DEEP IMPACT

Tom Rogerson assesses the potential positives and negatives of artificial intelligence's future influence on education

On 12 May this year, Cottesmore hosted a free conference on the topic of artificial intelligence (AI). Tickets were snapped up within a day, so the Cottesmore team moved to open it up to a live national and international online audience through a livestream broadcast. There was certainly a global buzz surrounding the event. Educationalists joined from Singapore, Scotland, Nigeria, New York, Hong Kong, Honduras and from many places in between.

My nephew is at Cottesmore and is a technology wizard. He's about to head off to Eton College and, in my humble opinion, there'll be a huge 'net gain' when he arrives; he'll be running the whole school's technology within six months. He came back from the last weekend exeat in the Christmas term full

granted access to the live internet, and a tendency for AI-infused hardware to feel compelled to remove humans from the equation so that they can carry on more efficiently with their programmed tasks. Not ideal.

On a lighter note, we should consider how AI will impact children and young adults. For a start, an essay that would have taken them four hours to write now takes them eight seconds – an amazing development for the pupil who prefers to be kicking a football around with friends. But these stories and the consternation they induce are mere sideshows.

On a larger scale, AI is poised to have a significant impact on schools' curricula, transforming the way pupils learn. AI will be able to tailor educational content and materials to individual students' needs.

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of excitement about ChatGPT, a new 'generative' artificial intelligence application (a 'large language model' or 'LLM'). I listened with mild interest.

Then it all kicked off in the Easter term. Elon Musk, an early investor in ChatGPT, wrote an open letter calling for generative artificial intelligence research to be paused for six months while we all catch up. Interest was piqued, and the thirst for AI knowledge had to be quenched.

Apparently the Cottesmore AI conference is already the stuff of legend. We ended up hosting representatives from an enormous array of associations, state schools, independent schools, consultancies and government departments – it was a veritable *Who's Who* of the education world.

Why did we bother creating the conference? And why is AI worth all of this fuss?

Generative artificial intelligence is increasingly being embraced due to its transformative capabilities across multiple domains. AI enables one to create new images, music, and even entire stories, with unsettling ease.

As would be expected, there are significant drawbacks to all of this super-hyped productivity. These include potential mass redundancies, an apparent lack of control once generative AI is

A goal without a plan is just a wish, and from a curriculum-planning perspective, AI can also analyse vast amounts of data, such as performance, attendance records, and engagement levels.

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy: AI automates routine administrative tasks, such as grading assignments and managing paperwork. This automation will allow teachers to focus more on instruction and student interactions.

A problem shared is a problem halved: AI can facilitate collaborative learning and problem-solving activities; as AI becomes increasingly prevalent in the workforce, integrating it into the curriculum prepares students for future careers. However, it's essential that we strike a balance between AI-driven tools and human interaction to ensure an offering that nurtures creativity, social skills, and emotional intelligence.

The future is now and AI is here to stay. But I'd totally understand if you simply want to go and play golf and/or sit down in a dark room to think it over. It might go away if you sit quietly enough.

There are several AI applications that can help you with that swing, by the way. They'll require the use of virtual, and augmented, reality headsets but that's another story for another day... ◔