# Educators warn AI risks dulling students’ critical and emotional skills



# The Perils of AI in Education: A Call for Humanistic Values

Since the launch of OpenAI’s ChatGPT-3.5 in November 2022, artificial intelligence has dominated headlines, with narratives oscillating between promising utopia and impending doom. This dualistic “criti-hype” framing overlooks a significant concern: rather than AI outsmarting humans, the real danger lies in AI's potential to dull our cognitive and emotional faculties, particularly among students.

While AI excels in processing and calculation, it lacks essential human capabilities such as reasoning, empathy, and emotional intelligence. This deficit is not merely academic but has profound implications for our education system. As educational institutions increasingly adopt digital technologies that rely on AI, there is a risk that they are inadvertently stunting the intellectual and emotional growth of students, who are already showing signs of declining academic performance. Reports indicate that college students are struggling to engage with texts and articulate their thoughts, raising alarms about the overall collapse of educational standards.

The rise of digital tools in classrooms contributes significantly to this decline. As educational practices incorporate more screens and less rigorous content, they create what noted psychologist Jonathan Haidt describes as a “great rewiring” of childhood—one that impoverishes the neural connections necessary for effective learning. This transformation diminishes the development of critical and humanistic skills, fostering a generation that may undervalue their personal humanity and the nuances of human interaction.

#### The Importance of Humanities Education

Humanities education plays a pivotal role in teaching students to think critically and empathetically. For example, the study of history not only requires analytical skills but also nurtures imaginative empathy—understanding historical figures within their contexts. This dual engagement with cognitive and emotional dimensions is essential for developing well-rounded individuals capable of interpreting the complexities of modern society.

Historians like R. G. Collingwood emphasise that true understanding is a self-aware act of meta-cognition. This contrasts sharply with the way AI operates, which is devoid of self-awareness or empathetic engagement. AI’s processing capabilities may mimic human output but fundamentally lack the understanding and intuition that characterise genuine human thought.

Moreover, as AI continues to commoditise data, it robs sources of their original context, thereby flattening the rich tapestry of human experience into mere information. This process negates the excessive complexities intrinsic to human narratives, reducing them to mere lines of code. The implications of this disconnection extend beyond academia; they fundamentally challenge the principles of liberal democracy that rely on our ability to see each other as equals.

#### The Risks of Over-Reliance on AI

Relying on AI for educational purposes exposes students to significant risks. Although the technology may seem beneficial, it ultimately stunts intellectual growth and undermines humanistic skills. With AI-generated outputs deemed reliable by mere virtue of quantity rather than quality, students may become unable to critically evaluate these outputs. The prevailing narrative that champions early exposure to AI technology ignores the fact that without a solid grounding in critical thinking, students will struggle to leverage AI as a tool rather than become mere consumers of its outputs.

Experts argue that to truly understand AI's limitations, students must first acquire the skills to critically engage with it. This can only be achieved through a robust liberal arts education that fosters evaluative thinking, not by placing AI in the hands of students unprepared to assess its capabilities or shortcomings.

#### A Call to Action

The intersection of education, technology, and humanity demands urgent consideration. If humanistic education is not actively prioritised, we risk nurturing a generation of students who can no longer engage deeply with ideas or grapple with complex moral dilemmas. This challenge is not merely academic; it is a question of societal survival, as the fabric of our democracy depends on an educated populace capable of critical thought.

Reflecting on the direction we are heading, it is prudent to advocate for a drastic reconsideration of technology's role in education, particularly regarding AI. Implementing restrictions on its use within the humanities can help preserve the integrity of education and empower students to engage as thoughtful, reflective individuals. The aim should not be to dismantle technological advancement, but rather to cultivate an educational environment that prioritises humanistic values and emotional intelligence.

In envisioning a future where education prioritises these humanistic values, we must be vigilant against becoming complacent, allowing technology to dictate not only how we learn but also how we think. Ultimately, the challenge lies not in AI’s potential to surpass human intelligence, but rather in our willingness to maintain our own humanity amid its rise.

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## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiV0FVX3lxTE1neVlaSWNWRG8zcUp1RjEzRkN3NHBEelJRbjdDa1VQczZ2bkRwZzF4Tk5jS1VoeGZKZ3hyN3BIVlh0Yi1ONGhaclRCNm5ocnNzZUNmNV9Waw?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiV0FVX3lxTE1neVlaSWNWRG8zcUp1RjEzRkN3NHBEelJRbjdDa1VQczZ2bkRwZzF4Tk5jS1VoeGZKZ3hyN3BIVlh0Yi1ONGhaclRCNm5ocnNzZUNmNV9Waw?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiV0FVX3lxTE1neVlaSWNWRG8zcUp1RjEzRkN3NHBEelJRbjdDa1VQczZ2bkRwZzF4Tk5jS1VoeGZKZ3hyN3BIVlh0Yi1ONGhaclRCNm5ocnNzZUNmNV9Waw?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en), [^2]
* Paragraph 4 – [^3], [^4]
* Paragraph 5 – [^5]
* Paragraph 6 – [^6]

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1. <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiV0FVX3lxTE1neVlaSWNWRG8zcUp1RjEzRkN3NHBEelJRbjdDa1VQczZ2bkRwZzF4Tk5jS1VoeGZKZ3hyN3BIVlh0Yi1ONGhaclRCNm5ocnNzZUNmNV9Waw?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data