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The AI Paradox: Efficiency vs. Integrity in the Classroom

In the contemporary classroom, the line between using Artificial Intelligence (AI) for support and depending on it as a mental shortcut defines a new challenge to students' intellectual growth and self-awareness. With this rapid evolution comes the question: is this process of AI-assisted creation ethical, and to what extent should it play a role in education? While some believe that AI violates ethics and morals by not distinguishing between what should be created by people and what can be created by AI, others feel that it is a form of innovation that is greatly beneficial in the academic environment. While Artificial Intelligence offers significant benefits in terms of both teacher efficiency and student learning, its potential to undermine critical thinking and academic integrity means it must be implemented only as a supplement to traditional methods, and not a replacement.

Indeed, Artificial Intelligence can be greatly beneficial when it comes to supplementing students' learning and improving efficiency in teaching. As Dana Goldstein—an experienced journalist who covers topics related to education—reflects, "teachers are increasingly using A.I. tools themselves, both to save time on rote tasks…" (Goldstein). While many believe that this is a form of hypocrisy to students being barred from AI usage in their work, the saving of time for teachers that Goldstein discusses is a notable point; teachers do not always have sufficient time

to effectively teach and help their students learn all content matter. The utilisation of AI for time-consuming preparatory tasks allows for the teacher to allocate more effort into directly teaching students instead. Moreover, AI use has allowed teachers such as Jon Gold to "create dummy essays that illustrate for students the difference between an effective essay and one that lacks supporting evidence" (Goldstein). This is an example of a way AI can directly supplement students' learning—in this case, the "dummy essays" allow students to understand the vitality of evidence in their writing and how their writing could be improved based on examples. Likewise, Google's Gemini chatbot can "probe students with questions that prompt them to demonstrate and practise what they know" (Goldstein). Once again, this shows that AI can positively impact students' learning by allowing them to be better prepared for assignments and by enhancing their comprehension of course material.

However, AI can also become a hindrance to students' development of critical academic and life skills. As Olivia Han states in her letter to ChatGPT, offering a student perspective to this issue, "The more I relied on you, the less I challenged myself" (Han). This confession reveals how dependency on AI can ultimately destroy students' will to go beyond their comfort zones to learn and grow (as in Olivia's case). This mental shortcut of "cognitive offloading" essentially prevents students from reaching their full potential and being successful in the future. Olivia continues, "...frequent reliance on A.I. tools negatively affects critical thinking skills, as it reduces the mental effort of tasks" (Han). In other words, AI oversimplifies the learning process for students to some extent, which does not allow for critical thinking—a crucial skill in life—to be as effectively developed. This manner of AI usage also aligns with the sentiments of Plato; when the alphabet was invented, he feared "the use of this more modern technology would create forgetfulness in the learners' souls…will generally know nothing" (Tufekci). While Goldstein

highlights the time-saving efficiency for teachers, this very efficiency, Plato would caution, risks the ultimate diminishing of student skill. Although the alphabet is, after all, widely used today, Plato's philosophy is applicable to AI usage in this respect. His fears essentially mirror today's concerns of AI dependency. With constant usage of artificial intelligence comes the lack of recalling previously learned matter, which diminishes students' awareness, leading to limitations in their knowledge in the end.

From a moral perspective, unconditional use of artificial intelligence is erosive to one's integrity and character as well. According to Alex Baron, based on his own experiences as a teacher in relation to this topic, the use of mathematical applications is "a form of cheating" (Goldstein). This raises the question of academic honesty. In this regard, Baron brings attention to an important point: one could say that any AI application that provides precise, step-by-step solutions without student effort is, in reality, cheating. When cheating becomes a factor, AI usage could be considered immoral. From a somewhat different aspect, AI negatively impacts one's character, as Olivia reflects: "When I give you my ideas to organize, I lose more than creativity—I lose a deepened understanding of myself" (Han). This shows that by using AI, Olivia uses the chatbot's artificially produced thoughts—not hers. Essentially, although they might have the same intention or meaning, the thoughts are different, and not actually Olivia's—a part of herself subtly lost. Regarding artificial intelligence's compromise with integrity, Mike Sullivan shares that "...he has also caught students using A.I. tools during in-class quizzes" (Goldstein). This is a direct example of how AI use can violate morality and adherence to rules, as students become increasingly dependent on it. As Plato reflects "it would impart not truth but only the semblance of truth" (Tufekci). The students who depend on AI and cheat are not using their own true thoughts—just an artificial likeness of it.

Ultimately, although AI use can contribute to teacher work and student learning by increasing efficiency, it can also take away from the learning experience by impacting students' development of maturity, and contributing to cognitive offloading alongside a disregard for integrity and self-awareness. Although this upholds the complexity of AI use in education systems, if the positive impact can be appreciated alongside the recognition of its detrimental influences, Artificial Intelligence could be used as an effective tool and not a substitute to students' own work in an academic setting. To conclude, AI can play an important role in education to an extent when it is utilised mindfully, but this requires the development of AI literacy in such a setting for its effective implementation in education systems. Only through guided, ethical implementation can Artificial Intelligence's power be harnessed without sacrificing fundamental values in education.

Works Cited

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