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# Hunger, Power, and Education in the Algorithmic Age

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**Abstract**: *This article offers a critical pedagogical analysis of artificial intelligence in education by conceptualising AI not as a neutral enhancement of learning, but as a reorganisation of educational scarcity. Against dominant narratives that present AI as a solution to inequality, inefficiency, and lack of access, it argues that algorithmic educational systems often redistribute scarcity in less visible but more pervasive ways, producing informational abundance alongside ethical, political, and existential deprivation. Drawing on Freirean critical pedagogy, the article introduces hunger as a central analytical metaphor for examining education in the algorithmic age. Through a conceptual distinction between fasting, starvation, and death, it theorizes different forms of absence: fasting as a voluntary and pedagogically generative refusal of algorithmic immediacy; starvation as the imposed erosion of agency, voice, and context within datafied learning environments; and death as the foreclosure of education's emancipatory horizon when prediction and optimisation replace hope and transformation. The article develops a theoretical framework for understanding how AI reshapes power, subjectivity, and educational possibility, and outlines the contours of a critical pedagogy of AI grounded in dialogue, agency, and educational justice.*

**Keywords**: Artificial Intelligence, Hunger, Critical Pedagogy, Power, Education

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## 1. Introduction

The rapid integration of artificial intelligence into educational systems has reshaped contemporary debates about teaching, learning, and the purpose of education itself. AI-driven technologies such as adaptive learning platforms, automated assessment tools, learning analytics, and generative systems are increasingly presented as solutions to long-standing educational challenges, including inequality, inefficiency, and lack of personalisation. These developments are often framed within narratives of progress and inevitability, where technological innovation is assumed to be both neutral and beneficial. Yet such assumptions sit uneasily with traditions of critical pedagogy, which insist that education is never merely technical, but always ethical, political, and deeply entangled with power.

This article argues that the rise of AI in education demands not only technical evaluation but critical re-theorisation. Rather than asking how AI can improve learning outcomes, it asks what kinds of learners, forms of knowledge, and futures are being produced through algorithmic systems. To address these questions, the article introduces hunger as a central metaphor for analysing education in the algorithmic age. Hunger is not employed here as a biological condition, but as a conceptual and pedagogical lens through which absence, deprivation, desire, and possibility can be critically examined. Through the metaphors of fasting, starvation, and death, the article explores how AI reorganises educational experience, redistributes agency, and reshapes the conditions under which learning becomes possible.

Critical pedagogy has long emphasised that education is a site of struggle rather than consensus. Drawing on the work of Paulo Freire, education is understood not as the transmission of neutral knowledge but as a practice that can either reproduce domination or enable liberation (Freire *Oppressed*). From this perspective, technological systems cannot be separated from the social and political contexts in which they are designed and deployed. AI systems are built on data, models, and classifications that reflect particular values, assumptions, and interests. When integrated into education, they inevitably shape what counts as knowledge, how learning is measured, and whose voices are heard or marginalised.

The metaphor of hunger is particularly useful in this context because it foregrounds dependency and vulnerability - conditions often obscured by discourses of efficiency and optimisation. Education, like nourishment, is essential for human flourishing, yet access to meaningful education is unevenly distributed. In the age of AI, this unevenness does not always appear as exclusion from resources. On the contrary, learners may be surrounded by an abundance of information while remaining epistemically deprived. Hunger thus captures the paradox of contemporary education: saturation without sustenance, access without agency, personalisation without dialogue.

Within this metaphorical framework, fasting represents voluntary restraint and critical refusal. It names pedagogical practices that resist the immediacy of algorithmic answers and the constant consumption of information. Fasting in this sense aligns with critical pedagogy's emphasis on reflection, dialogue, and conscientization, understood as the capacity to critically perceive and transform social reality (Freire *Oppressed*). Starvation, by contrast, refers to imposed deprivation. It describes educational conditions in which

learners are denied meaningful participation, historical context, or ethical grounding, even as AI systems deliver content, feedback, and predictions. Death functions as a metaphor for the foreclosure of educational possibility, where learning is reduced to compliance, performance, or prediction, and the transformative promise of education is abandoned.

Situating AI within this metaphorical continuum allows for a critical interrogation of claims that algorithmic education is inherently empowering. While AI systems are often promoted as tools for personalisation and inclusion, they also intensify processes of datafication and surveillance, transforming learners into objects of measurement and prediction. Such abstraction risks severing education from embodiment, sociality, and collective meaning-making. This concern echoes earlier philosophical accounts of education and flourishing, including those of Aristotle, who emphasised that human development is inseparable from participation in ethical and political life (Aristotle). When education is reduced to individualised optimisation, its relational and democratic dimensions are weakened.

This article contributes to ongoing debates at the intersection of critical pedagogy and AI by offering a metaphorical and theoretical intervention rather than an empirical evaluation of specific technologies. It seeks to reframe AI not as a neutral enhancement of education but as a reorganisation of educational hunger - one that demands critical scrutiny. By mobilising hunger as a pedagogical metaphor, the article highlights how AI systems can simultaneously feed and starve learners, offering information while eroding agency, dialogue, and hope. Methodologically, this article adopts a critical-theoretical and conceptual approach grounded in critical pedagogy. Rather than offering an empirical evaluation of specific AI technologies, it develops a metaphorical analysis to examine how algorithmic systems reshape educational experience, power relations, and learner agency. The use of hunger as an analytical metaphor functions as a critical tool for making visible forms of deprivation and possibilities that remain obscured within dominant discourses of educational technology. Against prevailing narratives that frame AI as a solution to educational scarcity, this article argues that algorithmic systems often redistribute scarcity in less visible but more pervasive ways.

This article intervenes in contemporary debates on AI in education by challenging solutionist and data-driven framings of artificial intelligence as a neutral remedy for educational scarcity (Selwyn; Benjamin; Watters).

The argument developed here proceeds as follows. The next section situates the analysis within critical pedagogy and examines the politics of educational technology. This is followed by a conceptual elaboration of hunger as metaphor, focusing on fasting, starvation, and death as analytical categories. The article then examines how AI reorganises learning through automation, personalisation, and datafication, before turning to the implications of algorithmic starvation for learner agency and educational justice. The concluding section outlines the contours of a critical pedagogy of AI that reclaims hunger not as a deficit to be eliminated, but as a site of ethical and political responsibility in contemporary education.

## 2. Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Educational Technology

Critical pedagogy emerges from the recognition that education is not a neutral or purely technical endeavour,

but a political practice embedded within broader social, economic, and historical relations of power. Rather than treating schooling as a site for the transmission of objective knowledge, critical pedagogy understands education as a space where ideologies are reproduced, contested, and potentially transformed. This orientation is especially significant in contemporary discussions of educational technology, where artificial intelligence is frequently framed as an apolitical solution to pedagogical and institutional problems.

At the core of critical pedagogy is the insistence that knowledge is socially constructed and that educational practices are inseparable from questions of domination and liberation. The foundational work of Paulo Freire conceptualises education as either an instrument of oppression or a practice of freedom (Freire *Oppressed*). Freire's critique of the "banking model" of education, in which learners are positioned as passive recipients of deposited knowledge, remains particularly relevant in the context of AI-driven educational systems. Automated platforms that deliver content, assess performance, and provide feedback risk reproducing this model on a larger and more technologically sophisticated scale.

Educational technologies are often presented as neutral tools whose effects depend solely on how they are used. Critical pedagogy challenges this assumption by foregrounding the political economy of technology. Technologies are designed, funded, and implemented within specific institutional and ideological contexts, and they inevitably reflect the priorities and values of those contexts (Selwyn). In the case of AI, these priorities frequently include efficiency, scalability, standardisation, and prediction. While such goals may align with managerial and market-oriented visions of education, they often conflict with pedagogical commitments to dialogue, critical inquiry, and democratic participation.

From a critical pedagogical perspective, AI must therefore be understood not simply as an instructional aid, but as a form of governance. Algorithmic systems classify learners, rank performance, and anticipate future behaviour, shaping educational trajectories in ways that are often opaque and difficult to contest (Williamson). These processes redistribute power away from teachers and learners toward designers, institutions, and corporate actors who control the data, models, and infrastructures of AI systems. As a result, decisions about what counts as learning, success, or risk are increasingly automated.

Freire's concept of conscientisation offers a crucial lens for analysing these developments. Conscientisation refers to the process through which learners become aware of the social, political, and economic forces shaping their lives and develop the capacity to act upon that awareness (Freire *Oppressed*). Education that fosters conscientisation is dialogical, participatory, and oriented toward transformation. By contrast, educational systems that prioritise prediction and control risk undermine this process. When AI systems predefine learning pathways and outcomes based on past data, they may limit learners' capacity to imagine alternative futures, thereby constraining the very critical awareness that education ought to cultivate. Critical pedagogy also emphasises the relational and dialogical nature of learning. Knowledge is not produced in isolation but emerges through interaction, disagreement, and collective meaning-making. AI- mediated education, however, often privileges individualised learning experiences optimised through data analytics. While personalisation is frequently presented as empowering, critical pedagogy questions whether such individualisation comes at the expense of shared inquiry and social

responsibility (Biesta). The shift from dialogical classrooms to data-driven interfaces risks reducing education to a private transaction rather than a public and ethical practice.

The politics of educational technology are further complicated by issues of inequality and exclusion. AI systems rely on large datasets that often reflect existing social biases related to race, class, language, and geography. When these biases are encoded into educational technologies, they can reproduce and intensify structural inequalities under the guise of objectivity (Noble). Critical pedagogy insists that such processes be named and challenged, rather than accepted as technical limitations or unintended consequences. Importantly, critical pedagogy does not reject technology outright. Instead, it calls for a critical engagement that interrogates the purposes technology serves and the forms of subjectivity it produces. The question is not whether AI can be used in education, but under what conditions, for whose benefit, and toward which ends. From this perspective, educational technology becomes a site of struggle rather than a neutral innovation. It is a terrain where competing visions of education - instrumental versus emancipatory, predictive versus open-ended - are negotiated.

In situating AI within the tradition of critical pedagogy, this article treats educational technology as a political project that shapes not only how students learn, but who they are invited to become. The metaphor of hunger introduced in this article builds on this insight by highlighting how algorithmic systems can simultaneously promise nourishment while producing new forms of deprivation. Understanding these dynamics requires a critical pedagogical lens attuned to power, ideology, and the ethical responsibilities of education in the algorithmic age.

## 3. Hunger as Metaphor: Fasting, Starvation, and Death

Metaphor plays a central role in how complex social and educational phenomena are understood and theorised. Rather than functioning as a purely rhetorical device, metaphor shapes perception, frames problems, and guides action. As Lakoff and Johnson argue, metaphors are not merely linguistic embellishments but fundamental structures through which human beings conceptualise experience. In educational theory, metaphor has long been used to make visible the often-invisible dynamics of power, subjectivity, and exclusion. Within this tradition, hunger offers a particularly generative lens for examining contemporary education, especially in technologically mediated contexts.

Hunger is a compelling metaphor because it captures both necessity and vulnerability. To hunger is to lack something essential, but also to be oriented toward fulfilment. Education, similarly, is premised on absence - on not yet knowing, not yet understanding, not yet becoming. However, not all forms of hunger are pedagogically productive. By distinguishing between fasting, starvation, and death, this article develops a conceptual framework that differentiates between forms of absence that enable learning and those that undermine it.

Fasting, as a metaphor, represents voluntary restraint and intentional withholding. In pedagogical terms, fasting names moments in which learners and educators resist immediacy, excess, and constant consumption. It aligns with traditions of critical pedagogy that value reflection, dialogue, and the suspension of premature

closure. To fast education is to refuse the demand for instant answers and measurable results, creating space for questioning and critical awareness. This form of hunger is productive precisely because it is chosen and situated within a broader horizon of meaning. It echoes Freire's emphasis on problem- posing education, where knowledge emerges through inquiry rather than transmission (Freire *Oppressed*).

Starvation, by contrast, names a fundamentally different condition. Metaphorically, starvation refers to imposed deprivation—situations in which learners are denied access to the conditions necessary for meaningful participation in education. Unlike fasting, starvation is not a choice and does not generate clarity or insight. Instead, it narrows attention, erodes agency, and forecloses possibility. In educational contexts, starvation may take the form of exclusion from dialogue, absence of historical and cultural context, or the reduction of learning to fragmented skills and metrics. Importantly, starvation can occur even in environments saturated with information. Learners may be constantly fed content while being deprived of interpretation, critique, and voice.

This distinction is crucial for understanding contemporary education in the age of AI. Algorithmic systems often promise abundance - more resources, more feedback, more personalisation. Yet from a critical pedagogical perspective, such abundance may coexist with forms of starvation if learners are denied opportunities for collective inquiry, ethical reflection, and political engagement. Starvation thus captures the paradox of being educationally overwhelmed yet intellectually undernourished. It also foregrounds the power relations that determine whose hunger is addressed and whose is ignored.

The metaphor of death represents the most extreme educational condition: the foreclosure of learning altogether. Metaphorical death occurs when education ceases to be transformative and becomes merely reproductive. In such contexts, learners are no longer invited to question or imagine alternatives, but are trained to comply, perform, and conform. Death, in this sense, is not a dramatic rupture but a gradual erosion of educational purpose. It marks the point at which education loses its orientation toward the future and abandons its ethical responsibility to human flourishing.

This conception resonates with longstanding philosophical concerns about the conditions of learning and life. Classical accounts of education emphasise that human development requires not only instruction but participation in a shared ethical and political world. When education is reduced to technical optimisation, its relational and normative dimensions are weakened. Metaphorical death thus names the disappearance of education as a public and democratic practice.

Taken together, fasting, starvation, and death form a continuum that allows for a nuanced analysis of educational conditions. They distinguish between forms of absence that foster critical engagement and those that produce deprivation or erasure. Importantly, this framework avoids romanticising struggle or lack. Critical pedagogy does not celebrate hunger for its own sake; rather, it insists on naming the conditions under which hunger becomes oppressive rather than emancipatory.

By mobilising hunger as a metaphor, this article seeks to reframe debates about education and AI away from narrow questions of efficiency and effectiveness. Instead, it foregrounds ethical questions about what learners are being nourished with, what they are being deprived of, and what forms of life education ultimately.

sustains. In the sections that follow, this metaphorical framework is applied to an analysis of artificial intelligence in education, examining how algorithmic systems reshape educational hunger in ways that demand critical scrutiny.

## 4. Artificial Intelligence and the Algorithmic Reorganisation of Learning

Artificial intelligence has increasingly become a defining feature of contemporary educational infrastructures, reshaping how learning is organised, monitored, and valued. AI-driven systems are now routinely used to personalise instruction, automate assessment, predict learner performance, and generate content. These developments are often justified through narratives of innovation, efficiency, and scalability, presenting AI as a technical solution to pedagogical and institutional challenges. From the standpoint of critical pedagogy, however, such narratives obscure the deeper reorganisation of educational experience that algorithmic systems enact.

At a structural level, AI reconfigures learning by shifting emphasis from relational and dialogical processes toward data-driven optimisation. Learning is increasingly framed as an individual trajectory that can be measured, predicted, and adjusted in real time. This reorientation privileges what can be quantified - clicks, completion rates, response times, scores - while marginalising forms of learning that resist easy measurement, such as ethical deliberation, collective inquiry, and critical reflection (Biesta). As a result, education risks being reduced to what algorithms can see and process, rather than what learners can question or transform. From a critical pedagogical perspective, this transformation has profound implications for power and agency. Algorithmic systems do not merely support educational practices; they actively shape them. Decisions about curriculum sequencing, assessment criteria, and learner feedback are increasingly delegated to automated processes that operate according to predefined models and assumptions (Williamson). These systems encode particular views of what learning is and what it is for, often privileging efficiency, predictability, and performance over uncertainty, struggle, and dialogue. In doing so, they subtly reorganise educational hunger-directing learners' attention toward predefined goals while limiting opportunities to ask why those goals matter.

The promise of personalisation is central to the appeal of AI in education. Adaptive systems claim to meet learners where they are, tailoring content to individual needs and abilities. While such personalisation is frequently framed as empowering, critical pedagogy raises concerns about its isolating effects. When learning is individualised through algorithmic recommendation, opportunities for shared inquiry and collective meaning-making may be diminished. Education becomes a private interaction between learner and system, rather than a social practice embedded in community and dialogue. This shift risks undermining the democratic and relational foundations of education emphasised in critical pedagogical theory (Freire *Oppressed*).

Moreover, the personalisation offered by AI is often based on historical data that reflects existing inequalities. Predictive models trained on past performance may reproduce patterns of exclusion related to race, class, language, and geography, thereby constraining learners' futures in the name of accuracy or efficiency (Noble). In this sense, AI does not simply respond to educational hunger; it categorises and manages it,

determining which forms of hunger are addressed and which are rendered invisible. Learners may be continuously fed content while being starved of opportunity, recognition, or hope.

The datafication of learning further intensifies this dynamic. As learners are transformed into data profiles, education becomes increasingly detached from embodied experience and social context. This abstraction aligns with broader trends in digital governance, where individuals are rendered legible primarily through data traces (Zuboff). In educational settings, such abstraction risks reducing learners to objects of analysis rather than subjects of learning. Critical pedagogy challenges this reduction by insisting on the irreducibly human dimensions of education: vulnerability, contradiction, and the capacity for transformation.

Importantly, the algorithmic reorganisation of learning also reshapes the temporal dimensions of education. AI systems operate through anticipation and prediction, using past data to forecast future behaviour. While prediction can support early intervention, it can also narrow the horizon of possibility by treating the future as an extension of the past. From a critical pedagogical standpoint, this is deeply problematic. Education, understood as a practice of freedom, must remain open to the unexpected and the not-yet-imagined. When learning trajectories are algorithmically fixed, the space for becoming otherwise is diminished.

This section has argued that AI reorganises learning not simply by adding new tools, but by reshaping the conditions under which education takes place. Through personalisation, datafication, and prediction, algorithmic systems redistribute power, redefine knowledge, and reconfigure educational hunger. The following section builds on this analysis by examining how these processes contribute to forms of algorithmic starvation, in which learners' agency and capacity for critical engagement are progressively eroded despite the apparent abundance of educational resources.

## 5. Algorithmic Starvation and the Erosion of Agency

While artificial intelligence in education is frequently associated with personalisation, support, and efficiency, critical pedagogy draws attention to a more troubling dynamic: the gradual erosion of learner agency through algorithmic governance. This section develops the concept of algorithmic starvation to describe how AI-mediated educational systems can deprive learners of voice, autonomy, and critical capacity, even as they provide continuous access to content and feedback. Starvation, in this sense, does not result from a lack of educational resources, but from the systematic denial of meaningful participation in knowledge production.

Agency is a central concern in critical pedagogy. For Freire, education as a practice of freedom depends on learners' ability to name the world, question it, and act upon it collectively (Freire *Oppressed*). Agency is not merely individual choice, but the capacity to engage dialogically with others and with social reality. Algorithmic systems, however, tend to recast agency in narrow, instrumental terms. Learners are invited to choose among predefined options, follow recommended pathways, or respond to automated prompts, but rarely question the structures that shape those choices. In this way, agency is simulated rather than enacted.

Predictive analytics play a particularly significant role in this process. By using historical data to forecast learner performance, risk, or potential, AI systems increasingly influence decisions about placement, intervention, and progression (Williamson). While such predictions are often justified as supportive or preventative, they can also function as self-fulfilling prophecies. When learners are categorised according to algorithmic expectations, their educational futures may be constrained in advance. Critical pedagogy warns that such practices undermine the open-ended nature of education by replacing possibility with probability.

Algorithmic starvation is also evident in the ways AI reshapes assessment and feedback. Automated assessment systems prioritise what can be easily measured and standardised, often privileging speed, accuracy, and completion over depth, creativity, or ethical reasoning (Biesta). Feedback generated by algorithms may be immediate and frequent, but it is typically limited to surface-level indicators of performance. Learners are thus fed constant signals about how they are doing, while being starved of opportunities for interpretive dialogue and mutual recognition. The pedagogical relationship is displaced by a technical interface, weakening the relational foundations of learning.

From a critical perspective, this shift has implications for how learners understand themselves. When progress is continuously tracked and evaluated by algorithmic systems, learners may come to see themselves primarily through metrics and dashboards. This datafied self-understanding aligns with broader patterns of digital governance in which individuals are rendered legible through quantification and surveillance (Zuboff). In educational contexts, such processes risk producing compliant and self-regulating subjects who adapt to algorithmic expectations rather than critically interrogating them.

Algorithmic starvation is not experienced uniformly. As critical scholars have shown, AI systems often reproduce existing social inequalities because they are trained on data shaped by historical patterns of exclusion (Noble). Learners from marginalised backgrounds are therefore more likely to be misclassified, over- surveilled, or subjected to deficit-oriented interventions. In such cases, starvation takes on a distinctly political character, as certain groups are systematically denied the conditions necessary for educational flourishing while being subjected to intensified control.

The erosion of agency described here must also be understood in temporal terms. Education traditionally holds space for uncertainty, struggle, and transformation over time. Algorithmic systems, by contrast, prioritise immediacy and optimisation. Learning is expected to be efficient, linear, and continuously improving. From a critical pedagogical standpoint, this temporal compression undermines the slow and often uncomfortable processes through which critical awareness develops (Giroux). Learners are starved of time to dwell in ambiguity, to make mistakes without penalty, and to engage in collective reflection.

This section has argued that algorithmic starvation names a condition in which learners are surrounded by educational technologies yet deprived of agency, dialogue, and critical possibility. Far from being a marginal side effect, this starvation is structurally produced by AI systems that privilege prediction, measurement, and control. The next section turns toward the question of response, exploring how critical pedagogy might reclaim hunger as a site of resistance and reimagine AI's role in education without abandoning the emancipatory aims of learning.

## 6. Reclaiming Hunger: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of AI

If algorithmic systems reorganise educational hunger in ways that risk deprivation and control, the task of critical pedagogy is to reclaim hunger as a site of ethical, political, and pedagogical struggle. This does not mean rejecting artificial intelligence outright, nor romanticising scarcity or difficulty. Rather, it involves reasserting education as a fundamentally human, relational, and open-ended practice that cannot be reduced to optimisation, prediction, or automation. Reclaiming hunger, in this sense, is about restoring the conditions under which learners can desire, question, and transform the world rather than merely adapt to it.

Critical pedagogy has long argued that education must resist being subordinated to instrumental rationality. Freire (*Oppressed*) emphasises that education oriented toward liberation is dialogical, unfinished, and grounded in praxis–the reflective action through which individuals and communities name and change their reality. Applied to AI, this perspective suggests that technologies should be treated not as authoritative sources of knowledge or decision-making, but as objects of inquiry themselves. Learners must be invited to question how AI systems work, whose interests they serve, and how they shape educational and social possibilities.

Reclaiming hunger thus begins with slowing down. In contrast to the speed and immediacy of algorithmic systems, critical pedagogy values pedagogical practices that create space for reflection, hesitation, and uncertainty. Biesta argues that education requires "beautiful risk," understood as the willingness to engage with unpredictability rather than eliminate it through control. In AI-mediated environments, reclaiming this risk may involve resisting constant monitoring, suspending automated judgments, or deliberately creating moments where learners are not immediately answered or evaluated. Such pedagogical fasting is not deprivation, but an ethical refusal of premature closure.

Dialogue is central to this reclamation. While AI systems are often designed to simulate interaction, critical pedagogy insists on dialogue as a fundamentally relational and ethical encounter. Dialogue involves listening, disagreement, and mutual recognition, none of which can be fully automated. Giroux emphasises that democratic education depends on spaces where learners can connect personal experience to broader social structures and engage collectively in critique. Reclaiming hunger means prioritising such dialogical spaces over individualised, data-driven pathways that isolate learners from one another.

A critical pedagogy of AI must also confront questions of power and governance. As Selwyn argues, educational technologies are increasingly shaped by corporate interests and market logics that prioritise scalability and profitability over democratic accountability. Reclaiming hunger, therefore, involves making visible the political economy of AI in education. Learners and educators alike must be encouraged to examine who owns educational data, how algorithmic decisions are made, and what forms of surveillance are normalised in the name of improvement. This form of critical literacy extends Freire's notion of reading the word and the world to include reading the algorithmic infrastructures that shape contemporary life.

Importantly, reclaiming hunger does not imply a return to pre-digital education. Critical pedagogy has always been concerned with engaging the conditions of the present rather than retreating into nostalgia. AI can support learning in meaningful ways when it is subordinated to pedagogical purposes rather than allowed to redefine them. For example, AI tools might be used to support collaborative inquiry, surface diverse perspectives, or make structural inequalities visible, rather than to rank, predict, or discipline learners. The question is not whether AI is present, but whether it is positioned as a servant of human flourishing or as a manager of human potential.

Reclaiming hunger also requires attending to hope. Freire insists that hope is not a passive expectation but an active, critical force grounded in struggle. In algorithmic education systems that emphasise prediction and risk management, hope is often displaced by probability. Learners are encouraged to optimise themselves within predefined parameters rather than imagine alternatives. Critical pedagogy resists this foreclosure by insisting that education remain oriented toward the not-yet, toward futures that cannot be fully anticipated or modelled. Hunger, understood in this way, becomes a sign of possibility rather than deficiency.

This section has argued that reclaiming hunger is central to developing a critical pedagogy of AI. By slowing down, foregrounding dialogue, interrogating power, and sustaining hope, educators can resist forms of algorithmic starvation without rejecting technological engagement altogether. The concluding section draws these arguments together, reflecting on the broader implications of hunger as a metaphor for education in the algorithmic age and outlining directions for future critical inquiry and practice.

## 7. Conclusion

This article has argued that artificial intelligence in education must be understood not merely as a technical development, but as a profound reorganisation of educational experience, power, and possibility. Drawing on the tradition of critical pedagogy, it has proposed hunger as a central metaphor through which to examine this reorganisation. By distinguishing between fasting, starvation, and death, the analysis has sought to illuminate how AI-mediated education can alternately enable reflection, impose deprivation, or foreclose transformation altogether.

Against dominant narratives that frame AI as neutral, inevitable, or inherently progressive, this article has emphasised that educational technologies are always embedded within ideological, economic, and political contexts. As Freire reminds us, education either functions as a practice of freedom or as a mechanism of domination. The integration of AI into educational systems does not suspend this tension; rather, it intensifies it by embedding power within opaque algorithmic processes that are often shielded from critical scrutiny. When learning is reduced to data, prediction, and optimisation, education risks reproducing the very banking logic that critical pedagogy has long sought to challenge.

The metaphor of hunger has proven useful in naming the paradoxes of contemporary education. In algorithmic learning environments, learners may be surrounded by information while remaining epistemically deprived. They may receive constant feedback while being denied dialogue, agency, and collective meaning-making.

This condition, described here as algorithmic starvation, highlights how deprivation can occur even under conditions of apparent abundance. Starvation, in this sense, is not a failure of access but a failure of justice. It reflects decisions about what kinds of learning matter, whose voices are valued, and which futures are deemed imaginable.

At the same time, the article has resisted the temptation to treat hunger solely as a deficit to be eliminated. Through the metaphor of fasting, it has been argued that certain forms of absence - when chosen, contextualised, and ethically grounded - can be pedagogically generative. Slowing down, withholding immediate answers, and resisting constant evaluation can create space for reflection and conscientisation (Biesta; Freire *Oppressed*). Such practices stand in contrast to the logics of immediacy and efficiency that dominate AI-driven education. They remind us that not all hunger is harmful, but that the distinction between productive and destructive absence is always political.

The metaphor of death has served as a warning rather than a conclusion. Educational death, as theorised here, does not refer to the disappearance of schools or technologies, but to the erosion of education's emancipatory purpose. When prediction replaces possibility, when optimisation replaces justice, and when learners are rendered as data rather than subjects, education risks losing its orientation toward the future. This concern resonates with broader critiques of datafication and surveillance in digital societies, where human potential is increasingly managed rather than nurtured (Zuboff; Noble).

Reclaiming hunger, the article has suggested, is central to developing a critical pedagogy of AI. This reclamation involves foregrounding dialogue, interrogating power, and sustaining hope in the face of algorithmic closure. It also requires expanding critical literacy to include an understanding of how AI systems function, who controls them, and how they shape educational and social life (Selwyn; Williamson). Such an approach does not reject AI outright, but insists that technological engagement remain subordinate to ethical and democratic educational aims.

The contribution of this article lies in offering a conceptual and metaphorical framework rather than a set of technical prescriptions. By framing AI as a reorganisation of educational hunger, it invites educators, researchers, and policymakers to reconsider what is being nourished and what is being neglected in contemporary education. Future research might extend this framework through empirical studies of AI-mediated classrooms, critical analyses of specific platforms, or intersectional examinations of how algorithmic starvation is unevenly distributed across social groups.

This article has not sought to measure the effectiveness or impact of AI technologies in education, but to reframe the terms through which their pedagogical, ethical, and political significance is understood. The question raised by this article is not whether AI will shape the future of education - it already does - but whether education will retain the capacity to shape human futures beyond what algorithms can predict. Hunger, understood critically, reminds us that education is always unfinished, dependent, and relational. To attend to hunger in the algorithmic age is therefore to reaffirm education as a practice of freedom, responsibility, and collective human becoming.

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