

Podcast Transcript

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Quarto Podcast, I'm Agata, I'm Ewa, I'm Karina, I'm Hania and

In today's episode, we will be discussing the impact of Artificial intelligence on education and personal development.

In the last few years, artificial intelligence and all the tools based on it have really made their way into our everyday lives. And honestly, we're no exception. While working on this podcast, we've used tools like ChatGPT and we're not hiding it! If anything, it's a great example of how helpful AI can be.

What makes tools like this so useful is that you can ask them really specific questions and things that would take a really long time to figure out just by searching online.

They can help you write texts, analyze data, study, put together presentations and even make everyday decisions.

The speed at which this technology is evolving is kind of mind-blowing. Just a few years ago, the idea of having a natural, back-and-forth conversation with a machine sounded like something out of a science fiction movie. But now? It's real and it seems like it's only just the beginning.

How does it influence the way we think and process information? Can it change the way we solve problems or make decisions? What impact does it have on creativity and critical thinking? And how should we approach the ethical challenges that come with using AI in education and beyond?

In today's episode, we'll be exploring these questions and more, diving into both the opportunities and challenges that AI brings to education, learning, and the way we think.

MAIN BODY

A: So, to start off, Hania, what do you think about AI-based tools, and how often do you use them?

H: Hm, being honest I use ChatGPT quite often but I always examine its output. It's mainly because a lot of times the answers it gave me were total garbage that's why you should always confront this information with more valid sources.

A: Exactly and I think that is a really important thing to talk about. Many people don't even realize that such tools still make a lot of mistakes. Sometimes they just "make up" answers that sound convincing but have no logical basis. This phenomenon even has its own name - it's called AI hallucinations.

Some time ago, I read an article from the New York Times that talked about this exact issue. The authors, Cade Metz and Karen Weise, discussed how the latest and most powerful reasoning systems like OpenAI and the Chinese startup Deepseek actually generate more errors rather than fewer. Even though their math skills have improved a lot, their grasp of facts has become less reliable, and no one really knows why.

Many of us might have already experienced it, but the A.I. bots tied to search engines like Google and Bing sometimes generate search results that are laughably wrong. If you ask them for a good marathon on the West Coast, they might suggest a race in Philadelphia. Or

another example, if they tell you the number of households in Illinois, they might cite a source that does not even include that information.

I've actually experienced that problem myself, because there were many times when I asked ChatGPT or another AI bot for the source of specific information. Even when it gave me a link that was supposed to back up what it had said, I couldn't find that information anywhere on the site. It's like it doesn't exist.

It is also important to emphasize that as CEO of Vectara - a startup building AI tools - said that despite their best efforts, those AI systems will always hallucinate

So that might actually cause a lot of problems for many people, especially kids that may not verify those given information.

E: Yes, absolutely, during my research I also found that children are prone to this issue. They often lack the critical thinking skills needed to evaluate whether the information is actually true or not. And whilst I feel like it is ok to help yourself with AI during schoolwork it should not be copy and paste. And if we do not want to be harmed drastically by this tendency Scientists should work on algorithms that genuinely enhance learning outcomes, while teachers should guide pupils in using AI with the right mindset.

K: Exactly! As someone who didnt have access to AI when in middle school, I can say that the way of studying was far more different than it is now! When you wanted to get information about something, you had to google it, check 20 different sites and combine all the knowledge there. You had to spend hours, but at least you knew that the facts were backed by someone, and were written by a real person who must have had knowledge about it. And with the process of finding, you learned it by heart! Now, you just have to type a prompt into an AI chat and everything will be given to you at your command.

You'll read it once, twice, spend 30 minutes studying and call it a day. And on the other hand, chat combines different answers, with the result sometimes not being the right mix - the hallucinations we mentioned earlier.

Not validating the sources, and such a short-sighted learning might be efficient but only in terms of time, not the truth, and remembering it. And as it goes for students now, they prefer to ask AI than their teachers. And teachers wouldn't be called teachers if they weren't meant to teach us something - and communicate with us.. And, Now, our teacher is a soulless machine, with knowledge coming from scatters from all over the web, not always true ones.

H: Honestly, the way I see it, we're totally overwhelmed these days - not just with information, but with misinformation too. And while technology gives us access to everything, it doesn't really teach us how to think critically or argue well. Maybe we need to look back - like, way back - about two thousand years, to what Aristotle had to say about learning.

He was inspired by Plato and Socrates and really believed in the power of open dialogue among students. These kinds of discussions weren't just about sharing ideas - they helped people spot weak arguments and dig deeper into what they were learning. I think if we applied that mindset to AI, it might actually help us tell the difference between what's true and what's just noise.

But here's another thing I've been thinking about: it feels like more and more people are struggling to express their opinions or defend their views - basically, we're losing touch with rhetoric. And if we rely on AI every time we face an open-ended question, how are we ever going to build those skills ourselves?

From Ancient Greece all the way up to the 19th century, the art of persuasion was a key part of education. Honestly, I think it should be a required subject again - maybe now more than ever.

And Aristotle didn't just focus on knowledge. His approach to education was holistic - he believed learning should also shape a person's character. He talked about how important it is to develop virtues like courage, justice, and self-discipline.

E: Oh funny you mention virtues, because I actually have never thought about how AI can affect for example children's etiquette. So when it popped up while doing my research I was very surprised.

When kids talk to other humans, they pick up manners and social cues. But when they talk to AI, they can also be influenced and you know, if you're not nice to AI, it's not nice to you either. In that sense, it's clear that it can never replace a parental role and humans still have to be kids main source of influence and parents should always supervise what their children consume from ai

A: Exactly! Like, when I'm angry, AI can be sassy back to me and I feel like that's very telling. That's why it's super important to monitor these interactions.

K: Some people say that when AI evolves into a capable and conscious being, it will remember the ones being not nice to it, so you'd better watch your language or you might be the AI 'S first target haha.

H: Ewa, you mentioned humans being an influence to children. I wanted to share with you another insight from Aristotle's legacy that I personally find the most important. He wrote: 'It is through wonder that men now begin and originally began to philosophise... Now he who wonders and is perplexed feels that he is ignorant; therefore [it was] to escape ignorance that men studied philosophy.' In other words if we want children or our learners to focus, work hard, and take notice, we must ignite their curiosity - to me it is the best way to motivate children to discover and learn on their own.

E: Another disturbing thing is that algorithms can be discriminatory and that blew my mind. In the UK during COVID, final exams were canceled. Instead, results were calculated using an algorithm created by the government based on grade distributions of schools. As a result, many students with good grades from disadvantaged schools received lower scores, while students from privileged schools, especially private ones often got better scores. Thankfully in this case uk government withdrew from the results algorithm given The system harmed unprivileged students and for me it is so sad that even something that should be more „objective” than a human still makes these mistakes and I wonder what will happen in the future when more and more procedures are automated.

H: It's not really ChatGPT's fault as it's just an algorithm. The issue is with the people who graded the students. They seem to have forgotten something we emphasize here: you have to double-check what AI gives you. This is one of those “learn the hard way” moments that shows why we should always be skeptical of AI.

And honestly, how are we as students supposed to see our teachers as mentors after something like this? That's a big deal - especially for kids, because teachers are supposed to be role models. If they want to teach us not to blindly rely on AI, they should start with holding themselves to the same standards.

E: Yes, I agree with you about teachers as mentors. Next thing that comes to my mind is how much danger children face nowadays when it comes to cybersecurity. When we were younger, we had lessons about online safety, like “don't talk to strangers” or “don't share

personal information.” But now, the threats are much more complex, like “deepfakes”. Children can be groomed, bullied, or emotionally harmed by AI-generated content. Only thing needed is a child's face and then everything can happen. That's why it is very disturbing for me when I see my family members, or even influencers put their young children on the internet, because as soon as they post it they lose all control.

K: That's true. Back then, the internet felt dangerous but now, the future seems even darker for the little ones. Especially with technology advancing further and further every day, being more available for everyone, it's not such a good thing that it is available also for the children.

Every time I see a kid in a baby stroller with a phone in hand, watching some colorful videos, not paying attention to the environment - people and objects, I'm mind blown that parents allow for this. And when they take away the source of fun - the phone - the child makes a ruckus and wont function properly.

As the studies show, this has really bad effects on their development. When I think about the future of such a child, - the ability not to focus long on things, being angered and annoyed easily, all of this being allowed by the unconscious parents. They will wonder why their child is so overstimulated and can't learn things, and they won't realize it's all their fault!

And now, with technology and AI developing, their children can get access to uncontrolled dangerous things even earlier. They can become the victims of deep fakes, or of mind-possessing “brainrot” - ai generated content that doesn't really make any sense, but it's funny - and addicting.

E:And it's not just children. Elderly people are in danger too. I often see fake posts or deepfakes on Facebook, and it's heartbreaking how often seniors fall for them - they write comments engaging emotionally with what they saw becoming happy or sad for „ the author”. It really shows how unprepared we all are for this new kind of manipulation.

A: Exactly and this emotional vulnerability isn't limited to any one group. It is something many people are feeling as AI becomes more present in our lives. That's why we decided to survey around 200 people to better understand how they personally feel about AI. One of the questions we asked was: “How do you assess the impact of AI on your daily life?”

K: The results were surprising for me! Almost 34% of the people ranked it as positive, and 40% said they have a neutral attitude towards it. Only 8% marked very negative or negative. I got really intrigued with these statistics, because the common opinion I overheard being said about AI is that it's a dangerous tool and influences people in a bad way - making them lazy, not dependent on their natural - human - skills and talents.

And the most important thing is that in the future it will overtake many professions, making people lose their own jobs, causing a work crisis. But how the real opinions differ.

In my personal opinion, I think that the impact of ai should be considered in a spectrum of different types it's used for. For me, the influence on studying and thinking is negative, but in terms of time efficiency it's a big plus.

H:Wow, I didn't expect such answers because I consider Ai's impact as negative. I definitely would prefer to not use it at all and be able to achieve everything wholly by myself.

E:For me personally it is a Neutral rank as it has very positive and very negative effects, so it kind of evens

A: I'm somewhere in the middle. On one hand, I always feel a bit guilty using AI tools like ChatGPT, but on the other hand, I find them incredibly helpful for smaller tasks that are usually really time-consuming and don't require much creative thinking. I think if we use these tools in a mindful, controlled way, they can offer a lot of benefits. But at the same time, it's really important not to overuse them and especially not to become too dependent on them.

E: What I found really interesting is that about 55% of students said AI has a positive impact on their education. But honestly, I think that's a bit worrying, it seems like they don't really notice how it can make them addicted or cause them to stop using their own creativity.

A: Yeah, that's something that also really surprised me. Like I said earlier, I do think AI has a lot of benefits but way too many people are getting a little *too* comfortable with it. They start turning to AI for even the simplest problems and that can seriously limit their creativity and independent thinking. And like we mentioned before, this can be especially harmful for kids, who are at a stage where they should be developing abstract and creative thinking skills.

K: Yeah! Sometimes we just need to think a little, search something, and the answer will come itself.

But now, even the easiest questions and tasks are becoming a burden, if we have something that can do it all for us.

E: Also in general it feels like people are not really aware of the impact AI has in all fields of life. While doing research I also read a bit about the environmental impact AI has on the Earth. I was aware that the servers powering AI require large amounts of water for cooling and that generative AI consumes a lot of energy, but the actual numbers still surprised me.

K: What do you mean?

E: Well, it's estimated that by 2026, electricity consumption by data centers will grow so much that they'll rank fifth globally, right next to countries like Japan and Russia. And honestly, it's hard for me to even imagine how much energy that means, especially when they're beating some of the most populated and technologically advanced countries in the world.

A: Whatttt

E: Yeahhhh....

A: I knew that it consumes a lot of energy but I had no idea it was that bad and also - growing so quickly

H: Another interesting question from our survey was: "Would not having access to AI tools make it harder for you to study, work or perform everyday tasks". Because if it is true - that students depend on AI while doing basic or more advanced tasks - answers to these questions should be affirming. But all answers from definitely false to definitely true, had from 12 to 26 percent. Ewa it might ease your concerns, because around 70% of those surveyed don't really care about access to ChatGPT.

K: Well Hania, I wouldn't be so optimistic because to me, these 70% of people are confident of themselves and didn't really think about the consequences. Once you get used to something that makes your life easier in some way, you become attached to it, and with time, you depend on it more and more. I think these people are not conscious about the influence AI has on them. Even if they are not using it directly, like asking it prompts, its being integrated into our lives in ways that we could not possibly notice its influence in. Like

images we see, content we read, music we listen to. If it all suddenly was gone, we'd see how much of the things from our daily life would disappear, leaving holes. And we don't even notice it today.

A: Well I have to admit that I would have a problem if AI tools suddenly disappeared. Even though I try not to overuse them, I still ask them for help in many different situations, especially when it comes to explaining phrases or definitions I don't fully understand. They can also be really helpful while studying for an exam, asking you questions and later checking the answers or even preparing practice tests to help you review what you've learned.

E: And finally many of our degree colleagues did our survey and for them the answers were pretty similar, for example most of them said they use ai more than once a day, when it comes to question „do you think you are addicted to ai to some degree?“ the answers were mostly yes, and I sadly have to agree i fear to some extent I am also addicted to ai, When I do not know something I do not google it I just open Chat GPT And I am given answers on a silver platter. Where I draw the line is asking ai questions like how to cook eggs? because it feels so brainless and dystopian but I know a lot of people that do that. and how is it for you?

H: I kind of wish I used ChatGPT less. Whenever I'm working on a tough problem or trying to write a long essay, I struggle for a few minutes, but then I end up asking AI for help - just so I don't "waste" too much time. Agata you mentioned this topic earlier but the thing is, it's not really a waste of time. Those challenging, time-consuming tasks, the ones that really make us think and apply what we've learned - that's where the real learning happens.

I mean, what value has theoretical knowledge without hands-on experience? Understanding cannot arise from abstract contemplation alone it is mandatory to integrate it with practical application as Aristoteles said: "For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them". It not only helps in memorizing but also improves problem-solving skills. That's how we actually learn and remember stuff.

So yeah... I'm trying to cut back on using AI as much as I can. And honestly, in the near future, I think I'll probably start answering questions about AI dependency more negatively. I wonder what about other majors, if they have similar feelings toward usage of AI.

K: Hania, we had respondents from many different majors, and working in different fields. Something interesting I noticed is that the younger ones working in public services or technical fields were confident that AI will not take their jobs, they also used it less in their work than their technological colleagues.

And The concern of the IT group, like bioinformaticians, was much higher, with more fear that AI will take their job, as well as them using AI in their work.

But it's all different when it comes to people that finished their education and work in the IT field. Very small percentage of them were scared of AI taking over their jobs. I wonder if its connected to their work experience and the fact that maybe the employers value their opinions and their human side? I wish more younger people were confident in their skills, not making them afraid to pursue them, with AI in mind somewhere. I also hope that the young bioinformaticians around us aren't scared of this field because of this, and will continue to achieve big things!

AI has been developing rapidly, throughout the short time it has been present in our lives, it has changed drastically, as well as it has changed our lives too. Making it easier in many ways, it also carries the consequences, of which we aren't always conscious.

So, If i could give a message that everyone could hear, I'd say that we shouldnt be afraid of AI. Instead, we should set clear boundaries to its usage, for ourselves and for others. We can't forget that we are humans, we made AI.

We, and our minds, We are the most complex machines that we should depend on. We can't let ourselves become integrated with a mindless machine, created by us, just because it analyses everything faster. We humans - should depend on ourselves. With the tools we create - helping us in judgement, but not doing it for us, especially when it can make mistakes too. Tools are created to help us, but everything should be carried with caution.

E: And I think it is a perfect take-home message!! Thank you for listening to our podcastV

A: We hope you enjoyed it!!

ALL: Byeeee!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!