

Embracing AI in the classroom will empower students and teachers

Over the last couple of months, you may have struggled to ignore the wave of innovative AI programs which have sparked both fear and optimism about the future of education. Programs such as ChatGPT and Google's Bard have the potential to save teachers time on repetitive tasks, helping reduce their overall workloads.

Temps de lecture : minute

10 August 2023

Despite these promises, there is a lingering uncertainty about how AI will be used in school. At RM, we independently polled 1000 teachers and 500 students, and the data revealed that whilst AI helps the majority of students (67%) with their schoolwork, more than a third (36%) of teachers believe their students have a better understanding of AI than they do.

With teachers worried they know less about AI than their pupils, it is understandable that AI has been met with some scepticism. A recent survey conducted by the *EdWeek Research Center*, confirmed this when it found that only 27% of teachers said that they believed AI would have a positive effect in the education sector over the next five years.

If schools are to fully realise the positive impact AI can have, it is clear that more needs to be done to educate both teachers and pupils on how it can be effectively used in the classroom.

Reducing burdens outside the classroom

According to the *Department for Education*, teachers on average work over 57 hours a week. However, tasks such as lesson preparation, marking, and other general administrative tasks result in only 19.3 hours being actually spent in the classroom teaching.

Striking the right balance between the time spent on administrative tasks and the time spent on the personal and educational development for their students is tricky. Yet, with the mainstream adoption of AI programs, we have an opportunity to help teachers dramatically decrease the time they spend on administrative tasks, and focus their resources on what matters most, their students.

One example of this might be creating end of year reports. AI models can collate feedback from a variety of teachers and pinpoint where pupils are struggling. These programs can also recognise biases and anomalies in work, helping teachers gain a more holistic understanding of where pupils might require additional support.

Indeed, we have already seen how AI can reduce administrative burdens in school within non-teaching departments. AI programs are being used to help tackle complex and time intensive tasks such as bookkeeping, helping various departments cut down on their workload.

Making sure pupils needs are prioritised

One of the concerns that many teachers have voiced in recent months has been the lack of human connection associated with using AI in the classroom. Teachers are right to ask how the education sector can avoid creating a technology-enabled education system that's void of the personal connection between students and teachers.

Indeed, our own research showed that 89% of teachers believe that nothing can replace human intelligence, empathy or creativity.

However, it's important to note that no-one is advocating for AI to replace the hardworking teaching community. The role of AI is to support teachers, rather than eradicate them. In fact, AI models have the potential to help teachers monitor and personalise the learning experience for their students - catering to different learning styles and abilities.

For example, if a student has a learning difficulty or specific requirements, AI algorithms can use data to create a customised lesson plan and flag to the teacher any areas where the student may require additional support. If a student struggles with reading, the teacher can use an AI program which reads out loud for the student.

Additionally, AI programs can give students struggling to pay attention a creative and unique way to engage with subjects. From interviewing Shakespeare, to asking Einstein questions about relativity, AI has the capacity to help engage students that might otherwise struggle with traditional textbooks.

Despite this, it is important to recognise that a lot of these programs remain under development. Programs such as ChatGPT have become notorious in recent months for producing material which requires proof reading, and teachers should monitor the work it produces, being ready to step in and make adjustments.

Increasing AI literacy

In this debate around AI in the classroom, it is vital to not look over how AI in the classroom benefits pupils on an individual level and could impact the opportunities they're able to access after their school career. AI

literacy will become increasingly important as this technology continues to evolve, and a deeper understanding of how AI works could become an essential skill of the future.

Incorporating AI into the classroom will help to demystify AI for students, and teachers will be able to guide their students on the best way to use these programs to enhance their learning experience.

By empowering students with AI literacy, teachers can equip them with valuable skills and knowledge that will enable them to adapt, innovate, and thrive in a rapidly evolving digital world.

Embracing AI in the classroom

Change with regards to AI is moving at an incredible pace. As we continue to find new and exciting ways to use AI in our day to day lives, it is clear that the classrooms should be one of the key vehicles to support children using AI safely. In turn, it is likely that developers will be paying more attention to how they can create programs specifically targeted at the education sector.

Classrooms may therefore find themselves at the forefront of innovation in this sector, as teachers and students discover how AI can enhance the classroom experience.

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