

'People are scared of looking foolish', how maths anxiety is holding us back

Early everyone will know they have felt anxious about a maths question at some time in their lives. What may not seem so obvious is that many other people have felt the same way and that maths anxiety is a real problem.

So much so that the Maths Anxiety Trust has been set up to raise awareness of the issue. A poll for the trust found more than a third of 15- to 24-year-olds feel anxious when shown a maths problem. The same applies to one in five British adults.

so much so that 到这种程度以致

This comes as little surprise to Celia Hoyles, professor of mathematics education at University College London (UCL). “With maths, there’s a right or a wrong answer and that’s why people can feel so anxious — they’re scared of looking foolish,” she says.

One issue that needs to be tackled is how maths is taught. “We need teachers to be **empathetic** and to see other points of view, to understand where pupils are finding aspects of the subject difficult so they can be encouraged to overcome those hurdles,” says Hoyles.

empathetic 同感的

Technology in the classroom often gets teachers and parents hot under the collar, prompting **dire** predictions of “robot teachers” replacing real people — and many education technology products have been launched with great **fanfare** in the past few years only to fall by the wayside. Simply digitising how maths is taught with **appealing** graphics and games isn’t enough, says Georgie Hart, education director at Sparx — learning technology needs to be designed with deep understanding of how pupils learn and a healthy reality check around how teachers want to use it.

dire 可怕的；极端的

fanfare 号角齐鸣；大张旗鼓

appealing 吸引人的

Beware of bandying terms such as artificial intelligence (AI), she says. “AI can be a very **disempowering** term for teachers, it’s not helpful. But the concept of adaptive teaching allows teachers to do more of the job they love,” says Hart.

beware 当心

disempower 剥夺权力