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Utilizing Google NotebookLM in Teaching and Research at Ho Chi Minh City University of Physical Education and Sports

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ABSTRACT: The Fourth Industrial Revolution and the unprecedented proliferation of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) have catalyzed a profound transformation within the global higher education landscape. Specialized academic institutions, particularly those focusing on interdisciplinary fields such as pedagogical theory and movement science, are confronting significant challenges associated with digital transformation and information overload. This research critically examines the application of Google NotebookLM—an advanced, Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG)-based language model—in optimizing teaching methodologies and scientific research workflows at Ho Chi Minh City University of Physical Education and Sports (UPES). Unlike conventional large language models that are prone to algorithmic “hallucinations,” NotebookLM leverages an expansive context window and strict data grounding to ensure high academic integrity and transparent citation mechanisms. Through a comprehensive conceptual analysis drawing upon contemporary educational technology frameworks, this paper explores the platform’s multimodal pedagogical capabilities, notably the Audio Overview feature, which facilitates dynamic, dialogue-based learning tailored to diverse cognitive preferences. Furthermore, the study outlines a systematic, four-step methodological workflow for researchers to streamline literature reviews. Concurrently, it provides a rigorous epistemological critique of the tool’s intrinsic limitations, specifically addressing intellectual property vulnerabilities, the potential erosion of proactive cognitive engagement, and the risks of algorithmic bias stemming from frequency heuristics. Ultimately, this paper proposes strategic recommendations for cultivating an “Active Learning Ecosystem” and optimizing academic literature syntheses, thereby contributing to the comprehensive digital transformation objectives at UPES in the era of artificial intelligence.

KEYWORDS: Generative Artificial Intelligence, NotebookLM, Higher Education, Educational Technology, Retrieval-Augmented Generation.

INTRODUCTION

The advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, characterized most notably by the explosive and ubiquitous growth of generative artificial intelligence (AI), has begun to exert profound, structural impacts on the global higher education landscape. In this rapidly evolving technological context, higher education institutions in Vietnam are navigating a complex paradigm shift. They face not only the acute logistical pressures of comprehensive digital transformation regarding physical and cloud-based infrastructure but also intricate pedagogical challenges in innovating traditional teaching methodologies and significantly enhancing the scientific research capacity of their academic faculty.

For specialized tertiary institutions such as Ho Chi Minh City University of Physical Education and Sports (UPES), the educational mandate is exceptionally complex. The curriculum necessitates the seamless integration of abstract pedagogical theory, rigorous movement science, biomedical data, and highly practical sports training methodologies. This interdisciplinary convergence requires modern educators to possess not only excellent digital data management and exploitation skills but also the epistemological agility to synthesize and develop knowledge at a highly specialized level. Furthermore, this knowledge must be dynamically adapted to suit both the academic training level and the diverse cognitive profiles of target learners.

However, current educational realities indicate a critical bottleneck: both lecturers and students are increasingly confronting debilitating “information overload” within the unstructured digital environment. The daily processing of vast, uncurated amounts of information derived from peer-reviewed scientific articles, complex textbooks, and policy documents, alongside the intricate retrieval of relevant legal and theoretical bases in the educational sector using traditional, manual methods, is no longer sustainable, thereby revealing numerous systemic inadequacies. Against this backdrop of informational saturation, the emergence of NotebookLM—a breakthrough, specialized AI tool developed by Google featuring profound personalization capabilities based on highly controlled input data through Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG)—has opened a transformative new trajectory, effectively addressing the precise issues where traditional information processing methods fundamentally fail.

Unlike generalized large language models (LLMs) currently offered on other commercial technological platforms, Google’s NotebookLM empowers individual users to consciously construct a distinct, maximally personalized “smart knowledge repository.” This closed-

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system architecture actively assists scholars and students in summarizing massive texts, executing granular cross-referencing, and querying complex information directly and exclusively based on the highly specific source documents they curate and provide.

In the broader field of contemporary educational technology, although NotebookLM is widely evaluated by early adopters as possessing immense potential to optimize electronic lesson plans, support nuanced research data analysis, and personalize dynamic learning pathways, its practical, institutional-scale application remains limited. Particularly within a specialized, practice-oriented pedagogical environment like UPES, NotebookLM remains a relatively novel generative AI artifact without widespread structural implementation among the faculty. Stemming from the core research question: *How can the latent potential of NotebookLM be systematically exploited and pedagogically transformed into an effective, rigorous tool to enhance the quality of teaching and scientific research at UPES?*, this study critically examines the platform's institutional utility. This article represents a foundational portion of the research findings from a broader, long-term institutional project aimed at building a robust, smart digital learning material ecosystem, thereby directly contributing to the realization of comprehensive, sustainable digital transformation goals at UPES in the burgeoning AI era.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND TECHNOLOGICAL ARCHITECTURE

1. The Epistemological Challenge of LLMs: Navigating “Hallucinations”

During the initial phases of generative AI integration into academic spheres, foundational LLMs frequently encountered severe epistemological issues related to generating plausible but fundamentally inaccurate information. Furthermore, these models were algorithmically designed to persuasively present this fabricated data to convince users of its validity—a pervasive phenomenon known within computer science and academia as “hallucinations.” This inherent unreliability constitutes a significant structural barrier for researchers and educators operating within the exacting fields of evidence-based pedagogy and academic research. To address and systematically mitigate this issue of empirical validity, Google developed the NotebookLM (Notebook Language Model) ecosystem.

The NotebookLM model operates on the core epistemological philosophy of “grounding,” an architectural imperative that restricts the AI's informational extraction and synthesis processes strictly to the bounded universe of the source documents explicitly provided by the user. This foundational characteristic differentiates NotebookLM from conventional conversational AI chatbot models by prioritizing methodological transparency and information accuracy (Google, 2023).

2. Architectural Breakthroughs: Gemini 1.5 Pro, Context Windows, and RAG Technology

NotebookLM, underpinned by Google's advanced Gemini 1.5 Pro architectural framework, represents a paradigm shift in the application of generative artificial intelligence within higher education settings. The architectural cornerstone of this system is its expansive “context window,” a technological development that facilitates the simultaneous ingestion, retention, and processing of millions of interconnected data tokens. In practical academic terms, this computational capacity equates to the concurrent, seamless analysis of dozens of comprehensive monographs, hundreds of peer-reviewed scientific articles, or extensive longitudinal datasets without compromising analytical depth or losing contextual continuity. By transcending the restrictive token limitations found in earlier iterations of language models, this extended context window optimizes the capacity of researchers and educators to synthesize extensive, interdisciplinary literature corpuses.

Furthermore, the platform integrates state-of-the-art RAG technology, which serves as a critical mechanism for ensuring the empirical validity of all generated academic content. Instead of relying exclusively on pre-trained, generalized, and often opaque global datasets, the RAG framework empowers the system to scan, index, and extract data directly from user-curated source repositories—ranging from complex PDFs and Google Docs to web pages and raw text files—to locate direct, context-specific textual evidence. This data-processing methodology, rooted in the aforementioned philosophy of “knowledge grounding,” tethers the AI's analytical and generative outputs to the provided scholarly materials. Consequently, it systematically mitigates the pervasive issue of AI “hallucinations” that frequently compromises the reliability of conventional large language models in rigorous academic contexts.

Before formulating any response to a user query, the model autonomously cross-references its synthesized answer to ensure strict alignment with the localized dataset. Crucially, this process culminates in the automatic generation of granular, hyperlinked citations embedded within the text. As emphasized by Crompton and Burke (2023), this precise citation capability ensures that every generated response is inherently verifiable. It allows scholars and students to instantaneously verify the provenance of specific claims by navigating directly to the exact textual locations within the original excerpts, thereby upholding the stringent standards of academic integrity and research ethics demanded by modern universities. Ultimately, the convergence of massive token processing capabilities and RAG-driven, grounded evidence retrieval positions NotebookLM as a sophisticated instrument that streamlines complex literature reviews, optimizes precise data cross-referencing, and elevates the methodological standards required in contemporary scholarly inquiry.

NOTEBOOKLM AS A CATALYST FOR ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND MULTIMODAL PEDAGOGY

The integration of Google NotebookLM into contemporary higher education and research paradigms introduces a unified framework for the centralized management of diverse learning resources and extensive scholarly literature. By consolidating unstructured informational streams into a user-curated, AI-powered repository, the platform streamlines the initial cognitive load associated with academic inquiry and course preparation.

However, its most critical contribution to maintaining scholarly rigor lies in its automated and transparent citation mechanism. In an era where large language models are frequently scrutinized for producing unverified, biased, or fabricated information, NotebookLM distinguishes itself by anchoring its analytical outputs in the user's explicitly provided corpus. Whenever the model generates a response to an academic query, it embeds sequentially numbered, hyperlinked citations directly within the text output. By clicking these embedded markers, users are instantaneously redirected to the specific, context-specific textual segment within the original source document. As articulated in the educational frameworks proposed by Mollick and Mollick (2024), this granular traceability is crucial for upholding the stringent standards of academic integrity

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demanding in global higher education. It empowers researchers, faculty members, and students to continuously verify the provenance, context, and accuracy of synthesized claims, thereby reducing the temporal expenditure traditionally required for manual cross-referencing, literature validation, and fact-checking processes.

Beyond text analysis and transparent citation management, NotebookLM introduces a transformative approach to multimodal pedagogy through its *Audio Overview* capability. Recognizing that contemporary educational methodologies must adapt to accommodate diverse cognitive preferences, neurodivergent needs, and varied learning styles, this multimodal conversion feature transcends conventional, often monotonous text-to-speech functionalities. Instead, it utilizes advanced generative audio models to produce immersive and realistic audio discussions, commonly referred to as “Deep Dives.”

The underlying generative architecture constructs and orchestrates a dynamic dialogue between two virtual subject-matter experts. Crucially, these virtual personas do not merely recite the uploaded text; rather, they critically synthesize complex theoretical frameworks, identify underlying tensions in the literature, and engage in nuanced, accessible debates regarding the core themes, methodologies, and empirical findings embedded within the source materials. This interactive, conversational synthesis positions NotebookLM as a pedagogical assistant tailored to the cognitive processing paradigms of auditory learners who benefit from acoustic, narrative, and dialogic engagement rather than static textual consumption. Furthermore, the computational efficiency of this multimodal generation—capable of producing high-quality, academically grounded podcasts in a matter of seconds—offers scalable opportunities for educators. It facilitates the rapid democratization of knowledge dissemination, allowing instructional designers at institutions like UPES to convert dense theoretical monographs in sports science or intricate biomechanical articles into accessible, engaging, and portable auditory formats.

UTILIZING GOOGLE NOTEBOOKLM IN TEACHING AT UPES

1. The Imperative for a Digital Learning Ecosystem

Within the context of accelerating digital transformation at UPES, NotebookLM—equipped with multimodal features and robust data grounding developed by Google—serves as a valuable asset for constructing a resilient, dynamic digital learning materials ecosystem. The primary pedagogical advantage of this platform is that it minimizes time-consuming, repetitive manual tasks for lecturers, such as collating reading lists, generating summaries, or formatting citation guides. Consequently, faculty members can direct their instructional energy toward creating high-level, interactive academic value, facilitating deep classroom discussions, and mentoring students.

2. Exploitable Pedagogical Features

Several core NotebookLM features can be systematically leveraged by UPES lecturers to optimize the instructional process:

- **Audio Overview:** This feature transforms dense, theoretical textbooks and peer-reviewed articles into conversational podcasts. It is particularly effective for sports science students who may optimize information absorption through auditory means while commuting or engaging in physical conditioning.
- **Source-Grounded Q&A:** To facilitate evidence-based inquiry, educators can establish interactive modules where students pose questions to the syllabus or specific scientific papers. The platform provides instant, cited answers that guide student comprehension without offering unearned conclusions.
- **Automated Summarization and Study Guide Generation:** The system can instantly process full-semester syllabi to generate structured study guides, customized glossaries of biomechanical or pedagogical terms, and targeted review materials.

3. Ethical Considerations and Procedural Guidelines

Although NotebookLM is a powerful computational tool capable of supporting mass education and deep personalization, its implementation requires careful adherence to several ethical and procedural protocols. Specifically, educators must:

- Ensure that all uploaded documents do not infringe upon intellectual property copyrights or expose sensitive personal data, such as student grading records;
- Consistently verify the generated outputs, treating the AI’s responses as preliminary drafts rather than definitive authorities;
- Maintain instructional proactivity to mitigate the systemic risk of over-reliance on AI, which can compromise independent pedagogical thought.

4. Paradigm Shift: From Memorization to Interaction

Fundamentally, employing NotebookLM in UPES classrooms transcends the mere adoption of a novel technological tool; it signifies a profound epistemological paradigm shift from traditional “knowledge memorization” to dynamic “knowledge interaction.” In this modernized paradigm, educators pivot from being primary distributors of information to acting as facilitators. Their mandate expands to guiding learners on the ethical, effective use of AI in the educational process, specifically by instructing students in the critical skill of prompt engineering—crafting effective, academically rigorous prompts to extract knowledge accurately, critically, and optimally.

METHODOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS: NOTEBOOKLM IN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

In the realm of scientific research, particularly within interdisciplinary fields such as physical education and movement science, a primary structural barrier for researchers is the efficient access, filtering, and synthesis of exponential volumes of information. Within contemporary digital research environments, NotebookLM serves as an analytical instrument that provides procedural solutions for scientists conducting literature reviews and advancing theoretical knowledge through rigorous scholarly inquiry.

Ambiguity, lack of conceptual clarity, and opacity regarding the exact provenance of information represent significant concerns for the academic research community when exploiting secondary data sources. Through NotebookLM’s grounded architecture, when a researcher poses a contextual methodological question surrounding a curated corpus, the tool delivers a synthesized response accompanied by direct textual evidence

from those specific sources. Concurrently, it identifies the exact retrieval locations via hyperlinked citations, thereby streamlining the fact-checking process.

To maximize the utility of this technology, a systematic, four-step methodological workflow is established to streamline literature reviews and data synthesis.

- **Step 1: Knowledge Curation.** Rather than reading uploaded files in isolation, researchers intentionally construct a thematic “Notebook” to systematically compile relevant documents pertinent to a specific research topic (e.g., “The Biomechanics of Sprinting”). Currently, the platform supports the secure upload of up to 50 source documents per notebook, seamlessly integrating PDFs, Google Docs, presentation slides, raw text files (.txt), and web links.
- **Step 2: Data Querying.** Once the curated corpus is established, researchers formulate comparative, synthetic, and analytical queries based strictly on the uploaded materials. For instance, a researcher might prompt the system to cross-analyze methodological variations across multiple studies regarding muscle fatigue.
- **Step 3: Synthesizing and Drafting.** Utilizing the platform’s generative capabilities, researchers draft foundational sections of a research manuscript—such as the literature review, theoretical framework, or methodological justification—grounded exclusively on the notes and insights preserved during the querying phase.
- **Step 4: Validating and Editing.** In the final validation phase, researchers actively verify the embedded citation markers provided by NotebookLM to navigate directly to the corresponding locations within the primary source texts. This practice ensures rigorous human verification, guaranteeing that the nuanced informational context of the original authors is neither distorted nor oversimplified by the algorithmic output.

Table 1: Comparison between NotebookLM and other Generative AI tools

Criteria	NotebookLM	ChatGPT / Claude	Perplexity
Data Sources	User-provided (Personalized and bounded)	Broad-scale, generalized training data (Unbounded)	Real-time internet crawling and indexing
Accuracy	High (Effective hallucination mitigation via strict RAG)	Medium (Prone to generating inaccurate information sources)	High (Dependent on the quality of retrieved web sources)
Citations	Direct, hyperlinked within uploaded documents	Often hypothetical or inaccurate citations	Hyperlinked external internet citations
Usage Fees	Free access model (Subject to platform laboratory terms)	Freemium tiers (Paid subscriptions required for advanced models)	Freemium tiers (Paid subscriptions required for advanced models)

As demonstrated in the architectural comparisons of generative AI utilities, literature reviews typically consume a substantial portion of a researcher’s time. NotebookLM enhances the efficiency of this foundational phase by assisting scholars in systematically comparing diverse theoretical perspectives on a single, complex issue. According to data published by UNESCO (2024), AI-powered reading comprehension and synthesis tools possess the capacity to accelerate the processing speed of dense academic documents up to four times compared to traditional, manual reading methodologies.

CRITICAL LIMITATIONS AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS

Despite the operational capabilities outlined above, the integration of Google NotebookLM into contemporary research methodologies does not represent a universal solution. The deployment of advanced generative artificial intelligence (AI) within scientific and academic environments is accompanied by a spectrum of structural, ethical, and cognitive limitations. To prevent the uncritical adoption of these technologies, the scholarly community at UPES and beyond must conduct a rigorous, ongoing examination of the tool’s constraints. Specifically, researchers must navigate several fundamental limitations that can compromise intellectual property, diminish analytical rigor, and distort the epistemological foundations of scientific inquiry through algorithmic biases.

1. Intellectual Property Rights, Data Privacy, and Confidentiality Risks

The primary constraint when incorporating cloud-based generative models like NotebookLM into institutional workflows revolves around the preservation of intellectual property rights, data privacy, and institutional confidentiality. Although Google has articulated privacy commitments—assuring users that proprietary data uploaded to the localized NotebookLM environment is isolated and not utilized for training its public foundational models—a degree of professional skepticism remains a necessity for the academic community.

Within specialized research domains, such as proprietary sports medicine or biomechanical innovation at UPES, investigators are routinely entrusted with confidential materials that should not be uploaded if data policies present potential compliance risks. These sensitive materials encompass pre-publication manuscripts, proprietary institutional datasets, patent-pending technological blueprints, commercially sensitive algorithms, and human-subject biomedical data. Uploading these intellectual assets to a third-party computational infrastructure introduces vulnerabilities regarding data sovereignty, academic embargoes, and institutional compliance. Consequently, the utility of NotebookLM is inherently curtailed when dealing with novel, competitively sensitive, or classified research agendas. This reality demands that scholars exercise proactive discernment, deliberately excluding sensitive, unpublished corpuses from the AI’s processing parameters to mitigate risks of data exposure or inadvertent intellectual property infringement.

2. The Erosion of Proactive Cognitive Engagement and Analytical Intuition

A significant limitation of utilizing generative AI for literature reviews is the potential degradation of independent cognitive engagement among researchers. NotebookLM exhibits computational proficiency in aggregating dense quantities of text and synthesizing complex theoretical frameworks into coherent summaries. However, this automated efficiency paradoxically threatens to undermine the sustained cognitive immersion required for authentic scholarly discovery, intellectual maturation, and the development of expert intuition.

As articulated in the conceptual framework of Baker and Smith (2019), artificial intelligence must be strategically positioned strictly as a collaborative instrument rather than a substitute for human intellectual labor and critical reasoning. The essence of rigorous scientific research extends far beyond the mechanical summarization of existing literature; it demands the subjective interpretation of conflicting data, the intuitive identification of methodological flaws that an AI might overlook, and the creative synthesis of disparate ideas to conceptualize novel scientific paradigms. Over-reliance on automated summaries risks alienating the researcher from the raw, granular context of primary literature.

By delegating foundational reading and interpretive cognitive processes to a machine learning algorithm, scholars may inadvertently bypass subtle linguistic nuances, underlying epistemological tensions, and contextual caveats embedded within primary texts. Furthermore, this dependency heightens the systemic risk of the “*garbage in, garbage out*” phenomenon; if the user-curated source documents are flawed, ideologically biased, or of sub-optimal quality, the AI will propagate, validate, and potentially amplify these errors. It presents these flawed syntheses with an unwarranted veneer of algorithmic authority. Therefore, human intuition, skepticism, and analytical capacity must remain the driving forces of the research endeavor, ensuring that AI serves strictly as an auxiliary navigational tool rather than the ultimate epistemological authority.

3. Algorithmic Bias, Frequency Heuristics, and Epistemological Distortions

Finally, the core architectural algorithms that underpin the functionality of NotebookLM introduce methodological and epistemological concerns, particularly regarding algorithmic bias and the disproportionate weighting of informational frequency. Despite the verifiable nature of its RAG technology, the system’s operational logic often relies on statistical frequency heuristics. In practical academic application, NotebookLM is algorithmically predisposed to evaluate the importance or validity of an argument, theoretical construct, or empirical dataset based primarily on how frequently that information appears across the provided source documents.

This frequency-dependent mechanism can inadvertently construct an isolated academic echo chamber, systematically marginalizing minority perspectives, dissenting methodological approaches, or statistically less frequent hypotheses. The dangers of such statistical homogenization align with the concerns raised by Bender et al. (2021) regarding large language models functioning as “stochastic parrots”—systems that probabilistically stitch together linguistic patterns and syntactic structures without possessing genuine semantic comprehension, contextual awareness, or the cognitive capacity to evaluate the intrinsic truth-value of synthesized claims.

When NotebookLM encounters highly repetitive data streams, it elevates that data’s prominence in its generated responses, which can skew the researcher’s interpretation and lead to biased conclusions. This algorithmic tendency distorts the epistemological landscape of the literature review, falsely equating statistical repetition within a bounded corpus with genuine academic consensus. Consequently, it is an imperative for researchers to implement independent verification processes. Scholars must continually interrogate the AI’s outputs, cross-reference the suggested insights, and independently evaluate the structural validity of novel trends before incorporating these algorithmic interpretations into the foundational corpus of their scientific research.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report has presented an analytical overview of Google’s NotebookLM, contextualizing its RAG technology within the specific requirements of higher education. In addition to introducing structured methodological frameworks for leveraging NotebookLM to support pedagogical innovation and scientific research at UPES, the report has highlighted critical considerations regarding intellectual property, cognitive engagement, and algorithmic bias to ensure academic integrity and safety during implementation. Based on these synthesized findings and the imperatives of digital transformation, the following strategic recommendations are proposed for higher education institutions:

First, institutions should systematically develop an “Active Learning Ecosystem” tailored to university students. Instead of permitting passive learning modalities—a paradigm that renders students susceptible to information overload within digital environments—lecturers can utilize NotebookLM as a personalized virtual tutor that students can query throughout their academic curriculum. To achieve this institutional shift, educators must proactively upload verified syllabi, peer-reviewed scientific articles, and curated lecture transcripts onto the platform to establish a secure, bounded data repository. Furthermore, universities must formally guide students in utilizing the Notebook Guide feature to generate customized glossaries and knowledge summaries, while instructing them in prompt engineering—crafting precise, evidence-based queries that foster critical thinking rather than simple fact retrieval.

Second, academic leadership should formally establish professional training frameworks that optimize the literature review phase for scientific inquiry. In contemporary research activities, synthesizing extensive volumes of academic literature to compose a coherent framework represents a significant logistical challenge for scholars, particularly for early-career researchers and graduate students. This operational constraint can be directly addressed by the NotebookLM workflow. The formalized process begins with the selection and uploading of high-quality primary sources related to a specific research topic, followed by the deployment of advanced analytical prompts to cross-examine methodological and theoretical variations across the document cluster. Subsequently, the Audio Overview feature can be employed by researchers for auditory critical reflection, allowing them to evaluate AI-generated discussions of the literature to identify research gaps. Furthermore, based exclusively on the provided materials, NotebookLM assists researchers in managing scholarly notes, synthesizing disparate ideas, and constructing manuscripts equipped with transparent, accurate source citations, thereby elevating the overall research productivity of the institution.

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