



By: *Elise Quevedo*

Preparing future leaders for a world shaped by AI



It's September, and school is back in session across the world. For years, when we have spoken about the future of education, we have debated whether technology was making students more distracted or more prepared.

With artificial intelligence entering the classroom, 2025 will be remembered as the year everything began to shift in education.

China has already announced that AI training will be mandatory for children as young as six. The goal is to raise future leaders who are equipped to live in a world shaped by AI. And this is only the beginning.

A Global Movement Is Emerging

China is not alone. Several countries are already moving in the same direction.

In China, the new curriculum **begins** this school year. Children as young as six will learn the foundations of AI, from basic concepts to how algorithms influence daily life. The idea is to prepare future engineers and create a society where digital literacy includes AI literacy.

South Korea has been investing in AI education for several years. In 2022, they launched a plan to integrate AI into primary and secondary schools. The children of today are already learning how AI tools can be applied responsibly. South Korea is focusing on integrating AI into problem-solving in schools, rather than treating it as a purely technical subject.

In Singapore, the government has introduced AI literacy programmes at the primary school level, teaching kids how machine learning works in practice and building awareness about digital ethics. Singapore is betting on raising children who become informed citizens in an AI-driven world.

Finland has been a pioneer in AI education since introducing its Elements of AI **programme** in 2018, which has since become a global success. Now, AI awareness is being

introduced into primary education, where the focus is shifting from coding to understanding how AI impacts society.

The UAE is integrating AI into classrooms through national strategies designed to prepare young people for future jobs. AI literacy in primary education is framed as essential for the next generation of leaders in science, governance and business.

Ruler of Dubai, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, **announced** the decision on his X account earlier this year, and he said, "Our responsibility is to equip our children for a time unlike ours, with conditions different from ours, and with new skills and capabilities that ensure the continued momentum of development and progress in our nation for decades to come."

A Decade of Change

To appreciate how fast education is transforming, let's look back ten years. In 2015, most classrooms relied on smart boards, basic tablets, and learning management systems.

These tools were seen as innovative at the time. Today, those tools are the foundation rather than the highlight.

Here are the three tools that define the classroom of today:

AI-powered personalised learning platforms

Systems like **Squirrel AI** in China or **Carnegie Learning** in the United States are tailoring lessons to each student. These platforms analyse how children learn and adjust the pace, difficulty, and style of teaching. The promise is simple: no child gets left behind.

Virtual and augmented reality in education

Classrooms are using VR headsets to take students on field trips to ancient civilisations or inside the human body. Augmented reality brings science experiments and historical

moments into classrooms in ways that were unimaginable a decade ago.

Collaborative AI assistants for teachers and students

AI is now a partner in the classroom. From tools that grade assignments instantly to assistants that help students brainstorm, AI is changing how knowledge is shared. Instead of replacing teachers, these tools give them more time to focus on human connection.

Ten years ago, technology was a distraction. Today, it is the bridge that connects knowledge with imagination.

Predictions for the Next Five Years

There is always the classic question that gets asked in schools, "Where do you see yourself in five years?" When it comes to education, this is what I see.

AI will be a core subject in schools worldwide. By 2030, most developed countries will treat AI literacy as essential as math or reading.

Ethics will become part of the curriculum. As children learn how AI works, they will also learn how to question it. Teaching critical thinking about algorithms will be as important as teaching multiplication tables.

Global inequality will widen without investment, because countries that fail to integrate AI into education will fall behind, creating a new digital divide. Access to AI training will determine future economic competitiveness.

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Teachers will be empowered, not replaced. The narrative of AI replacing educators will fade. Instead, AI will serve as an assistant that

helps teachers manage classrooms, design personalised lessons, and spend more time supporting students emotionally.

Students will co-create with AI, and in the near future, children will use AI tools as the norm and train them too. Innovation will begin in more primary school classrooms.

I see future leaders who will live in a world far more complex than the one we grew up in. AI will transition from being an optional skill to being an integral part of everything. Preparing children today is the only way to ensure they thrive tomorrow.

I make it a point to look back on my own childhood, to remember how different children are growing up today. I will always be grateful to have experienced both worlds.

But there is also a darker side we should acknowledge. As always, with opportunity comes risk. Children will need to learn about privacy, security, and misinformation.

The more we integrate AI into our lives, the more we need to build awareness of the dangers. Education should balance innovation with protection.

New History In The Making

Education has always been, and will always be, the foundation of progress. What makes this moment so unique is that we are changing that foundation in real time.



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For the first time in history, we are teaching six-year-olds about the very technology that will define their future careers, relationships, and even their sense of self.

In essence, we are teaching them new ways of life. Are we ready to guide young learners towards a future where AI is both powerful and ethical?

To the young leaders of tomorrow: stay curious, stay focused, and remember that education is your greatest superpower.

Technology will keep evolving, but your ability to learn, adapt, and lead will always be the most valuable skill of all. Never stop learning.

And to my readers, when these six-year-olds graduate in the 2030s, what kind of world will we have prepared for them? Even if you don't understand the new ways yet, please allow those young minds to explore the new world we are creating.