

ChatGPT. The future is now – well some of it?

Michael Dennison raised a number of really interesting observations in *The Future is now* (Dennison, 2023) about the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on teaching, learning and assessment in what he described as a paradigm shift: it's well worth a read.

I have to agree with Michael that developments in the field of AI are inexorable and unstoppable. So, the major challenge will be to manage the potential challenges and exploit the advantages.

In recent weeks access to the free source ChatGPT has been a challenge in itself as the amount of traffic, much of which is no doubt driven by curiosity, has hindered engagement. Other AI sources are well under way, and we shall no doubt see some competition in this field. However, at the moment, the big technology providers such as Microsoft are leading the development leaving little space for small scale endeavours. It is also likely that users will have to pay for certain levels of access to AI raising issues around equality and equity.

One of the big challenges faced by education and training providers will be around ensuring authenticity and academic integrity of work, particularly in unsupervised assessments such as coursework. In this respect, Michael noted the need for highly efficient and effective quality assurance mechanism as means of ensuring the integrity of any work submitted as part of a qualification. At a local level, teachers and trainers are likely to know their students well and be in a position to spot anything suggesting skulduggery. But anyone dealing with large numbers of students or assessing anonymised work will not be in such a position.

As mentioned in the blog I co-wrote with Simon Sharp on AI ([link here](#)), we already have technological support in identifying plagiarism and collusion. But AI takes us to a new dimension as the output of a chatbot is unique. However, the cavalry is already amassing on this one as software that can detect AI generated text is already under development. Whether it can keep pace with the AI generators is something to ponder.

We should also consider how we respond to Michael Dennison's challenge for more focussed human scrutiny in regard to internal and external quality assurance regimes. We already require centres to declare they have taken steps to prevent cheating or gaming the system, and the Independent Commission on Malpractice (2019) highlighted the need to build an ethical culture within institutions offering access to qualification courses, a sentiment echoed in the final report of The Ethical Leadership Commission (ASCL, 2019) that based its framework on the seven 'Nolan principles' of public life.

But we should also consider how we engage students in the ethical considerations of submitting any work produced for the purpose of assessment. The Independent Commission on Malpractice (ibid) presents a range of interesting and workable approaches in this regard. Sure, folk do cheat, and they have always found ways of doing so from notes on the sleeves of shirts, looking over shoulders to taking more extreme measures such as surgically placed Bluetooth implants (Sharma, 2022). Taken on face value, some would suggest that the only way to combat AI in high stakes assessment is total reliance on set piece traditional examinations. But this limits validity, and whilst AI may well enhance approaches to teaching and learning or marking regimes, what we must not do is to jump to any quick conclusions that limit the validity or reliability of assessments through fear and assumptions that undermine the integrity and honesty of students, their teachers and trainers and their institutions. As Dennison (2023) concludes: "We must now embrace the future of education, learning, assessment and assurance and ensure we have the right tools and processes in place to meet the challenges ahead."

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