have instead cultivated a new breed of academic dishonesty.

Many students use generative AI (GenAI) technology in a non-transparent manner to take shortcuts in their writing in order to meet graduation deadlines. Conventional plagiarism detection software has proven inadequate, as generative AI is capable of crafting new text that bypasses traditional similarity index checks (Kusumawardani, et all.,2024).

On the other hand, the prevalence of data fabrication and exploitation by predatory journal publishers has further exacerbated the damage to the higher education ecosystem. Mandatory publication policies for students at all levels have effectively lost their substantive relevance; instead of serving as a platform for the dissemination of expertise, they have devolved into transactional administrative hurdles.

The Theory of Academic Capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie):

This theory explains how higher education institutions have adopted a free-market logic, in which scholarly work is treated as an economic commodity with high transactional exchange value, primarily to boost institutional rankings (Vaidhyanathan, 2023). Currently, higher education is undergoing a massive and structural degradation of morality and accountability, characterized by blatant, collective manipulation of research outcomes. Scholarly work has lost its sacred and rigorous scientific status due to widespread malpractice including the use of AI to generate books and academic papers from scratch (often without even being read), the recycling of research data, and the fabrication of data all to produce journal articles solely to satisfy the administrative requirements for "Lecturer Activity Proof" (BKD).

For lecturers and researchers, the cumulative credit point system (KUM) which mandates publications in reputable international journals as a primary requirement for advancement in academic ranks (from Associate Professor to Full Professor) creates immense psychological work-related pressure. Driven by the need to meet these national credit point requirements, some lecturers have become ensnared in a cycle of unethical practices, ranging from the misuse of AI and ghostwriting to the phenomenon of "gift authorship" (Dwivedi, et all., 2023).

While the SINTA system in Indonesia has succeeded in mapping the visibility rankings of domestic research, its implementation often creates stratification and structural inequalities among higher education institutions, stemming from disparities in financial capacity to cover Article Processing Charges (APCs) for open-access journals indexed in Scopus (UNESCO, 2023).

Human Agency Theory (Albert Bandura):

This theory focuses on how the dominance of intelligent machine automation has the potential to erode critical thinking capacity, emotional intuition, and the authenticity of scientific discovery processes traditionally carried out manually by human subjects amidst the rapid influx of algorithm-based, instantly generated content (Dwivedi, et all., 2023). The emergence of AI has transformed many aspects of life, including primary and higher education. Students have become heavily reliant on AI technology and Google for their learning activities; they frequently use these tools to address questions and complete assignments or even examinations. AI is a double-edged sword: while it can resolve problems quickly, it may also stifle human creative thinking. Mark Zuckerberg has stated that AI is potentially more dangerous than nuclear weapons, as it could lead to widespread job losses, leaving many people to face starvation.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive evaluative research design. A qualitative approach was selected because the research aims to explore critically, in-depth, and contextually the phenomenon of academic governance policy amidst the disruption caused by artificial intelligence (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Sugiyono, 2020). The evaluative design is used to re-examine the validity, relevance, and impact of the implementation of regulations concerning scientific publications which serve as requirements for both student graduation and the advancement of faculty functional ranks based on textual regulatory data and empirical realities observed directly in the field, without any manipulation of variables by the researcher (Sanjaya, M. R., 2025).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on a content analysis of regulatory documents concerning higher education governance, it is evident that the current operational legal framework encompassing both the Operational Guidelines for Faculty Credit Point Assessment (PO PAK) and the competency standards for student graduation remains rooted in a conventional paradigm (Dwivedi, et all., 2023). These regulations establish the quantity of text-based scholarly publications (indexed in Scopus and SINTA) as the sole indicator of intellectual maturity.

However, a review of secondary literature on the development of artificial intelligence technology presents a significant challenge to this premise. State-of-the-art Generative AI algorithms have reached a level of capability that allows machines to automate the entire scholarly writing pipeline from synthesizing literature and drafting methodologies to generating data visualizations almost instantaneously. This literature review reveals that national higher education regulations have failed to keep pace with the emergence of AI-driven "paper mills," a phenomenon that undermines the integrity of the global peer-review ecosystem.

As AI becomes capable of generating scholarly articles with high efficiency, relying solely on written publications as the benchmark for a faculty member's expertise no longer accurately reflects their true competence. Future evaluation models must shift the focus away from mere paper-based outputs toward tangible outcomes such as patented innovations adopted by industry, empirically demonstrated impact through community engagement, and high-quality, contextual teaching that remains resilient to AI-driven automation.

A. Student Graduation Ecosystem (Undergraduate Theses, Master's Theses, and Doctoral Dissertations)

Through direct, passively participatory observation conducted by faculty researchers during the supervision of final-year projects, a dramatic decline in the depth of students' critical reasoning has been identified. The requirement for publication as an absolute condition for graduation coupled with the easy accessibility of Generative AI (GenAI) has fostered a pragmatic approach among students. The researchers' field notes indicate a tendency for students to use AI as a shortcut in drafting scholarly articles, bypassing the essential process of thoroughly internalizing the underlying concepts.

Furthermore, direct observation confirms that conventional plagiarism detection software (such as Turnitin or its equivalents) employed by the faculty is entirely ineffective at identifying the originality of ideas; AI-generated text can be reformulated in such a way as to bypass traditional similarity index thresholds. The policy requiring students to publish their work has shifted from serving as a vehicle for the dissemination of expertise to becoming a transactional, administrative, and financial hurdle.

B. The Ecosystem of Functional Rank Advancement for Lecturers

In observing the behavior of fellow lecturers regarding the process of advancing their functional academic rank, the researcher noted the presence of significant psychological pressure and widespread academic burnout. The requirement to accumulate credit points (KUM) driven by the need for publications in reputable international journals has forced academics into a race centered on the sheer quantity of written work.

Direct observation within academic circles reveals a growing tendency toward the non-transparent use of AI to accelerate manuscript preparation, the proliferation of "gift authorship," and the financial exploitation of researchers by predatory journals all driven by the pressure to meet bureaucratic deadlines (UNESCO, 2023). The substantive expertise of faculty members is undergoing a qualitative degradation, as the current national evaluation system places greater value on paper based outputs (such as formal publication credits) than on the tangible impact of technological innovations in society or the quality of contextual teaching within the classroom.

The findings of this research reveal a profound epistemological crisis within higher education. While national regulatory documents such as the PO PAK (guidelines for academic promotion) and graduation standards continue to prioritize text-based scholarly articles as the sole instrument for assessing competence, the observed digital reality demonstrates that text has undergone mass commodification through generative artificial intelligence (Generative AI). The efficiency with which modern algorithms assemble the components of a manuscript undermines the fundamental premise that "writing reflects the depth of one's thought" (Dwivedi, et all, 2023).

Psychological pressure, the phenomenon of academic burnout, and the prevalence of unethical shortcuts such as "gift authorship" and the traps set by predatory journals, all identified through direct observation serve as tangible manifestations of the tensions inherent in the theory of "academic capitalism." Higher education has been compelled to adopt a free market logic, in which the quantity of international publications is treated as a transactional commodity, utilized primarily to boost institutional rankings (Vaidhyanathan, 2023).

However, when humans are compelled to compete with the production speed of intelligent machines in generating text, the academic ecosystem becomes unhealthy. The financial disparity between higher education institutions regarding the payment of Article Processing Charges (APCs) for open-access journals further exacerbates social stratification among faculty members (UNESCO, 2023). These findings challenge the assumption that a mandate for international publication automatically enhances the quality of national science; on the contrary, without a reorientation of performance indicators, such a policy serves only to degrade the dignity of the academic profession—reducing educators and discoverers to mere laborers tasked with the production of documents.

As a concrete step to address this disruption, the future direction of higher education governance policy must shift from an output-centric paradigm (based on the quantity of written documents) toward an outcome-centric paradigm

(based on processes and tangible impact). The practical implications of this research suggest reformulating academic evaluation models through two key strategies that are resistant to manipulation by artificial intelligence (AI-resistant assessment models).

- ✓ For Student Graduation: Replace or diversify the requirement for publishing academic articles by introducing alternatives such as demonstrating an innovation project, undergoing a comprehensive oral examination that directly tests logical reasoning, or developing a functional technological product that provides solutions for local industries.
- ✓ For Faculty Promotion: Reduce the weight given to theoretical or contemplative academic articles indexed in Scopus or SINTA. Instead, the majority of cumulative credit points (KUM) should be reallocated toward indicators of empirical impact—such as innovation patents adopted by industry, measurable outcomes from community service initiatives, successful research commercialization (hilirisasi), and a track record of contextual, humanistic teaching.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that the policy requiring the publication of scholarly work (indexed in SINTA or Scopus) a mandatory condition for student graduation and the advancement of faculty functional ranks has suffered a degradation in both its relevance and substantive validity in the era of disruptive generative artificial intelligence. Through a triangulation of literature review and direct observation, a significant gap is revealed between the ideals set forth in written regulations and the empirical reality on the ground. As AI infrastructure enables the mass, instantaneous generation of scholarly text, written documents can no longer serve as a reliable, sole proxy for measuring an individual's genuine intellectual capacity. Rather than enhancing the quality of science, maintaining a mandate for text-based publication at a time when conventional plagiarism detection systems have become largely ineffective only fosters academic pragmatism, diminishes students' critical reasoning, and contributes to academic burnout and the adoption of unethical practices among faculty members.

The theoretical implications of this study confirm the applicability of Goodhart's Law to higher education governance, wherein an assessment metric loses its meaning once it is imposed as a bureaucratic, mechanical target. In practical terms, this research urges the Ministry of Education and higher education authorities to promptly reorient their Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Future academic governance policies must shift from a paradigm centered on the quantity of text (output-centric) toward an evaluation model that is resistant to AI manipulation and focused on tangible results (outcome-centric). Assessment should instead center on the demonstration of hands-on innovation projects, comprehensive oral examinations, the practical application of research, industry-adopted patents, and the concrete impact of community engagement initiatives.

Although this study offers a fundamental critique of contemporary regulations, it has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. The research relies on qualitative methods specifically literature review and direct observation within an academic ecosystem limited to the scope of the researcher's own observations; consequently, it does not fully capture the behaviors of academics on a national scale. Therefore, future research should employ large-scale quantitative studies or a mixed-methods approach to map the extent to which students and faculty rely on Generative AI (GenAI) for scholarly writing. Furthermore, subsequent research is encouraged to develop a technical assessment matrix based on clinical or practical competencies that can be applied equitably across various academic disciplines in the wake of this technological disruption.

FURTHER STUDY

This research still has limitations, so further studies on the topic of Disruption of Student Graduation Requirements and Academic Rank Advancement for Lecturers in the Era of Generative AI: A Critical Analysis are needed to improve this research and add insight for both the author and the readers.

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