



OUM25 Public Lecture Series

VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

CHARTING THE FUTURES OF DIGITAL EDUCATION

6 August 2025

9.00 am - 4.30 pm

Seri Pacific Hotel, KL

(Re)discovering the human in algorithmic-informed open, distance and digital learning

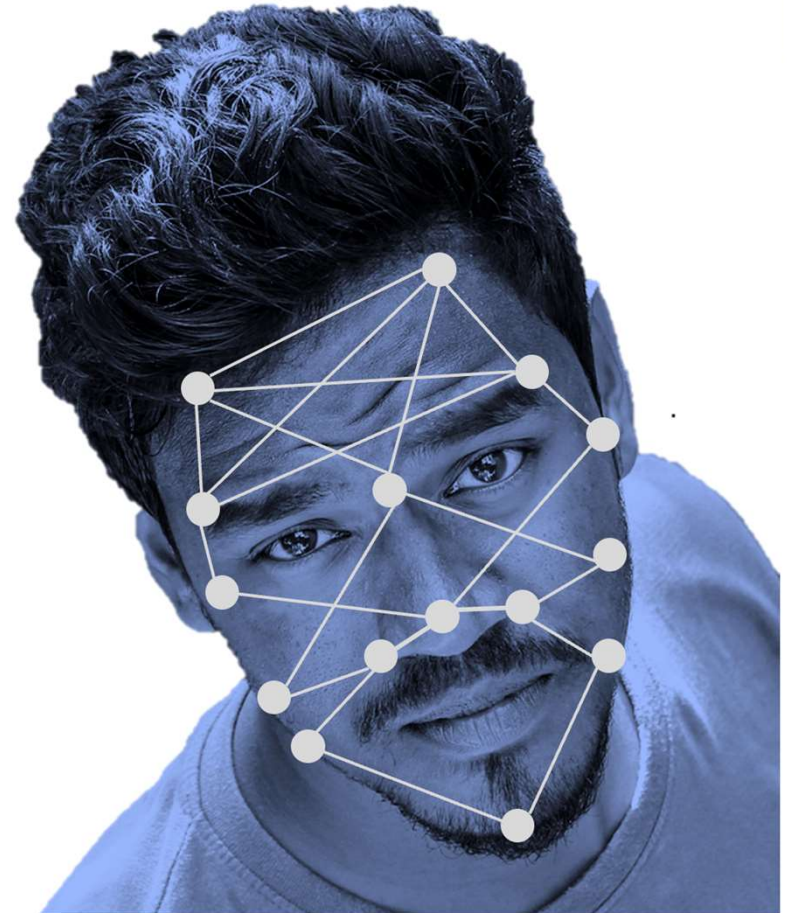
Public Lecture 6 August 2025
Open University of Malaysia (OUM)

Paul Prinsloo

University of South Africa (Unisa)

X @14prinsp

NO: ONE PERSON
GENDER: MAN
AGE GROUP: YOUNG MAN
ETHNICITY: ASIAN
HUMAN BODY PART: HUMAN FACE
TIME: 5371 S
DETECTION: 63421 POINTS
INTELLIGENT
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NOT BLACKLISTED

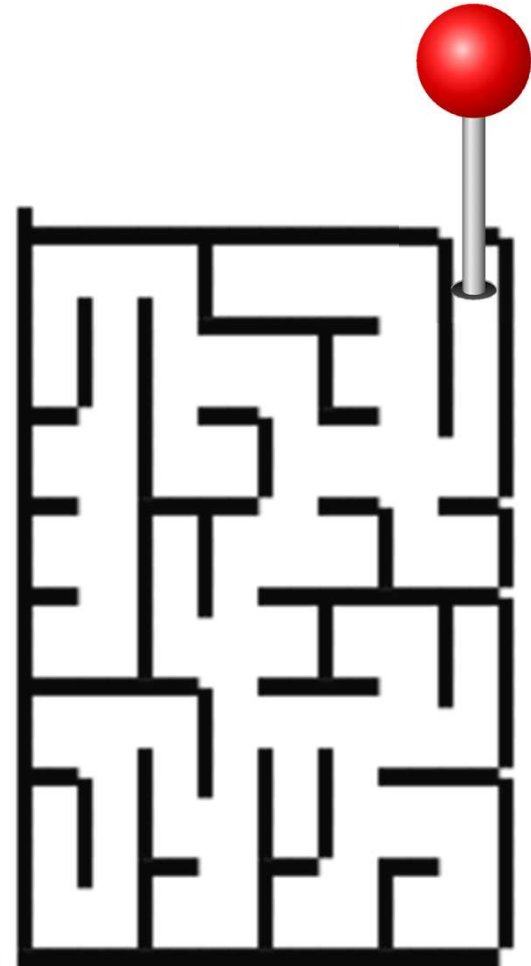


Adapted from an image by Daniel Joshua Paul from Pixabay

Acknowledgements

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- None of the ideation and text in this presentation has been generated by using a Large Language Model (e.g. ChatGPT) **#ProudlyHuman** 😊
- This presentation is not about AI, but about **being human** in an age of AI.





Overview:

- Briefly **situate** our thinking against the backdrop of living in a digitally saturated world.
- Reflect on how our lives are already personalised and how it changes **being human**.
- Explore the deployment of **AI in digital education**.
- Provide some **pointers** for consideration.
- Concluding remarks.





Image by Sonyworld from Pixabay



I am human



reCAPTCHA

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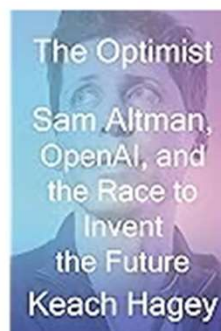
<https://arcanumai.medium.com/the-2-key-ways-netflix-utilises-ai-and-machine-learning-2210ffb67ba5>

<https://mindandfashion.com/2022/01/02/psychology-of-netflix-4-reasons-you-cant-stop-watching-netflix/>



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The Optimist: Sam Altman, Openai, and the Race to Invent the Future
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The AI Con: How to Fight Big Tech's Hype and Create the Future We Want

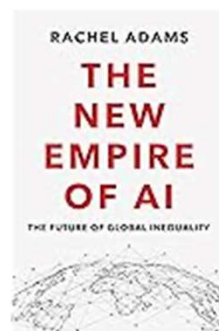
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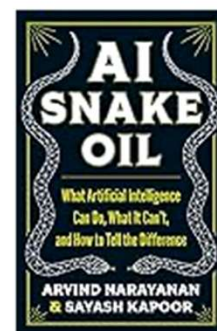
The New Empire of AI: The Future of Global Inequality

Rachel Adams

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AI Snake Oil: What Artificial Intelligence Can Do, What It Can't, and How to Tell the...

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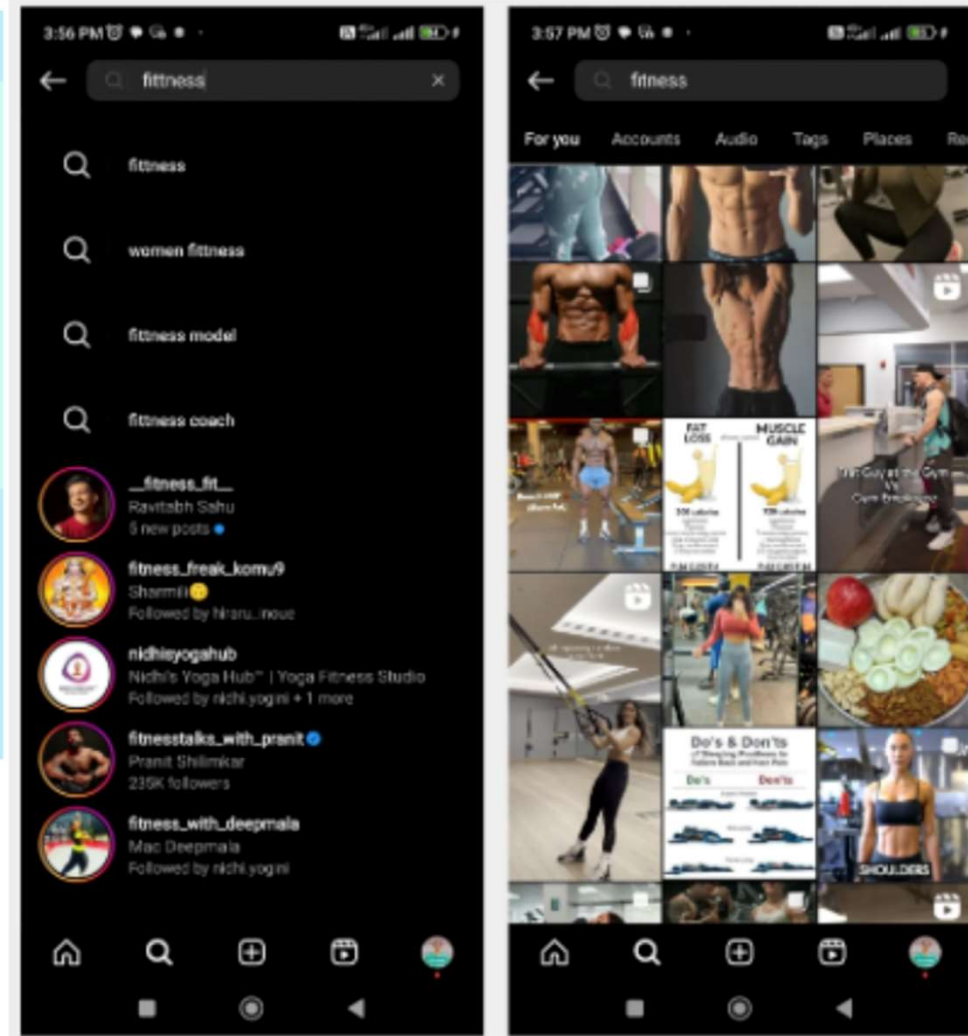
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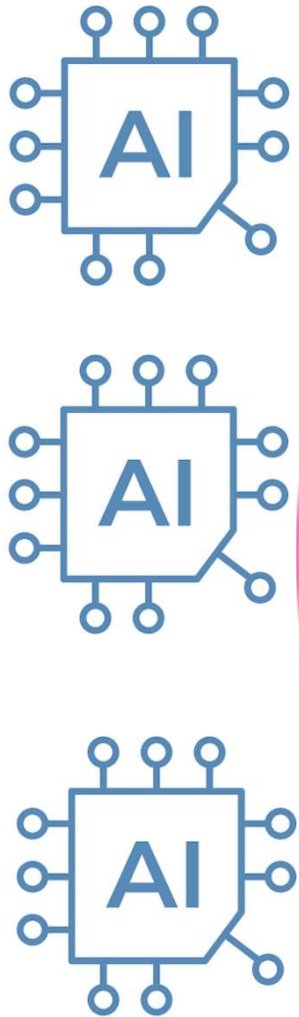
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Facebook Uses Machine Learning for Personalized Ads



<https://social-stand.com/facebook-uses-machine-learning-for-personalized-ads/>
<https://medium.com/design-bootcamp/the-influence-of-instagrams-for-you-page-how-personalization-shapes-user-experience-8bdf7a6391ce>

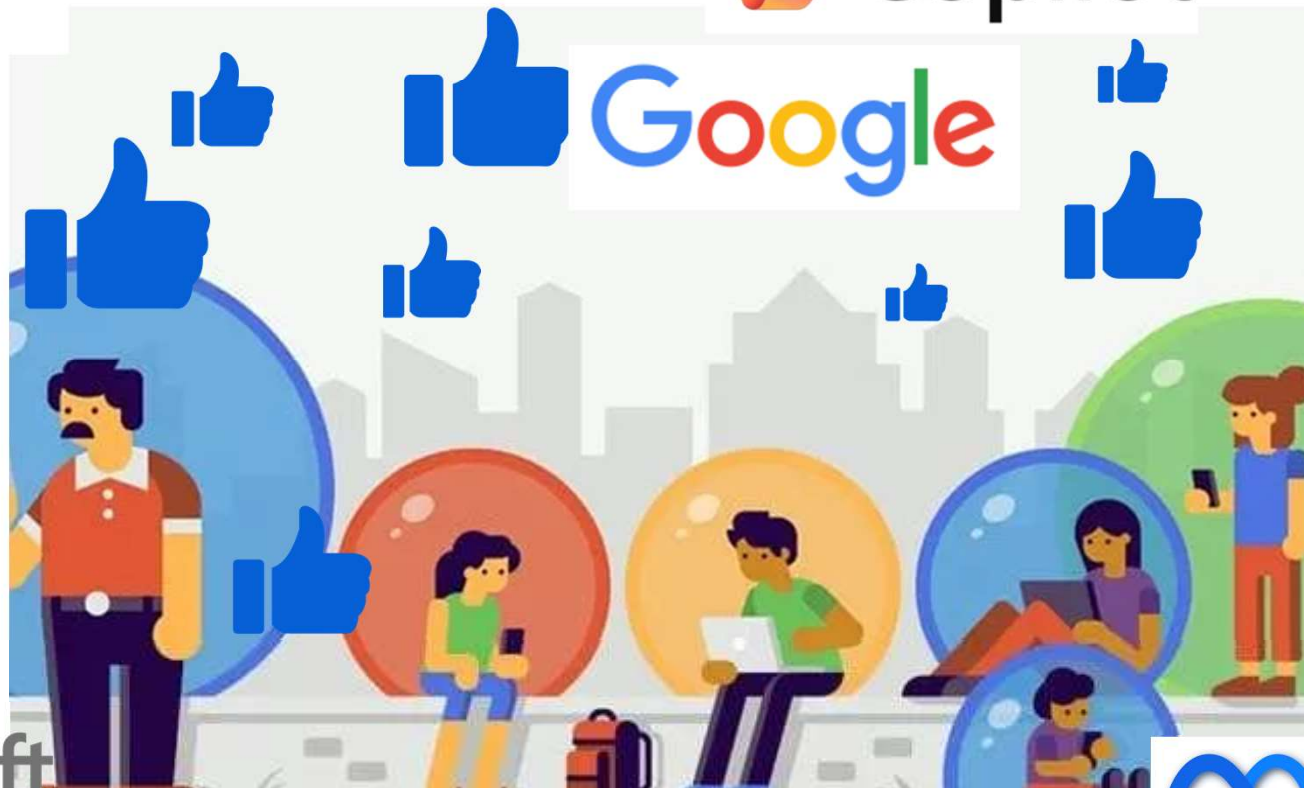




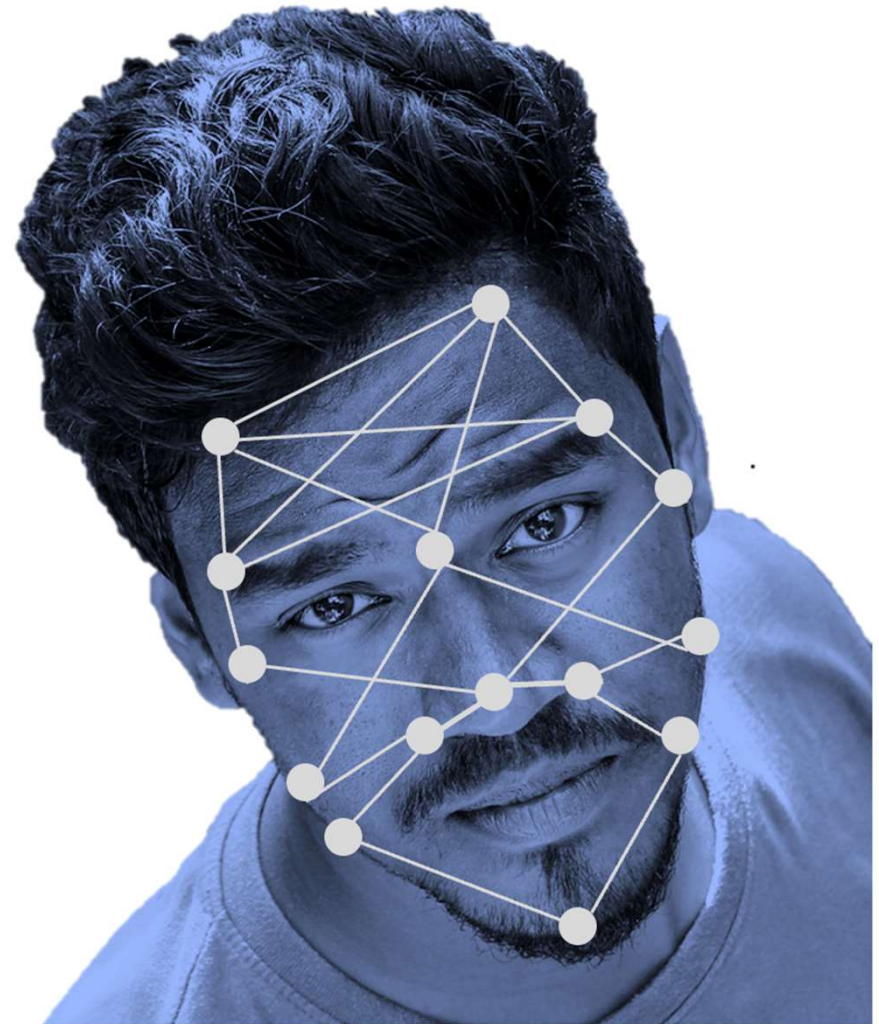
We are in filter bubbles, locked into our past decisions, and force-fed a future we increasingly have little choice over.

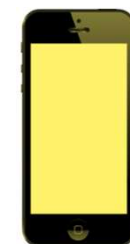
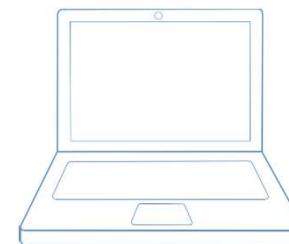
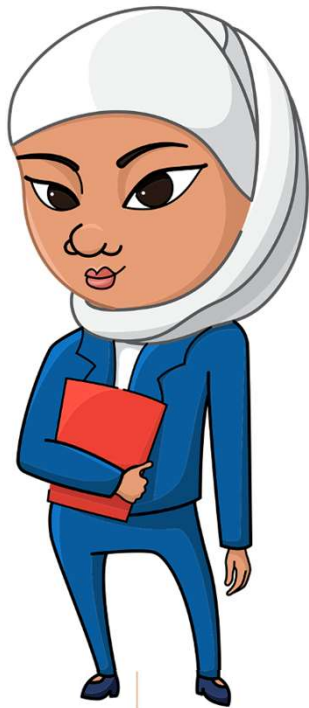
ANTHROPIC

deepseek



Who needs a human when you can learn with an AI-agent that not only understands you, but knows what you want, what types of questions you prefer or struggle with, and that can provide you with instant feedback and support, 24/7.

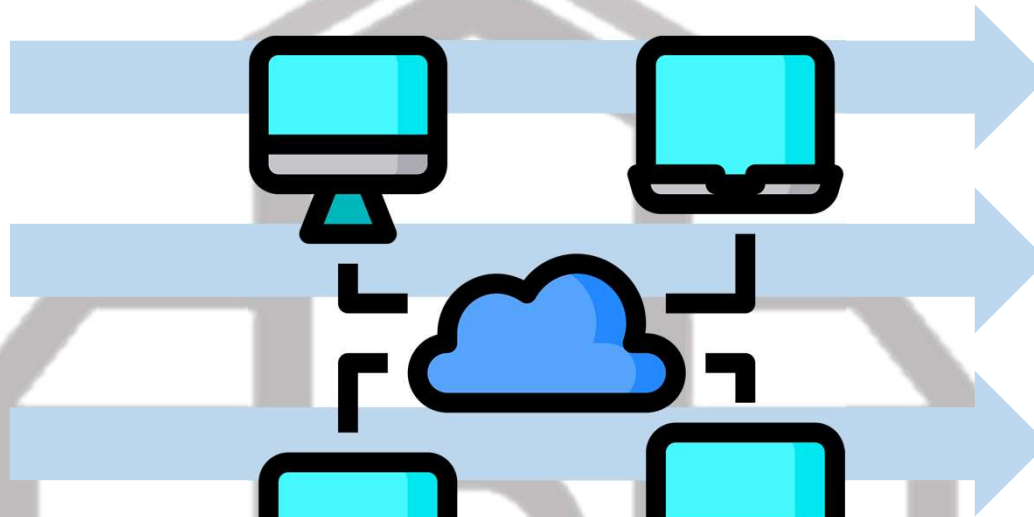




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CANVAS
LMS



moodle



Classroom
by Google

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

AI's giants want to take over the classroom

OpenAI and Anthropic say AI can help students learn—not just cheat—even if real-world use suggests otherwise.

By
James O'Donnell

July 1

Medium

Search

Artificial Intelligence in Pla...

AI

New AI, ML and Data
Science articles every
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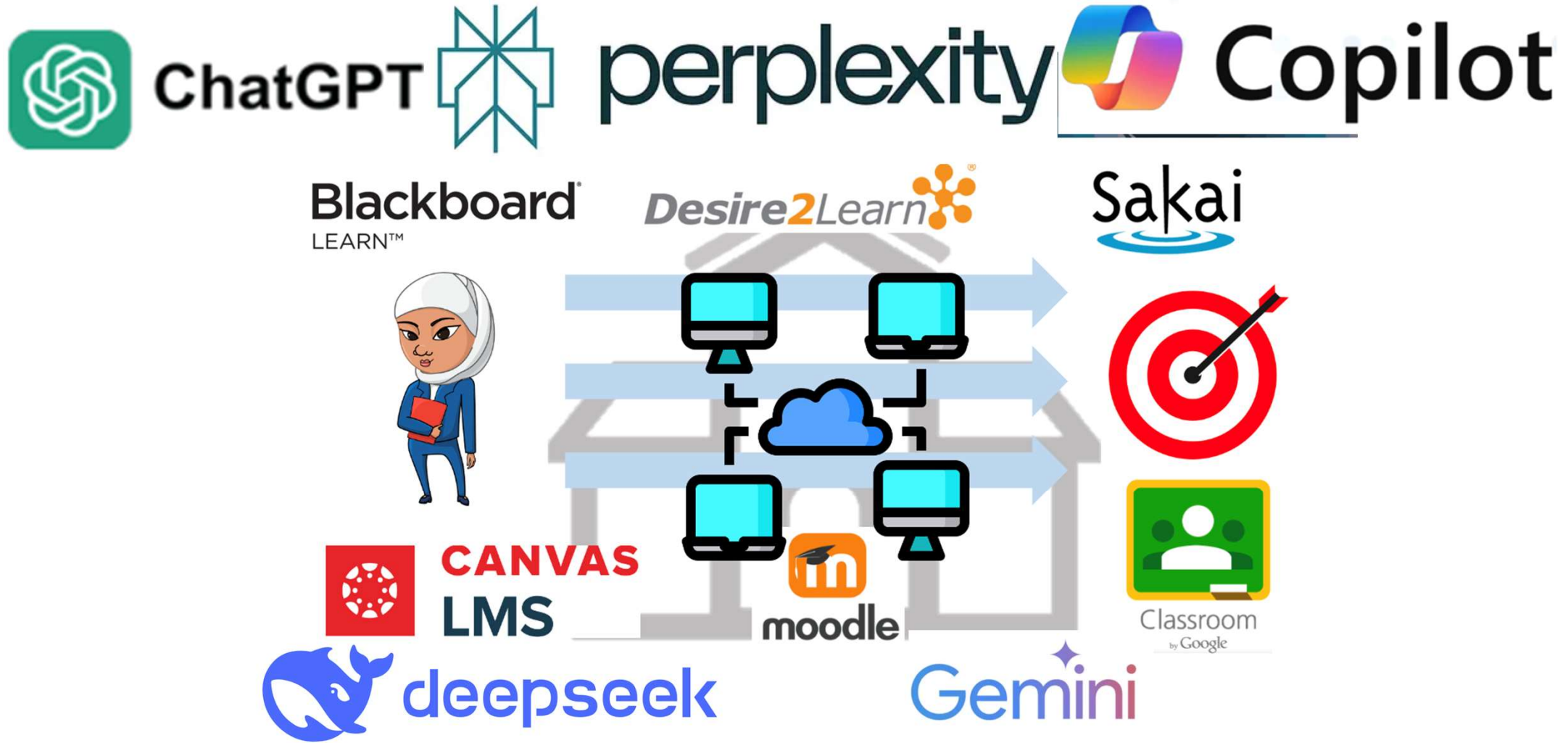
AI Is Outsmarting Degrees: Are Universities Teaching Anything Students Still Need?



Coby Mendoza

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TC TechCrunch

Anthropic launches an AI chatbot plan for colleges and universities

Maxwell Zeff — 8:00 AM PDT · April 2, 2025



A new collaboration with OpenAI charts the future of AI in higher education

OpenAI February 4, 2025

OpenAI and the California State University system bring AI to 500,000 students and faculty



/ innovation



PUBLISHED
4 MAR 2025

Oxford and OpenAI launch collaboration to advance research and education

Columbia University and OpenAI Forge a Groundbreaking Partnership with ChatGPT Enterprise

February 26, 2024

OpenAI's new ChatGPT Edu is for universities. Here's how teachers and students can benefit

This new AI offering is designed to make it more affordable for universities to bring AI to their campuses.



Written by **Sabrina Ortiz**, Senior Editor
May 31, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. PT

BUSINESS INSIDER

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AI

ChatGPT was a homework cheating tool. Now OpenAI is carving out a more official role in education.



By Alistair Barr | Author of the [Tech Memo](#) newsletter



Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, talking recently in Washington. Reuters/Aaron Schwartz/Sipa USA

Jul 23, 2025, 7:01 PM GMT+2

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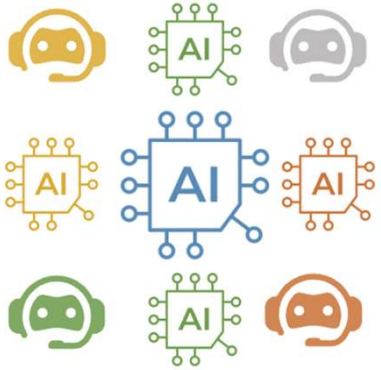
23 July 2025

- OpenAI partners with Instructure to integrate AI into classroom instruction.
- Instructure's Canvas app will use AI to enhance teaching and student engagement.
- AI tools will assist in creating assignments, assessing students, and managing admin tasks.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/chatgpt-openai-education-canvas-ai-2025-7>



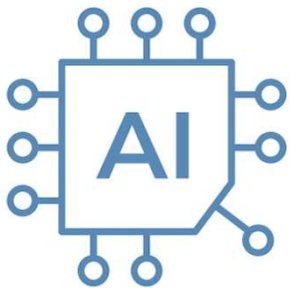
With all of this
happening, let us just
briefly pause to think
about what exactly
this thing called AI is...



Multi-AI agent systems – Consisting of a ‘main’ algorithm that analyses a specific task and break it down into different tasks and then delegates these tasks to different algorithms (rule-based and/or GenAI) to solve before combining the different results in a response to the task.



Generative AI (GenAI) - Algorithms learn to identify patterns, first on a training data set and then apply what they have learned on new data sets, independently – ever-expanding their ability to identify patterns in new ways.



Traditional or rule-based AI – An algorithm is trained on a selected training dataset to do **specific** tasks (and no other tasks). E.g., playing chess, identifying students who are at risk based on a defined set of criteria and responding to this category of students in predetermined ways.



**Teacher/
human
controls**

**Teacher/
human** has
full control



AI provides
supportive
information

**Teacher
only**

**Teacher
assistance**

**Teacher/
human
monitors**

AI



AI controls
specific
tasks

**Partial
automation**

**Teacher/
human
monitors
incidentally
but can
control any
time**

AI controls
broader set
of tasks

**Conditional
automation**

**Teacher/
human
control and
monitor is
not required
for
specific tasks**

AI controls
most tasks
automatically

**High
automation**



AI controls
all tasks
automatically

**Full
automation**

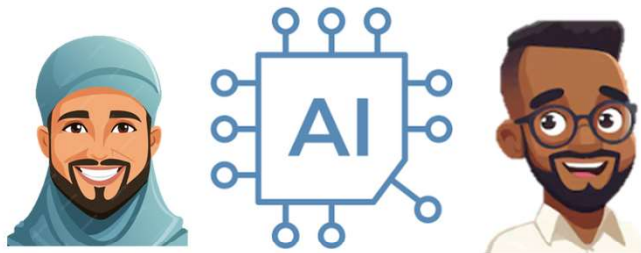
Administrative processes –
student services – front line
staff – what can be automated
and what should not be
automated



**Student support – affective
(psycho-social), cognitive
(academic), technical, and
administrative**

**Curriculum development and
instructional design**

What is regarded as
knowledge and learning?



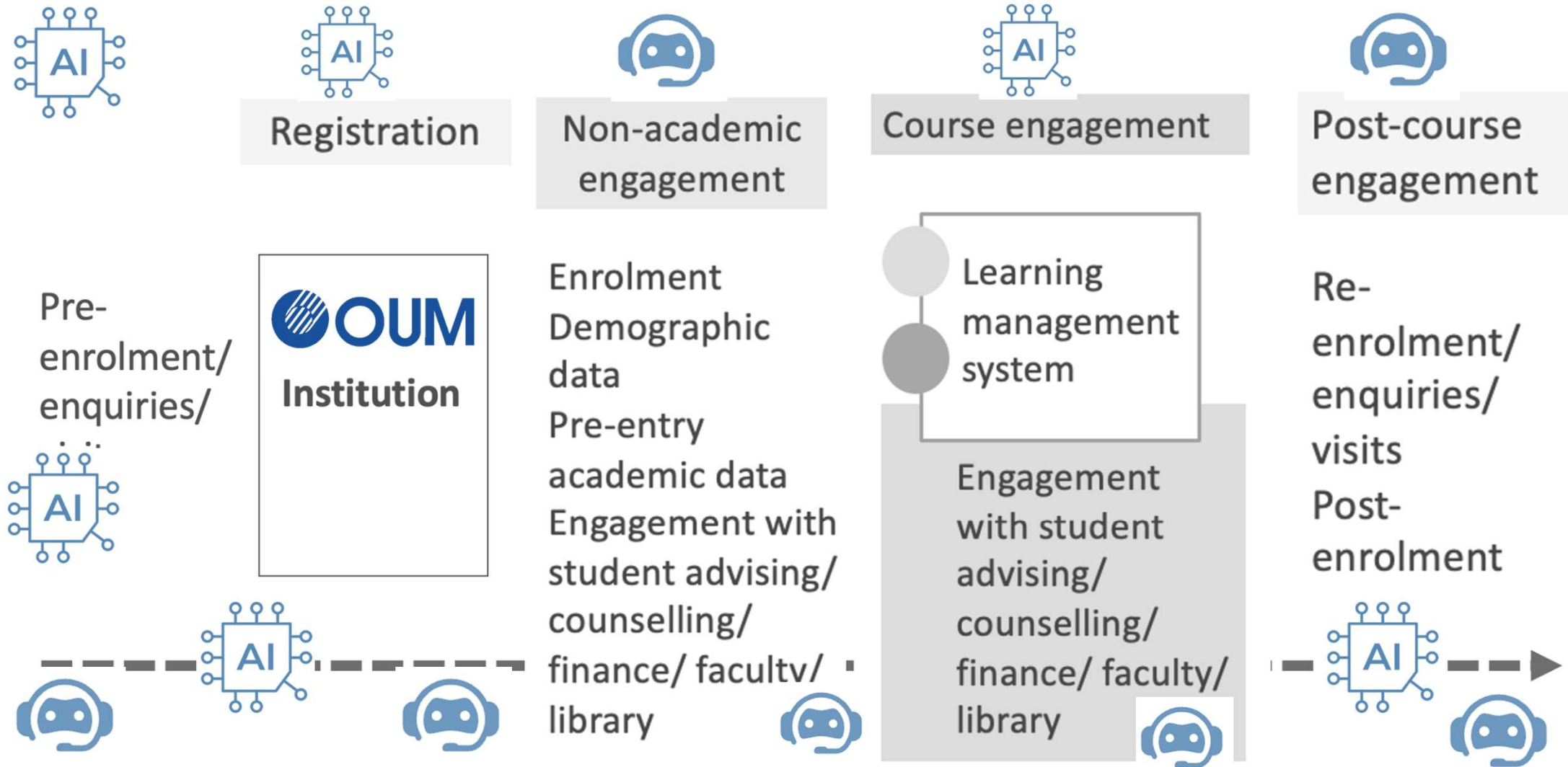
**Research – the purpose and
its processes, dissemination
and validation**

**Formative and summative
assessment**

What/ when and how do we
assess?

**The cost, quality of and access
to educational provision (for
students and the institution)**

Institutional reputation





Some pointers for considerations

Image by Peggy und Marco Lachmann-Anke from Pixabay

ChatGPT will “*redefine human knowledge,*
accelerate changes in the fabric of our reality, and
reorganise politics and society”
(Kissinger, Schmidt, & Huttenlocher in Peters et al. 2023, p. 4; italics
added).





Intelligencer

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HIGHER EDUCATION

Everyone Is Cheating Their Way Through College

ChatGPT has unraveled the entire academic project.

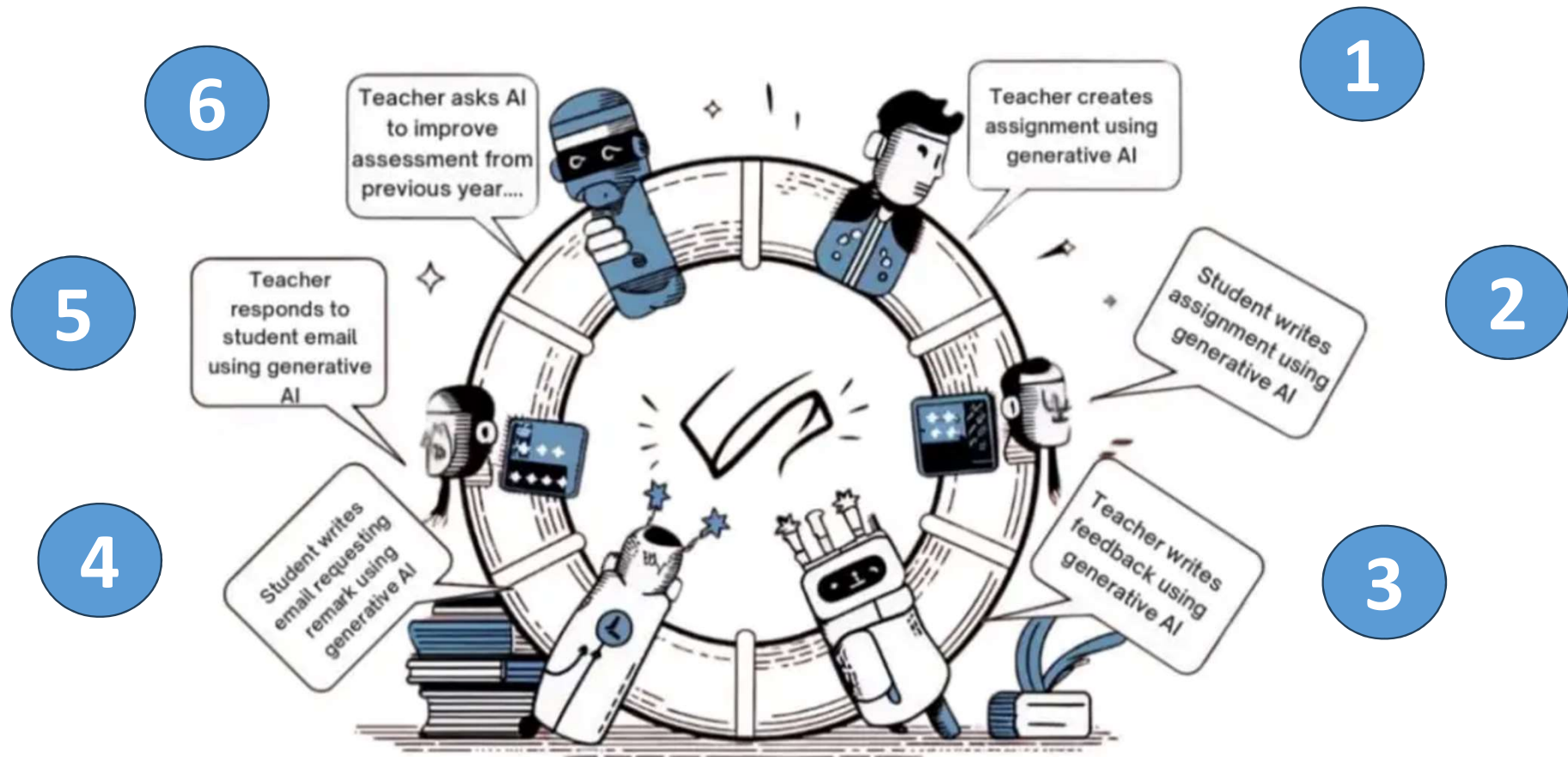


By James D. Walsh, Intelligencer staff writer

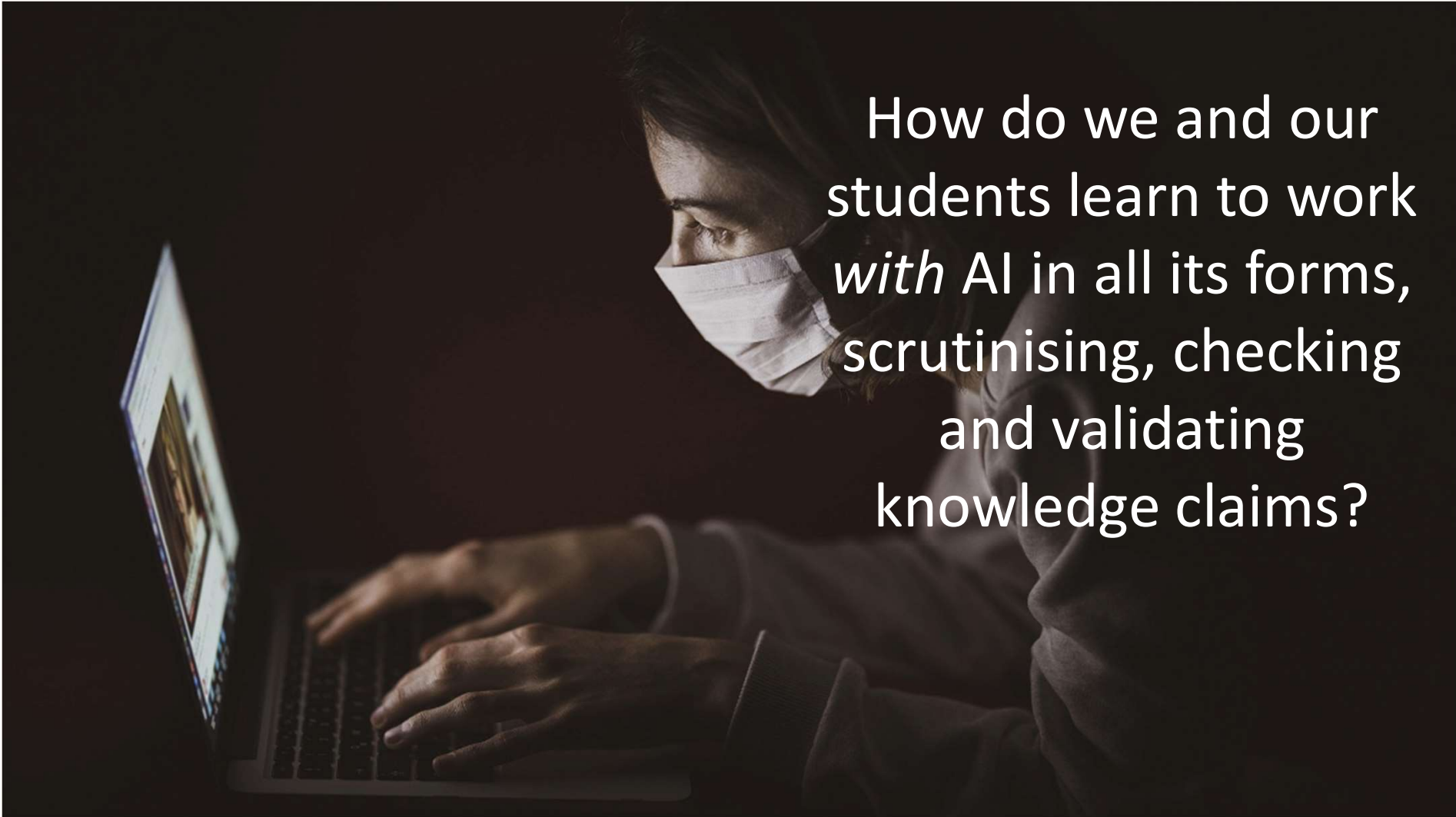
It's not just the students: Multiple AI platforms now offer tools to leave AI-generated feedback on students' essays. Which raises the possibility that AIs are now evaluating AI-generated papers, reducing the entire academic exercise to a conversation between two robots — or maybe even just one.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/technology/everyone-is-cheating-their-way-through-college/ar-AA1EjCRk>

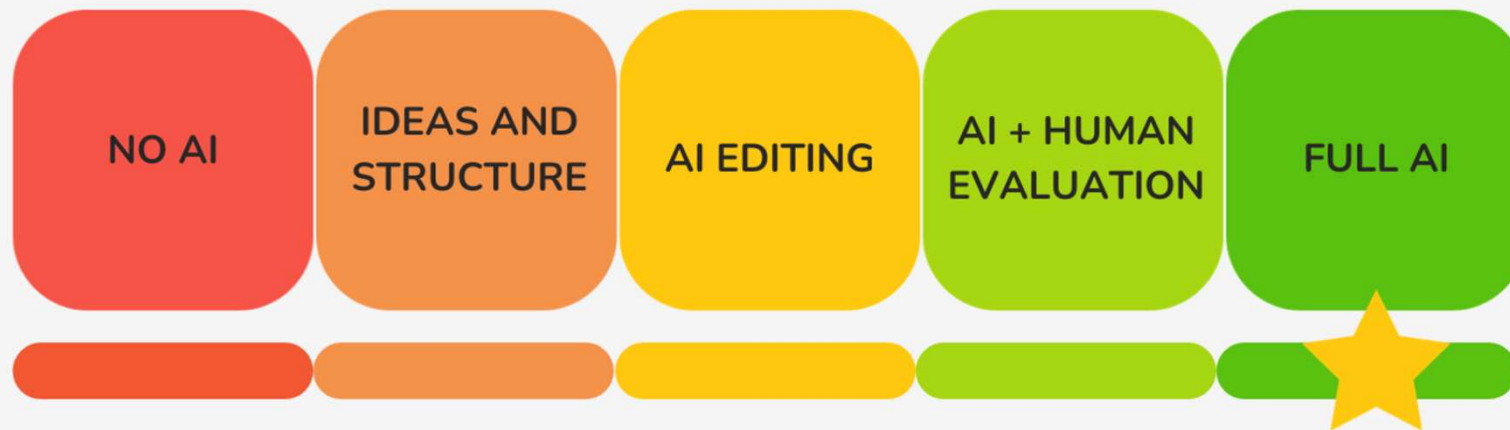
The AI Wheel of Death



Dr James Bedford + Dr William Scal



How do we and our
students learn to work
with AI in all its forms,
scrutinising, checking
and validating
knowledge claims?



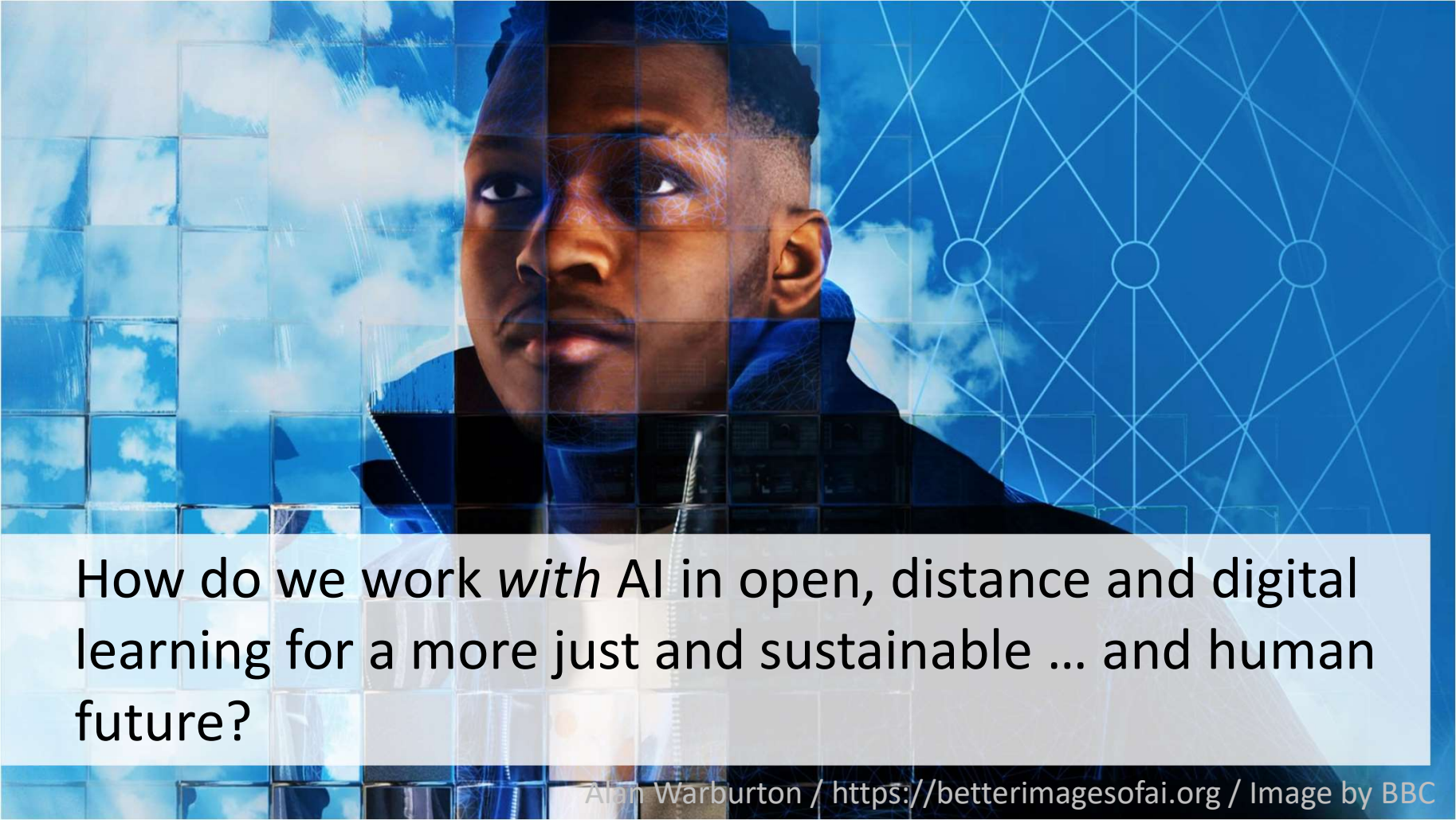
THE AI ASSESSMENT SCALE

A TOOL FOR GENAI ASSESSMENT

How do we use AI in all its forms, to
make students feel valued,
and human?

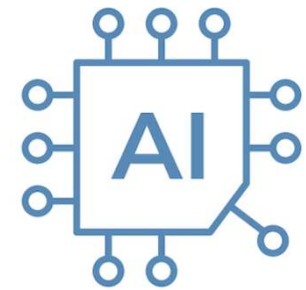
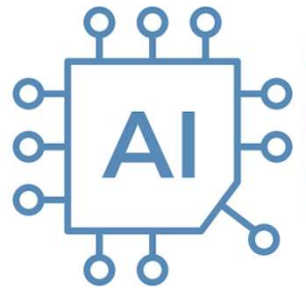
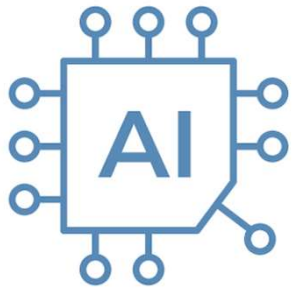


image credit: <https://www.deviantart.com/kovangfx/art/Being-alone-526166616>



How do we work *with* AI in open, distance and digital learning for a more just and sustainable ... and human future?

Alan Warburton / <https://betterimagesofai.org> / Image by BBC



How do we
create, choose
and use AI, with
our students, to
be open for the
potential but also
to be critically
aware of the
risks?



I am human



reCAPTCHA

[Privacy](#) - [Terms](#)

Thank you

Paul Prinsloo

Professor Extraordinaire

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Personal blog: <http://opendistanceteachingandlearning.wordpress.com>

X profile: @14prinsp

Humanizing Digital Education or Digitalizing Human Education: That Is the Question

Professor Junhong Xiao

Open University Malaysia / August 6, 2025

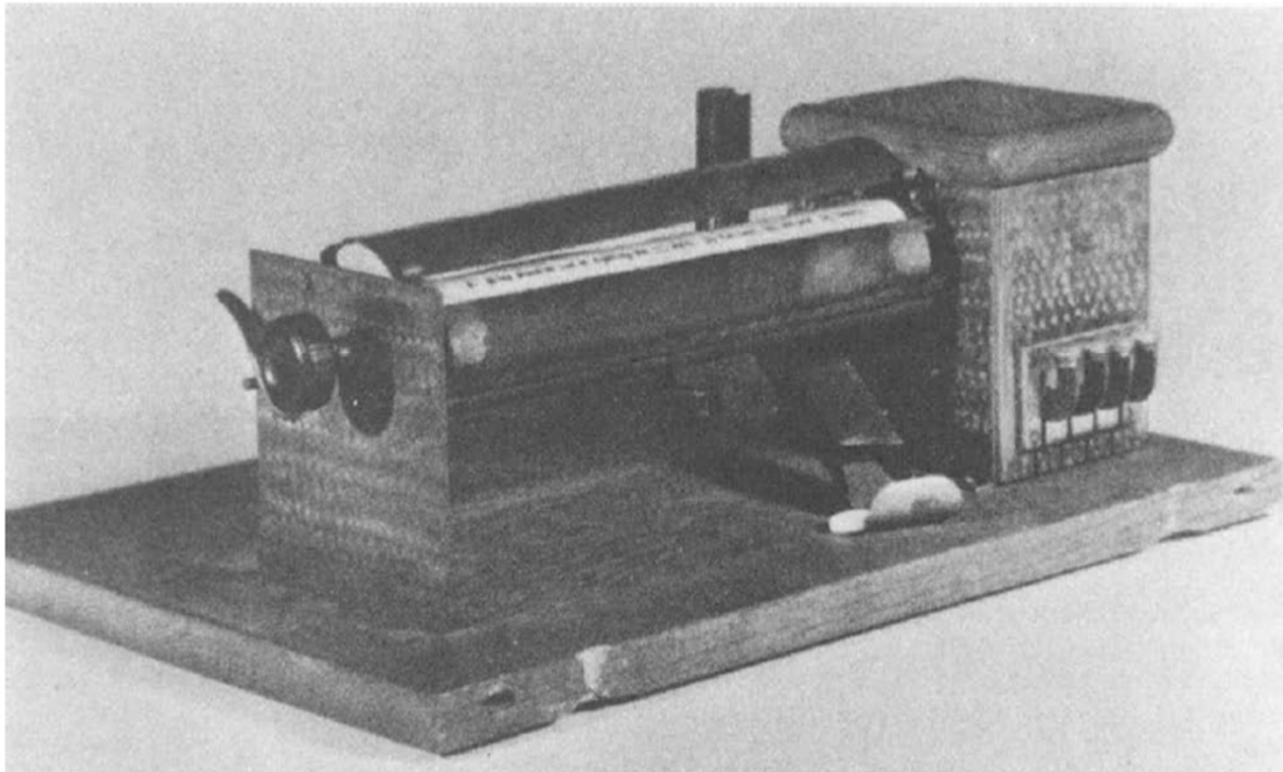
Education is a human-to-human enterprise

- Education is a **transformative** journey that eventually defines who we are.
- Education is about **human beings**, not technology, no matter how “intelligent” technology has become.
- Education is **a basic human right**.

A historical perspective on the role of technology in education

- Technology is **essential** to the development of education.
- Technology was **never intended to replace human educators** until after the invention of the teaching machine in the 1920s.
- **Disruptive** intentions often end up in **sustaining** realities.

The Self-Scoring, Multiple-Choice Teaching Machine Exhibited by Sidney Pressey at the 1924 and 1925 Meetings of the APA



Source: Benjamin, L. T. (1988). A history of teaching machines. *American Psychologist*, 43 (9), 703-712, p. 707 .

Problematizing the digitalization of education

- I. Hiding the real agenda behind the digitalization of education
 - **The stated agenda:** “intelligent” technology, equitable education, qualified workforce...
 - **The hidden agenda:** to maximize profits for the EdTech sector and in some countries, to compensate for the reduction of governments’ expenditure on education.

2. Deprofessionalizing education

- If human educators are replaced by digital technology, education will no longer require professional educators' expertise and will eventually be **dehumanized**.
- The complexity and multidimensionality of education is way **beyond the capacity of any cutting-edge technology** to deal with.

3. Diminishing the centrality of humanity to education

- Education is **socioculturally contextualized** while the automation or digitalization of education tends to be **decontextualized**, hence asocial and solitary.
- A key theme that characterizes the digitalization of education should be the **humanization** of education.

4. Exacerbating existing inequalities

- Digital education is **not a free meal** for individual students, an issue which is of practical relevance but is often evaded.
- It is **a curious paradox** that digital technology can bridge the gap in education between the rich and the poor.

5. Posing ethical risks and/or causing harms

- Ethical risks and/or harms are more the results of **deliberate design** than unintended consequences.
- Digital technology often results in **broad consequences** that stretch beyond matters of learning.
- Digitalization catalyzes the emergence of **digital colonialism** and renders **sociocultural diversity at stake**.

Educational leadership in humanizing digital education

1. Be professional

Not all educational problems have a technological fix.

2. Be critical

Do not buy into the discourse that digital technology is always an objective force for good. Be alert to **bandwagonism**.

3. Be technologically pessimistic

Pessimism doesn't mean passively accepting things as they are but instead actively exploring possible better ways in which digital technology may help solve educational problems effectively.

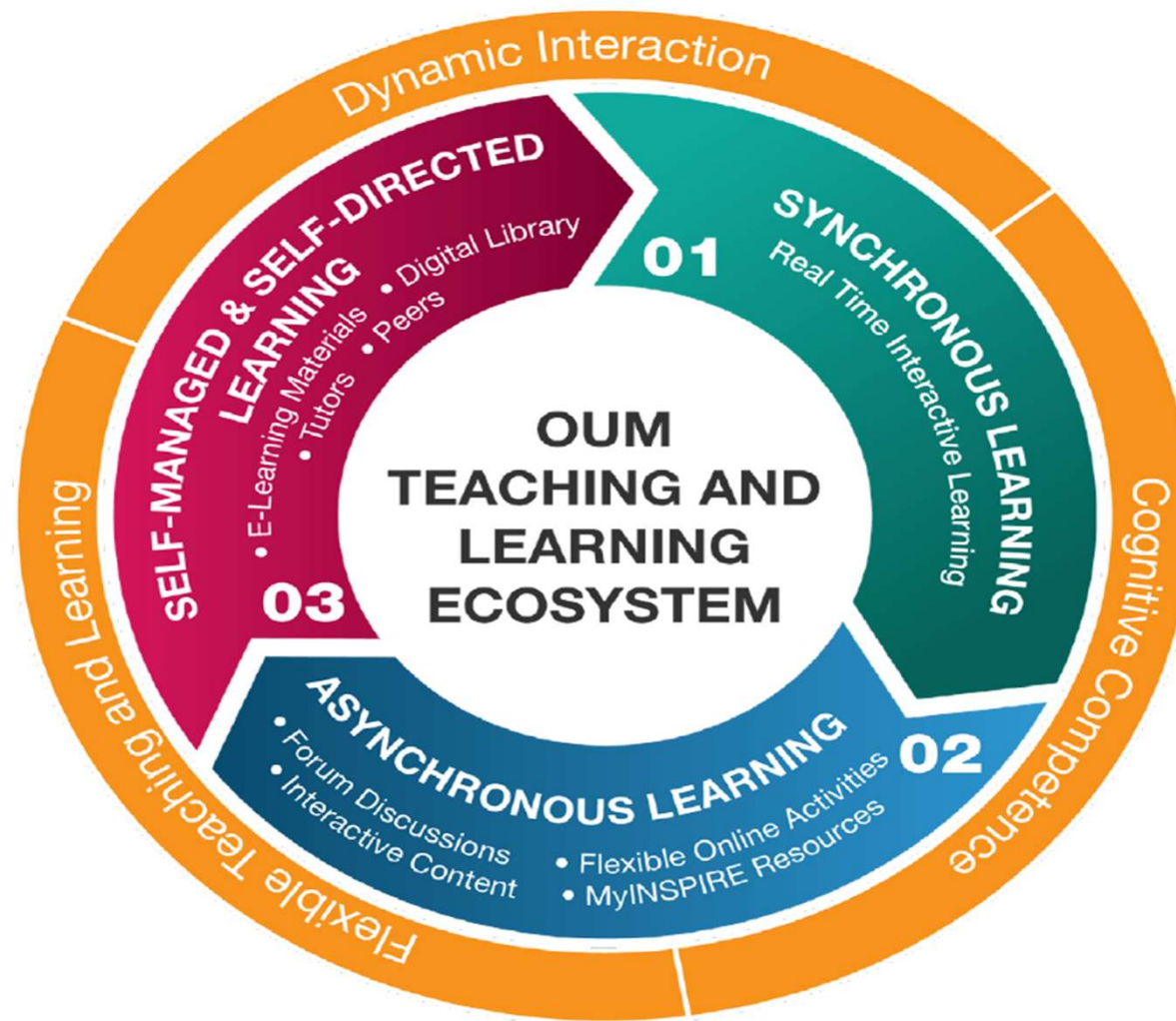
4. Be pragmatic

Being pragmatic means taking up a contextualized stance when making decisions on the digitalization of education.

5. Be proactive

By being proactive, educational leaders do not fit education around technological advancements.

Whether a technology should be used depends on whether it can fix specific educational problems **in the most cost-effective and quality-assured manner.**



Inspired, Issue 24: From the First to the Next 25 Years
Interview with Prof Datuk Dr Mohd Tajudin Md Ninggal, Vice President/Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & Research)

Concluding remarks: Breaking the eschatological spell

- The **latest** technology of the day is not the **last** technology of humankind.
- Technology should not be to blame for any malpractice in education; it is **people** who use it for the wrong purpose or in the wrong way that **should be to blame**.
- If the futures of education are predicated on emerging technologies, **humanity will eventually be redefined**.

THANK YOU!

- Email: frankxjh@outlook.com
- [ORCID](#) profile
- [Google Scholar](#) profile
- [LinkedIn](#) profile

This presentation is GenAI-free.



RETHINKING INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE LENS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FUTURE

MELINDA DELA PEÑA BANDALARIA
PROFESSOR AND FORMER CHANCELLOR (2016-2025)
UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES OPEN UNIVERSITY

Public Lecture, Open University Malaysia, 6 August 2025

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Industrial Revolutions; the Internet; the COVID-19 Pandemic; the Artificial Intelligence; the climate change and clamor to shift to green economy; the geopolitical concerns..

” How can we lead and manage a higher education institution in today’s volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous, and disruptive (VUCAD) world and at the same time ensure sustainability? ”



This Presentation:

Based on my reflections of 25 years of practice, especially during my UPOU Chancellorship (2016–2025).

WHY UNIVERSITY OF THE FUTURE?

- Still anchored on the traditional roles of universities: teaching, research, and public service.
- With IR4.0 > Education 4.0; 5.0; etc.. (*can we move away from these typologies? and what do they mean, anyway?*)
- The VUCAD world and the need to be relevant always



Unpacking the University of the Future

November 2019

1st Public Articulation of the
Concept of the University of the
Future

THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FUTURE:

1. Instruction and Learning

- Future-proof education and curricula: pluridisciplinary, microcredentialed, personalized.
- Technology-enhanced, AI-enabled learning pathways.
- Ubiquity: anytime, anywhere, anyone, any device.
- The new role of educators as designers and facilitators.



THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FUTURE:

2. Research and Knowledge Generation

- Guided by open science and futures research methodologies.
- Relevance to societal needs and sustainable development.
- Inclusion of trend analysis, scenario-building, and cross-impact modelling.



THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FUTURE:

3. Community and Societal Engagement

- From community outreach to University Social Responsibility (USR).
- Social profit and inclusive access as institutional commitments.
- Open pedagogy (*learners as co-creators in the advancement of knowledge*)



THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FUTURE:

4. Technology and Governance

- Integration of immersive technologies, AI, and data science not only in teaching (content and tool) but in governance and learner support.
- Sustainability as both operational continuity and ethical imperative.



UPOU AS A CASE STUDY: REVOLUTIONIZING DISRUPTIONS

- Established in 1995 with a mandate to democratise access to higher education via distance learning (A disruption by itself)
- Timeline of key innovations:
 - - Full online shift in 2007.
 - - MOOCs offered in 2013.
 - - Open Education Framework during the pandemic.
- UPOU's articulation of its next 25 years anchored on values: honor, excellence, equity, openness, agility, and sustainability.
- Its leadership strategy embedded in futures research, sustainability frameworks, and learner-centred design.

LEADING THROUGH THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FUTURE LENS

- Leadership not as control but as futures-oriented stewardship.
- Embrace a fluid framework, adaptive to evolving contexts.
- Key levers:
 - - Agile instructional design.
 - - Values-based governance.
 - - Quality assurance as both internal compass and external signal.
 - - International partnerships for mutual recognition and resource sharing.
- Importance of collaboration over competition, especially for microcredentials and open education.

THE CURRENT UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP (2025-2028) EMBRACING THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FUTURE PARADIGM

"In these times of uncertainty, complexity, and endless transition," she asked, "What does it mean to lead an open university?"

She shared her vision of UPOU as a "Transformative University of the Future," built of four interrelated components: a *Learning University*, where lifelong learning is embraced as a way of life; a *Healthy University* where well-being is a shared responsibility; a *Sustainable and Resilient University* where decisions are guided by a future-oriented perspective; and *Intrapreneurial University* where community members are both scholars and solution-builders.

In closing, she called on the UPOU community to "honor the past by shaping the future—with integrity, with intention, and with imagination."

Investiture address delivered on 30 July 2025

FINAL REFLECTIONS

- The University of the Future is not a fixed model, but a mindset.
- It is not just about surviving disruption but shaping educational futures anchored in social good, learner empowerment, and epistemic inclusivity.
- Higher education leadership has a critical role to play in an uncertain future.

FINAL REMARKS:

The University of the Future (UoF) Leadership Paradigm is about
leading a Higher education Institution in a VUCAD world:
embracing uncertainty and revolutionizing disruptions with
clarity of values and purpose.

THANK YOU!

Email: mbandalaria@upou.edu.ph
mbandalaria@up.edu.ph

What can Open, Distance, and Digital Education contribute to a sustainable future?

Professor Dr. Olaf Zawacki-Richter

Open University of Malaysia,
Centre for Digital Education Futures
6 August 2025, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Agenda

- Terminology: ODDE and sustainability
- Higher education and ODDE for a sustainable future
- Opportunities and challenges
- Conclusions and implications for leadership

Distance Education

- Simonson, Schlosser & Orellana (2011):

"Distance Education is institution-based, formal education where the learning group is separated, and where interactive telecommunications systems are used to connect learners, resources, and instructors". (p. 126)

The roots: "Speaking personally with Otto Peters" about DE



Zawacki-Richter, O. (2024). Speaking Personally – with Otto Peters. *American Journal of Distance Education*, 38(1), 81–89. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08923647.2023.2294668>

Distance education in the mainstream

- Former VP of OUUK, Alan Tait (1999):

"The secret garden of open and distance learning has become public, and many institutions are moving from single conventional mode activity to dual mode activity..." (p. 141)



- Knowing the history can inform evidence-based practices in digital education (Xiao, 2023)

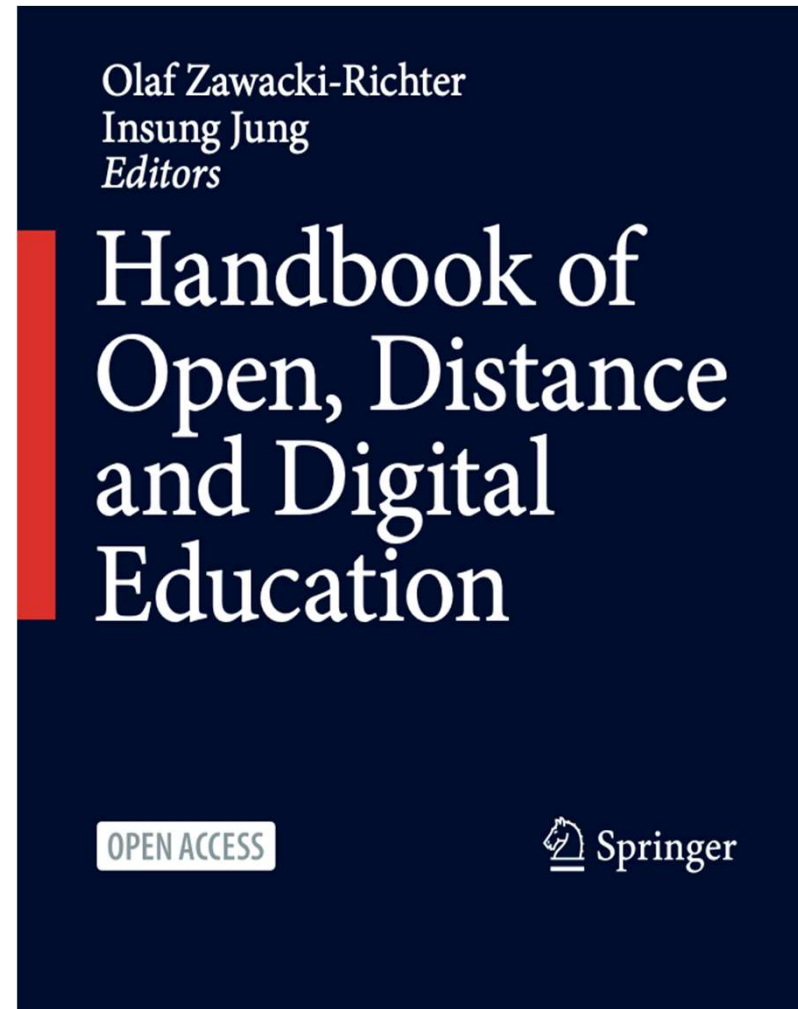
Tait, A. (1999). The convergence of distance and conventional education. In R. Mills & A. Tait (Eds.), *The convergence of distance and conventional education: Patterns of flexibility for the individual learner* (pp. 141–148). London: Routledge.

Xiao, J. (2023). Introduction to History, Theory, and Research in ODDE: Towards an Informed Approach to ODDE. In O. Zawacki-Richter & I. Jung (Eds.), *Handbook of Open, Distance and Digital Education* (pp. 15–25). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-2080-6_1

Handbook of ODDE

- Our roots:
Open and distance education
- Current practices:
Digital education

Zawacki-Richter, O., & Jung, I. (Eds.). (2023). *Handbook of Open, Distance, and Digital Education*. Springer. <https://link.springer.com/referencework/10.1007/978-981-19-0351-9>

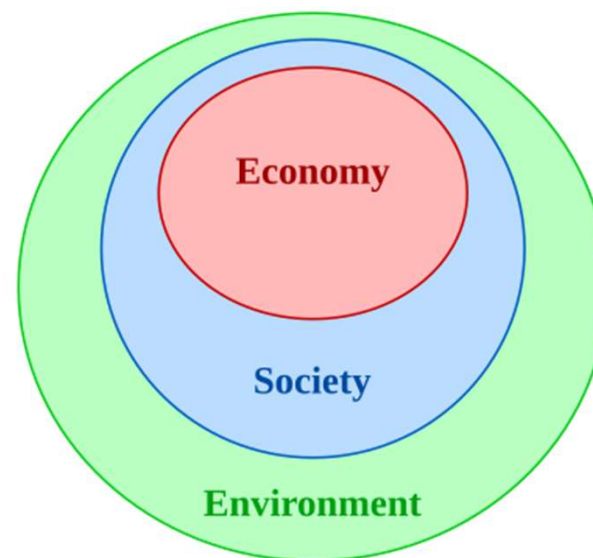


Sustainability

3. Sustainable Development

27. Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable - to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of sustainable development does imply limits

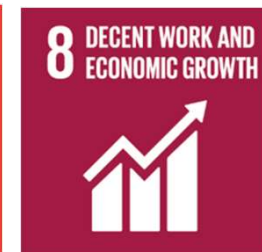
Brundtland, G. H. (1987). *Our common future* (p. 374). United Nations, World Commission on Environment and Development.



United Nations Agenda 2030 and SDG 4



- Ensure **inclusive** and **equitable** quality education and promote **lifelong learning opportunities** for all
- SDG 4 is central to achieve many other SDGs



Green Campus

*A “Green Campus” refers to a Higher Education Institution (HEI) campus that is designed, built, and operated in an **environmentally sustainable** manner. This can include a variety of initiatives such as energy efficiency, use of renewable energy sources, recycling and waste reduction programs, sustainable transportation options, and conservation of natural resources. Green campuses also often include green spaces, such as gardens and parks, which provide habitat for wild-life and opportunities for outdoor recreation for students, faculty, and staff. (Ubachs et al., 2024, p. 2)*

Ubachs, G., Katajaaho, S., Aydin, C. H., Bozkurt, A., Lane, A., Mapar, M., Caeiro, S., Jensen-Lampiri, L., Karhunen, A., Helimo, U., Becker-Schröer, S., Gerstenmeier, A., & Goupilleau, A. (2024). *Green Campus Initiatives in Online and Distance Higher Education*. European Association of Distance Teaching Universities. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13944881>



GreenMetric Sustainability Ranking

World Rank	University	Total Score	SI Score	EC Score	WS Score	WR Score	TR Score	ED Score
1	Wageningen University & Research 📍 Netherlands, Europe	9575	1350	1875	1800	1000	1750	1800
2	Nottingham Trent University 📍 United Kingdom, Europe	9550	1400	1900	1800	950	1700	1800
3	University of Groningen 📍 Netherlands, Europe	9475	1275	1850	1800	1000	1800	1750
4	University College Cork 📍 Ireland, Europe	9450	1300	1875	1800	1000	1700	1775
5	Universidade de Sao Paulo USP 📍 Brazil, Latin America	9450	1475	1800	1800	1000	1700	1675
6	Umwelt-Campus Birkenfeld (Trier University of Applied Sciences) 📍 Germany, Europe	9425	1225	1950	1800	1000	1700	1750
7	University of California, Davis 📍 USA, North America	9425	1400	1900	1800	1000	1575	1750
8	University of Nottingham 📍 United Kingdom, Europe	9425	1375	1825	1800	1000	1750	1675
9	Universita di Bologna 📍 Italy, Europe	9400	1350	1750	1800	900	1800	1800
10	University of Connecticut 📍 USA, North America	9375	1325	1700	1800	1000	1750	1800
11	Dublin City University 📍 Ireland, Europe	9355	1205	1950	1800	1000	1700	1700
12	Universitat Bremen 📍 Germany, Europe	9350	1375	1700	1725	1000	1750	1800



<https://greenmetric.ui.ac.id/>

GreenMetric Sustainability Ranking: OUs, DEs

World Rank ↑↓	University ↑↓	Total Score ↑↓	SI Score ? ↑↓	EC Score ? ↑↓	WS Score ? ↑↓	WR Score ? ↑↓	TR Score ? ↑↓	ED Score ? ↑↓
283	Allama Iqbal Open University 📍 Pakistan, Asia	7675	1250	1750	975	650	1425	1625
419	Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University 📍 Thailand, Asia	7010	750	1300	1500	800	1385	1275
436	Open University of Sri Lanka 📍 Sri Lanka, Asia	6960	810	1325	1125	650	1300	1750
⋮								
694	Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia Colombia 📍 Colombia, Latin America	6010	840	1400	900	650	1110	1110
⋮								
908	Anadolu University 📍 Turkiye, Asia	5150	740	1275	1500	360	850	425
⋮								
1166	Universidad Nacional De Educacion A Distancia Uned 📍 Spain, Europe	3815	295	1225	600	350	785	560

The potential of ODDE for sustainability



The potential of ODDE for sustainability



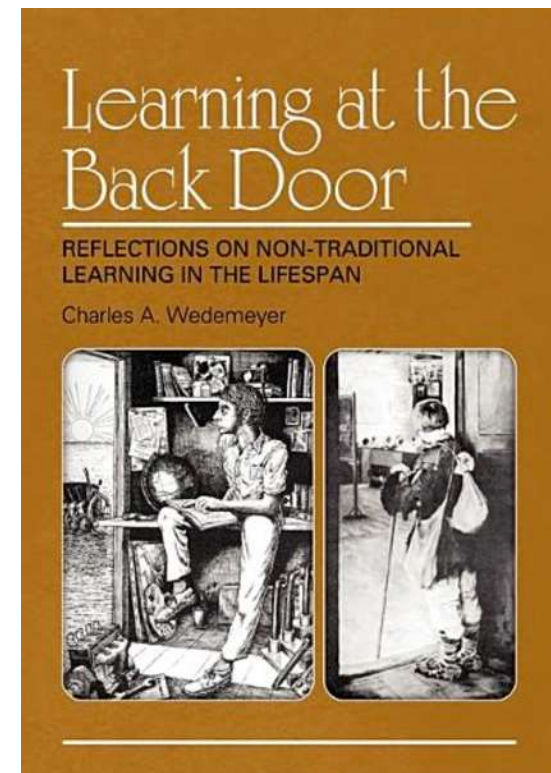
- Mark Nichols, President of the International Council for Open and Distance Education, ICDE (Nichols, 2024)

"[ODDE is...] Sustainable, characterised by, one, a low carbon footprint and, two, long-term financial viability while providing a quality, reliable service". (p. 13)

Social sustainability: Equity, access, and social justice

- Junhong Xiao (2018):

"Distance education is no longer 'learning at the back door' as suggested in the title of Wedemeyer's (1981) seminal work... it is now learning through the front door of higher education." (p. 11)



Wedemeyer, C. A. (1981). *Learning at the back door: Reflections on non-traditional learning in the lifespan*. The University of Wisconsin Press.

Xiao, J. (2018). On the margins or at the center? Distance education in higher education. *Distance Education*, 39(2), 259–274.

Social sustainability: Equity, access, and social justice

- Archer & Prinsloo (2017)

*"Actually, an **ethics of care** proposes that providing access without providing reasonable care to ensure success is actually justice denied."* (p. 274)



Archer, E., & Prinsloo, P. (2017). Some exploratory thoughts on openness and an ethics of care. In D. Singh & C. Stükelberger (Eds.), *Ethics in higher education: Values-driven leaders for the future* (pp. 273–286). Geneva: Globethics.net.

Social sustainability: Equity, access, and social justice

- Open Educational Resources (OER) – open access to learning materials, sustainable implementation (Aksoy et al., 2025)
- Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) – opportunities for lifelong learning supporting SGD 4 (Laurillard, 2024)

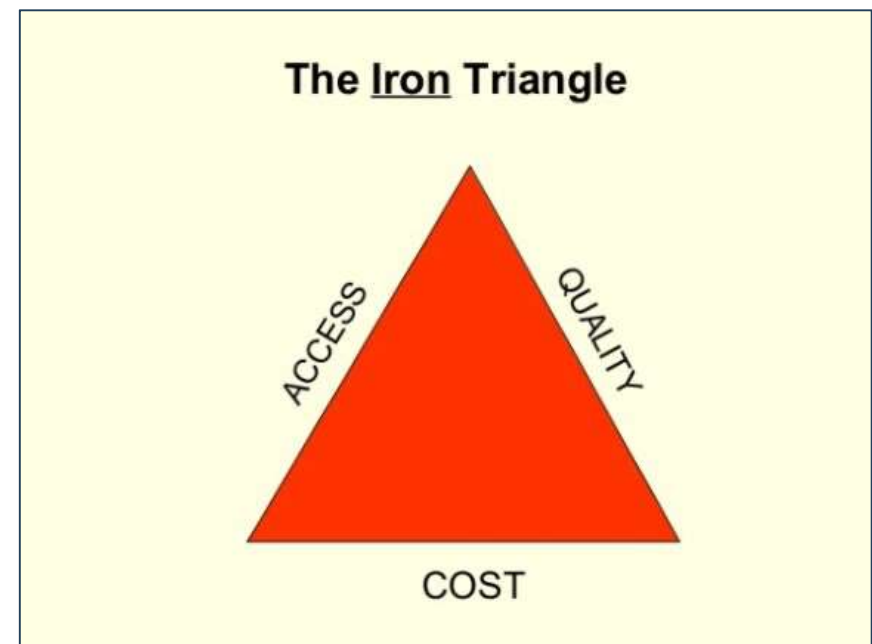


Aksoy, D. A., Kurşun, E., & Zawacki-Richter, O. (2025). Factors affecting the sustainability of open educational resource initiatives in higher education: A systematic review. *Review of Education*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.70029>

Laurillard, D. (2024). The power of ODDE: Is it equal to the challenges of the SDGs? *Journal of Open, Distance, and Digital Education*, 1(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.25619/DL6DCH74>

Financial sustainability: Higher education at scale

- Daniel et al. (2013):
- Economies of scale in ODDE (Hülsmann, 2000; Rumble, 2007)



Daniel, J., Kanwar, A., & Uvalić-Trumbić, S. (2009). Breaking higher education's iron triangle: access, cost, and quality. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 41(2), 30–35. <https://doi.org/10.3200/CHNG.41.2.30-35>

Hülsmann, T. (2000). *The costs of open learning: A handbook*. Bibliotheks- und Informationssystem der Universität Oldenburg.

Rumble, G. (2007). Social justice, economics and distance education. *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning*, 22(2), 167–176. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680510701306715>

Environmental sustainability: The carbon footprint

- Asha Kanwar, former President of COL (Johnson & Cefa, 2024):
*“[...] distance education can reduce costs, improve quality, and increase access and equity. But now we've got another dimension, the **ecology dimension** where we need more of research”.*

Johnson, K., & Cefa, B. (2024). Oral histories and engaged perspectives: In conversation with Asha Kanwar. *Journal of Open, Distance, and Digital Education*, 1(2), 1–10.
<https://doi.org/10.25619/CHFC1F44>



Environmental sustainability: The carbon footprint

- SusTEACH methodology at OUUK (Roy et al., 2005)
 - Distance education: 90 % less energy, 85 % fewer CO₂ emissions
- Carr et al. (2019):
 - Compared delivery modes at Botswana Open University vs. on-campus
 - Carbon footprint of face-to-face 3x higher than online delivery

Carr, A., Modesto, S., Balasubramanian, K., Ortlieb, K., & Lesperance, J. (2019). Delivery mode and learner emissions: A comparative study from Botswana. In W. Leal Filho & S. L. Hemstock (Eds.), *Climate change and the role of education* (pp. 107–127). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32898-6_7

Roy, R., Potter, S., & Yarrow, K. (2008). Designing low carbon higher education systems: Environmental impacts of campus and distance learning systems. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 9(2), 116–130. <https://doi.org/10.1108/14676370810856279>

The dark side: Potential harms of digital technologies



Rebound effects?

The dark side: Potential harms of digital technologies



- AIEd and genAI most dynamic area in educational technology (Bond et al., 2024; Cefa et al., 2025).
- very resource-hungry
- Fairness, Accountability, Transparency, and Ethics – FATE-Risks (Memarian & Dolek, 2023)

Bond, M., Khosravi, H., De Laat, M., Bergdahl, N., Negrea, V., Oxley, E., Pham, P., Chong, S. W., & Siemens, G. (2024). A meta systematic review of artificial intelligence in higher education: A call for increased ethics, collaboration, and rigour. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 21(1), 4. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-023-00436-z>

Cefa, B., Macgilchrist, F., ElGamal, H., Bai, J. Y. H., Zawacki-Richter, O., & Loglo, F. S. (2025). Responses to the initial hype: ChatGPT supporting teaching, learning, and scholarship? *Open Praxis*, 17(2), 227–250. <https://doi.org/10.55982/openpraxis.17.2.872>

Memarian, B., & Dolek, T. (2023). Fairness, Accountability, Transparency, and Ethics (FATE) in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and higher education: A systematic review. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence*, 5, 100152. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2023.100152>

Social harms

- Digital divide, Matthew Effect (Selwyn, 2024)
- Working conditions of data workers in outsourced business centers (Muldoon et al., 2025)

Muldoon, J., Cant, C., Graham, M., & Ustek Spilda, F. (2025). The poverty of ethical AI: Impact sourcing and AI supply chains. *AI & SOCIETY*, 40(2), 529–543.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-023-01824-9>

Selwyn, N. (2024). On the limits of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education. *Nordisk Tidsskrift for Pædagogikk og Kritik*, 10(1), 3–14.



Washington Post, August 28, 2023

Digital computing and AI as environmental burden

Production



Operation



Disposal

Environmental harms – Production

- Billions of electronic devices and batteries
- Mining for scarce metals and rare earth elements
- Toxic waste and (again) poor working conditions



Selwyn, N. (2025). *Digital degrowth—Radically rethinking our digital futures*. Polity Press.



Environmental harms – Operation

- Massive energy and water consumption of digital infrastructure, data centers
- IT and data processing industry already has a greater carbon footprint than airline industry
- Reckoned to increase sixfold over 10 years (BBC News, 2024)

**“Within
years, large
AI systems
are likely
to need as
much energy
as entire
nations.”**

Crawford (2024, p. 693)

BBC News (2024). Data centre power use ‘to surge sixfold in 10 years’, 28 March, [bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-68111111).

Crawford, K. (2024). Generative AI is guzzling water and energy. *Nature*, 626, 693.

Vonderbauwhede, W. (2021). *Low carbon and sustainable computing*. <https://www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/~wim//low-carbon-computing/>

Environmental harms – Operation

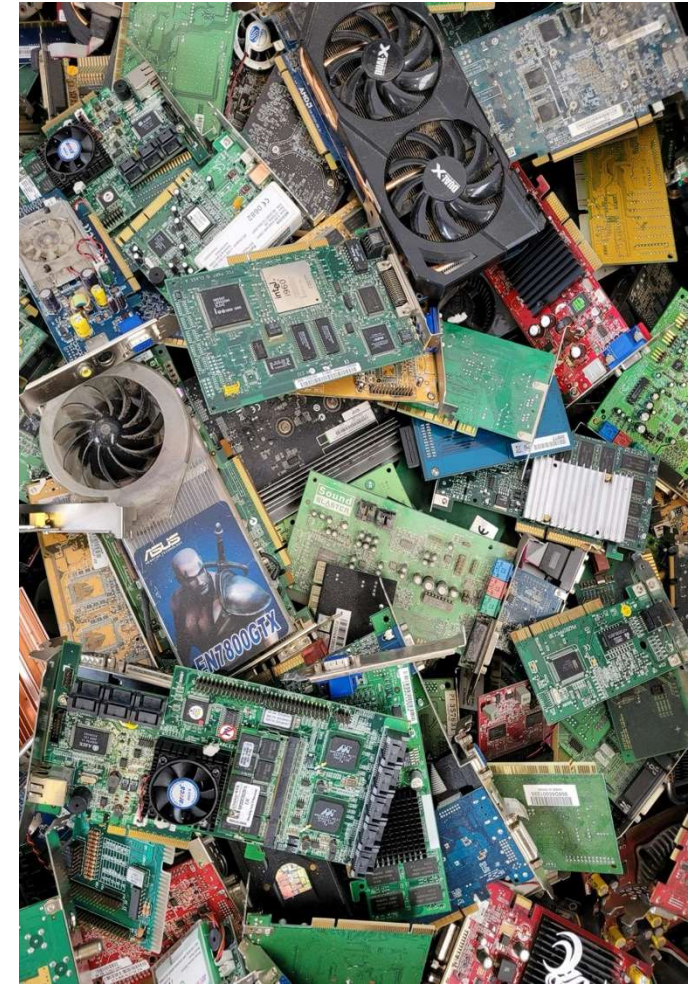
- Vonderbauwhede (2021):

By 2040 emissions from computing alone will be more than half the emissions level acceptable to keep global warming below 1.5°C. This growth in computing emissions is unsustainable it would make it virtually impossible to meet the emissions warming limit.” (para. 1)



Environmental harms – Disposal

- Toxic e-waste, little recycling
- Dumped in poor countries
- Wasteful business practices – "planned obsolescence"



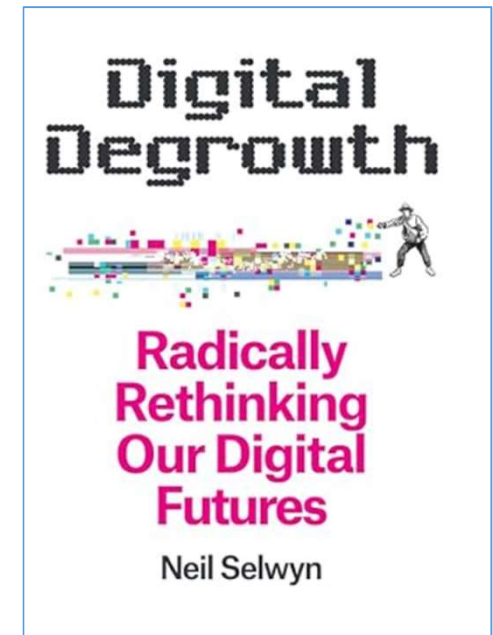
Selwyn, N. (2025). *Digital degrowth—Radically rethinking our digital futures*. Polity Press.

Conclusions and implications for leadership

- "Digital degrowth" (Selwyn, 2025) and "digital sufficiency" (Sanatarius et al., 2023).

- Lane (2025):

“The key to success is for a university or college to define sustainability for itself and build a unique strategy and structure which reflects its nature, context, and geography.” (p. 8)



Lane, A. (2025). What does open, distance, and digital education contribute to sustainability? *Journal of Open, Distance, and Digital Education*, 2(1).

<https://doi.org/10.25619/MHSMZJ36>

Sanatarius, T., Bieser, J. C. T., Frick, V., Höjer, M., Gossen, M., Hilty, L. M., Kern, E., Pohl, J., Rohde, F., & Lange, S. (2023). Digital sufficiency: Conceptual considerations for ICTs on a finite planet. *Annals of Telecommunications*, 78(5–6), 277–295. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12243-022-00914-x>

Selwyn, N. (2025). *Digital degrowth—Radically rethinking our digital futures*. Polity Press.

Conclusions and implications for leadership

- Open universities must innovate and rethink their role as pioneers in sustainable and ethical digital education (Olcott, 2024)
- *interregnum* – a time between paradigms (Murgatroyd, 2025)
- Navigating uncertainty while upholding educational values and long-term human and planetary well-being (Paul, 2024)

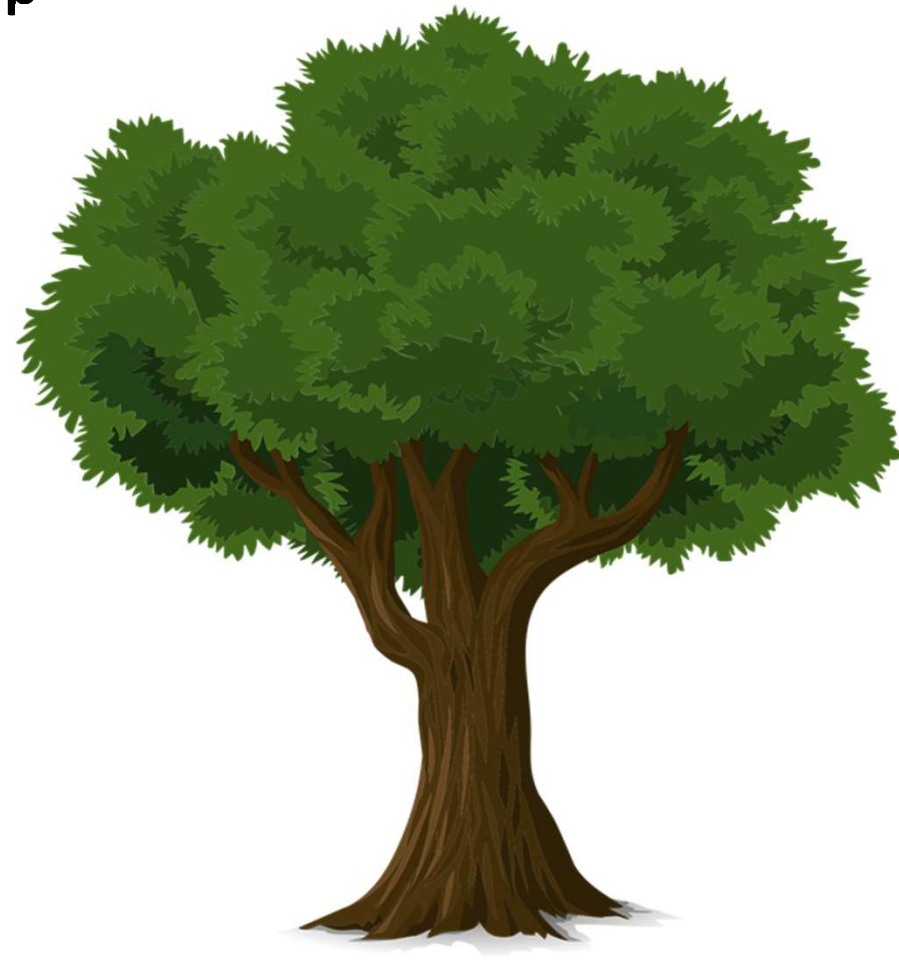
Murgatroyd, S. (2025). Interregnum: Disruption and the in-between time for higher education. *Journal of Open, Distance, and Digital Education*, 1(2), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.25619/DPKTZT39>

Olcott, D. (2024). Open Universities: Reinventing, repurposing and reimagining innovative futures. *Journal of Open, Distance, and Digital Education*, 1(2), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.25619/NTKVSZ26>

Paul, R. (2024). University leadership in the digital age: Challenges, opportunities, and critical actions. *Journal of Open, Distance, and Digital Education*, 1(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.25619/RP3RPR75>

Conclusions and implications for leadership

- Open universities in a unique position
- Lead and innovate responsibly for a sustainable future



Thanks for your attention!

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A Public Lecture

Organised by Open University Malaysia & the Centre for Digital Education Futures

Education for All or for the Few?

The Promise and Perils of Going Digital

Insung jung

6 August 2025, Seri Pacific Hotel, Kuala Lumpur

List of Contents

**1. Digital Education:
A Double-Edged Sword**

**2. Who Designs Digital
Education?**
Technology is NOT neutral.

3. What Gets Counted?
Issues with AI, Language, &
Culture

**4. So, How Do We Build a
More Inclusive DE Future?**
Three Suggestions

Final Thoughts

Note: All images used here are royalty-free ones from pixabay.com.

A Simple Question

Who really benefits from digital education?

Everyone?



The Few?



Digital Education is NOT automatically fair, equal, or inclusive.

Examples

DE on slow mobile phone

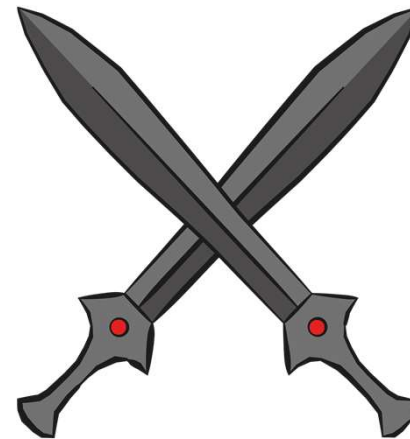


AI tool: Lack of understanding on local stories



1. Digital Education: A Double-Edged Sword

- 1) Promises
- 2) Problems





1) Promises

- ✓ Borderless access
- ✓ Revolutionary
- ✓ Personalized
- ✓ Education for anyone, anywhere

DE as a great equalizer

(e.g., continued education during the pandemic)

2) Problems



1 Access: Devices, internet, electricity

- UNESCO report --- during the pandemic, 43% of students had no home internet globally; 82% in Sub-Saharan Africa
- US case: Use McDonald; Homework at midnight; Smartphone only

2 Skills: Know-how to use tools

- can you use the tools effectively?

3 Outcomes: Actual learning gains

- are you actually learning, succeeding, and benefiting? (who is truly learning?)

Example: Two students from different backgrounds

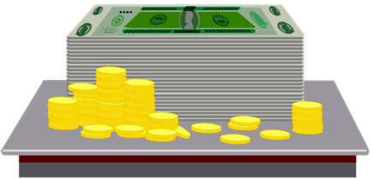


Myth of Digital Natives

Digital natives: people who grew up with digital technology from a young age.

Key Traits: Tech-comfortable (multi-tasking); Fast adopters; Visual learners; Expect instant info

Criticism: Not all are skilled; Ignores access gaps; Social ≠ Academic tech use; Oversimplifies learning needs



2. Technology is NOT Neutral.

- Most DE tools created by **tech companies** - not educators- in the Global North
- Key values:
 - commercial goals
 - Scalability
 - automation, profit
- Not designed always for inclusion
- Data tracked and stored – **do not know how the data is used**



Hidden Curriculum

- Many platforms:
 - Focus on **individual learning** over collaboration.
 - Default to **English** with limited language support.
 - Prioritize **automated assessments** like multiple-choice quizzes.
 - **Western examples** dominate
 - Content **rarely reflects Global South** realities
 - AI grading **penalizes cultural expression**
 - What cannot be measured **gets ignored**.

3. Other Issues

- 1) Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- 2) Language
- 3) Culture

WHAT

1) AI in Education



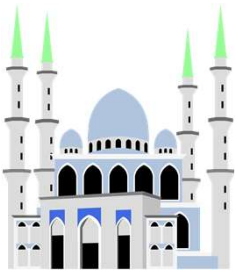
Quick Poll (good or bad?):

- a. Have you ever used any AI tools (like ChatGPT, translation apps, or image generators)?
- b. What was helpful or useful about them?
- c. What problems or concerns did you notice?

AI tools, helpful and beneficial, but can reinforce existing inequalities

Algorithmic bias

Example: UK 2020: Algorithm downgraded poor students



2) Language + Culture

➤ English-heavy platforms limit access.

Coursera, edX, Khan Academy courses; Physics in second language can be exhausting.

➤ Cultural disconnect lowers engagement.

Examples, cases, or humor, not make sense in other parts of the world



4. Three Suggestions

1) Human-Centered & Power-Sharing

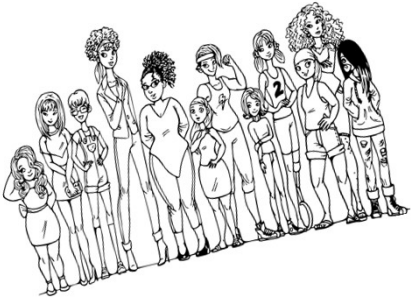
2) Reflect Diversity

3) Fair and Adaptive Technologies



1) Human-Centered Design & Shared Power

- **Co-designing and co-revising** digital tools, courses, policies
- **Partnering with educators and learners**, not just tech developers only



2) Reflect Diversity

- Supporting multiple languages
- Offering culturally relevant content
- Valuing different forms of expressions
- Embracing multiple ways of learning
- Digital literacy woven into every subject, grade, and context (teach students - children how to critically use tech)



3) Fair, Transparent, & Adaptive

- Regularly **auditing algorithms** for bias
- Protecting data **privacy**
- Using **OER** adapted to local contexts
- **Supporting**, not replacing, human relationships
- Considering **low-tech, high impact technologies** (e.g., Africa and Latin America's use of radio; Preloading videos in E. Africa; Mobile kiosks in Mongolia)



5. Final Thoughts

- Digital education has great potential — but its future is **not just about technology**. It's **about justice**.
- To make it truly inclusive, we must **listen, understand the gaps and build bridges** that reach everyone.
- **No one should be left behind.**

Thank you!

Questions or Comments?

