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Futures Influenced by AI:
The Cost of AI Dependence in Writing

How will students worldwide ever learn, develop, or enhance their writing skills if they are becoming reliant on artificial intelligence (AI) tools before their brains are even fully developed?

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, the brain does not finish developing or maturing until individuals reach their mid-to-late 20s. Many people who use AI fall under this age range, which poses a considerable risk, especially in a society where AI use is becoming normalized in classrooms worldwide. According to an article published by the Harvard Graduate School of Education, “In the report’s quantitative study, half (51%) of young people ages 14–22 reported using generative AI at some point” (Nagelhout, 2024).

These years of brain development are paramount, and by supplementing critical thinking for AI tools, students will not learn the combined skills of critical thinking and implementing it into their writing. I firmly believe that, although sometimes helpful, generative AI tools destroy a student's creativity, often having them settle for an answer that they could have created on their own if they had embraced the struggle and taken the correct steps in the critical thinking process.

Much of the learning in these developmental stages occurs through the process of trial and error. When students immediately turn to AI tools, they skip over the entirety of the trial stage. There is no creativity, critical thinking, or even evaluation of their own unique ideas. Students simply see what type of response these AI tools produce, treat it as a quick solution, and credit it to themselves, inhibiting problem-solving skills. In these cases, while AI can serve as a fast pass to accelerate the process, it risks reducing the depth of learning.

When you look at it from this perspective, it can be pretty scary. How will students ever learn if they are becoming so reliant on AI tools? Will all of their creativity be diluted by continuously using AI-generated outputs?

In writing-focused jobs especially, professionals are expected to be able to brainstorm, create, and edit their work without relying on any AI tool. Writers becoming more reliant on AI can cause a downshift in individual thinking and brainstorming. Writers skipping these writing steps will weaken their skills, eventually leading to complete AI reliance. AI not only eliminates

creativity in the early stages of our lives, but it can also lead to a devalued career for those who do write as a profession.

AI is simply not capable of writing the same way humans do. When we write, we fill our text with emotion, thought-provoking questions, and abstract concepts. When AI writes, it produces repetitive, clunky, and monotonous phrases.

While I understand individuals who support AI use in academia, seeing it as a helpful tool that can accelerate the writing process, fine-tune our work, and help generate ideas, I believe that the negative impacts of AI outweigh the benefits it may provide.

Students put so much pressure on the end grade and will do anything to succeed, even if this means bypassing the necessary steps of assignments using AI. This is difficult to think about because we created this highly competitive, grade-focused environment, but we must put it aside to set an example that learning is the goal, not the grade.

I believe that fostering a more learning-focused environment, rather than solely concentrating on end grades, will eliminate a majority of AI use from these students' behavior. Students currently view AI tools as a way to expedite their results and guarantee accuracy. However, if the classroom environment shifts to once again embrace the struggle and encourage a mindset centered around learning through trial and error, AI will no longer seem like a necessity.

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Artificial Intelligence: Redirecting the Future of Writing

You write, I write, we all write—whether it's texting friends, completing assignments for class, or keeping a daily journal to reflect on our thoughts.

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) is changing how we write, and AI tools are becoming more common as technology continues improving and advancing. Failure to adapt will put some at a disadvantage, leaving them with less advanced writing skills compared to those who use AI to enhance their abilities daily.

Writing with AI starts in the same place it would without AI: with an idea. The only difference is that AI tools can help individuals turn their words into a large quantity of specific ideas. This process helps to weed out ideas that may not fit and select ones that align with what you're trying to achieve.

According to an article by the University of Kansas, AI can assist students early in the writing process by helping them brainstorm and outline papers to organize their thoughts, allowing them to dive even deeper into their ideas.

There are many benefits to idea exploration with AI. For example, the large number of ideas generated by a short input can help explore concepts the individual may not have thought about on their own. Even minor adjustments to the input can drastically change the results from these AI tools. AI further enhances the quality of a student's brainstorming capabilities, leading to a larger variety of distinctive ideas.

These AI tools, in a way, serve as a well-educated tutor, creating an environment where the individual is focused on prioritizing efficiency. Students in our generation have incredibly high expectations placed on them. Not only are they encouraged to achieve success and excellent grades in the classroom, but they are also encouraged to get involved in leadership opportunities, extracurriculars, and anything that may separate them from their peers. With all of these demands constantly grabbing their attention, their schedules are busier than ever. AI offers a solution, creating a faster-paced, efficient study tool.

Efficiency in the workplace is crucial. While doing your job well is important, being able to do it fast is a trait coveted by all employers. According to an article on Writer.com about the state of

generative AI in 2024, “96% of companies view generative AI as a key enabler, with 82% anticipating rapid growth in its adoption across various departments” (Understanding Generative AI, 2024).

In a revealing discussion on the future of AI, an article in the New York Times summarized the findings of 10 AI experts. According to the article, “In a live poll, seven of the experts indicated they thought there was a 50 percent chance or greater that artificial general intelligence — the point at which A.I. can do everything a human brain can do — would be built before 2030” (Kessler, 2024).

Given the positive outlook many companies hold regarding the future of AI, why should we discourage its use by students? Theories state that before we know it, we will all be living in an AI-centered world. By eliminating AI use in classrooms, teachers are putting their students a step behind everyone who is consistently using AI as a tool as it continues to develop.

Those who are against the use of AI do have strong points. Users can become reliant or even lazy when using AI, but the idea that all students are using AI to cheat is an exaggeration. Labeling AI as a temporary tool would be a colossal mistake, one that will limit students' overall potential while hindering their ability to adapt to the fast-changing world of technology in the future. When used correctly and in moderation, AI serves as a prominent study tool and assistant to any academic needs a student may have.

With many areas of the world turning to favor AI use, it’s crucial that environments of academia follow.