

# Technology Empowered Educational Transformation - The Promise of AI



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Developments in AI over the last few months have generated expectations that this might be the breakthrough the education sector is looking for. Is it?

Let us look at the implications of AI for education, and the actions that we as educators must consider going forward.

We need to look at AI in Education from the perspective of the key stakeholders--the institution, the teacher and the learner.

As a broad framework, the Russell group of institutions, UK proposes five guiding principles. Universities must support learners to become AI literate, build the capacity of staff, promote the ethical use of AI and ensure academic rigour. To achieve these objectives, institutions must work collaboratively to optimise the potential of this evolving field.

AI is promising--can help institutions raise productivity, reduce costs, develop assessments and support credit transfers.

Teachers can reduce their workload by getting AI to generate lesson plans, text summaries and even develop microlearning courses.

For learners, the biggest benefits are personalisation, adaptive learning and instant feedback.

The use of chatbots can help us achieve the aspiration of providing one assistant per student. There are hundreds of tools available to generate content in seconds—create videos and support video dubbing and translation.

Experts estimate that China has developed about 30 large language models and Baidu's ErnieBot is similar to ChatGPT.

Large language models are getting integrated into Robots in the field of medicine. These can be repurposed to become laboratory/teaching assistants, making this the next frontier for AI in education.

A recent report on the Impact of AI in Education found that AI generated videos were as engaging as human videos, AI helped personalise content, supported automated grading and lowered the costs of learning materials. The promise of AI in education is already being realised. However, certain issues still need to be addressed.

Let me highlight three—first, let us not forget that the digital divide is alive and well. The global average for internet connectivity is 60% while in SSA it is only 40%. Women are 12% less likely to own a mobile phone than men.

One way to close the existing divides is to invest in the four Cs — connectivity, content, capacity and credentials — any investment in ICT infrastructure must make provision for reaching the last mile so that existing inequalities are not exacerbated.

Second, the pace of development of AI requires that regulations and policies are framed at all levels. For example, a UN Multistakeholder Advisory Body on AI has been established to recommend safeguards at the international level. Enabling policies and regulatory frameworks are available at the national level—for instance, in China there are the Regulations on Governing the Service of Generative AI. Institutional policies have been developed to safeguard both the staff and the students—such as Monash University’s Policy and Practice Guidance around acceptable and responsible use of AI Technologies.

Third, while AI is generating alarm regarding the future of jobs, humans will still be in high demand: for blue collar jobs, jobs that need empathy and jobs where creativity and innovation are the key requirement.

Let us ensure that our learners acquire three literacies. First, human literacy, prepares students to perform jobs that only human beings can do and help them to make ethical choices. Second, data literacy is essential where learners must be able to find meaning and separate the true from the fake. Third, technological literacy is essential for learners to deploy software and hardware for creativity and excellence.

Finally, we need to remember that AI by itself will not transform education—a whole paradigm shift is required. AI services are moving from ‘free’ to ‘costed’ as we saw in the case of ChatGPT 4. AI is still an evolving field where unpredictable patterns are visible—hence the need for cautious optimism.