

Summary of Zoom chat from “AI and the Future of Education: Disruptions, Dilemmas and Directions”

5th June 2025

Opening and Framing

- Participants joined from a wide range of locations and backgrounds, with several referencing their local weather and communities.
- A link was shared to resources and articles relevant to the discussion.

The Role of AI in Education

- There was debate about whether AI should be a tool to support learning, similar to a calculator, or if it risks interfering with the relationship between students and teachers.
- Some saw AI as a means to plug institutional gaps, such as acting as a cognitive assistant or critical friend when one-to-one support is not available.
- The idea that education should resist a future dominated by AI was put forward, with others suggesting AI could help steer education back to focusing on individual talents and life direction.
- The intermediary role of AI was discussed, with some questioning whether it should mediate educational relationships at all.

Human Relationships, Identity, and Cognitive Development

- Several participants stressed the need to centre human relationships and the importance of students developing their own voices, warning that early reliance on AI-generated voices could hinder self-identity.
- There was concern about the lack of clear guidelines for age-appropriate introduction of AI, and the impact on cognitive development, especially as the prefrontal cortex is not fully formed until adulthood.
- The risk of losing deep thinking skills due to over-reliance on AI was highlighted, referencing the importance of reading and writing for cognitive depth.

Professional Development and Institutional Readiness

- Many agreed that professional development for teachers around AI is lacking, with the pace of AI development outstripping training and guidance.
- The need for resources and support for integrating AI into teaching was repeatedly mentioned, alongside frustration at the lack of a clear plan for educators.
- One participant described the creation of a learning resource to help educators engage with generative AI tools.

Assessment, Academic Integrity, and Systemic Change

- The challenge of designing assessments that cannot be completed by AI was discussed, with suggestions to document prompts used and critique AI responses.
- There was criticism of tools like Turnitin and ChatZero, with some opting out of long-format essays and moving towards programmatic and synoptic assessment models.
- Concerns were raised about the marketing of AI tools to students as ways to “break” assessments, and the resulting need to rethink what is worth learning.

Equity, Access, and Open Source

- The cost of advanced AI tools and the resulting equity issues were raised, with calls for universities to set up corpora for open source language models and teach students how to use local AI instances.
- Open educational resources and universal internet access were mentioned as intersecting areas of advocacy.
- The potential for AI to support students with dyslexia and other learning needs was acknowledged, but concerns about commodification remained.

Ethics, Shame, and Systemic Critique

- The concept of “shame” around AI use was explored, with some seeing it as a failure to have honest conversations about AI’s nature and impact.
- There was direct criticism of AI as “founded on lies,” with discussion about the ethical challenges of engaging with a tool seen by some as fundamentally unethical.
- Others questioned whether a tool itself can be unethical, or whether the issue lies with the socio-technical systems in which it is embedded.
- The difficulty of pushing responsibility for ethical AI use onto individuals, rather than addressing systemic harms, was discussed.

- Environmental, social, and labour impacts of AI were mentioned as areas of concern.

Resistance, Agency, and Alternative Approaches

- Some participants described themselves as conscientious objectors to certain edtech products, and discussed strategies of resistance, such as opting out of specific tools or assignments.
- The use of open source AI tools and running local models was seen as a way to critically engage with AI and maintain agency.
- The idea of creating collective spaces for alternative learning, teaching, and assessment practices outside of data architectures was suggested.

Indigenous Knowledge and Alternative Perspectives

- There was interest in how Indigenous knowledge systems might inform AI futures
- Participants expressed a desire to continue conversations about Indigenous ways of knowing

AI Literacy and Critical Thinking

- The definition of AI literacy was discussed, with one participant quoting: “the ability to understand, utilize, and critically evaluate AI technologies and their societal impacts.”
- Some questioned whether AI literacy is distinct from general literacy, and whether restrictions or education are more effective.
- The need to teach young people to use AI intelligently and to set tasks that require personal and contextual critique was emphasised.
- Concerns were raised about most youth using AI at face value, without critical thinking, and the need for educators to help students move beyond this.

Policy, Governance, and the Future

- The lack of clear or widely accepted guidelines for AI use in education, especially for children, was noted.
- There were calls for repositories of ethical statements and opt-out rationales to help educators articulate their positions.
- Scepticism was voiced about the long-term sustainability and profitability of current AI models, with some predicting a deflation or collapse that would affect universities more than businesses.

- Safe spaces for dialogue and collaboration were seen as vital, and there was enthusiasm for continuing the conversation and sharing resources.

Additional Points

- The divide between “doers” and “doubters” in AI adoption was discussed, with recognition that both are needed in education.
- The narrative around AI, including the promotion of the “angel on your shoulder” personal assistant image by tech giants, was critiqued, with calls for alternative images to be promoted to students.
- The problem of surveys about AI use being affected by shame and self-reporting bias was mentioned.
- The entanglement of tools and socio-technical systems was debated, with some seeing no distinction and others advocating for education about the difference.
- The risk that AI could “collapse on itself” due to high costs was raised, but some felt too much has been invested for the bubble to burst quickly.