

Education Reset

*Transforming Education in the Age of AI
and the Pandemic*

By

HeeKap Lee

Education Reset: Transforming Education in the Age of AI and the Pandemic

by HeeKap Lee

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¹ Some Figures in this book were developed with the assistance of artificial intelligence (AI), including ChatGPT. The author retains responsibility for the conceptual content, accuracy, and final presentation of these figures.

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Foreword

When I think about the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on the learning process, I keep returning to one concern. This worry has nothing to do with test results or learning efficiency; it is about the more gradual and difficult work of human development. Some schools have doubled down on pairing learners with tireless AI tutors. Doing so might boost achievement in the short run, but it will weaken learners' development of judgment, character, and meaning, all of which can only be gained through genuine human interaction and intellectual struggle. Much of the present discussion around AI remains focused on whether students should be permitted to use it, which is similar to asking in 1905 whether students should be allowed to use a library. That is simply the wrong question.

The right question is this: what happens to education and human thriving when knowledge is abundant and AI is everywhere? *Education Reset* offers a serious response to this question.

What makes this book unusual, and what I suspect will make it last, is that HeeKap Lee refuses to give a single, straightforward account of this moment. While most writing about AI and schools concentrates on the technology alone, assuming that generative AI appeared within a stable system and simply disrupted it, Dr. Lee instead tells a story with two interwoven strands. The first is the pandemic, which did not merely interrupt education for a short time but left a generation carrying a considerable social and emotional burden that many classrooms have still failed to recognize, let alone address. The second is how generative AI has made vast knowledge instantly available, undermining the traditional

model of education. Through this more difficult narrative, Dr. Lee gives an honest explanation for why so many students now feel disconnected.

That is the book's real contribution. Rather than producing yet another manual on AI tools for classrooms, Dr. Lee has built a more comprehensive framework that deserves careful examination. He divides thriving into three levels, personal, relational, and cultural, and does not allow any one of them to take the place of the others. While a machine can process information and perform pattern matching on a scale no individual can manage, only a person, in relationship with another person, can turn understanding into purpose. This claim is why the teacher becomes, in his terms, a system architect and a coach rather than simply a content provider. This is why the parent becomes an active curator of a child's emotional and relational life rather than a passive observer of the school's decisions. And this is why the entire framework, in the end, focuses not on individual achievement but on what he calls community actualization, a healthier community.

Instead of taking a position in the ongoing debate about whether schools should be reformed or abolished, Dr. Lee proposes the idea of an Aschooling Society, in which the school persists but narrows itself to the tasks it is best suited for, namely the development of character, the maintenance of relationships, and keeping the community together, while AI takes on nearly all the other duties. Most writers in this field do not exhibit that same careful, balanced thinking. It would be simpler to choose a side.

The pandemic and the rise of AI have together brought education two problems, one concerning what students carry with them and the other concerning what knowledge is now considered valuable.

Dr. Lee does not provide the reader with answers on either issue. Instead, he offers a framework clear enough to debate, and that debate is the point. He leaves at least two lines of inquiry open so that readers can continue to explore them. As education becomes more personalized, how do we prevent a common cultural foundation from disappearing, so that future engineers still read novels and future novelists still understand code? And if the goal is truly the actualization of community rather than individual achievement, what would our campuses, our accreditation systems, and our very concept of graduation have to change in order to reach it?

Different readers will draw different insights from this book. Educators will find the words for something they have sensed but could not yet articulate about their own shift from content provider to coach. Administrators will see a justification for planning that focuses on relational capacity and human thriving, rather than just hoping for them. Parents will find a role that extends well beyond monitoring screen time. I believe most readers will finish the book with a clearer sense of their responsibilities than when they started.

Read it slowly and, if possible, read it with other people. Bring your questions and doubts with you, since Dr. Lee welcomes them. What follows is not a book about how to survive disruption; it is a book about what education is for, asked at the one moment in a century when an answer to that question is possible.

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Preface

Time to Reset

When the COVID-19 pandemic began to spread globally, a confirmed case in my California town in early 2020 sparked panic and shock. Government agencies, educational institutions, and businesses began shutting down. People were required to wear face masks, wash their hands frequently for at least 20 seconds, and quarantine as much as possible. Soon after, students were no longer allowed to attend school, and I, a university faculty member, was required to transition my teaching to an online format. The world grew dark, leaving many feeling isolated and despondent. Daily reports showed a devastating death toll from COVID-19, including people close to me. It felt as though there was no hope for the future. My life was no different. I was in a deep struggle, filled with despair and feeling demotivated every day. I was barely able to do the minimum needed to get by.

However, on a very dark night in December 2020, as I lay in bed, a single word came to my mind so vividly that I could not ignore it: RESET. Although I was not ready to process it deeply at that moment, the word echoed in my heart several more times. I got out of bed and looked up the word in the Webster dictionary. I found two primary definitions: 1) to set again or renew, and 2) to adjust a device, often back to zero.

As a faculty member with more than 20 years of experience in teacher education across various higher education institutions in the United States, the word 'reset' granted me deep insight to reflect on my personal life journey and my future professional

career. It was my first time experiencing the complete closure of schools, churches, and organizations. For the first time in my life, I witnessed the fragility of human existence and watched so many people in my community die in vain.

Yet, despite a deep sense of defeat and learned helplessness, the word ‘reset’ offered me a new opportunity to revive my professional calling. It led me to reset my career, my life, and my professional relationships. It instilled in me a profound sense of responsibility to re-evaluate the field to which I have dedicated my life—education. Ultimately, I realized it is time to reset our current educational structures, as contemporary content and methods may no longer effectively address the urgent, future needs of society and individual learners. To envision the future of learning, we must first analyze emerging educational trends and challenges in depth. This book is my personal endeavor to explore how education can truly be prepared for what lies ahead—especially in the age of AI and the post-pandemic era.

Some Terminology Readers Should Know

Before delving into this book, I would like to clarify several key terms used throughout the text. Doing so will help readers better understand the context of my discussion and avoid potential misunderstandings.

First, I use the term ‘learners’ more frequently than ‘students.’ While the two terms are often used interchangeably, there are distinct differences between them. ‘Students’ usually refers to individuals participating in formal educational experiences associated with an institution during a specific stage of life. In this view, students are often seen as recipients of an education designed by

others. ‘Learners,’ by contrast, are active participants who seek knowledge, skills, and understanding based on their own needs, interests, and motivations. A learner continues to acquire knowledge throughout their lifespan—a broader concept that emphasizes agency, self-direction, and personal responsibility. This term encompasses both traditional students and any individual actively engaged in lifelong learning.

I intentionally use the term ‘learners’ for two reasons. First, in the age of artificial intelligence (AI) and the post-pandemic era, individuals are increasingly required to take an active role in their own growth. They must develop metacognitive awareness (an understanding of how they learn), self-efficacy, critical questioning skills, and the capacity to evaluate AI-generated information. Second, learning in this new era is no longer confined to formal educational institutions; it occurs across diverse social contexts throughout one’s lifetime. Therefore, I generally use ‘learner’ throughout this book, reserving ‘student’ primarily for traditional, organized classroom contexts of the past.

In the same spirit, I prefer ‘educator’ over ‘teacher’ to describe key stakeholders who facilitate learning. ‘Teacher’ typically refers to an instructor who prioritizes delivering information and cultivating cognitive development within traditional classroom settings. An ‘educator,’ however, prioritizes the holistic growth of learners through both academic and non-academic support—serving as a facilitator, coach, and mentor inside and outside the classroom. I believe the role of the educator will be far more vital than that of the traditional teacher in the post-pandemic AI era.

In addition, I use the term ‘parents’ inclusively to refer to all primary caregivers and supportive adults involved in a child’s

upbringing and education. This includes biological parents, legal guardians, foster parents, extended family members, and other caregivers who provide a stable and nurturing environment.

Finally, I distinguish between ‘learning’ and ‘schooling.’ I use ‘learning’ to refer to the individual process through which human beings acquire knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions throughout life. ‘Schooling,’ on the other hand, refers to the formal, systematic, and structured process of instruction that occurs within educational institutions (Knight, 2006). Schooling involves organized systems in which schools interact with families, communities, governments, and social institutions to fulfill specific mandates. Thus, learning is organic and intrinsic, whereas schooling is institutional and largely extrinsic. Simply put, learning is an internal cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral experience, while schooling is a human-designed system created to deliver instruction, organize curricula, and certify achievement.

Final Comments

Throughout this book, I emphasize the importance of learning over educational systems (or schooling), particularly in the age of AI and the post-pandemic era. I strongly believe that one of the central challenges of our time is shifting our focus away from preserving outdated educational structures and toward cultivating the human capacity for deep, relational, meaningful, and self-directed learning. This perspective reflects my own beliefs and experiences as an educator and scholar and serves as the philosophical foundation for ‘Recontextualism,’ the educational philosophy developed in Chapter 2. Readers may not agree with all of my views, and such disagreement is both natural and welcome. However, understand-

ing these foundational assumptions will help readers better appreciate the arguments and ideas presented throughout this book.

This book represents my personal perspective, shaped by more than two decades of research and experience in education. I firmly believe that education is one of humanity's most powerful resources for preparing individuals to navigate and proactively shape an uncertain future. I hope that this book will make a modest contribution toward that goal. I warmly welcome readers' feedback, thoughtful critique, and continued dialogue as we collectively seek to reimagine the future of learning.

September, 2026

HeeKap Lee

Acknowledgements

According to data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS, 2026), approximately 100 million teachers serve worldwide across all levels of education, from pre-primary through higher education. Throughout human history, education and schooling have played an essential role in shaping, securing, and advancing a better and fairer world—one in which all people can contribute their unique gifts and talents.

All educators, whether in PK–12 or higher education, public or private, are transformers of the world. Without their dedication, hard work, and sacrifice, our society would not have achieved the progress we enjoy today. While complex challenges will always exist, there is profound hope for our future as long as educators continue to serve courageously with a commitment to positive change.

Having devoted the past several years to writing this book, I dedicate it to educators around the world in gratitude for their tireless service. My continued prayer is for God to grant them strength, wisdom, and perseverance as they transform our world through their vital calling.

I also express my deepest gratitude to my family. To my wife, Yoon, who has continually supported me with inspiring words, encouragement, and prayers, thank you for always being by my side. To my two grown children, Isaac and Sharon, thank you for your constant encouragement, support, and cheerful presence throughout this journey.

Above all, as a Christian, I give thanks to God, who has continually strengthened me with His wisdom, knowledge, and grace. Throughout the writing of this book, I have been reminded of the words of Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

HeeKap Lee

Chapter 1

The Enduring Impact of Global Crises

Introduction

This book is about the past, present, and future of education. This book is about change and stability. This book is about the dream, the vision, and the strategies for implementing it. I believe that education is the essential intervention to secure, prosper, and reset our abundant life, and that we are all responsible for building a strong educational foundation for the future. This book is about the blueprint that we discuss for this essential duty that all will be involved in. In this chapter, I will address the two revolutionary changes that occurred over the last decade that have drastically changed our lives. Then I will continue with how to design education and schooling effectively to prepare for fulfilled lives in the future.

Two Revolutionary Forces that Impact Education

Since human history began, change has been constant and inevitable. Education and school systems have been functioning properly and proactively to respond to societal and environmental changes, so people and society have remained stable and well maintained. However, the changes made to us recently are significantly different from those before, and are unprecedented, uncertain, and drastic. Two major changes over the last decade have been revolutionary and have profoundly impacted every dimension of our lives, including education and school systems. These two revolu-

tionary forces are external and internal changes. The global crises (I call this external revolutionary change), including the COVID-19 pandemic, alongside other external disruptions such as natural disasters and global conflicts, have fundamentally challenged the prevailing educational paradigm. Concurrently, the emerging and rapidly advancing artificial intelligence (hereafter, AI), which I term the internal revolutionary change, has profoundly transformed the traditional framework of education and schooling.

The Impact of global crises on education

Since the pandemic, class teaching has turned to virtual learning, which could make quality instruction available to students in remote or underserved regions (Lewrick & Hatamleh, 2025). Furthermore, programs and interventions integrated with AI offer immersive educational experiences, revolutionizing the current educational fields and classrooms. Achieving traditional educational goals that required classroom socialization became impossible as students hunkered down at home (Spring, 2022). Learning cooperation, considered by some an important educational goal, might be undermined by online instruction, in which a single learner sits in front of a computer screen.

Since the global spread of COVID-19 has made a huge impact on current education systems and their operating structure nationally as well as globally, causing three key issues: 1) learning loss, 2) a mental health crisis, and 3) a learning divide.

First, COVID-19 has led to significant learning loss for students. Since COVID-19, schools have been forced to close, bringing school into homes. Gradually, people have rethought the necessity of formal schooling and begun to seek alternative learning options,

such as digital or distance learning. Enrollment in schools has dropped since 2010, and chronic absenteeism among students has been rising and is now a critical issue in education. For example, more than 1.5 billion students globally have been out of school for anywhere between 3 and 16 months during the COVID-19 period, and 250 million school-age children were out of school before the pandemic appeared, while somewhere between a third and a half of all primary and secondary students have no internet access (Douse, 2021). Students' learning loss was significant.

Research showed that students dropped in math and reading scores (Lillard, 2023; Girrgiu, 2017). Even five years after COVID-19 hit, academic recovery has stalled, and achievement gaps have widened. While many students are growing at pre-pandemic rates, that growth is not closing the gap caused by pandemic disruptions in the USA (National Research, 2025). This research found that younger students (especially grades K and 1) experienced greater learning losses. Educational scholars expect the scores to continue to decline, and that it will take 7 more years to see full recovery in both areas.

Second, COVID-19 caused a serious mental health crisis for learners, educators, as well as parents and guardians. All are living with chronic, unprocessed trauma, and their emotional distress is a normal and valid response to these experiences. Supporting trauma-exposed learners without training puts more pressure on educators, who are already burned out and leaving the profession at high rates. (Villaverde, 2025). In fact, social isolation and loneliness were general features that COVID-19 brought to students. Even loneliness affects people of all ages, especially youth and learners living in low- and middle-income countries. Between 17–21% of individuals aged 13–29 reported feeling lonely,

with the highest rates among teenagers. About 24% of people in low-income countries reported feeling lonely — twice the rate in high-income countries (about 11%). Among them, teenagers who felt lonely were 22% more likely to get lower grades or qualifications (WHO, 2025). Crises expose children, educators, and school personnel to extreme violence and trauma (UNICEF, n.d.). Schools often provide psychosocial support, but when they are closed, children lose access to this critical help. The trauma they experience can severely impede their ability to learn. CARE (2020) found that COVID-19 is widening systemic inequalities that have long affected women, girls, and other people who face discrimination because of race and migration status. 27% of women experienced increased mental health struggles due to COVID-19 compared with 10% of men (CARE, 2020).

How would classrooms respond to the global pandemic that has significantly affected learners' social-emotional well-being? Educators and parents must instruct this generation, who are now questioning what they value, in ways that address their unique needs and differ from how previous generations were taught (Tan, 2025). Furthermore, France (2023) recommends that classrooms be places of healing. We must ensure classrooms are spaces for collective healing of their wounded lives. Students and teachers who come to school pursuing a journey toward wholeness and healing are available to be partners in learning that sticks and sustains; students become the primary learners.

Finally, COVID-19 exacerbated the educational system issue known as the learning divide, which refers to the disparity between learners who had the resources and support to continue their learning effectively at home and those who did not, often affecting vulnerable groups and communities such as displaced children, refugees,

and children with disabilities. They struggle with language and cultural differences, or a lack of physical access to learning spaces and necessary assistive technology (UNESCO, 2025). In the USA, Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students are recovering at a slower rate. Generally, girls experienced greater drops in academic scores than boys (Lillard, 2023). COVID-19 pandemic has increased learning poverty, especially in low- and middle-income countries, mainly due to the digital divide, which is evident along North/South, Rural/Urban, affluent/poor, powerful/marginalized, and gender lines (Douse, 2021).

After the COVID-19 pandemic, education systems worldwide have been further challenged by a series of natural disasters and other crises. These events have worsened existing educational inequities and created new obstacles for students and schools. This means that disruptions to education are likely to be a continuous challenge in the future. Now educators are dealing with multifaceted challenges, including the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as new disruptions from natural disasters and political conflicts. Jacob and Stanojevich (2024) summarized how the pandemic reshaped the educational landscape in four ways and we consider the opportunities and challenges these changes present for students, educators, and policymakers, which include: 1) accelerated adoption of technology; 2) transformed instructional practices, emphasizing on technology-based pedagogies, small-group instruction and personalized learning, making learning more engaging and appealing to students; 3) increased emphasis on social-emotional learning; and 4) facilitated virtual communication between parents and teachers.

The sad story is that COVID-19 was not only a major educational disruption, but subsequent crises like natural disasters, political

conflicts among nations, and wars have acted as compounding crises that deepened existing problems. This critical issue is that natural disasters and other global crises are not one-time events; compelling evidence suggests they are becoming more frequent, more severe, and more interconnected due to climate change as a driver of extreme weather (IPCC, 2022), growing geopolitical instability (UNHCR, 2023), and cascading and compounding effects (World Bank, 2024).

For example, the volcanic eruption in Tonga in early 2022, while short-lived, caused widespread damage and communication outages that isolated the island nation and halted education. Pakistan experienced catastrophic flooding in 2022 that submerged a third of the country, destroying over 26,000 schools and affecting an estimated 3.5 million children. Similarly, devastating floods in Brazil and China have displaced communities and disrupted education for extended periods. In early 2023, a massive earthquake devastated parts of Turkey and Syria, destroying schools and forcing a widespread halt to education for millions of students. The disaster left countless children and teachers without classrooms and grappling with severe trauma, making a return to normal schooling incredibly difficult. Another global crisis was the escalating wildfires in regions like North America (e.g., Canada and the USA in 2023 and 2025) and Europe, which have led to school closures and poor air quality, forcing classes to be canceled or moved online. These events have become more frequent, creating a cycle of disruption that affects long-term student learning.

Furthermore, the world is experiencing the highest number of conflicts since World War II. These conflicts are leading to massive displacement and attacks on civilian infrastructure, including schools. For example, the war between Russia and Ukraine in 2022

has also severely disrupted education for millions of children, compounding the challenges left by the pandemic. The war in the Middle East in 2026, anchored by the warfare involving the United States, Israel, and Iran, has left the world experiencing a compounding series of shocks.

In addition, increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events and climate disasters, such as wildfires and earthquakes, are causing school closures and disrupting learning. The World Health Organization (WHO) is tracking several other outbreaks, including measles, dengue, and cholera, which can affect children's health and ability to attend school. Global crises have a devastating effect on education, with more than 234 million school-aged children in need of urgent educational support. This number has increased by an estimated 35 million in the last three years (Education Cannot Wait, 2025). The biological devastation of resurgent Ebola outbreaks in Africa, this environment of continuous trauma shatters the illusion of structural predictability, demanding a radical re-evaluation of how we prepare future generations to survive a highly fractured world.

The Emergence of AI: Is it good or harmful to us?

While COVID-19 brought drastic changes to the education system, AI is another critical factor that is making a huge impact on education. The increasing adoption of AI in classroom teaching, education, and schooling compels all stakeholders, including learners, educators, and parents, to adopt new frameworks. In fact, the term AI is a broad concept, and it does not capture the full scope of AI evolution. Usually, AI has evolved in three stages that are closely related: AI (Artificial Intelligence), ML (Machine Learning), and

DL (Deep Learning). In the first stage of AI, computers mimic human intelligence by making decisions based on supervised (or unsupervised) learning. Gradually, a machine makes independent decisions using data under human guidance and supervision, and it improves its performance over time by correcting its mistakes (Machine Learning). Finally, deep learning is the most mature form of AI, in which machines make decisions and predictions on their own using artificial neural networks with multiple layers to analyze complex data (Lewrick & Hatamleh, 2025). In the past, AI was just a technology whose applications were limited to basic tasks such as automated grading of multiple-choice tests or simple educational games. Over the last decade, it has become a transformative force that has changed our lives at an incredible pace, refining how we connect, work, and experience the world around us.

Since its inception, AI has contributed positively to education and student learning, even though many educators are cautious about introducing it into education. For example, a 2025 survey at a USA school found that 54% of educators believe AI tools that support personalized learning will be the most influential factor in improving student outcomes over the next 2-4 years (PowerSchool, 2025). AI benefits educators by creating adaptive learning platforms that adjust content and teaching styles to fit individual learners' study patterns, preferences, and needs (Huang, 2025). AI also helps educators with administrative tasks very effectively, such as scheduling, student recruitment, and data analysis to identify at-risk students, making school systems more efficient. A survey published in 2025 shows that AI is helping educators reclaim valuable time; educators who use AI tools at least weekly save an average of 5.9 hours per week (Walton Family Foundation, 2025).

According to this survey, educators use AI to prepare lessons (37%), create worksheets (33%), modify teaching materials (28%), grade (16%), and analyze student data (12%). AI automates routine tasks such as grading, scheduling, and data analysis, which frees up teachers to focus more on mentorship, creative lesson planning, and building meaningful student relationships. For example, Turnitin uses AI to grade essays and detect plagiarism, saving teachers time and ensuring academic integrity. In addition, AI tools can analyze large datasets to identify at-risk students and predict learning difficulties, enabling proactive interventions to prevent students from falling behind.

In fact, AI has changed all dimensions of the traditional paradigm of education, which focused on the educator's role as the sage, the learner's role as a passive knowledge recipient, and all learners taking the same material at the same pace in the same classroom. However, with AI accelerating real-time, tailoring to individual learners' needs, multimodal learning will be possible. For example, AI enables a tailored curriculum that meets and adjusts to each learner's context, pace, and style, addressing individual needs and closing learning gaps more effectively than traditional methods (Carter, 2025). In addition, AI has a tremendous impact on learners by providing intelligent tutoring systems (such as ALEKS, Cognii, MATHia, Squirrel, Duolingo, etc.) that can adapt to their individual situations and contexts (Huang, 2025). These systems provide personalized feedback and recommendations, offering a level of customization that was previously impossible. This leads to an effective model of personalized learning through AI. For example, platforms like Coursera use AI to recommend courses and resources based on each learner's progress and preferences. AI tutoring also has a tremendous effect on students' learning by

answering questions, explaining concepts, and providing feedback on assignments. For example, Khan Academy's AI-powered tutor is offering personalized help to learners who struggle with specific topics. In fact, the AI tutor more than doubled learning gains over a collaborative classroom instruction model (Wang et al., 2025). Kestin et al. (2025) also found that learners learned significantly more in less time when using the AI tutor compared with in-class active learning. They also feel more engaged and more motivated. These findings offer empirical evidence for the efficacy of a widely accessible AI-powered pedagogy in significantly enhancing learning outcomes, presenting a compelling case for its broad adoption in learning environments.

However, AI does not necessarily positively influence all schools and learners. There are two key concerns we need to consider seriously when using AI in education: one is at the organizational level, and the other is at the personal level. First, high-poverty school districts are still lagging in their use of AI tools. For example, 43% of low-poverty school districts reported having trained teachers in AI, compared with 23% of middle-poverty districts and only 6% of high-poverty districts (Walton Family Foundation, 2025). Second, advancing technology causes students two emotional issues: change rage (Tan, 2025) and cognitive debt. People can feel overwhelmed when confronted with rapid and disruptive technological change, a phenomenon known as 'change rage.' AI may elicit feelings of anger, frustration, and even resentment, especially among teachers. For this, schools and school districts need to provide regular professional development and training for teachers on how to use new technologies (such as AI), along with the pedagogical benefits and rationale for adopting AI in their teaching and administrative tasks. Furthermore, AI is not necessarily

helping students learn because it can lead to over-reliance, causing cognitive debt. Girlich (2025) finds that consistent use of AI leads to a decline in critical-thinking performance due to cognitive offloading that contributes to digital dementia.

Learners become dependent on AI, which prevents them from actively searching and studying using their creative and critical thinking. Learners' passive overreliance on AI may diminish mental effort and reduce cognitive function, particularly affecting students' high-level cognitive skills, such as problem-solving and creative and critical thinking (Ascione, 2025). How to avoid the cognitive debt? Ascione (2025) suggests several strategies such as: 1) let learners know why and when they are using AI; 2) using AI to support their work, instead replacing thoughtful work; 3) teaching learners AI literacy such as how AI works, what are their limitations; biases, inaccuracies, hallucinations of AI; 4) encouraging critical dialogue and metacognition; and 5) designing assignments that prioritize process over product.

In a nutshell, we need to rethink our mindsets, as well as the educational culture and school systems that may impede the beneficial use of AI in education. For example, AI becomes a driver of interdisciplinary innovation across all domains of education. Traditional mindsets, which used to be siloed thinking, singular perspectives, and rigid functional capabilities, should be transformed into an integrated, networked perspective, multiple ways of seeing, and a pursuit of dynamic coevolutionary growth thinking. In addition, AI culture may not be congruent with the school's bureaucratic culture (Lewrick & Hatamleh, 2025). The focus of education may shift from memorizing facts to developing critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills—abilities that complement AI rather than compete with it.

Furthermore, crucial questions arise regarding the appropriateness of AI and its impact on thinking, creativity, and intellectual property (Ahuna & Kiener, 2025). Without a properly enabled and empowered culture, educational transformation through AI will not succeed. If educators can lead more effectively in the Age of AI, teachers need to empower students to lead their own learning. Students will take ownership of their learning.

Can AI replace humans? Will AI take educators' place? Throughout this book, I will answer a key question. At this time, my answer is clear. While AI continues to advance rapidly, certain human qualities will remain very difficult to replace, such as emotional intelligence, empathy, communication, adaptability, creativity, critical thinking, and relationship-building (Huang, 2025). Sharon Gai (2026) addresses this issue very clearly.

Therefore, rather than replacing teachers, AI is best used to augment their capabilities. Professional development is beginning to focus on helping teachers develop AI literacy and oversight skills to integrate AI into their pedagogy effectively. Education leaders stress that educators must remain at the center of the instructional process – reviewing AI outputs, tailoring them to their classroom context, and ensuring that AI recommendations align with sound pedagogy (Gai, 2026, p. 155).

Even though AI is a powerful tool for enhancing human capabilities, it cannot replace us. In education, we can move toward a more equitable and equal society by using AI properly and ethically to support our learners' needs. UNESCO strongly recommends a human-centered perspective When adopting AI (UNESCO, 2024), which is absolutely right. See the UNESCO AI Competency Framework for Teachers below.

Table 1.1 *UNESCO AI Competency Framework for Teachers (2024)*

Aspect	Progression		
	Acquire	Deepen	Create
Human-centered AI Mindset	Critical Reflections on AI	Safe and Responsible AI	Self-actualization in the AI Era
Ethics of AI	Human agency	Ethics by Design	AI Citizenship
AI Foundations & applications	AI Literacy	Programming and Data Analysis	Models and Visual Representations
AI Pedagogy	AI Pedagogical Affordances	AI Pedagogies Effectively	Innovative Pedagogies to Teach AI & with AI
AI for Professional Learning	Professional Preparedness	Continuous AI Professional Learning	AI Opportunities to Empower Teachers

VCLU Educational Change and Reset

Throughout human history, humanity has experienced ongoing changes; indeed, change is an inevitable condition of human existence. History teaches us that human lives improve only when we proactively respond to change, whereas we are overwhelmed and swept away by it if we fail to prepare properly. The Age of AI and the post-pandemic era represent drastic transformations that we must prepare for to ensure the prosperity of our future. In this section, I address the sweeping changes brought about by AI and the post-pandemic era, as well as the major frameworks required to respond effectively in education. The detailed strategies to address these shifts will be developed throughout the remainder of this book.

The Age of Confusion

As I explained in the previous section, two significant changes brought in education have caused drastic impacts on us and our future generations. Since the pandemic, schools have not functioned properly, and people have questioned the purpose of schooling and education. Both revolutionary forces have created an opportunity to reset how we think about education fundamentally. Both forces will also create a synergistic effect, shaping the future of education in ways we cannot predict, leading us to a completely new, more complex world. For example, in the Industrial Age, schools and education had clear roles and purposes to prepare learners for the future, with educators equipping them with new skills and competencies so they would be ready for their careers. However, we cannot predict what the future will be like because change is unpredictable, as Tan (2025) identifies the Current Age as the Age of Mistrust.

Change always brings new opportunities as well as risks to address. With a rapidly changing world, characterized by technological advancements and complex global issues, there is a pressing need for an educational revolution. This revolution must focus on cultivating adaptable, independent thinkers who are equipped not just with knowledge, but with the ability to navigate a world that demands lifelong learning. The schools, which have been considered the main agents of education for decades, are no longer the primary institutions for children's education, and teachers are no longer the primary facilitators of education. The primary agent of education shifted from teachers to learners and parents, and the main setting of education changed from the classroom to learners' homes and online platforms.