

opinion

Educating for being: Humanistic educational environments for the age of AI

How the integration of technology and human values can transform education towards the holistic development of learners



by José Blas García Pérez

In the age of artificial intelligence (henceforth, AI) and at a time when technology is advancing by leaps and bounds and redefining the way we live, work and learn, it is essential to reflect on the purpose and methods of education.

An approach to the use of technology from the paradigm of 'educating for being' is more relevant than ever in this context of constant change, as it fixes and protects the person against cultural and technological

The 'educating for being' paradigm promotes education centred on the individual's integral development.

ups and downs and, in the case of education, places students at the core of any action, innovation or educational process so they can be the author and engine of their own integral development.

In this article, we will try to reflect on whether it is possible to generate humanistic educational environments within the emergence of AI, emphasising the conscious role that technology should play in the training and empowerment of twenty-first century citizens.

HUMANISM AND TECHNOLOGY: BRINGING TOGETHER TWO CONCEPTS IN EDUCATION

It seems logical to try to bring these concepts together in a world where technology has already proven its ability to automate many tasks and processes, and where the ability to be fully human - with empathy,



creativity and an ethical sense - is becoming the irreplaceable 'value'.

This seemingly contradictory idea, that the integration of technology in education - especially AI - and the principles of educational humanism centred on the integral development of the human being - empathy, creativity, ethical and critical sense - and the ability to actively participate in society, is increasingly necessary and possible. Far from a dissonant perception, it is becoming increasingly possible to bring these two concepts together in a complementary and mutually reinforcing fashion.

The concept of 'educating for being' is based on the idea that education has to go beyond the mere transmission or possession of knowledge and technical

skills. An approach, deeply rooted in humanist pedagogy, that promotes that these characteristics should go hand in hand with an integral development of the individual that includes their emotional, social and ethical dimension.

Below, we will describe strategies and approaches to achieve this complementarity in education with the development of the capacity to be 'fully human'.

HUMAN CAPABILITIES AS A COUNTERBALANCE TO TECHNOLOGY

AI expert Kai-Fu Lee¹ explains why education needs to be rebooted: 'Education has to focus on what humans need. We should not teach children to be like artificial intelligence; instead, we should teach them to do what artificial intelligence cannot do.'

Human capacities can be condensed into three key areas: empathy, creativity and ethics. Kai-Fu Lee explains it with the Three Cs: Curiosity, Critical Thinking and Creativity. He explains it (in condensed form) as follows: Education should focus on teamwork, communication and collaboration, not on individual and competitive homework or testing. Students have to learn empathy (love, compassion, etc.) and know how to gain the trust (of those around them). The important part is in the added values. This does not mean that basic skills should not be learned (but as the name suggests, as a basis, not as the mainstay of education). We need to stop training children to be robots and rote learners and instead train creative and empathetic humans. We need university students to be critical thinkers and creative, compassionate, empathetic people. We have a long way to go, because education is one of the sectors that is slowest to integrate technology.

PROPOSAL FOR PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION

Focusing on the development of these specifically human capacities which are complementary to AI, in practice we need to combine the potential of AI to enrich education while maintaining the core values of humanistic pedagogy.

In order to put these principles into practice and develop the human capacities of empathy, creativity and ethical sense, an integrated and coherent approach involving all actors in the educational process is needed:

Empathy

AI-supported activities and designs:

- Design a curriculum that integrates emotional and ethical development objectives, integrated into and complementary with academics and technology.
- Incorporate AI as a permanent dialogue companion which reinforces arguments, generates alternatives and can help to weigh and assess each of them.
- Include readings, projects and activities that foster understanding and respect for the experiences of others, supported by AI. These can include community service projects, simulations and role-playing activities.

Complementary actions:

- Create an environment where empathy is valued

AI should complement humanist pedagogy to promote critical thinking and emotional development

In the artificial intelligence age, education should focus on human capacities such as empathy, creativity and ethics

and practised. This includes anti-bullying policies, mentoring programmes and social integration activities.

- Train teachers in techniques that promote empathy, such as active listening, constructive feedback and conflict management.

Creativity

AI-supported activities and designs:

- Engage in interdisciplinary projects, including those designed and developed with AI, that allow students to apply knowledge from diverse fields creatively and ethically.
- Promote activities that stimulate lateral thinking and the exploration of multiple solutions to a problem.

Complementary actions:

- Design classrooms and school spaces that foster creativity, with areas for collaborative work and free thinking.
- Implement active and participatory methodologies, such as project-based learning, design thinking and creative problem solving.

Ethical Sense

AI-supported activities and designs:

- Teachers and school leaders should model ethical behaviours, work on the ethical sense of technology and demonstrate how to apply ethical principles in their use and decision-making.
- Implement AI-supported formative assessments and self-assessments that promote personal reflection and continuous development.
- Use assessment methods that consider not only academic performance but also students' emotional and ethical growth.

Complementary actions:

- Include ethics and citizenship topics in the curriculum; this can range from case studies to debates on contemporary ethical dilemmas.
- Encourage spaces for reflection and debate on ethical issues, allowing students to explore and discuss their own values and principles.
- Organise community activities that enable students to apply their skills in a meaningful way in their local environment.

The key to "educating to be" is to train empathetic, creative and ethical individuals capable of being fully human

CONCLUSION

The paradigm of 'educating for being' in the AI age is based on the premise that holistic human development is essential to meet future challenges. By focusing on empathy, creativity and ethics, we are not only preparing students for a technologically advanced world but also empowering them to be well-rounded, responsible individuals. The implementation of these principles requires a collective commitment and a holistic vision of education, where every aspect of the educational environment contributes to the full growth of each student.

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Note

¹ Source: *Aprendemos Juntos 2030*. WMCMF

