AI in Schools: Progress or a Rushed Experiment?

Table of Contents

Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly visible in schools and universities, transforming how students learn, write, and think. For some educators and students, AI tools offer powerful support – from personalized tutoring to automated grading – but others worry that its unchecked use could undermine critical thinking and fair assessments. The truth likely lies in between: AI has the potential to enhance education, but only if used thoughtfully. In this opinion report, we explore the promise and perils of AI in schools, the need for clear guidelines, and what future education should look like in an AI-powered world.

The Role of AI in Education

On one hand, AI can be a game-changer for learning. **Personalized learning** is a prime example: AI-driven platforms and intelligent tutors can adapt to each student's pace and understanding, providing tailored explanations and exercises. Research shows that students using AI-based adaptive learning programs saw significantly improved test scores – up to a 62% increase in one study – by receiving content and challenges that matched their proficiency level . This kind of one-on-one support can help students grasp complex topics that might otherwise be missed in a traditional classroom.

AI also acts as a tireless assistant for teachers. It can **save time** by automating routine tasks like grading, lesson planning, and administrative work. For instance, AI tools can grade essays and quizzes in seconds, freeing teachers to focus on giving more in-depth feedback and instruction . AI-powered lesson planners and presentation generators can help educators craft engaging lessons more quickly, and chatbots can answer students' questions 24/7, acting as virtual study partners. In essence, AI can **amplify** teachers' efforts, allowing them to provide more individualized attention to students while handling the heavy lifting of content delivery and grading .

Beyond the classroom, AI tools are **improving accessibility** for students with disabilities. For example, text-to-speech AI can read out loud for students with visual impairments, and speech-to-text AI can convert spoken language into text for those with speech or writing difficulties. These features help ensure that education is more inclusive – a crucial benefit as AI becomes more widespread. **Conversational agents** and **personalized learning platforms** powered by AI can serve as assistive technology, providing support to students with cognitive, speech, or mobility challenges . In short, AI is already expanding educational opportunities and making learning more equitable in various ways.

Potential Risks and Concerns

On the other hand, the rapid rise of AI in schools has raised important questions and concerns. One of the biggest is about **academic integrity** and student work. If students can easily use AI to write essays or complete assignments, it becomes harder to tell what work is truly their own. This blurs the line between collaboration and cheating. Educators worry that **cheating and plagiarism** could increase if students rely on AI-generated content without attribution . Some schools have even banned AI tools outright for assignments, fearing that without clear rules, students might treat AI like a shortcut to answers. As one school district put it, "this time, schools should immediately ban students from using generative AI tools for essay writing, homework or studying help, coding projects, or anything else that would allow them to bypass learning" . The challenge is to find a middle ground: how to leverage AI's benefits without letting it undermine the core values of learning and honesty.

Another concern is the impact on **critical thinking and creativity**. AI excels at generating text, solving problems, and even mimicking creative ideas. This raises the question: are we evaluating students' knowledge or their ability to prompt AI effectively? In a world where answers can be instantly generated by a machine, the emphasis in education should be on **higher-order thinking skills** – analyzing, synthesizing, and creating – rather than just recall. If students come to rely on AI for quick answers, they might not develop the deep understanding and critical reasoning that are essential for success in the 21st century. Research has shown that over-reliance on AI can reduce engagement in learning and even **weaken long-term retention** of information . For example, one study found that students who used AI tools to complete writing tasks experienced lower reasoning and argumentation skills compared to those who did their work without AI . This suggests that while AI can be a powerful aid, it must be used judiciously to avoid **cognitive offloading** – where students offload their thinking onto AI and thus lose practice in doing it themselves.

The **quality of assessment** is also at stake. Traditional assessments like essays, exams, and problem sets have long been used to gauge student understanding. But AI can now produce credible answers to many of these tasks, which makes those assessments less reliable as indicators of true learning. As one expert put it, "the emergence of generative AI has precipitated what can only be described as an assessment crisis" . Educators are grappling with how to redesign assessments so that they still measure what students have learned, rather than their ability to prompt an AI. This may involve moving toward more **performance-based assessments** (such as projects or presentations) and tasks that require critical thinking, rather than rote recall. It also may mean developing better ways to detect AI-

generated content in student work, though current AI detection tools are not foolproof and can sometimes misidentify human writing .

Finally, there's the issue of **readiness and regulation**. The rapid advancement of AI has outpaced the development of clear rules and guidelines in education. Some argue that we are moving too fast without fully understanding the implications. A total ban on AI in schools might seem like a simple solution, but it could also stifle innovation and ignore the potential benefits. Conversely, **blindly adopting AI without controls** could lead to inequities and unintended consequences. The real problem is not AI itself, but the lack of a framework to use it responsibly. As one editorial put it, "the problem is not AI itself, but the lack of clear rules and real digital education" . Schools and policymakers need time to research and develop guidelines that balance the benefits of AI with the need to protect academic integrity and student learning.

How to Make AI Work for Education

To harness AI's potential in education while mitigating its risks, a balanced approach is needed. Here are key steps that educational institutions and policymakers can take:

- **Develop AI Literacy**: All students and teachers should be educated about what AI is, how it works, and its limitations. This means teaching **AI literacy** – understanding how AI tools function, recognizing their biases and errors, and learning to use them ethically. AI literacy helps students become *critical consumers* of AI-generated information, enabling them to evaluate and use AI in a way that complements rather than replaces their own thinking. By teaching students to question AI outputs and to verify information, we can ensure they do not uncritically accept everything they see . Similarly, teachers should be trained to integrate AI tools effectively into their teaching strategies and to use AI in ways that enhance student learning without overshadowing the human element.

- **Establish Clear Rules for AI Use**: Schools must set transparent policies on how AI can be used in assessments and coursework. This includes guidelines on **when AI is acceptable** (for example, as a research or brainstorming tool) and **when it is not** (such as in exams or final assignments). Institutions should also require students to disclose if they used AI to complete an assignment, and to cite any AI assistance appropriately. Clear rules help maintain academic integrity and prevent misuse. For instance, universities are increasingly updating their policies: as of 2025, many top universities (including Oxford, MIT, Princeton, and Cambridge) have issued guidelines that allow students to use AI for personal study but restrict its use in summative assessments unless explicitly permitted . These policies emphasize transparency, academic honesty, and the need for students to verify and cite AI inputs . By implementing such policies, schools can strike a balance between encouraging innovation and maintaining fairness in evaluations.

- **Focus on Strengthening Critical Thinking**: Instead of treating AI as a shortcut to learning, educators should use it as a tool to **deepen critical thinking skills**. This means designing assignments and assessments that require students to analyze, interpret, and create, rather than just regurgitate information. For example, teachers can ask students to evaluate AI-generated content – such as critiquing an essay written by an AI and identifying logical fallacies or biases – which not only tests comprehension but also cultivates a skeptical mindset . Similarly, projects that involve solving

real-world problems or engaging in debates can help students develop reasoning and argumentation skills that AI cannot fully replicate. By emphasizing higher-order thinking and creativity, educators ensure that students are learning *with* AI, not *without* thinking. In essence, the goal is to teach students to **augment** their thinking with AI, not to rely on it as a crutch .

- **Maintain Human Oversight and Teacher Involvement**: While AI can automate many tasks, it should not replace the role of teachers or the human connection in education. The best outcomes are achieved when AI is used as a **co-teacher** – a support system that works in tandem with human educators. Teachers should remain the ones guiding students, setting the learning objectives, and providing feedback that is nuanced and tailored to each student's context. As one perspective notes, AI can "amplify" teachers' efforts but should not "replace effort, teachers, or thinking" . This means teachers need to be involved in the design and evaluation of AI tools, ensuring they align with educational goals and do not undermine important human values. It also means maintaining human-led assessments and discussions, even as AI tools are integrated into the classroom. In the words of UNESCO's AI and education guidance, applying AI in education should be "to enhance learning, not to replace teachers" . By keeping teachers at the center, schools can ensure that AI is used to **support** rather than **supplant** the educational experience.

The Way Forward

Looking ahead, the integration of AI into education will only accelerate. The global AI in education market is expected to grow significantly, and by 2025, over 47% of learning management systems are projected to be powered by AI . This suggests that AI will become an increasingly common part of classrooms worldwide. As we move forward, it's crucial that we do so with a clear vision of how AI can **enhance** education, not just automate it. The future of education in the age of AI should be one where:

- **Students are empowered to learn with AI**, rather than being afraid of it. This means teaching AI literacy from an early age, so that students grow up knowing how to use AI responsibly and critically. By equipping students with the skills to navigate AI, we can prepare them for a future where AI is a ubiquitous tool in both education and work.

- **Assessment reflects what students have learned**, not just their ability to use AI. This may involve shifting from end-of-unit exams to continuous, performance-based assessments that measure higher-order skills. It also may involve developing new forms of evaluation that test students' ability to use AI effectively (for example, how well they can prompt an AI to solve a problem or create content). By redesigning assessments to focus on learning outcomes rather than rote recall, we ensure that AI does not skew the evaluation of student progress.

- **Equity and inclusion are prioritized**. AI has the potential to personalize learning and provide support to students who might otherwise fall behind. However, it must be accessible to all students – regardless of socioeconomic background or physical ability. Ensuring that AI tools are affordable, widely available, and designed with inclusivity in mind will help bridge the digital divide. Additionally, policies should prevent the misuse of AI in ways that could disadvantage certain groups, such as ensuring that AI is used fairly in grading and that all students have equal access to AI resources. In

short, AI should be a force for **educational equity**, not a new barrier for those who lack access or support.

- **Ethical and responsible AI practices are embedded in education**. This means following international guidelines and principles for AI ethics. UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, adopted by 194 member states, emphasizes human rights, fairness, transparency, and accountability in AI systems . Educational institutions should adopt similar principles: protecting student data privacy, ensuring that AI systems are unbiased and transparent, and maintaining clear lines of accountability for AI use. By integrating ethical considerations into AI implementation, schools can build trust with students, parents, and the public that AI is being used in a responsible manner.

Conclusion

AI in schools is not a passing fad – it is a transformative force that offers both remarkable opportunities and serious challenges. The truth is that AI can **enhance** education by providing personalized learning, automating tasks, and improving accessibility. But it must be used with caution and under clear guidelines to avoid **undermining** the values of learning and fairness. The debate over AI in schools is not about whether to ban it or embrace it wholesale; rather, it is about finding the right balance. Future education should be built on the foundation of **AI literacy**, **transparency**, and **critical thinking**, ensuring that students learn how to use AI as a tool while also developing the skills that only humans can provide. By doing so, we can harness the power of AI to create a more efficient, inclusive, and innovative educational system – one that truly empowers students for the 21st century and beyond.

This article represents a personal opinion and general analysis for informational purposes only. It does not constitute official educational guidance or institutional policy.

Reference

[1] The Role of AI in Personalized Learning
https://claned.com/the-role-of-ai-in-personalized-learning/

[2] AI in Schools: Pros and Cons - College of Education | Illinois
https://education.illinois.edu/about/news-events/news/article/2024/10/24/ai-in-schools--pros-and-cons

[3] The cognitive paradox of AI in education - PMC - NIH
https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12036037/

[4] AI and the next digital divide in education
https://www.brookings.edu/articles/ai-and-the-next-digital-divide-in-education/

[5] AI and the future of education: Context
https://www.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2025/04/CN_DLW-2025_draft_250325_public_EN.pdf

[6] Artificial intelligence in education - AI
https://www.unesco.org/en/digital-education/artificial-intelligence

[7] Top AI Tools for Teachers in 2025
https://pce.sandiego.edu/ai-tools-for-teachers/

[8] Embracing AI for Personalized Learning

https://casmi.northwestern.edu/news/articles/2024/embracing-ai-for-personalized-learning.html

[9] How AI in Assistive Technology Supports Students and ...
https://www.everylearnereverywhere.org/blog/how-ai-in-assistive-technology-supports-students-and-educators-with-disabilities/

[10] Schools Went After Cellphones. Now It's Time to Ban ...
https://techpolicy.press/schools-went-after-cellphones-now-its-time-to-ban-generative-ai

[11] Does AI Harm Critical Thinking
https://lile.duke.edu/ai-ethics-learning-toolkit/does-ai-harm-critical-thinking/

[12] What's worth measuring? The future of assessment in ...
https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/whats-worth-measuring-future-assessment-ai-age

[13] 5 Pros and Cons of AI in the Education Sector
https://www.waldenu.edu/programs/education/resource/five-pros-and-cons-of-ai-in-the-education-sector

[14] Generative AI Policies at the World's Top Universities
https://www.thesify.ai/blog/gen-ai-policies-update-2025

[15] AI and the future of education
https://eipformazione.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/395236eng.pdf

[16] Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence
https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/recommendation-ethics-artificial-intelligence