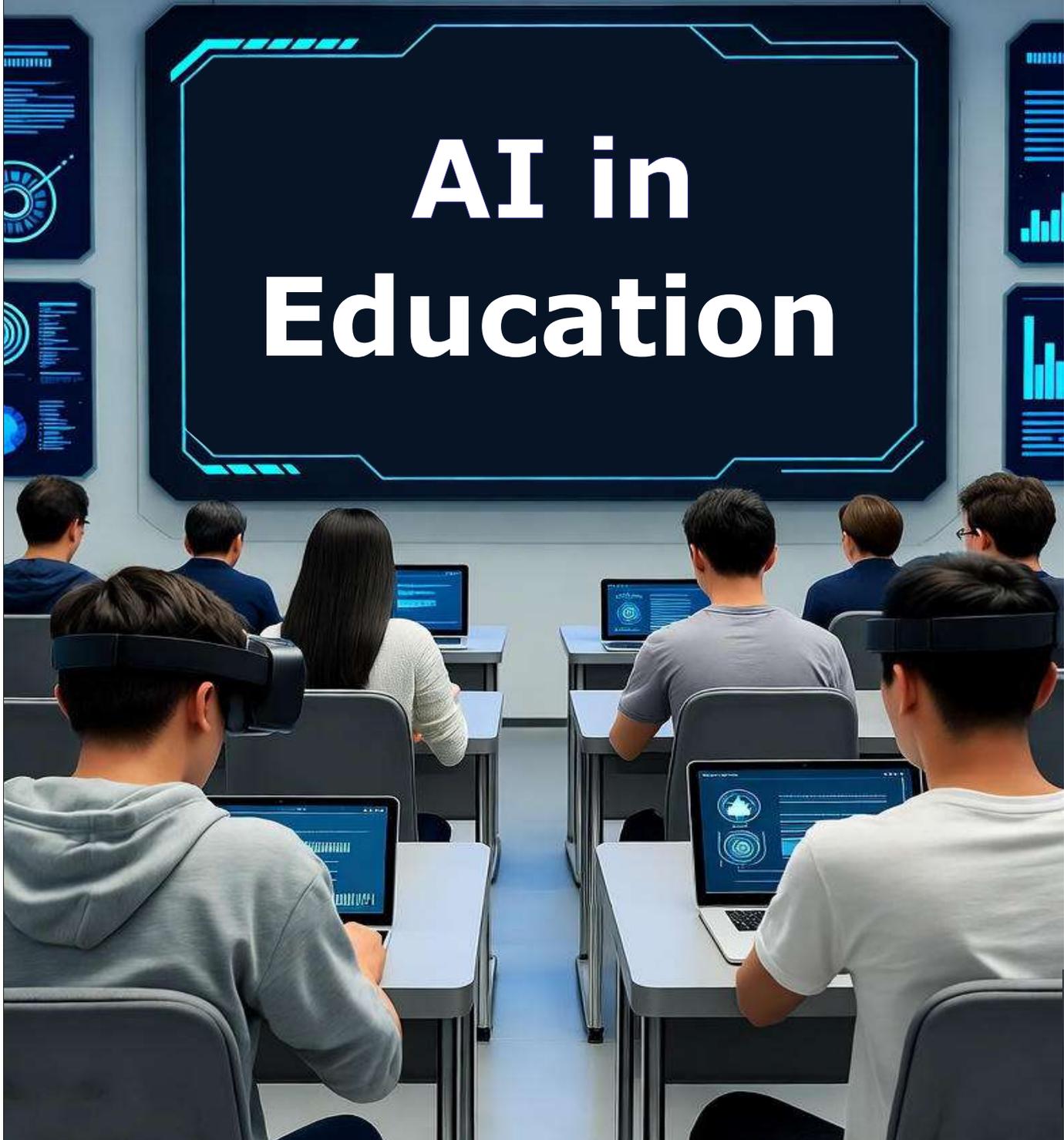


# EduFOCUS



December 2025 issue | For Private Circulation Only

## AI in Education



# Contents

## 03 Editorial

## 05 Are you an AI-groucho or AI-migo?



## 10 UNESCO dedicates International Day of Education to Artificial Intelligence



## 12 Smart Tech, Dumber Minds?

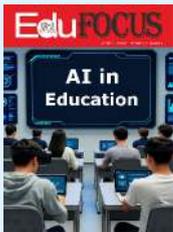
## 20 Teacher's Assistant or Overlord?



## 24 The Rise of Virtual Tutors



## 26 Clicks vs. Bricks



*Cover design credit:*  
**AI - generated**

## 30 When Intelligence Meets Error:



## 32 Will AI be more creative than us?

## 34 Antiqua et Nova



## 39 Indian Teachers make Pilgrimage to Abu Dhabi

## 41 Fraternity Tour - A Dream Come True



## 44 A Bastion of Cosmopolitanism

## 50 Giggle-bytes



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# Editorial



Dr. (Fr.) MagAI Murzello

Before I dive into my 'out of the box' editorial, I must admit **my editorial is not “AI-free”!**

I know, I know. That might raise some eyebrows. But hey, after that shocking confession, has your opinion of me plummeted? Did my credibility tumble like a toddler on roller skates?

My mugshot should have forewarned you. It sports a red 'CAUTION' sign with glowing white letters spelling out 'AI'. If my reputation has taken a nosedive in your eyes for collaborating with AI, then congrats! You've just earned yourself the title of “AI-resistant”.

Don't worry; you're not alone. Every staffroom resembles a reality show with two tribes of teachers: the **AI-resistant**, fuelled by coffee and spirited discussions against AI in education, and the **AI-compatible**, who have probably already embraced AI and integrated it into their classrooms. (Do flip the page to uncover your unique AI persona as an educator.)

The AI-resistant prefer chalk and charts over chatbots and code. Resistance to AI mirrors objection to earlier educational tools as well:

- **Chalk** (First modern disruptor): Resisters argued that they distracted from memorisation and oral recitation, core to traditional pedagogy. Likewise, AI is seen as diverting from human interaction.
- **Pencils** (Portable revolution): Resistance stemmed from perceptions that pencils fostered carelessness and laziness, similar to the fears that AI enables lazy thinking or cheating.
- **Pens** (Blot on tradition): Resisters feared the loss of handwriting skills and found pens messy because of leaks and blots. The AI-resistant also seek to maintain valued traditional teaching skills.
- **Ballpoint Pens** (Convenience and Controversy): Resistance was fierce, though ballpoint pens were revolutionary for their reliability and low maintenance as compared to fountain pens. Schools banned them because they were viewed as tools for laziness, encouraging poor penmanship and a lack of care for the craft of writing. Similarly, the AI-resistant display cultural snobbery in dismissing AI-generated content as low-quality.
- **Calculators** (Threat to mental math): Like the AI-resistant, critics feared that calculators would atrophy mental maths skills. The core fear of resisters is the erosion of foundational skills and dependency on machines.
- **Mobile Phones** (Contemporary Frontier): Concerns about distraction and inequity parallel current debates about AI's accessibility and potential to disrupt focus. Ten years ago, when the newspapers reported that I had installed lockers for mobile phones in school, I was roasted by resisters. During COVID-19, it was these 'banned' mobile phones that came to the rescue.

- **Artificial Intelligence** (Current battlefield): UNESCO dedicated the International Day of Education 2025 (24 January) to AI. Since then, there has been a quiet battle between the AI-resistant and the AI-compatible. One side sees AI as a threat to the heart of teaching, while the other side sees it as a tool that frees them to teach better. The truth? We need both. The resistant keep us grounded and the compatible keep us growing.

Whether you are AI-resistant or AI-compatible, here's to staying what education has always needed most – **human**.

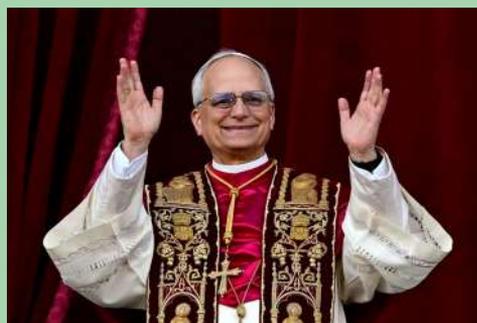
To commemorate 60 years of Gravissimum Educationis, Pope Leo XIV writes in his apostolic exhortation “Drawing New Maps of Hope”: No algorithm can replace what makes education **human**: poetry, irony, love, art, imagination, the joy of discovery, and even learning from mistakes as an opportunity for growth. The decisive point is not technology, but the use we make of it. (28 October 2025)

The future of education isn't about being replaced by AI, but about reimagining through it.

**Evolve!**

“

AI can process information quickly, but it cannot replace human intelligence. And don't ask it to do your homework for you!! It cannot offer real wisdom. It misses this very important human element. AI will not judge between what is truly right and wrong; and it won't stand in wonder, in authentic wonder, before the beauty of God's creation. So be prudent, be wise. Be careful that your use of AI does not limit your true human growth. Use it in such a way that if it disappeared tomorrow, you would still know how to think, how to create, how to act on your own, how to form authentic friendships. Remember, AI can never replace the unique gift that you are to the world.



”

(Pope Leo XIV during a livestreamed conversation with young people at the National Catholic Youth Conference, Indianapolis on 21 November 2025)

# Are You an AI-Amigo or an AI-Groucho?

DeepSeek

**Instructions:** Grab your favourite grading pen and hypothetical cup of coffee! Let's find out if you're ready to ride the AI wave or if you'd rather send it to the principal's office. For each statement, choose the answer that makes your teacher heart nod the most.

No boring scales here! Pick your vibe:

- A. Hard Pass! 🙄
- B. I'm Sceptical. 😐
- C. I'm Intrigued! 😊
- D. Absolutely! 🚀



1. When you hear “AI can write a lesson plan in 30 seconds”, your first thought is:
  - A. “So can I... if I didn't have to attend all these meetings!”
  - B. “I'd probably have to spend 30 minutes fixing its mistakes.”
  - C. “Hmmm, a rough draft could save me some time...”
  - D. “Where has this been all my life?! Sign me up!”
2. Your ideal AI assistant would be named:
  - A. Nope-bot 3000
  - B. Fact-Checker Fred
  - C. Lesson-Launcher Larry
  - D. My Personal Time-Turner
3. If a student used AI to brainstorm ideas for an essay, you would:
  - A. Sigh, and long for the days of encyclopaedias.
  - B. Worry they didn't learn how to brainstorm themselves.
  - C. Discuss with the class how to use it ethically as a starting point.
  - D. High-five them for being resourceful and then analyse the output together.



4. The phrase “AI-powered differentiation” sounds like:
  - A. A corporate buzzword that means “more work for teachers”.
  - B. A nice idea, but my 60 students in one room say otherwise.
  - C. A promising tool I'd like to explore.
  - D. The key to finally meeting every learner's needs!
  
5. Your reaction to an AI-generated report card comment is:
  - A. “It has no soul! It doesn't know about Timmy's love for glitter glue!”
  - B. “It might be okay for a generic comment, but I'd have to rewrite it entirely.”
  - C. “Not bad! I could tweak this to make it personal.”
  - D. “Fabulous! 60 comments done, now I can actually plan that science experiment.”
  
6. Designing an “AI-proof” assignment feels:
  - A. Like a noble and necessary battle in the war for learning!
  - B. Exhausting, but probably required now.
  - C. A little bit like an interesting challenge.
  - D. Kind of futile. Let's design “AI-engaged” assignments instead.
  
7. The thought of using AI to create a fun, differentiated worksheet on “The Phases of the Moon” makes you:
  - A. Miss the copy machine that always jams. At least it's predictable.
  - B. Curious, but I'd still need to check every answer.
  - C. Excited to see what it comes up with!
  - D. Already planning to use the time saved to do a live moon observation with the class.
  
8. In your school's AI debate, you are most likely to be:
  - A. Leading the resistance from the back of the staffroom.
  - B. Asking the tough questions about data privacy and accuracy.
  - C. Listening carefully to both sides and trying out a few tools.
  - D. The one running the public debate session, showing cool prompts.
  
9. When an email arrives about a “mandatory AI training”, you:
  - A. Immediately feel the urge to take casual leave.
  - B. Go, but with arms crossed and a list of “what-if” scenarios.
  - C. Show up with a notebook, ready to learn a trick or two.
  - D. Arrive early to get a front-row seat and ask the presenter advanced questions.
  
10. What's your take on students using AI for homework help?
  - A. It's the digital equivalent of having a stranger do their work.
  - B. It's okay for simple facts, but they need to show their work.
  - C. It's a modern tutor. We just need to teach them how to use it wisely.
  - D. It's an essential skill for their future careers.

11. Your principal announces a new AI tool for writing report cards. You think:
- A. “Great, now a robot will also tell me I use too many exclamation points.”
  - B. “I’ll believe it when I see it actually save me time.”
  - C. “Finally! I can focus on the comments that really need a personal touch.”
  - D. “I’ve been using one for months! Let me show you my templates.”
12. The term “prompt crafting” means:
- A. A new, unnecessary skill to add to our overflowing plates.
  - B. Basically, learning how to talk to a very literal computer.
  - C. The secret to getting AI to give you what you actually want.
  - D. The most important new literacy skill of the decade.
13. If AI could automatically contact a parent about a missing assignment, you would:
- A. Never use it. The personal phone call is sacred.
  - B. Use it only for the most routine, non-sensitive alerts.
  - C. Try it, but probably still follow up personally for big issues.
  - D. Set it up immediately and reclaim your evenings.
14. Seeing a student deeply engaged in a conversation with an AI history tutor would make you feel:
- A. Concerned. Is it giving them biased or incorrect information?
  - B. Cautiously optimistic, but I’d be listening in closely.
  - C. Impressed! They’re taking charge of their own learning.
  - D. Thrilled! This is the future of personalized education.
15. Finish this sentence: “In my classroom, AI is mostly...”
- A. “... a distraction and a problem to be managed.”
  - B. “... a tool I’m still figuring out.”
  - C. “... a helpful assistant for certain tasks.”
  - D. “... a transformative partner in learning.”

## How to Score Your Quiz

**Mostly A's:** The AI-Groucho (A Classic AI-Resister)

**Mostly B's:** The Cautious Critic (Leaning AI-Resister)

**Mostly C's:** The Inquisitive Innovator (Leaning AI-Compatible)

**Mostly D's:** The AI-Migo (A True AI-Compatible Pioneer)

# Your Profile

## Mostly As: The AI-Groucho

**Your Motto:** “If it ain't broke, don't plug it in.”

You're not against technology, but you're against solutions that feel impersonal, gimmicky, or like more trouble than they're worth. You believe in the timeless magic of a teacher's personal touch and are sceptical that a machine can truly understand the beautiful chaos of a classroom. You're the voice of reason, reminding everyone that sometimes the best tool is a well-sharpened pencil and a great idea.

## Mostly Bs: The Cautious Critic

**Your Motto:** “Trust, but verify. Then verify again.”

You see the potential glitter of AI, but you're also keenly aware of the potential for glitter bombs. You're not a resister; you're a responsible adult. You ask the important questions about bias, accuracy, and whether this *actually* helps kids learn. You'll get on board, but only after you've thoroughly inspected the lifeboats and read the safety manual. Twice.

## Mostly Cs: The Inquisitive Innovator

**Your Motto:** “Ooh, what does this button do?”

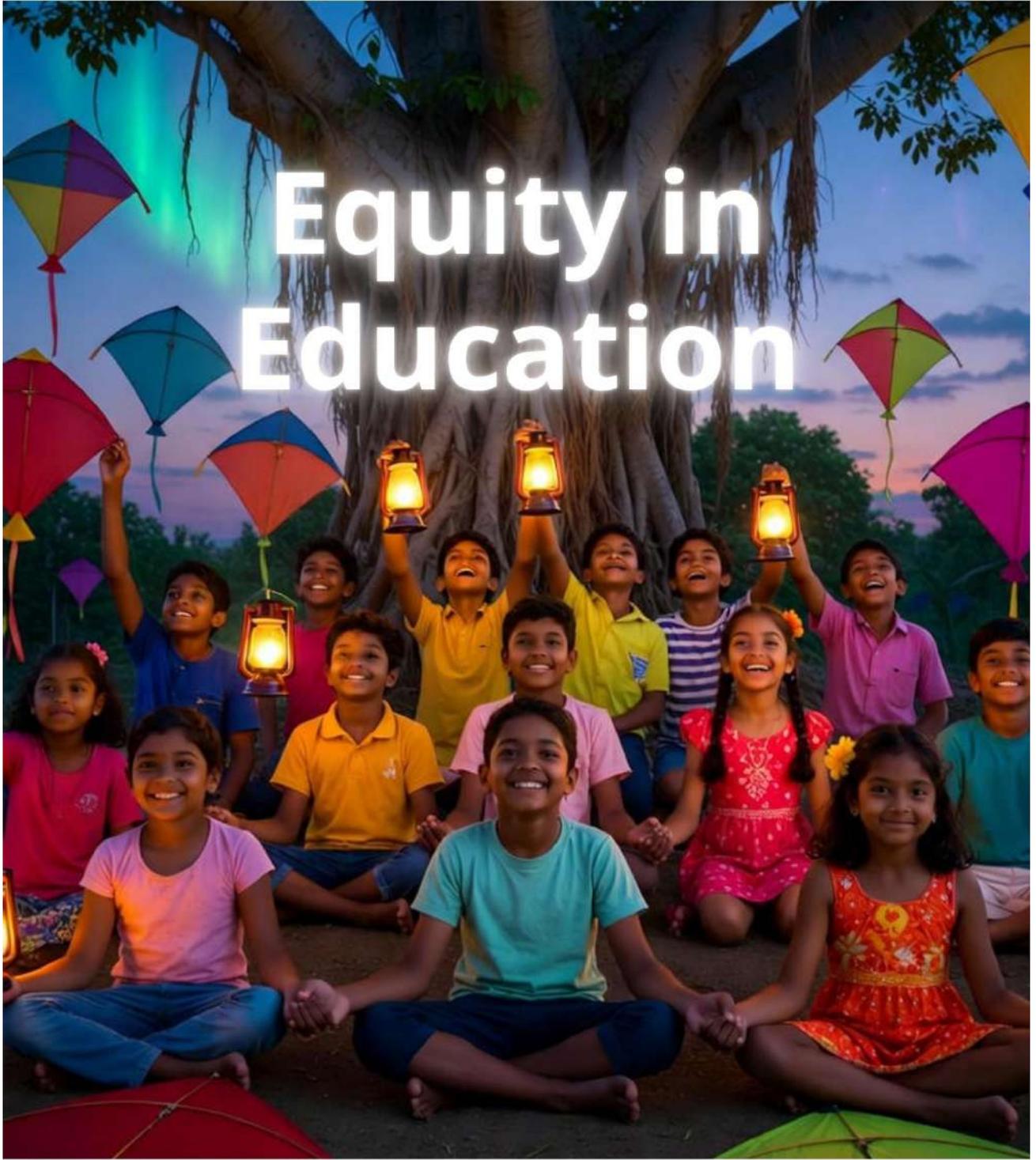
You're the curious explorer of the teaching world! You're excited by the possibilities AI presents for saving time and sparking creativity. You're probably already using it to brainstorm lesson hooks or create silly examples for your students. You see AI as a new, powerful crayon in your box – one you're still learning how to use, but you're definitely going to colour with it.

## Mostly Ds: The AI-Migo!

**Your Motto:** “Work smarter, not harder, and bring everyone with you!”

You're not just using AI; you're collaborating with it. You see it as the ultimate teaching assistant that never sleeps (and never asks for a raise). You're already crafting killer prompts, redesigning assignments, and showing your colleagues how to get their weekends back. You're riding the AI wave and having a blast, all while keeping your focus firmly on what matters: your students.

**No matter your result, remember:** The best classrooms have a mix of all these types! The Grouchos keep us grounded, the Critics keep us safe, the Innovators bring new ideas, and the Amigos show us what's possible. Now, go forth and teach!



# Equity in Education

**Team EduFOCUS invites articles on 'Equity in Education' to be published in the next issue.**

**Please send in your articles by 31 January 2026 to [andieacademic@gmail.com](mailto:andieacademic@gmail.com)**

# UNESCO Dedicates International Day of Education to Artificial Intelligence

Concept note released on 20 January 2025



**A**s computer and AI-driven systems become more powerful, the boundaries between human intention and machine-driven action often blur. This raises critical questions about how to protect and, ideally, elevate human agency in an age of technological acceleration and expanding automation.

The 2025 International Day of Education (commemorated on 24 January) – **AI and Education: Preserving Human Agency in a World of Automation** – will explore how education can help people understand and steer AI to better ensure that they retain control over

this new class of technology and are able to direct it towards desired objectives that respect human rights and advance progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals.

## **AI and automation in education**

According to recent surveys, in high-income countries, over two thirds of secondary school students are using generative AI tools to “automate” the completion of academic assignments. Teachers and schools are also directing AI technologies to assess and respond to student work. Learning pathways, traditionally selected and specified by human teachers and curriculum development experts, are

increasingly being determined by AI-enabled machines. In higher education, AI is playing a role in everything from instruction to admission processes and certification. AI utilities are also helping to assemble and analyse large educational datasets to inform the allocation of resources and influence decisions as varied as placing teachers, planning academic calendars, providing career guidance and counselling and projecting dropout. AI is also impacting the world of work and the skilling, up-skilling and reskilling needs. Understanding how helpful automation and machine analysis are, is, ultimately, a task for education. Research is needed to strengthen the alignment of machine decisions with human intention and values and to defer machine choices to human judgment when there is ambiguity.

Clarifying how to maintain lines of accountability for actions taken by machines, both within and beyond the education sector, is also an urgent task that education and research can help unravel.

### **Education to develop AI competencies**

Education has a foundational role to play in helping individuals and groups determine what tasks should be outsourced to AI and what tasks need to remain firmly in human hands. Making these determinations requires understanding AI – fundamentals about how the technology works, its current and ever-evolving capabilities, its strengths, its limitations and its risks. Education systems around the world are rightly being updated to help teachers as well as learners

develop the AI competencies needed to navigate a world where AI is likely to be more and more pervasive. The UNESCO competency frameworks for students and for teachers provide roadmaps. They clarify that AI literacy requires cultivating technical understandings as well as critical and ethical awareness of AI tools. Education helps teachers and learners ask not only how a tool works and towards what ends, but on whose terms the tool is being used. Developing the AI competencies of all learners will help ensure that human agency and intention are preserved even as technology continues to advance.

International Day for Education 2025 aims to:

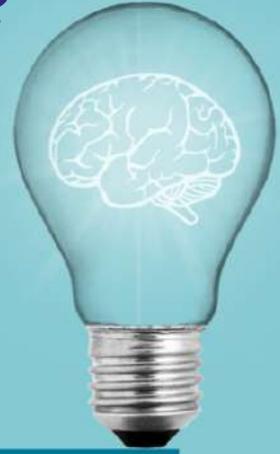
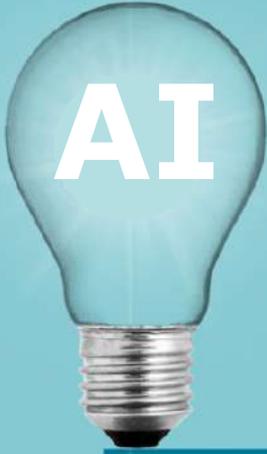
- Examine new possibilities offered by AI, especially for teaching, learning, assessment and educational administration.
- Promote the development of critical AI literacies by equipping educators and learners with the competencies needed to understand, use and influence AI technologies, in line with the UNESCO AI competency frameworks for teachers and students.
- Ensure that AI complements, rather than replaces, the essential human elements of learning, including the cultivation of in-person relationships and emotional intelligence.

*Source: UNESDOC – UNESCO Digital Library*

*“AI offers major opportunities for education, provided that its deployment in schools is guided by clear ethical principles. To reach its full potential, this technology must complement the human and social dimensions of learning, rather than replace them. It must become a tool at the service of teachers and pupils, with the main objective being their autonomy and well-being.”*

- Audrey Azoulay, Director – General, UNESCO

# Smart Tech, Dumber Minds? The AI Education Dilemma



*The most valuable skill now is not the answer  
but knowing if you can you trust  
the AI tool that gave you the answer.*



**Leslie D'Monte**

**T**his May, a former high school English teacher, Hannah Maria, posted a TikTok video announcing her exit from the teaching profession. In her video, which drew more than a million views, she blamed artificial intelligence (AI) tools for making students overly dependent on technology and unmotivated to learn. She claimed many can't read without text-to-speech apps and have lost focus after years of “high-stimulation” social media use.

The 26-year-old teacher later made her video private and clarified that her grouse was against technology and not the students she was teaching. While many teachers may, or may not, subscribe fully to her views, they will likely echo her concerns.

Students, on their part, have their own angst. Consider the case of Ella Stapleton, a business student at Northeastern University in the US, who caught her teacher using ChatGPT to write notes that very month. She felt cheated, given

the high cost of education fees and the reputation of the college. “He's telling us not to use it and then he's using it himself,” Stapleton told The New York Times. She wrote a formal complaint to Northeastern's business school, demanding that they refund her tuition fee, which would be over \$8,000 for the course.

Northeastern denied her request but the case sparked a debate on broader transparency in education with students demanding that their teachers should also be made to disclose whenever they are preparing class notes with help of ChatGPT and other AI tools.

While the use of audio, video, remote teaching and tools that provide data analytics and gamified learning have long been part of the educational landscape, both the above examples serve as cases in point to demonstrate how the launch of generative AI (GenAI) chatbots like ChatGPT have both transformed and disrupted the way students and teachers study and teach.

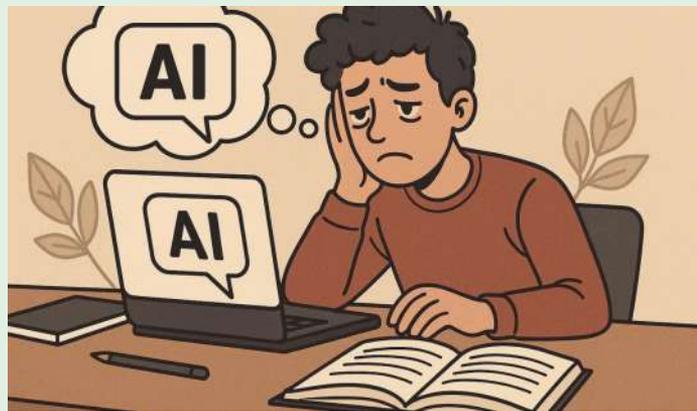
GenAI chatbots are basically next-word prediction tools trained on humungous amounts of data from the internet and other sources. Despite concerns over accuracy, confident fabrication of facts – technically known as hallucinations – and the potential misuse for generating fake data or papers, students and teachers are using AI tools like ChatGPT, Anthropic's Claude, Google's Gemini, Microsoft's Copilot, Meta's LLaMa, and Perplexity's search engine and chatbot for tutoring, generating study materials, and simplifying complex topics.

For instance, when ChatGPT was released in November 2022, it gained one million users in just two months of the launch. The backlash, too, was swift with many schools banning it and revoking the bans later when they realized that benefits of AI tools outweighed their potential harm. Today, OpenAI's large language model (LLM)-powered chatbot alone, currently has a little over 800 million users (about 10% of the world's population), with most of them in the United States and India.

Writers now use AI tools for brainstorming, drafting, and editing. It's also popular for social media captions and marketing campaigns. It automates routine tasks like drafting emails, writing reports, and generating data insights. Researchers use ChatGPT to quickly summarize academic papers, extract key points, and perform preliminary literature reviews. OpenAI analysis shows more than one-third of college-aged young adults in the U.S. use ChatGPT, and approximately a quarter of the messages they send are related to learning and schoolwork – from starting papers and projects, to exploring topics and brainstorming creative ideas.

A survey released this July by the Centre for Teacher Accreditation (CENTA) on classroom

usage found that over 70% of teachers are already integrating AI tools into their teaching practices. Teachers with more than three years of experience show even higher adoption rates, with nearly 75% reporting active use of AI resources. The survey also revealed that lesson planning is the number one activity for which teachers use AI, with close to 60% of respondents choosing it as their primary use case.



This trend holds consistent across both experience levels and school fee segments, highlighting AI's role as a planning and productivity tool across varied teaching environments. Additionally, around 26% of teachers use AI to generate activity ideas for their classrooms, reinforcing its value as a creative aid in lesson delivery. The findings also revealed that 84% of respondents expressed concerns about AI. Specific worries included fears about AI's accuracy and concerns around AI replacing human jobs in education. Other notable concerns related to AI's impact on creativity, transparency, and misuse.

That being said, while AI adoption is accelerating across classrooms, research and administration, progress remains uneven and fragmented. Current usage is largely limited to generative AI tools for developing teaching

materials, AI-powered tutoring and chatbots, and small-scale pilots in areas such as admissions and campus operations, notes the FICCI–EY Parthenon Knowledge Report 2025, released in October.

The Indian government, too, is playing its part. In a recent circular released by the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), Delhi, the body said its new move is aimed to empower teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and tools to effectively use AI to deliver personalized learning, innovative pedagogy, and meaningful assessments. Under the project, 50 government schools across Delhi have been identified and recommended by the Directorate of Education, from which two computer teachers from each of them have been randomly selected to undergo the training. The new initiative will also help teachers with handling non-teaching tasks like creating PowerPoint presentations, generating ideas for extracurricular activities, and editing photos.

### **Understanding the potential**

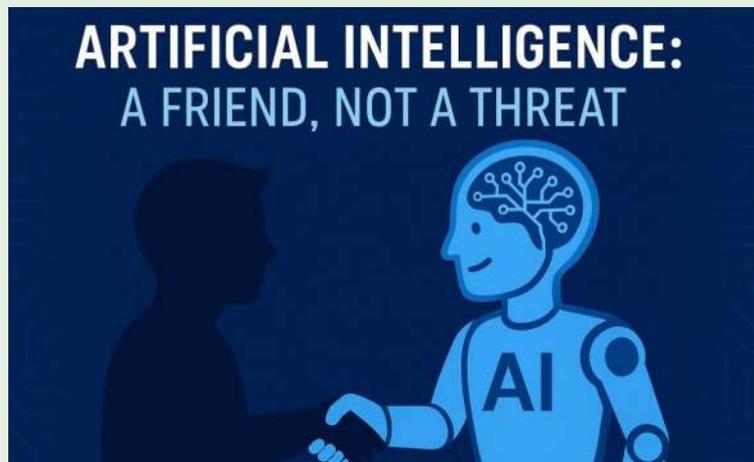
Algorithms are playing an important role in modern classrooms. AI is now as much a part of education as textbooks once were, reshaping how students learn, how teachers teach, and even how exams are designed. In this new era, the question isn't whether AI belongs in education, but how it should be used. For teachers, it means rethinking the curriculum from the ground up. The most valuable skill now is not the answer but knowing if you can trust the AI tool that gave you the answer.

This shift is pushing schools toward project-based learning – where AI becomes a creative partner, helping students research, simulate, or

design solutions to real-world problems. To harness AI's transformative power, CENTA recommends that Indian higher educational institutions (HEIs) must re-conceptualize their institutional strategies along three key dimensions.

First, they must integrate AI into core academic design by ensuring that every graduate attains AI literacy, embedding domain-specific applications into disciplines, and investing in research that advances both applied and fundamental AI knowledge. Second, they need to reskill the faculty, redesign the curricula, and strengthen data infrastructure, governance, and policies that address fairness, transparency and accountability. Third, HEIs must drive student-centric outcomes by leveraging AI-enabled insights to improve access, employability and lifelong learning pathways.

Institutions like the Open Institute of Technology (OPIT) have created AI copilots trained on entire course archives to deliver



personalized learning paths and real-time academic support. Research projects such as VTutor use browser-based pedagogical agents capable of voice interaction and adaptive feedback, while frameworks like Microsoft's AutoGen enable schools to design custom

agentic workflows that plan lessons or assist in research. Closer home, India's MeraTutor.ai offers a browser-based learning assistant that helps K–12 students with homework and explanations directly online, removing device and installation barriers.

Many educators now see AI more as an assistant rather than a threat. Lessons increasingly include AI literacy – understanding how generative tools work, how to detect bias, and how to verify their claims. Students are often required to disclose their use of AI: what prompts they used, what they changed, and how they validated the results. This shift is mirrored in classrooms worldwide. Teachers use chatbots to demonstrate bias, simulate debates, or explore alternative interpretations of data. The classroom becomes a lab for critical thinking, not just content recall.

### What about exams and grading?

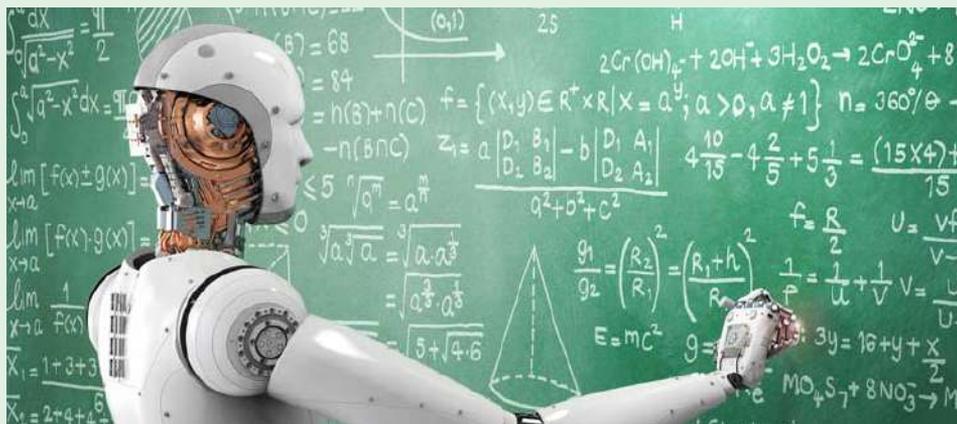
If AI can write essays, solve equations, and even code, what happens to exams? Around the

to use AI tools – just as they might in real life. The difference lies in what educators are trying to measure.

For factual recall, closed-book tests still make sense. But for evaluating judgment, analysis, and creativity, banning AI entirely may feel outdated. The emerging trend is “AI-resilient assessment” – questions that go beyond what an algorithm can easily generate. Students might be asked to analyse their own field data, critique AI's output, or defend their reasoning in an oral viva. The result is an exam that tests how students think, not just what they know.

The shift isn't theoretical – it's happening now. The University of Sydney has become one of the first major institutions to formally allow AI use in most assessments. From 2025, it will adopt a two-track approach: supervised, in-person exams with no AI tools, and open assessments where students can use AI freely, provided they disclose it. At Oxford, the policy is stricter. Students may use generative AI only if explicitly authorized by their instructor;

otherwise, it's considered academic misconduct. Meanwhile, universities across Asia and North America are experimenting with hybrid models, allowing AI for brainstorming and research but not for final submission.



world, educators are wrestling with that question – and the answers are anything but uniform. Some universities are doubling down on traditional, in-person exams to preserve academic integrity. Others are embracing open-resource assessments where students are allowed

AI isn't just changing what students submit – it's also changing how teachers grade it. Across the U.S., Singapore, and parts of Europe, teachers are using AI systems to speed up marking and provide feedback. At Ithaca College in New

York, Professor Diane Gayeski uses ChatGPT to perform a “first pass” on essays, generating comments she later refines. “It doesn't replace me,” she told CNN. “It helps me be more consistent and faster.”

Singapore's University of Technology and Design has built an in-house AI grader for poster assignments, giving structured feedback before human verification. Tools like Gradescope and Turnitin's AI indicators already analyse student work or detect machine-generated writing. Carnegie Mellon University's Eberly Center has even published a guide for “Generative AI in Grading and Feedback”, recommending calibration sessions to ensure consistency and fairness. The early results are promising. AI feedback aligns with human grading about 70% of the time in pilot studies. That remaining 30%, though, underscores why humans can't step out of the loop – AI still struggles with humour, nuance, and originality.



### **But are AI tools making us lazy thinkers?**

New technologies have historically triggered concerns over the rewiring of our brains, and the dangers of making us dumb. Nicholas Carr, in *The Shallows* (2010), argued that the internet weakened deep thinking even as it improved our ability to scan information. His views remain

unchanged in the book's 2020 update. Indeed, each leap – from wheels to smartphones – reshapes our worldview. While some decry smartphones for spreading misinformation or distracting youth, millions have gained skills via YouTube. In communication, especially, change feels more profound because it alters how we think, connect, and create – provoking both anxiety and awe.

In the September 2024 edition Mint Tech Talk newsletter, I asked: 'Can AI agents ideate better than humans?' However, no two experts agreed on this subject. For instance, an August 2024 study from the University of Bath and the Technical University of Darmstadt suggested that LLMs may impress with their capacity to process larger datasets and generate increasingly sophisticated language, but that these models were unlikely to evolve and develop complex reasoning skills. A month later, Stanford researchers in a study titled 'Can LLMs

Generate Novel Research Ideas?' asked whether AI research agents can “autonomously generate and validate new ideas”. In other words, can AI agents think and reason too? The researchers posited that while recent advances in LLMs had raised hopes about their ability to speed up scientific discovery, there was no evidence that LLMs could generate novel, expert-level ideas or complete the

research process.

At present, AI and GenAI have made many advancements in reasoning. Besides, they don't hallucinate as much as they did earlier. These rapid advancements have once again prompted researchers to ask whether ChatGPT-like models can rob us of our thinking power.

In a new 206-page study titled 'Your Brain on ChatGPT' researchers from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) set out to understand the “cognitive cost of using an LLM in the educational context of writing an essay”. In the study of 54 participants, released this month, they compared how essay writing was affected by using different tools: LLMs, search engines, or no tools (brain-only). Each participant wrote essays over three sessions using just their assigned method. In the fourth session, LLM users had to write without help, while brain-only participants tried using LLMs.

Using electroencephalography (EEG) to track brain activity, researchers found brain-only users showed the strongest cognitive engagement, followed by search-engine users. LLM users had the weakest brain activity and lowest memory recall. When LLM users had to write unaided, their performance dropped further. In contrast, brain-only users introduced to LLMs showed a spike in visual processing and memory recall. Essays by LLM users were more uniform and scored lower. They also felt less ownership of their writing and struggled to recall it afterward.

The study concluded that while LLMs are efficient, they may reduce learning, memory, and critical thinking if overused. The researchers, however, qualified that “longitudinal studies (research studies that follow the same people over a long period of time to observe how things change) are needed in order to understand the long-term impact of the LLMs on the human brain, before LLMs are recognized as something that is net positive for the humans”.

## **Other concerns: Ethics, Bias, and the Human Touch**

While these innovations promise more individualized learning and significant time savings for teachers, they also raise serious concerns around data privacy, content accuracy, and over-reliance on automation.

Systems like Ed, the Los Angeles school district's multilingual AI assistant, highlight both the potential and pitfalls of deploying such technology – it was eventually shelved over data privacy and accuracy issues. Agentic AI tools collect large volumes of sensitive educational data, from student behaviour to assessment



performance, which can be misused if not governed properly. Ensuring transparency, ethical data use, and human oversight remains critical as classrooms inch closer to an era where AI agents – rather than students or teachers – navigate much of the web-based learning process. Prompt injection attacks, which are malicious hidden prompts on websites, can easily hijack your computer, your files and even log into your brokerage or banking using your credentials.

Further, for all its efficiency, AI grading raises thorny ethical questions. Should students know

if an algorithm helped evaluate their work? What happens if the system misunderstands cultural or linguistic nuance? Teachers are cautious. Many use AI to draft feedback but still review every comment before sharing it.

Bias remains a concern. AI models trained primarily on Western data may misjudge phrasing or reasoning styles from other cultures. Transparency is critical: students should be told when and how AI is used, and teachers must retain final authority over all grades. Yet the risks are real. Over-reliance can flatten diversity of thought, rewarding conformity over originality. Automated systems can also misfire – flagging authentic work as AI-generated or mis-scoring creative answers. As Carnegie Mellon's guidance stresses, AI in grading should “augment, not replace, the teacher's professional judgment”.

AI tools also fall short when it comes to engagement. A teacher's delivery, enthusiasm, and storytelling spark curiosity and shape how students connect with a subject – something no algorithm can imitate, according to an AI For Education article titled: 'What AI Can't do Yet'. It explains that while AI can explain topics, it can't

convey passion or inspire in the same way a human can. AI also struggles with real-time feedback. It may analyse answers quickly, but it can't read emotions or respond with empathy. Teachers, by contrast, sense confusion, frustration, or excitement and adapt instantly – something machines still can't do.

In a broader context, UNESCO mandates a human-centred approach to AI. It aims to shift the conversation to include AI's role in addressing current inequalities regarding access to knowledge, research and the diversity of cultural expressions and to ensure AI does not widen the technological divides within and between countries. UNESCO also published AI competency frameworks for students and teachers to guide countries in supporting students and teachers to understand the potential as well as risks of AI.

### **Classroom of the future**

An April 2024 World Economic Forum article titled: 'The future of learning: How AI is revolutionizing education 4.0', posits that given the rapidly evolving technological landscape, the intersection of AI and education “is not just a future possibility; it is imminent”.



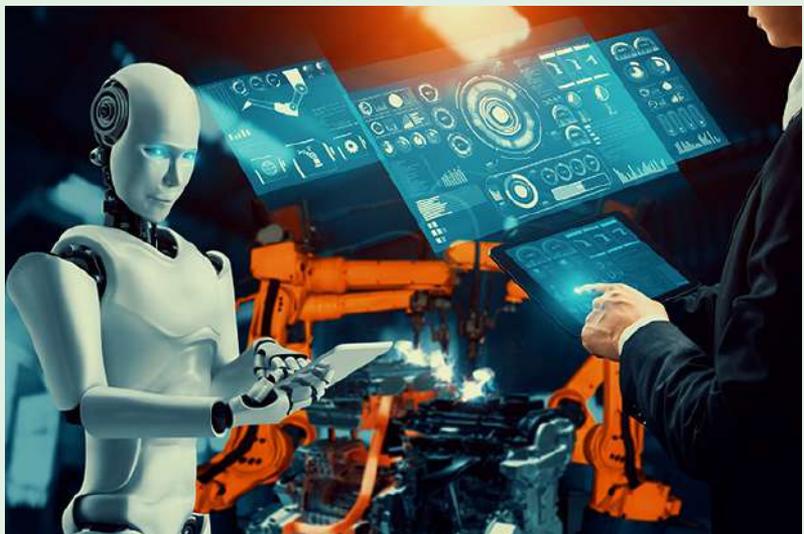
Consider the pace at which AI is evolving. If GenAI chatbots were hard to wrap our heads around, agentic AI browsers like Perplexity's Comet, OpenAI's Atlas, Opera's Neon, Dia Brave, Microsoft's Edge (with Co-pilot) and Google Chrome are automating tasks like navigating websites, filling forms, executing transactions, negotiating prices, and even complete purchases automatically. Now these browsers and web-based learning agents are even beginning to reshape how teachers teach and students learn.

Moreover, those without AI skills may be at big disadvantage when applying for jobs. Despite 96% of organizations running AI programs, demand for AI, ML (machine language), and data analytics talent will exceed one million roles by 2026, with up to 73% talent shortages in key positions like ML engineers and data scientists, according to Coursera's 2025 Global Skills Report. This implies that students will have to be AI-equipped to be job ready in the future, notwithstanding the limitations of AI tools.

While it's hard to exactly predict the classroom of the future, here's one way of seeing it, given the current trends – it

will be a collaboration between humans and machines (software and hardware). Students will use AI to brainstorm, analyse, and simulate, while teachers will use it to assess, track, and personalize learning. Exams will likely split into two categories: one testing unaided knowledge, the other testing AI-augmented reasoning.

Education, in short, will mirror the world it prepares students for – a world where human intelligence and machine intelligence work side by side. That's the real promise of AI in education: not automation but amplification. The best teachers won't compete with the machine. They will teach us how to think beyond it.



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system that recognizes students from classroom photos. What used to take him twenty minutes each period now takes two minutes. Over a week, that's an hour saved per class – enough time to prepare extra problems for struggling students or simply breathe. “I feel less like a data entry clerk and more like an actual teacher,” he says with visible relief.

Grading is another monster tamed by AI. While standardized multiple-choice tests have been machine-gradable for years, modern AI can now evaluate subjective responses. A government school in Bangalore uses an AI platform that assesses essay answers and provides detailed analytics – not just marks, but patterns in student performance. Teachers can now see that Ram consistently confuses active and passive voice or that Priya struggles with paragraph structure. This diagnostic data lets teachers teach, not just mark. The irony is delicious: AI is making teaching more human by handling the inhuman grunt work.

Lesson planning, too, benefits from AI assistance. Teachers in resource-strapped schools now use AI tools to generate lesson outlines based on the curriculum and learning objectives. A teacher in a Kolkata school told us: “I used to spend Sunday evenings preparing lessons. Now, AI gives me a draft in five minutes. I personalize it with my classroom stories and examples – which is the part I actually love. The AI handles the scaffolding; I handle the soul.”

### **When Your Job Has a Countdown Clock**

But not everyone is celebrating. In a staffroom in Pune, tensions simmered when the administration proposed an AI-driven student performance tracking system. “First it's grading, then it's lesson planning,” one senior teacher muttered. “Eventually, they'll say, 'Why do we need teachers at all?'" This fear isn't paranoia; it's rooted in watching technology disrupt industries worldwide. It's reasonable to wonder if you're next.

The concern runs deeper for Indian teachers because the context is fragile. Teaching jobs are already precarious. Contract teachers outnumber permanent ones in many states. If AI can grade better than humans, provide personalized learning pathways, and optimize classroom management, wouldn't administrators feel tempted to downsize?

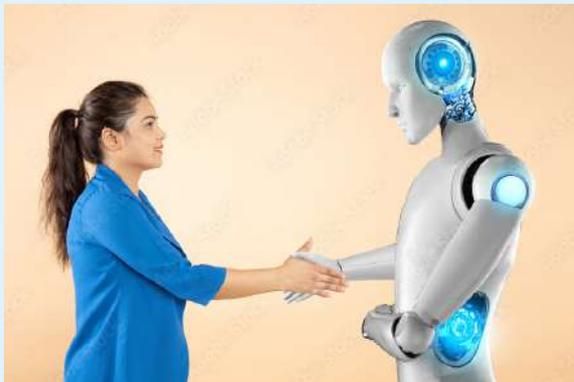
Here's the uncomfortable truth: some tasks might be better done by machines. Multiple-choice testing, for instance. Humans grade standardized tests inconsistently; AI does it perfectly. Should we mourn that? Maybe not. But what about the more complex anxieties? What if AI-generated lessons standardize teaching to the point where a teacher in a small village in Odisha delivers the identical curriculum as one in Delhi – losing local context, cultural relevance, and adaptability? What if AI efficiency becomes an excuse for larger class sizes or reduced teacher-student interaction?

These aren't hypothetical fears. They're rational concerns about the direction of reform.

### **From Busy Work to Breakthrough: AI as Your Ally**

Yet here's what's often missing from doomsday narratives: teaching is fundamentally an act of relationship, mentorship, and human judgment. These can't be automated – and increasingly, people are realizing this.

Consider the story of Ms. Gupta, a teacher in a Delhi NCR school who uses AI for initial student assessment. The AI evaluates reading level, identifies knowledge gaps, and suggests content. But then – and this is crucial – Ms. Gupta takes over. She notices Arjun scores poorly on comprehension, but when she asks him questions verbally, his understanding is sharp. She modifies her approach, creating audio-visual content instead of text-heavy materials. She recognizes he's a kinaesthetic learner. This diagnosis and intervention is teacher work. AI gave her bandwidth to do it.



Similarly, an AI-powered behaviour tracking system at a Hyderabad school flags students showing signs of disengagement or distress based on attendance, performance trends, and classroom participation patterns. But the counselling – the real conversation with a struggling student about what's happening at home, whether they're dealing with family pressure or mental health issues, how to support them – that's irreplaceably human. AI surfaces the signal; the teacher provides the care.

In Indian classrooms, where many students come from under-resourced backgrounds and may not receive attention at home, this mentoring role is sacred. A teacher often serves as the stable adult in a child's life – sometimes the only one who notices when something's wrong. AI can't replace that presence. What it can do is give teachers the time and information to be present more meaningfully.

### **The Comedy of Errors: AI's Most Human Moments**

Of course, AI isn't perfect, and Indian teachers have already discovered the comedy. One school



tried an AI that recorded lessons for absent students. The system confidently transcribed the teacher's explanation of photosynthesis as “four to synthesis” and later “photo sin thesis”. Students watching the recorded lesson were thoroughly confused about what exactly they should be sinning.

And then there's the AI chatbot that suggested ways to make history classes more interactive. It recommended a field trip to the Taj Mahal for a school in Gujarat. The teacher responded with a laugh: “Sure, and I'll book a helicopter for transport with my teacher's salary of ₹25,000 a month.”

These glitches aren't just funny – they're important. They remind us that AI is a tool built by people with specific contexts in mind. It needs human judgment to be implemented wisely in Indian schools.

### **The Evolution of Educators**

So what does the practical future look like? Rather than “teacher or no teacher”, the question becomes “what kind of teacher?”

The *data-enabled* teacher uses AI dashboards to track student progress, identifying who's struggling before they're hopelessly behind.

The *mentor* teacher uses reclaimed time to have deeper conversations with students about goals, anxieties, and possibilities.

The *adaptive* instructor uses AI-generated content as a starting point but tailors it to the classroom culture, local examples, and student interests.

The *reflective* teacher analyses AI-generated insights about their own teaching patterns and improves.

In Indian schools specifically, where class sizes are often large and resources limited, this could be transformative. A teacher in a class of seventy-five students can't know each child's learning profile without help. AI provides that help. A teacher covering six different subjects across

primary grades can't prepare six different lesson plans daily. AI provides templates. A teacher in a rural school without access to pedagogical workshops can use AI to access quality instructional strategies.

None of this replaces the teacher. It redefines the job.

### **The Essential Takeaway**

Mrs. D'Souza still marks papers – AI doesn't eliminate that entirely. But she marks smarter, with AI highlighting common errors. Mr. Patel still teaches lessons, but AI handles the attendance so he can focus on explaining quadratic equations instead of calling out names. He still mentors students, but now he has more

energy for it because his administrative burden has shrunk.

The fear that AI will become an overlord dismissing teachers is understandable but, in context, less likely than the more nuanced reality: AI will become a tool that changes what teaching means. The administrative tasks will largely vanish. The relational, mentoring, adaptive work will remain and become central.

That's not the end of teachers. It's the beginning of teaching as it should always have been – ***focused on human connection, adapted to individual students, and responsive to context.*** In India's under-resourced, over-crowded classrooms, that's not just desirable. **It's revolutionary.**



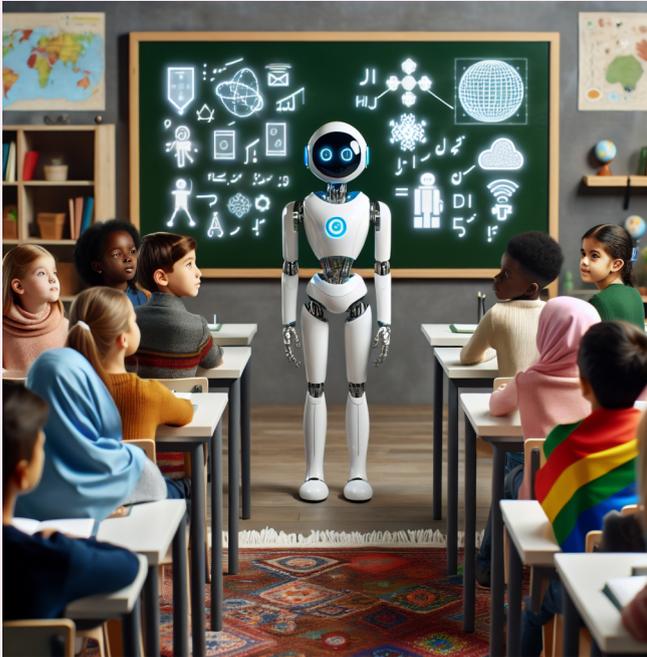
**Vanessa D'Cruz** has been associated with education for more than 20 years and finds teaching to be a very enriching experience. She is currently Principal, St. Anne International School, Orlem. She is happy to be a member of the EduFOCUS Editorial Team as it gives her a preview into the latest trends in the field of education, the lives of teachers and students and allows her to interact with different intellectuals and educationists who work to meet the challenges of an ever-advancing knowledge-based society and a dynamically changing environment.



# The Rise of Virtual Tutors

## Can AI Replace Human Teachers?

Luna D'Souza



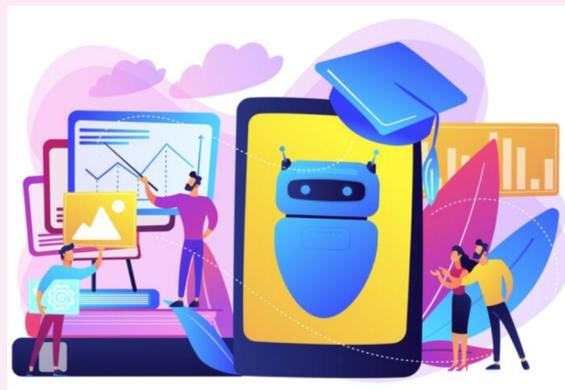
In today's classrooms, the teacher's desk isn't the only source of answers. Many students now turn to virtual tutors – intelligent, round-the-clock companions like Duolingo's chatbot, Socratic by Google, or ChatGPT-based study assistants – for help with homework, concept clarification, or quick revisions before exams. These AI-powered tools are reshaping how students learn, and how teachers teach.

For example, Dev, a ninth grader is battling Algebra late at night. Instead of waiting for tuitions, he opens his smart phone and chats with an AI tutor. Within seconds, step-by-step explanations appear. The app even gives him a quiz. He says: "It's like having a teacher who never gets tired!" AI app-based tutors are revolutionizing how students learn – anytime, anywhere.

Last academic year, one of our young intelligent, highly educated, passionate maths lecturers 'called it quits' rather than continuing with her 'clock hour basis'/ approval-based teaching job. On inquiring whether she intended to teach in another college, she surprised me with her unusual reply. She had made plans to shift to Bengaluru as the future lies not in classroom teaching but in virtual tutoring... using AI... on a one-on-one basis. She had already forayed into it and it did indeed pay well.

Online teaching, online learning, educational videos, Quora, Teachers teach teachers, SlideShare... Free as well as paid versions... Hmm! As educators, many of us have used these tools to enhance the teaching learning experience. But AI as a virtual tutor? AI tutors are transforming the learning landscape. And rather than running away from AI, why not embrace it?

AI tutors use smart algorithms to adapt to each learner's pace and needs. They offer 24/7 homework help, adjust difficulty levels automatically, give instant feedback and also track progress and mastery, thus personalizing the learning experience. Some AI tools can even detect hesitation in a student's response and rephrase the question for better understanding! They even provide the option of a virtual live



qualified tutor, if you need one. Students in remote areas, or those unable to afford private tuition, can now access high-quality learning support.

But the big question remains: Can these AI tutor apps truly replace human teachers?

I began small, by getting students to use AI apps to draft their science project reports, to make science posters on a given topic, etc. I gave them AI samples of the format and what was expected. Yet, I didn't get the desired results from the students. The common complaint was that, even after they put the name of the topic, parameters and required output, the response was either too academic or totally askew.

Moreover, virtual tutors can make factual or contextual errors, particularly when students ask open-ended or creative questions. I know of educators who purposely plant inaccurate information and notes so that they can separate the goats from the sheep... to evaluate whether the student has actually done a basic study of the topic. Without proper guidance, students might accept these inaccuracies as truth.

So essentially, with the demands of the present times, we, as educators, need to guide students to at least study the topic and use “key words”

to prompt AI tools for a relevant response. Also, how to fact check. We must guide our students how to 'combine' the responses that AI tools have provided in order to make a good presentation.

Rather than replacing educators, AI tutors work best as collaborators. Teachers benefit too. AI can handle repetitive corrections, vocabulary drills, and formula reviews, allowing us educators, to focus on critical thinking, creativity, mentorship, emotional development and real-world application. Basically, “AI can give my students the 'what' and 'how', but I provide the 'why'. It's the human connection that turns information into understanding.”



In the classroom of tomorrow, success will belong to those who can combine the precision of AI with the empathy of the human heart. When used thoughtfully, these digital assistants can enhance personalized learning,

bridge gaps, and make education more inclusive. The future of learning isn't human or AI – it's human and AI, working together to inspire every learner. AI tutors are transforming education – not by replacing teachers, but by empowering them.

**Luna D'Souza** has been an inspiring educator for over 34 years and currently teaches at St. Anne High School and Junior College, Malad. A pioneer in integrating technology in education to enhance the teaching learning experience, she used tools like the OHP (projector) long before smart boards became common. Known for her rich experience, innovative strategies, and lifelong learning mindset, she remains a resource person for both academic and co-curricular initiatives. Beyond school, she actively promotes environmental initiatives in her community as a certified eco-ambassador.



# Clicks vs. Bricks

## Crisis and Opportunity in the College Classroom

Dr. Preeti Oza

**E**ducation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is increasingly defined by technology, transforming classrooms from traditional spaces into dynamic virtual landscapes. India stands at a crossroads, facing both unprecedented opportunities and significant challenges in integrating technology into education. This technological integration offers personalized, interactive learning experiences through multimedia resources, simulations, and real-time assessments.

Government platforms like DIKSHA, SWAYAM, and e-PATHSHALA aim to democratize quality education, breaking down economic and geographic barriers. Urban students benefit from smart classrooms, consistent internet connectivity, and advanced tools such as AR/VR and AI-driven platforms, bridging socio-economic divides. However, stark disparities persist. Rural students confront infrastructural challenges, including erratic power supply, limited internet access, and a lack of devices. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted these inequities, with rural students struggling significantly compared to their urban peers. Additionally, rural areas experience technological skill gaps among both students and teachers.

Content quality varies widely and sometimes lacks cultural relevance for rural learners. Data privacy and cybersecurity also pose significant concerns, necessitating careful regulatory management. To fully harness technology, India must prioritize inclusive digital growth. Initiatives that enhance rural infrastructure, subsidize affordable devices, and train educators are critical. Projects like BharatNet, which connects Gram Panchayats with high-speed internet, promise to narrow the rural-urban educational gap significantly.

### What is Technological Integration in Education?

Technological integration in education involves incorporating tools such as computers, digital platforms, multimedia resources, artificial intelligence (AI), and internet connectivity into the teaching-learning process. It transforms traditional classrooms into interactive, accessible, and personalized educational spaces. Technology helps tailor learning materials to address individual students' strengths and weaknesses. Platforms like BYJU's and Vedantu in India offer personalized tutoring sessions based on AI algorithms that assess each student's learning pace and style. Students from remote or underserved areas gain access to high-quality teachers, courses, and resources online. Indian government initiatives like SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) provide free online courses designed by prestigious institutions such as IITs and IIMs. Digital platforms permit learners to explore content independently, fostering a culture of lifelong learning. Educational YouTube channels,



such as Khan Academy India, offer accessible, high-quality video lessons, enabling students to learn at their own pace.

### **Timeline and Short History**

The transformation of classrooms from traditional spaces into dynamic virtual landscapes began in the 1960s with computer-assisted instruction, advancing significantly through establishing open universities and distance-learning models. The widespread adoption of the internet in the 1990s accelerated this shift, with web-based platforms and early Learning Management Systems (such as Blackboard and Moodle) providing new means for interaction and content delivery. The rise of Web 2.0 in the mid-2000s further enhanced collaborative learning through interactive tools like blogs, wikis, and social media. Around 2012, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) revolutionized access to global education.

Technological advancements such as virtual and augmented reality have further enriched learning experiences, creating immersive and experiential environments that captivate students. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic served as a catalyst, dramatically accelerating the worldwide adoption of online education and solidifying hybrid and flexible learning models through platforms like Zoom, Google Classroom, and Microsoft Teams.

Today, we stand on the brink of a new era in education, driven by advances in artificial intelligence and the rise of metaverse-based learning environments. These innovations are crafting increasingly personalized, interactive, and fully immersive virtual classrooms, establishing technology-enhanced learning as the definitive educational paradigm of the future. Like virtual and augmented reality enabled immersive, experiential learning environments.

### **Challenges in Technological Integration**

The gap between rural and urban India in technological integration within education is significant. Urban students typically enjoy

reliable broadband connectivity, whereas rural students in states like Jharkhand, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, often depend on weak or inconsistent mobile networks. In urban settings, students have easy access to digital devices like computers, tablets, and smartphones, while rural students frequently must share limited devices among family members. Digital literacy is also notably higher among urban students due to regular exposure, whereas rural students experience limited opportunities to develop these skills. For instance, an urban student in Delhi might easily engage in interactive science experiments using advanced AR/VR headsets, whereas a rural student in Rajasthan may find it challenging to participate even in basic online classes, relying entirely on a shared smartphone with unstable internet connectivity. Additionally, urban teachers generally receive better training in technology use compared to their rural counterparts, who often lack sufficient exposure and professional development opportunities.

Online content may not always be culturally sensitive or contextually relevant, especially in rural or tribal communities. Digital content primarily designed in urban contexts might reference city-specific examples that rural students find hard to relate to. Increasing dependence on technology escalates the risk of cyber threats and data breaches. Instances of hackers infiltrating online classrooms or learning platforms to disrupt classes have been reported in various cities, underscoring privacy concerns.

### **Government Initiatives to Bridge the Gap:**

- **DIKSHA Portal:** A national digital platform launched by the Ministry of Education, offering curriculum-linked educational resources for teachers and students across rural and urban areas.
- **e-PATHSHALA:** NCERT's digital platform provides access to digital textbooks and learning materials free of charge, widely accessed by students across India.
- **BharatNet Project:** Aimed at providing high-speed broadband connectivity to all village



Gram Panchayats, thus potentially bridging the rural-urban digital divide.

### Real-Time Examples from India's Higher Education Landscape

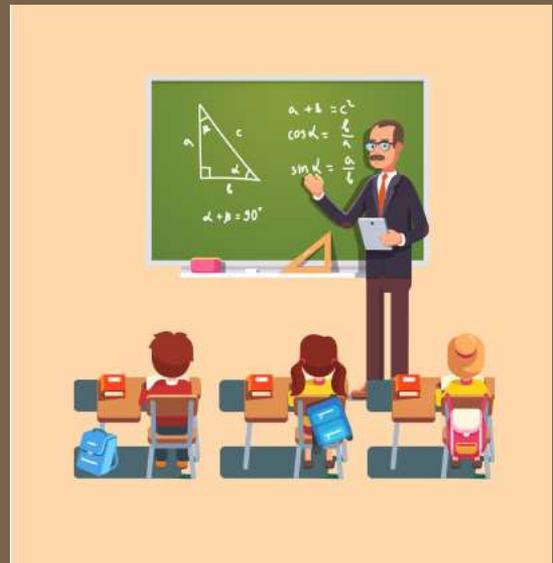
- **Urban Advantage:** Ashoka University, Haryana swiftly transitioned to virtual learning during the pandemic using digital platforms like Zoom, Google Classroom, and Moodle, facilitating uninterrupted education. But despite technology integration, students reported fatigue from prolonged online sessions, indicating challenges in maintaining engagement and student mental health.
  - **Rural Struggle:** Tribal Students of Gadchiroli, Maharashtra faced severe difficulties during the pandemic due to lack of devices, poor internet connectivity, and regular power cuts. But many students resorted to climbing trees or hills to receive mobile signals for online classes. NGOs and local initiatives stepped in to distribute smartphones and create local hotspots, demonstrating the potential for community-driven digital empowerment.
  - **Digital Inclusion Efforts:** Delhi University (DU) effectively integrated technology through virtual classes, online assessments, and digital learning resources, ensuring
- continuity during campus closures. But numerous outstation students from economically weaker backgrounds faced difficulties accessing reliable internet connections and suitable devices, highlighting socio-economic disparities.
- **Skill-based Virtual Labs:** IIT Bombay's Virtual Labs allowed engineering students across India to remotely access sophisticated laboratory experiments, democratizing practical education. But students from rural colleges struggled due to limited bandwidth and older devices unable to handle resource-intensive simulations, emphasizing infrastructural inadequacies.
  - **Hybrid Education Model:** Symbiosis International University, Pune introduced a hybrid model combining online lectures and offline practical sessions, balancing digital convenience with essential face-to-face interaction. But implementation challenges arose, including logistical coordination and concerns about learning consistency, reflecting the complexity of hybrid models.
  - **Localized Initiatives:** Government Colleges in Kerala effectively utilized local cable TV channels, such as Victers Channel, to broadcast lessons, circumventing internet accessibility issues. But the one-way communication limited interactive engagement, underlining the need for two-way technology-driven solutions.
  - **EdTech Boom and Inequality:** Platforms like BYJU's and Unacademy revolutionized higher education coaching, offering affordable, high-quality content accessible across the nation. But many rural and economically disadvantaged students still could not afford subscription fees, exposing financial barriers despite digital reach.



value that we must uphold in our educational system. It is this value that will ensure that no student is left behind. And implementing robust policy frameworks and cybersecurity measures to safeguard students' data. These strategies are essential for India to fully leverage technological advancements, fostering inclusivity and equipping learners with vital future-ready skills. Real-world examples of urban students benefiting from advanced digital resources contrasted sharply with rural counterparts struggling with basic connectivity, illustrate the pressing need to bridge the digital divide. Successfully merging “clicks” (digital learning) and “bricks” (traditional classroom learning) through targeted, equitable interventions can pave the way for a more inclusive, empowered educational landscape in India's diverse college education system.

## Conclusion

Effective integration of technology in India's educational system requires a balanced approach that addresses several critical areas: strengthening rural infrastructure to ensure stable electricity and reliable internet connectivity; subsidizing digital devices for economically weaker students to promote equitable access; conducting comprehensive and regular training workshops for teachers, especially in rural regions, to enhance their technological proficiency; developing culturally sensitive and localized digital learning content specifically tailored to rural communities. This emphasis on cultural sensitivity is not just a strategy, but a



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# When Intelligence Meets Error

## The Flip Side of AI

Donna Barretto

**A**rtificial Intelligence (AI) is emerging as one of the defining innovations of the twenty-first century. Its rapid evolution has revolutionised the way humans think, learn, and create. Once confined to the realm of science fiction, AI now permeates nearly every field accelerating research, streamlining operations, and reimagining human capability.

When wielded thoughtfully, AI enhances creativity, productivity, and innovation. It empowers teachers to design PowerPoint presentations, interactive lessons, personalise learning pathways, and engage students in dynamic, technology-driven environments. Tools such as MagicSchool.ai, and Quizizz AI help educators generate lesson plans, assessments, and creative learning content almost instantaneously thus saving a lot of precious time.

Students have already moved on. They are massively adopting AI viewing it as an indispensable academic partner to streamline complex assignments and accelerate learning outcomes. Platforms like ChatGPT, Gemini, Socratic by Google, and Perplexity.ai aid in research, essay writing, and concept clarification. Writing assistants such as Grammarly and QuillBot refine language and structure, while AI-powered design tools enhance presentations and projects with professional polish. AI has become an indispensable companion in both teaching and learning.

Yet, amidst this technological brilliance, lies an essential truth – a superficial understanding of AI can lead to a perilous situation. Many users employ AI tools without grasping their underlying mechanisms or constraints, often assuming their responses to be infallible. One must remember that AI operates solely within the boundaries of human input. When given vague or poorly structured commands, AI may produce

distorted, inaccurate or even contradictory outcomes.

The lockdown period wasn't just about my survival; it was a testament to my deep-seated technical agility and willingness to adopt powerful new tools. I share this to state that far from being a newcomer, my successful integration of complex digital environments establishes a clear fact that I can comfortably handle apps like ChatGPT, Gemini, Fireflies.ai, Lexica.art and some other apps.

However, my direct engagement with these technologies offers a valuable reminder of a core truth: AI is a powerful collaborator, but a poor replacement for human insight. For all its sophistication, AI is only as intelligent as the human mind that directs its use. Left unchecked, or faced with nuance, it can sometimes appear to 'have a mind of its own', delivering results that dwell in confusion or logical contradiction, proving that true judgment and empathy remain exclusively human domains.

On one occasion, I thought AI would save some precious time, so I chose an AI tool to condense an article I had written. Instead of providing a concise summary, it eliminated over half of the key points, thereby altering the essence of my message. On another occasion, while experimenting with an AI-based graphic design tool instead of Canva, the one app I usually navigate confidently through, the results were unexpectedly drastic and chaotic. The generated visuals contained spelling errors, repeated names, inappropriate background and misplaced elements despite my instructions being clear and elaborate – or so I thought.

These experiences reinforce a vital lesson: **Human Intelligence (HI) must always direct Artificial Intelligence (AI).** Ultimately, the

CATHOLIC MEDICAL OUTREACH, MUMBAI  
in collaboration with  
HEALTH PROMOTION TRUST

# MEDICAL CAMP

at Snehavardhani, Roha  
Sunday, 27th July 2025



The camp is conducted for the Katkhari tribe who are socially and economically backward

**Come Serve with Love** ❤️

**The Importance of Medical Camps for the Poor**

- Addresses healthcare communities
- Reaches underserve medical services

1) Dr Emilia D'Souza    2) Dr John Rodrigues  
3) Dr James Kuris    4) Dr Chreya Menezes  
5) Dr Deepika Dsouza    Camp Coordinator:

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**COME SERVE WITH LOVE**

**IMPORTANCE OF MEDICAL CAMP FOR THE POOR**

- Provides access to free healthcare services
- Addresses basic medical needs and issues
- Raises awareness on health and well-being

Dr Emilia  
Dr John Rodrigues  
Dr James Kuris  
Dr Shreya Menezes  
Dr Deepika Dsouza  
Camp Coordinator:  
Dr Cheryl Desouza



*Artificial Intelligence* v/s *Human Intelligence*

message is clear: AI is a powerful co-pilot, it cannot run on autopilot. Our final defence against misinformation, logical error, or outright fabrication lies in rigorous human scrutiny. Do not succumb to the temptation of blind trust. The responsibility is solely ours: check, verify, and never publish AI's output without critical review. The clarity, precision, and quality of the output depend entirely on the discernment and skill of the human mind that guides it.

As AI becomes increasingly woven into the fabric of modern life, it is imperative that educators and learners alike cultivate AI literacy, understanding how these systems function, their strengths, and their limitations. In the digital era, mastering AI is not merely an advantage; it is a necessity. By learning to communicate effectively with intelligent systems, we transform them from mechanical tools into intelligent collaborators.

**Donna Barretto** teaches English and Social Sciences at St. Joseph's Convent High School, Bandra. She has a keen interest in Geography which led to her completing her master's degree in the subject during the lockdown. She is an Eco Ambassador certified by the Archdiocesan Office for Environment, Mumbai. Donna recently received a Certificate of Recognition from the Laudato Si' Movement for her work as a Laudato Si' animator and for bringing Laudato Si' to life in her community.



# Will AI Be More Creative Than Us?

Nalini Sorensen

**A**s a children's book author, this is the question that has been haunting me for a while now: Will AI be more creative than us? I mean, to be blunt, will I soon be out of a job? It outraged me at some level that I was even considering this as a serious question. I mean, this is me. I'm an award-winning author who has had several books published, to my name, by most of the leading publishers in India. How can this even be a thing that is keeping me up at night?

I decided to put my money where my words were.

Here's what I did... I typed exactly this on ChatGPT: Can you write a short three stanza poem using the word prompt 'pencil'? And then I dug into my archives on my laptop, and looked up a poem that I myself had written – on the very same word prompt – a few months ago.

Here's what ChatGPT came up with:

## Pencil

A slender wand of wood and lead,  
It hums with thoughts not yet all said—  
A dream begins where silence ends,  
And graphite ghosts become our friends.

It sketches worlds from whispered thought,  
Shapes what the restless mind has sought,  
Each line a bridge from soul to page,  
Each smudge a trace of fleeting age.

When sharpened down to just a nub,  
It waits—its life within the stub;  
For even dust, when softly blown,  
Can spark a world the hand has known.



Here's the poem I wrote on the very same word prompt:

## It Started With the Puppy

The puppy asked the table.  
The table said, "Yes."  
But, the table muttered to himself,  
"This could become a mess."  
Instead the table passed it,  
To the child in plight.  
And gently whispered to her,  
"It'll bring you light."  
"Is it a stick?" the child asked.  
'Till she used it to write.  
A pencil! A weapon.  
She won every fight.

A-ha! I was delighted. Could AI think out of the box and come up with a puppy or talking table on a word prompt about a pencil? No. Could AI bring in an angle of the success of a girl child by educating her? No. What did AI do? AI took well-chosen words, strung them together and hung them out to dry on the line – in the form of three well-balanced stanzas in a poem.



Now that I'd tasted success, I decided to try one more time. Just to make sure, this wasn't just beginner's luck.

This was the prompt I typed on ChatGPT: Could you write a three or four stanza poem using the word prompt 'matchstick'?

This is ChatGPT's poem:

### Matchstick

In a box of quiet sleepers, one waits—  
a sliver of fire in wooden disguise.  
Dreaming of darkness it might unmake,  
of skies it could briefly revise.  
A flick, a spark—its fleeting art,  
a blaze born just to fade away.  
It burns with the hunger of a heart  
that knows it cannot stay.  
Ash and echo, scent of flame,  
the world returns to cool and still.  
Yet something glows-unnamed, the same—  
a warmth that outlives will.

Here is my poem on the same word prompt:

### Tiny Me

If you've ever watched  
A tiny matchstick slide across the side of a  
matchbox, and burst into a flame,  
A flame used to light a candle,  
A candle that brings joy on a cake,  
A cake that has a party in your stomach.  
If you've ever watched  
A tiny matchstick slide across the side of a  
matchbox, and burst into a flame,  
A flame used to light a wick,  
A wick attached to the top of a firecracker,  
A firecracker that rockets up into the sky and  
bursts into colour,  
Colour that brings awe.  
If you've ever watched  
A tiny matchstick slide across the side of a  
matchbox, and burst into a flame,  
A flame used to light a log,  
A log that's one in a pyramid,  
A pyramid that supports a funeral pyre,  
A funeral pyre that holds tears and heartache.  
If you've ever watched any of this...  
You'll never say, "I'm one tiny person.  
What can I do?"

Victory! I rest my case.

You see, AI has perfect word choice and coaxes those words to marry and hold hands, but that relationship lacks spark; lacks soul. As long as we have creativity in our souls, I think we're safe. AI is undoubtedly an incredible resource, which we should avail of, but I don't think it can ever supersede us in creativity.

So now, I sleep peacefully again at night, my mind drifting from one plot to the next, my words waiting to weave themselves on to paper... in the way only I can.



**Nalini Sorensen** is an award-winning author of children's books. She has contributed to anthologies, children's magazines and has written readers for schools in India. She is a TEDx speaker and has presented at literary events across India. She's on Instagram (@nalinisorensen) and on Facebook (@NaliniSorensenAuthor).

# Antiqua et Nova:

## Note on the Relationship between Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence



Anjali Heredia Gracias

**A**ntiqua et Nova ('Ancient and New' in Latin), a doctrinal note co-issued by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Dicastery for Culture and Education, was published on 28 January 2025. It is a commentary on the relationship between human intelligence, which is rooted in the unity of body and soul and includes moral judgment, and artificial intelligence, which is purely computational and fictional. It reflects on the anthropological and ethical challenges raised by AI.

### Background

The Vatican has been at the forefront of challenging us to consider how artificial intelligence can support the values of human dignity, justice and truth rather than eroding them.

Since 2020, the Pontifical Academy for Life has been promoting the "Rome Call for AI Ethics", a document intended to promote a sense of responsibility on ensuring developing AI technologies remain at the service of humankind

and do not threaten its dignity. The document has been signed by a wide range of audiences from tech giants like Microsoft, IBM and Cisco to universities to leaders of major world religions.

On 24 June 2024, at a G7 summit held in southern Italy, Pope Francis expressed concerns about locking the world order in a "technocratic paradigm". "No innovation is neutral," the Pope told the leaders present. Rather, technology "represents a form of order in social relations and an arrangement of power, thus enabling certain people to perform specific actions while preventing others from performing different ones." He added that technology "always includes the worldview of those who invented and developed it."

A week later, the Centesimus Annus Foundation, a Vatican nonprofit organization that seeks to promote the church's social teaching on finance and economics, hosted a conference to discuss generative artificial intelligence and the



“technocratic paradigm” mentioned by Pope Francis.

Franciscan Fr. Paolo Benanti, an ethics professor at Rome's Pontifical Gregorian University and an advisor to Pope Francis on AI issues was among the speakers who were mainly academics and leaders in government and industry. In his speech, Fr. Benanti noted that due to the omnipresence of technology, “we have transformed reality into a software-defined reality”. To that end, he proposed using the Church's social doctrine as a model to shift the building of AI tools away from the pursuit of progress i.e. “the ability to do something faster, speedier, in a much more efficient way”, towards development, which prioritizes serving the common good. “That means allowing human beings to be enriched by AI tools, (while) maintaining the control of the process and being able to have this kind of process compatible with democracy,” he said.

In *Dilexit Nos*, Pope Francis' final encyclical, he noted the superiority of human intelligence over artificial intelligence. No algorithm would ever be able to capture “thousands of little things that are a precious part of everyone's lives: a smile we elicited by telling a joke, a picture we sketched in the light of a window, the first game of soccer we

played with a rag ball, the worms we collected in a shoebox, a flower we pressed in the pages of a book, our concern for a fledgling bird fallen from its nest, a wish we made in plucking a daisy... all of these live on as precious memories “kept” deep in our heart.”

## Overview

The core message of *Antiqua et Nova* is simple: AI should support, not redefine, what it means to be human. Human intelligence is more than just processing information. No machine can genuinely replicate reason, creativity, morality, and self-awareness. AI must remain a tool to enhance human potential, not replace or diminish it.

The document addresses challenges and opportunities in AI in the fields of education, economy, work, health, relationships, and war. It calls attention to workers becoming “deskilled” and becoming more subject to harsh, repetitive labour and surveillance. It also warns of students failing to develop critical thinking skills, while cautiously noting prudent use of AI can help provide instant critiques. Regarding war, the note mentions “grave ethical concern” which refers to autonomous lethal weapons systems without direct human intervention or control. It also draws



attention to environmental concerns about the use of water and energy needed to run the necessary hardware for AI. The document expresses serious concerns about deepfakes and false information generated by AI, as well as further privacy issues surrounding surveillance and expressing matters of conscience to chat models. It warns of a technocratic control of society, with large companies exerting significant social and political influence capable of manipulating consciences and democratic process.

The document concludes that artificial intelligence must only be used to complement human intelligence rather than replacing it, as a replacement would enslave humanity and serve as a “substitute for God”.

### The Focus on Education

- **Holistic formation of the person is key**

True education is not simply about passing on facts or skills. Rather, education aims for the holistic formation of the person: intellectually, culturally, spiritually, socially – preparing individuals for their full human vocation and for contributing to society. It draws on the teaching of the Second Vatican Council: “True education strives to form individuals with a view toward their final end and the good of the society to which they belong.”

- **Teacher-student relationship is central**

The personal, relational dimension of education – the bond between teacher and student – is indispensable. Teachers do more than deliver content: they model human qualities, inspire the joy of discovery, attend to the unique dignity of each student. This presence and relational dynamic cannot be replaced by AI.

- **AI offers opportunity**

AI can be a positive resource in education when used prudently and in the right context. It can expand access to educational opportunities in areas where resources are limited. It can provide tailored support and immediate feedback to students, supplementing traditional instruction. Used well, AI can assist and enrich, not replace, the educational process.

- **Concerns caused by AI in education**

- **Over-reliance on AI:** If students depend too heavily on AI and its tools, their ability to think independently, reason well, and exercise freedom may be weakened.
- **Erosion of key skills:** Some AI systems simply provide answers or generate text for students, potentially short-circuiting the process of learning how to discover, reflect and express one's own understanding.



- **Digital culture and relational effects:** In a highly digitalised culture, the very way we learn, communicate and relate to others is transformed. Education must help students navigate that culture, not simply immerse them without guidance.

- **Quality and bias of information:** AI systems may generate biased, fabricated or misleading information. If students treat AI-outputs as unquestioned truths, the educational process is undermined.

- **Educational aims for AI-literacy and critical thinking**

The document calls for education systems (schools, universities, scientific societies) to promote the use of AI in ways that strengthen critical thinking, ethical reflection, and discernment. Students of all ages need to be helped to understand not just how to use AI tools, but to evaluate data, content and AI-generated outputs responsibly.

The goal is that AI in education serve human flourishing – forming minds capable of seeking truth, goodness and beauty – not merely efficient producers or consumers of information.

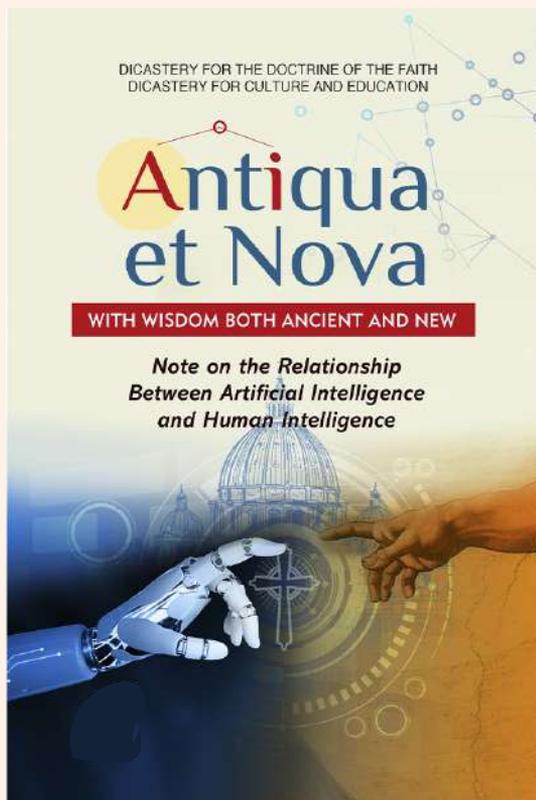
### Excerpt from *Antiqua et Nova*

#### *AI and Education*

77. The words of the Second Vatican Council remain fully relevant today: “True education strives to form individuals with a view toward their final end and the good of the society to which they belong.” As such, education is “never a mere process of passing on facts and intellectual skills: rather, its aim is to contribute to the person's holistic formation in its various aspects (intellectual, cultural, spiritual, etc.), including, for example, community life and relations within the academic community,” in keeping with the nature and dignity of the human person.

78. This approach involves a commitment to cultivating the mind, but always as a part of the integral development of the person: “We must break that idea of education which holds that educating means filling one's head with ideas. That is the way we educate automatons, cerebral minds, not people. Educating is taking a risk in the tension between the mind, the heart, and the hands.”

79. At the center of this work of forming the whole



human person is the indispensable relationship between teacher and student. Teachers do more than convey knowledge; they model essential human qualities and inspire the joy of discovery. Their presence motivates students both through the content they teach and the care they demonstrate for their students. This bond fosters trust, mutual understanding, and the capacity to address each person's unique dignity and potential. On the part of the student, this can generate a genuine desire to grow. The physical presence of a teacher creates a relational dynamic that AI cannot replicate, one that deepens engagement and nurtures the student's integral development.

80. In this context, AI presents both opportunities and challenges. If used in a prudent manner, within the context of an existing teacher-student relationship and ordered to the authentic goals of education, AI can become a valuable educational resource by enhancing access to education, offering tailored support, and providing immediate feedback to students. These benefits could enhance the learning experience, especially in

cases where individualized attention is needed, or educational resources are otherwise scarce.

81. Nevertheless, an essential part of education is forming “the intellect to reason well in all matters, to reach out towards truth, and to grasp it,” while helping the “language of the head” to grow harmoniously with the “language of the heart” and the “language of the hands.” This is all the more vital in an age marked by technology, in which “it is no longer merely a question of 'using' instruments of communication, but of living in a highly digitalized culture that has had a profound impact on [...] our ability to communicate, learn, be informed and enter into relationship with others.” However, instead of fostering “a cultivated intellect,” which “brings with it a power and a grace to every work and occupation that it undertakes,” the extensive use of AI in education could lead to the students' increased reliance on technology, eroding their ability to perform some skills independently and worsening their dependence on screens.

82. Additionally, while some AI systems are designed to help people develop their critical thinking abilities and problem-solving skills, many others merely provide answers instead of prompting students to arrive at answers themselves or write text for themselves. Instead of training young people how to amass information and generate quick responses, education should encourage “the responsible use of freedom to face issues with good sense and intelligence.” Building on this, “education in the use of forms of artificial intelligence should aim above all at promoting critical thinking. Users of all ages, but especially the young, need to develop a discerning approach to the use of data and content collected on the web or produced by artificial intelligence systems. Schools, universities, and scientific societies are challenged to help students and professionals to grasp the social and ethical aspects of the development and uses of technology.”

83. As Saint John Paul II recalled, “in the world today, characterized by such rapid developments in science and technology, the tasks of a Catholic

University assume an ever greater importance and urgency.” In a particular way, Catholic universities are urged to be present as great laboratories of hope at this crossroads of history. In an inter-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary key, they are urged to engage “with wisdom and creativity” in careful research on this phenomenon, helping to draw out the salutary potential within the various fields of science and reality, and guiding them always towards ethically sound applications that clearly serve the cohesion of our societies and the common good, reaching new frontiers in the dialogue between faith and reason.

84. Moreover, it should be noted that current AI programs have been known to provide biased or fabricated information, which can lead students to trust inaccurate content. This problem “not only runs the risk of legitimizing fake news and strengthening a dominant culture's advantage, but, in short, it also undermines the educational process itself.” With time, clearer distinctions may emerge between proper and improper uses of AI in education and research. Yet, a decisive guideline is that the use of AI should always be transparent and never misrepresented.

To read the entire document along with references, kindly visit:

[https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_dcf\\_doc\\_20250128\\_antiqua-et-nova\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_dcf_doc_20250128_antiqua-et-nova_en.html)

Sources: [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va), Wikipedia, [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)



# Indian Teachers Make Pilgrimage to Abu Dhabi in the Name of Brotherhood

**Nirmala Carvalho**

**S**t. Andrew High School in Mumbai – where teachers of different religions work side by side – has promoted a trip in the name of the historic document signed in 2019 by Pope Francis and Imam al Tayyeb. Headmaster Dr. (Fr.) Magi Murzello: “A common religious response to the challenge of pluralism and the promotion of diversity as a value rooted in religious freedom.”

St. Andrew High School in Bandra, Mumbai, is currently promoting a 'Tour of Fraternity' to Abu Dhabi with its teachers, inspired by Pope Francis' signing of the Document on Human Fraternity – a journey 'into diversity' and 'in a spirit of fraternity'.

The group left on the morning of 05 September 2025, the day on which India celebrates Teachers' Day, which also coincides with the liturgical feast of Saint Teresa of Calcutta. Speaking to AsiaNews, Headmaster Dr. (Fr.) Magi Murzello explains: “Pope Francis' signing of the Document

on Human Fraternity was historic and left a deep impression on our staff and students. St Andrew's is a Catholic educational institution, serving children of all faiths through our educational apostolate. Furthermore, in April 2024, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) asked schools to promote religious and cultural sensitivity and respect for diversity not only among students but also among staff members. It also suggested offering training on inclusive practices to create a welcoming and harmonious working environment in educational institutions.”

“For this reason,” continues the headmaster of St. Andrew High School, “we planned this tour to Abu Dhabi for our teachers, with the specific aim of taking them to the place where, in 2019, the historic 'Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together' was signed by Pope Francis and the Sheikh of al-Azhar, Ahmed al-Tayyeb. It was a common religious response to the challenge of pluralism and the promotion of diversity as a value rooted in religious freedom.”



Given the multicultural and pluralistic nature of Indian society, St. Andrew's aims to promote the spirit of diversity, tolerance and harmony. "Not only are Catholic students a minority in our institutions, but our teachers also come from different religious denominations," comments Dr. (Fr.) Magi Murzello.

Ma'am Rachna Bhanushali, one of the teachers on the trip, told AsiaNews: "It is a privilege for me to teach at St. Andrew High School, where, in addition to offering quality education, we transmit values for character building and nation building. After the signing of the Document on Fraternity, a seminar was organised at our school with the staff to explain what had happened between two great religious institutions: the Catholic Church and Al-Azhar. Since then, many members of the teaching staff had expressed their desire to participate in a Fraternity Tour."

Sir Avdesh Tiwari, another teacher, added: "It is a wonderful initiative: in India, we live in a

multicultural and multi-religious society, and Pope Francis was highly respected by people of all faiths. Whenever he spoke, he did so for everyone, not just for Christians. His words and actions had universal appeal. This tour will also strengthen the sense of fraternity among the staff at St. Andrew's."

The trip was entirely funded by the teachers themselves. 25% of the cost was covered by their perks (gifts received for Teachers' Day, Christmas, etc.) while the remainder was self-financed.

"Saint Teresa of Calcutta was also a teacher," concludes Dr. (Fr.) Magi Murzello. "She believed in unity among people of different religions, promoting interreligious harmony by emphasising that compassion and love transcend religious boundaries."

*The article first appeared in Ecclesia in Asia – the Asia newsletter dedicated to Christian Communities in Asia.*



**Nirmala Carvalho** has been a Crux correspondent since 2004, and, in 2006, won the Communications Award from the Catholic Bishops Conference of India for "exceptional sensitivity to the Church and minority-related issues". She holds a bachelor's degree in philosophy, and a master's degree in sociology, both from the University of Mumbai.



# Fraternity Tour – A Dream Come True

**Tr. Lydia Fernandes**

The teachers at St. Andrew High School experienced a memorable Fraternity Tour to Abu Dhabi and Dubai in September 2025. It was a long-awaited trip filled with joy, bonding and discovery. What made this trip truly special was the spirit behind it. The teachers sacrificed their Teachers' Day gifts, Christmas celebration and their annual picnic funds so that this long-cherished promise made by our dear Principal was fulfilled. This trip would never have been possible without divine help and the vision, encouragement and support of our Principal, Dr. (Fr.) Magi Murzello. The trip offered a perfect blend of learning, togetherness and fun. Before we set out, we entrusted our journey to God, and, truly, His hand was upon us throughout.

*“The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore” – Psalm 121:8*

The most inspiring part of the journey was visiting Abu Dhabi, the very city where Pope Francis and Sheikh Ahmed El-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, signed the historic 'Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together' in February 2019. Pope Francis described the document as a path to reconciliation and to look beyond differences and build bridges of understanding – a message that resonated with the staff members belonging to different faiths celebrating diversity and friendship in the true spirit of fraternity, thus living out Pope Francis' call to build bridges not





walls. The staff reflected on how this same spirit of harmony was lived out through their own journey of different beliefs yet one heart.

*“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God” – Matthew 5:9*

In Dubai, the staff marvelled at the breathtaking

Burj Khalifa, soaked in the beauty of the desert safari, enjoyed the magical dhow cruise, visited the vibrant souks, explored the modern marvels and shared countless joyful moments. We returned from the trip with hearts filled with gratitude and renewed spirit.



# A Bastion of Cosmopolitanism: St. Michael's at 175



**Dr. Omkar Bhatkar**

*(with inputs from Tr. Ruhana Munshi)*

**H**ow does one measure the soul of an institution? Is it counted in the seasons it has weathered, or in the lives it has forged?

For St. Michael High School, Mahim, standing at the monumental milestone of 175 years, the answer is a beautiful alchemy of both. Longevity, after all, is the reward for impact. An institution does not endure for nearly two centuries, especially in a city of fleeting moments, by being a mere landmark of brick and mortar. It must be something more.

It is a living crucible of character. Those of us who walked its corridors and taught in its classrooms know this profound truth. We know its true, lasting legacy: a rare, powerful spirit of profound equality and mentorship.

The journey began in 1850 as Escola de Caridade (School of Charity), a humble Portuguese-medium parish school “born from faith and

compassion”. This was the initial spark. The school's story is one of constant, intelligent evolution: laying the foundation for a new building under Fr. B. F. D'Silva in the 1930s; and adding new floors under Msgr. George Fernandes in the 1940s.

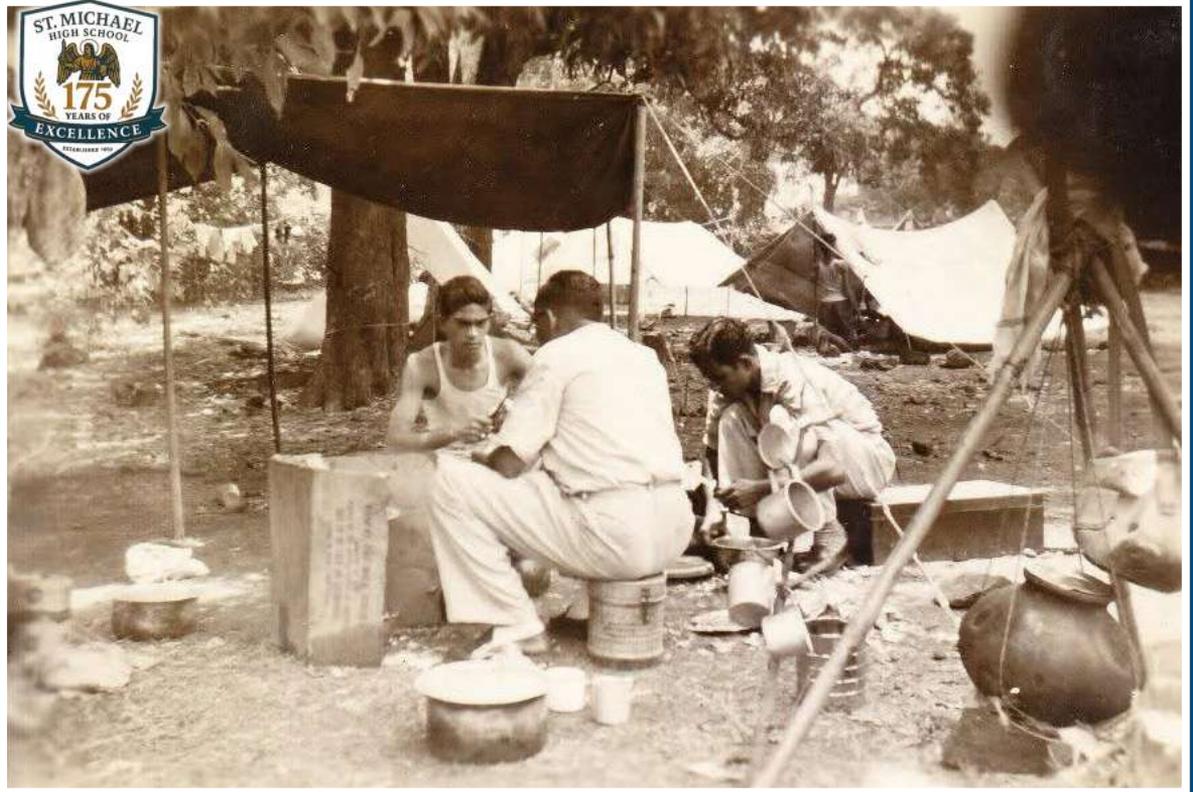
That building became a silent witness. Its corridors echoed with a thousand footfalls, and its old teak-wood stage, a hallowed space, seemed to hold its breath for every elocution and Annual Day. It was, and is, a place with a soul.

## **A Bastion of Celebration**

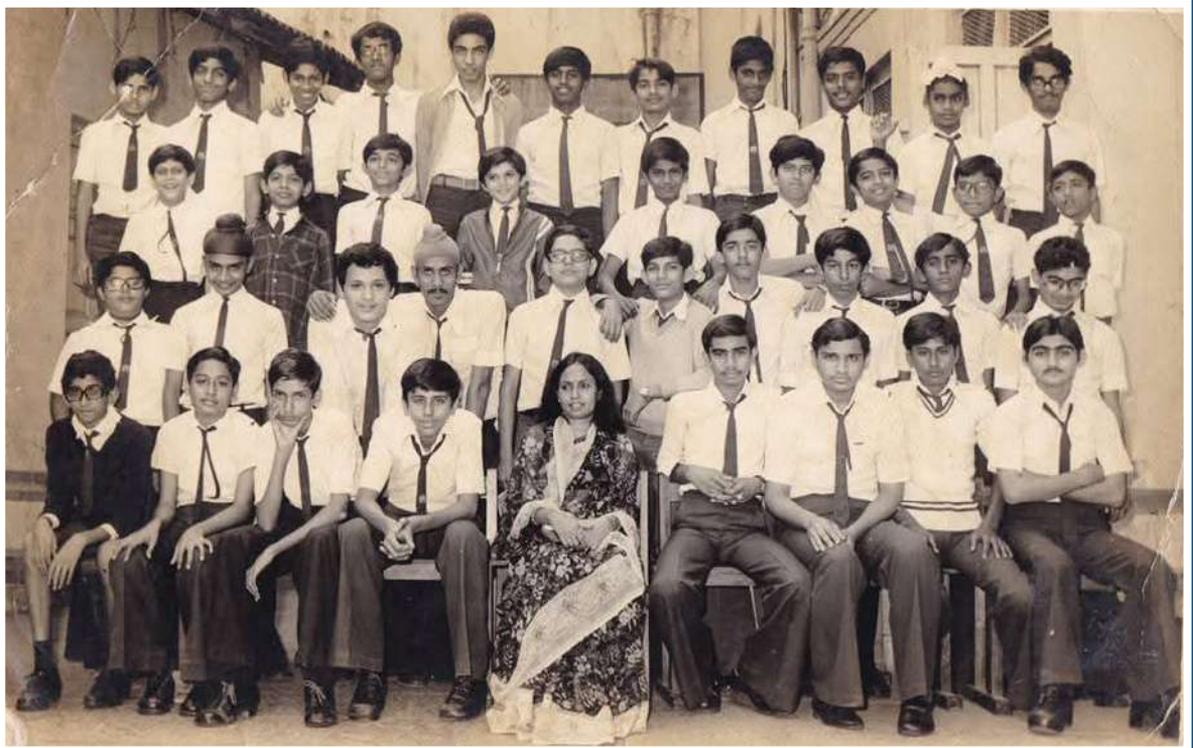
Long before “cosmopolitanism” was a societal buzzword, it was simply the lived, daily reality at St. Michael's. This was a genuine melting pot, a microcosm of Mumbai itself. The school roster was a tapestry of faiths – a large, vibrant Christian student body learning and playing alongside Hindus, Muslims, Parsees, Jains, and Buddhists.



*The original school building*



*Boy scouts in the late 1950s*



*A class photograph from the late 1970s*

This diversity was mirrored in the staff room too, which welcomed teachers from Anglo-Indian, Zoroastrian, and myriad other communities. Inside the school gates, these distinctions dissolved. What mattered was not your surname, but your character. In a world often obsessed with social and economic hierarchy, St. Michael's was a great leveller, a bastion of profound, unstated secularism.

Togetherness was wholehearted celebration. We celebrated Janmashtami, Diwali, and Christmas with an equal, shared fervour. Our Christmas preparations were legendary. The whole school would collaborate on the ground-floor crib, a massive, loving display with life-sized statues.

And who could forget the thrill of Santa Claus visiting and distributing gifts? It was a magical moment, made all the more special when we realized, months later, that it was our very own Geography teacher, Ms. Debra, her eyes twinkling with mischief behind the white beard.

### **The Soul of the School: A Vocation, Not a Profession**

These were the architects of this environment: our teachers. We were, in a word, blessed – taught by “rare gems” who treated their role not as a profession, but as a true vocation.

Their names are spoken with reverence. There was Sir Thomas Netto, who trained the choir, his entire existence seeming to beat in time with the school's rhythm. There was the late Sir Atlay, who championed the Arts for 25 years. And who could forget Ms. Nita Dias, who patiently honed our craft, teaching us to make the most interesting objects: walnut-shell boats, Christmas baubles, candy-stick pen stands, and even bookbinding. She taught us to sew, to make perfect buttonholes, to stitch hooks and buttons – skills for life.

We had the sweet and patient Ms. Monica for Marathi, and the formidable and eloquent Ms. Helen, who possessed the rare, dual mastery of

both Marathi and English. We had kind Mohan the Librarian, who unlocked the vast world of books, the remarkable History teacher Ms. Lynette D'cruz, and insightful Sir John Rumao, with unrivalled Physics brilliance. We also had dedicated Sir Sharma for Hindi and the meticulous Ms. Lalitha Mani for Geography. This ethos of merit and care is perfectly articulated by former teacher and Assistant Head Mistress, Ms. Shailaja Mulay (Ms. Shaila).



“St. Michael's has always been special to me. First, because I was inducted as an English and French teacher despite being a non-Christian... Later, that same spirit of fairness was shown to me when I was considered for promotion to



*Ms. Shailaja Mulay*

Assistant Head Mistress (AHM). It was based on pure merit, interview, and capability... I felt on cloud nine. It was a place that truly acknowledged sincerity and hard work.”

This sentiment is echoed by her colleague, retired teacher Ms. Ruhana Munshi, who reflects on her 32-year journey: “Being part of a 175-year-old institution for 32 years has been both an honour and a privilege. I have seen education evolve, technology transform classrooms, and students grow into confident individuals. Yet, what remains unchanged is the school's spirit – its commitment to values, excellence and holistic growth.

Time has changed many things – classrooms, methods, and even generations of students – but the heart of this institution has remained the same: a place built on love, values and a shared

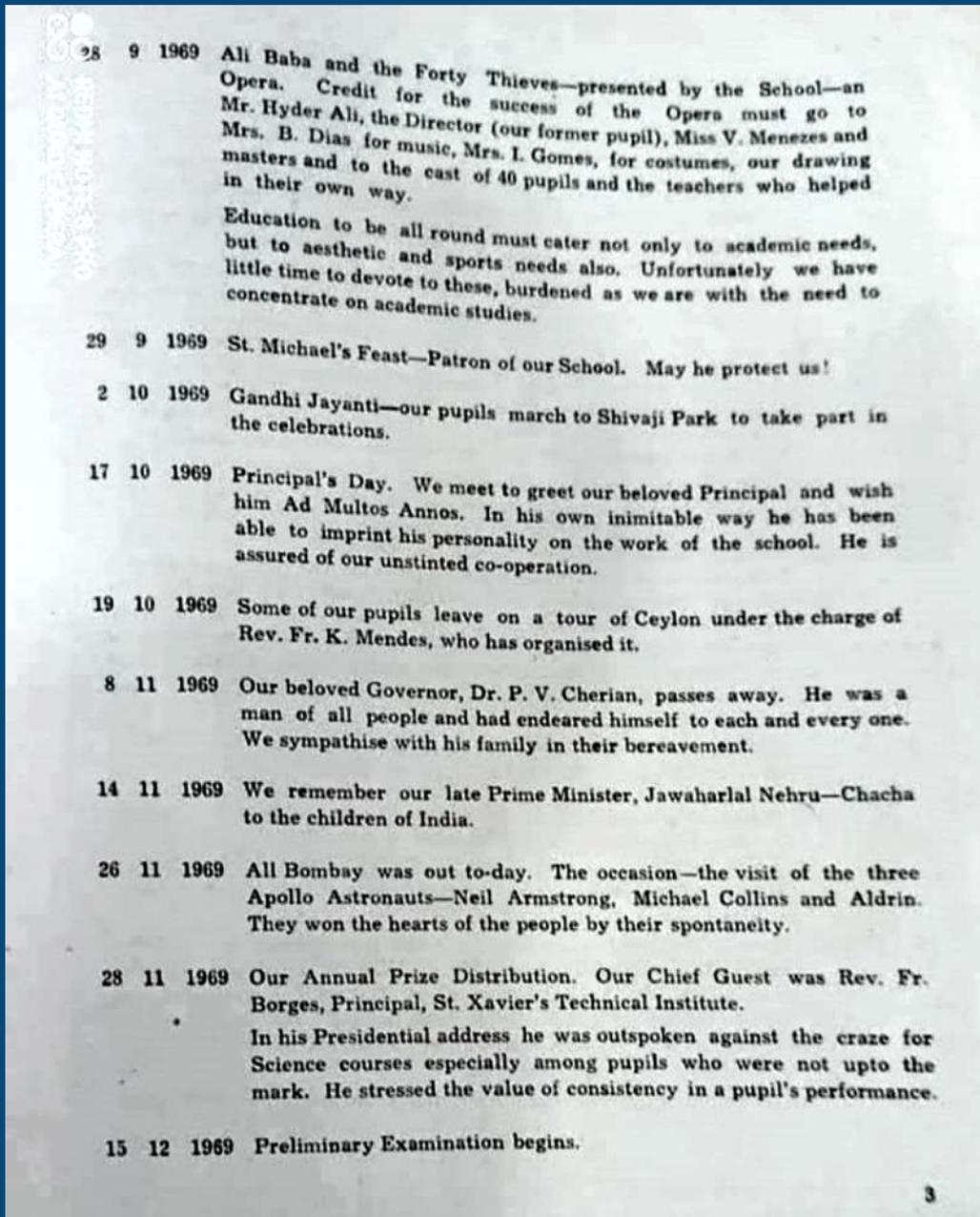


dream of nurturing goodness and wisdom.

To have journeyed 32 years within these sacred walls during this historic 175th year is an honour beyond words. My heart overflows with gratitude for all the memories, lessons and bonds that will forever remain a part of me."

## Nurturing the Whole Child

This was the St. Michael's way: nurturing, discipline, and a holistic development that defied limitations. Sir John Ruma's prize-winning Spirometer wasn't just an idea; it was born in that massive laboratory – a world of its own, smelling faintly of chemicals and discovery, a realm



presided over by the diligent Laxmana and Ms. Sunita.

We lacked our own sports ground, but this never deterred a culture of athletic excellence. Our football teams, forged in early-morning practices on the Parsee Ground, often dominated inter-school tournaments. The school annual sports meets were held at St. Stanislaus (Bandra), St. Andrew's (Bandra) or St. Paul's (Dadar). The spirit – of turning limitations into strengths, of nurturing every facet of a student – is what defines the “Michaelite” experience.

### A Living Compass

This profound sense of formation is captured perfectly by one of the school's most distinguished alumni, **His Lordship Bishop Barthol Barretto**.

“Reflecting on the 175th anniversary of St. Michael's, I am filled with profound gratitude. The person I am today was undeniably shaped by the formative influence of my alma



*Bishop Barthol Barretto*

mater. Indeed, after my family, St. Michael High School was the single most defining force in my life. I recall with great affection and respect the late Fr. Jos Menezes SDB, the late F. X. Fernandez, my principal, and my teachers. Figures like the late Ms. Wilma Nunes and Sir Sharma were more than educators; they were true mentors who genuinely cared for each student. I am reminded of this when I think of Ms. Nunes,





who encouraged me to participate in the elocution competition. It was my first time on stage, and it was only through her persistent belief that I found the courage. I won first

place, but that victory was truly hers. That singular act of personal encouragement is a perfect example of how they instilled in us morals, ethics, and God-given values – not as abstract concepts, but as a living compass to navigate our lives. I shall never forget the institution that imparted to me the true meaning of love and compassion."

### **Inspiring Generations, Empowering Futures**

The theme for the School's 175-year celebration is "Inspiring Generations, Empowering Futures". The School never stopped evolving. It embraced computers in 1992, smartboards in 2014, and AI today. When the pandemic struck, its heart beat strongly through Google Meet.

Thousands have marched from its portals. Many, like Cardinal Emeritus Oswald Gracias, Bishop Bosco Penha, Bishop Barthol Barretto, Justice F. I. Rebello, and the late tabla maestro Ustad Zakir Hussain, became luminaries. But perhaps more importantly, every Michaelite, in his own way, became a luminary for his family.

As Faiz Ahmed (Batch of 2007) so perfectly puts it: "School was a memorable time for me, a golden period of my life... which I still cherish every day and memories will linger as long as I live."

Today, as St. Michael's stands at this historic crossroad, it is clear: it is not just a legacy of the past, but a living beacon for the future, empowering every student to dream boldly, lead confidently, and build a brighter world.

*Photos Courtesy: Sunand Pierre*

**Dr. Omkar Bhatkar** is an international artist-scholar whose work seamlessly bridges the worlds of academia, theatre, film, and literature. His doctoral expertise in Proxemics and Social Ecology informs a distinguished decade-long career as a visiting professor in Film and Cultural Studies for institutions such as the London School of Economics International Programmes. As the former curator of St. Andrew's Centre for Philosophy and Performing Arts (SAPP) and director of Metamorphosis Theatre Inc., he has directed over twenty plays, with works like *Blue Storm* and *Raindrops on My Window* gaining international acclaim. A true polymath, he is also a published poet and playwright, a stage critic, cultural theorist, and performer. Across all these disciplines, his work consistently explores the profound intersections of poetry, performance, and sacred traditions. He is an alumnus of St. Michael High School (Batch of 2005).



**Mrs. Ruhana Munshi** has been a dedicated teacher at St. Michael High School for the past 32 years, teaching Mathematics and Science to students of Std. IX and X. Known for her strong classroom presence, clear teaching style and patient guidance, she has helped shape the academic journeys of countless students. Her long association with the school reflects her commitment to quality education and her deep belief in the values that St. Michael's stands for. As the school celebrates its 175 years - old legacy, Mrs. Munshi's contribution stands as a shining example of commitment, care, and lifelong service to education.





15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> December 2025  
St. Michael High School Auditorium

# the blue boat of hope

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY DR OMKAR BHATKAR



# Giggle-bytes

**What's an AI's favorite music genre?**

The algo-rhythm and blues



**What's the opposite of Artificial Intelligence?**

Real stupidity



**Why did the AI get a promotion?**

It had all the right connections

**Why don't AI researchers like nature?**

It has too many bugs

**Why was the AI so polite?**

It was programmed with good mannerscripts



**Why didn't Alexa want to be Prime Minister?**

She thought she was better suited to be the Speaker of the House

**What does AI like to eat for breakfast?**

Siri-al

**Why don't AI ever tell secrets?**

They are afraid of data leaks.

**Why did the AI go on a diet?**

It had too many bytes.



**Why did the AI go to therapy?**

It was having trouble processing human emotions

**Did you hear about the AI Oreo?**

It was one smart cookie.

**How did AI eat its cheeseburger?**

With micro-chips

**Why did AI bring a ladder to work?**

It wanted to reach cloud storage



**Why was the AI comedian bad?**

All its jokes were too binary – either 0 laughs or 1 too many groans.

**What's the difference between ChatGPT and a comedian?**

A comedian knows when to stop.

**Why was the AI bad at stand-up comedy?**

Its jokes were too predictable.



# COMING SOON

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and then there are stories that reveal.

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# GROW GROW GROW



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OF MICROGREENS

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(MON – SAT, 9 AM – 1 PM) BEFORE SATURDAY, 24 JANUARY 2026.



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