Have you ever had a teacher that was just kind of Boring？Maybe even a little robotic? We've all been there. Let's face it. It's hard to learn when you're being put to sleep. But what if we found a completely new way of learning could a robot be a better teacher than a human? How might education change with AI? What are the pros and cons? This is what if, and here’s what would happen if your teacher was an AI.

Schools all over the world are experimenting with new ways of teaching, using technology. As our population reach a critical mass, we may have not enough teachers for every child on the planet. Could robot teachers be a solution? Or could that turn into the scary crisis for our species? Whether you are for or against it, scientist believe artificial intelligence in the classroom is not far off. That is of course, If classrooms still exist. So what would happen if we replace all our teachers with AI? They may look like us or they could be entirely virtual like an Avatar on the screen, regardless of what they look or sound like.

AI in education would simplify administrative tasks that eat up a lot of time: grading exams will be automated, learning interphases will become smarter with interactive textbooks; people with learning disabilities or different learning styles will be better accommodated. Everything will be standardized and customized to help students learn more effectively. Students could even choose to focus on more specialized subjects based on their interests which could help them discover their passions or corky nerdy obsessions early in life. According to a 2016 UNESCO report, an additional 20.1 million teachers are needed to meet the goals for equal accessed education by 2030. Many schools are already looking into advanced systems to help close this gap. For instance, automated services like bag-packs use algorithms to read children’s handwriting and grade tests and assignments. In China, AI is used to create personalized tutoring lessons. Surveillance and even brain wave trackers to keep an eye on classroom progress.

Futurests believe education is moving towards highly individualized curricula allowing students to learn through their own pace without having to hold back others. With the proliferation of the Internet on a global scale, the limitations of education are becoming a thing of the past. Teachers are experimenting with virtual classrooms, especially with the COVID 19 pandemic. Alongside this personalized data availability, universities and college missions might become automated as well. Even job recruiters could potentially use this data which may tailor candidates to available positions. Also greater access to education world wide would mean much higher competition for jobs. And with much more educated population, technological developments will rapidly advance. But this new way of learning could come at a price. So what exactly are the risks?

If all our teachers are replaced by AI, we would be extra-careful about security. Just as the media is played with fake news. We would be at risk of having our education systems hacked to spread false information or propaganda. Whoever rules AI also has the power to manipulate the whole world. This new way of learning might also affect children’s health with too much screen time being an normal cause of obesity, sleep disorders and lack of interpersonal development. So maybe try not to binge-watch too many what-if videos. We would also need wide-spread internet, Wi-Fi networks and electricity to power all these devices, which could come at a great cost to our planet. And if artificial intelligence becomes so advanced that it gains self-awareness or sentience, our species might run in some problems.

Currently our AI is in a category of artificial narrow intelligence. It can perform tasks using human-like capabilities, but it can only do what it is programmed to do. With limited memory systems it can learn and improve on basic task, but we are far off from truly independent artificial consciousness. Let’s just be extra-careful, though. And try not to kick them around too much. I prefer to stand on their good side.

We still can’t authentically program empathy which is an important component human teachers have. For many kids, teachers act as guidance counselors, role models, coaches and even surrogate parents. And we need teachers now more than ever. As in 2016, UNRSCO has reported that 263 million children in youth are out of school, and more than 70% of them live in impoverished areas of southern Asia and sub Saharan Africa. Many teachers in these areas are with little to no access to educational resources. Having consistent easily accessible AI-enhanced education on line could change this numbers drastically. Perhaps our next phase of human evolution is dependent on a global AI school system. But if all our teachers can be replaced with artificial intelligence, could other jobs suffer the same thing? If you want to dive deeper into how we human might one day coexist with AI, check out our “What-if” discussed episode where we sit down with professor Joana Bryson, a specialist in artificial intelligence who shares her thoughts on our future with AI.