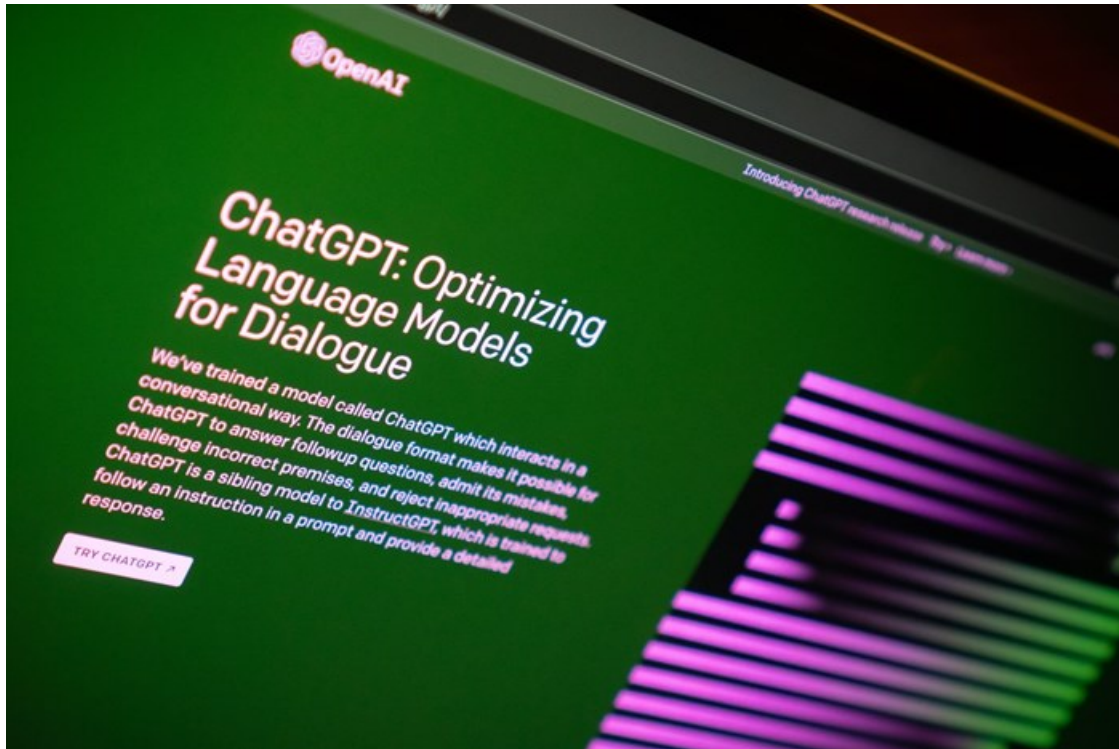


ChatGPT and chatbots: The learning transformation catalyst educators been waiting for?

 By [Yudhvir Seetharam](#)

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ChatGPT is causing a major change in the field of education. Educators in higher education, in particular, are dealing with the consequences of this technology, which has the potential to bring positive changes but also raises questions about how it might affect the traditional ways students demonstrate their knowledge, such as through essays and tests.



Source: [Unsplash](#)

As a lecturer myself, these are issues that I have had to consider in terms of my own approach to the way I design and deliver my course materials. And I've come to realise that AI offers me, and my students, numerous potential benefits.

For example, AI can help teachers identify patterns in student writing, highlighting areas where students might need additional support. Educators can then use this information to provide targeted feedback and support, helping students develop critical thinking skills and even encouraging them to develop their unique writing styles.

However, many educators are understandably concerned that AI could eventually replace human feedback entirely, leading to the large-scale homogenisation of student outputs. To address this issue, I believe that we as educators need to take the seemingly counter-intuitive approach of embracing AI as a tool to enhance our teaching, rather than fearing it as our eventual replacement.

And it's in this area of advancing critical thinking in students where I am convinced AI platforms like ChatGPT can, and will, deliver massive benefit, for educators and learners alike. But unlocking these benefits will require a significant shift in the way educators approach the work they do – particularly with high-school learners and undergraduate-level students.

Education system that rewards note memorisation

Traditionally, high school and undergraduate education has focused primarily on testing students' ability to memorise

information and simply regurgitate it when they sit for exams. This approach has led to an education system that rewards note memorisation over deeper learning and critical thinking.

However, with the advent of AI and the availability of large language models like ChatGPT, this traditional approach is becoming less relevant. In fact, AI finally presents educators with the solution to the ineffective, and often unfair, note learning approach that many of them have been waiting for.

ChatGPT gives students equal access to information, making the ability to memorise information less important than the ability to interpret and analyse that information, think critically, and apply the knowledge they have gained to solve complex problems.

There isn't an educator alive that wouldn't agree that such a critical-thinking approach to learning is vastly more valuable than note memorisation – and ChatGPT means they all have the ability to implement such an approach with their learners and students.

Of course, utilising AI to maximum effect requires a significant change in the way that education is designed and delivered. Rather than simply presenting information and testing students on their ability to memorise it, educators now need to encourage students to think deeply about the concepts they are learning and to apply them to real-world scenarios.



AI ai...ai...ai...

Regine le Roux 26 Jul 2023



One way to do this is through greater inclusion of project-based learning, where students work on real-world tasks, preferably in groups (mimicking the teamwork that is prevalent in work environments) and requiring them to practically apply the knowledge and skills they have learned.

Another way to shift the focus away from memory is to use assessments that test students' ability to think critically and to apply their knowledge. This might include open-ended questions that require students to analyse and interpret information, or problem-solving exercises that require them to apply their knowledge to solve complex questions.

So, while ChatGPT may have raised some educator's eyebrows, the potential benefits of the platform, and AI in general, far outweigh the few risks that the naysayers most often cite, like the potential for cheating and plagiarism.

The truth is that the purpose of education is ultimately to prepare learners and students to become functioning adults, able to perform well in the job market and contribute to the economy.

AI is fast becoming a significant part of that job market, so educators have a responsibility to ensure their students have the

necessary skills and knowledge to use it to maximum effect in their roles and harness it to equip for a work environment that is constantly, and rapidly changing.

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