Children, Ethics, and Generative Video: Educational Reflections on Sora 2

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Abstract

The release of OpenAI's Sora 2 marks a turning point in the relationship between generative AI and education. For the first time, text-to-video systems can produce coherent and photorealistic scenes that blur the boundary between what is filmed and what is fabricated. This commentary examines the ethical, pedagogical, and policy implications of this shift in children's learning and safeguarding. Drawing on emerging research, international frameworks, and ethical theory, it argues that AI literacy must extend beyond functional competence to civic and moral capacity. Teachers require sustained professional learning to design reflective, human-centred practices that help young people navigate synthetic media critically and compassionately. The commentary concludes that education should not retreat from generative technologies but humanise them, cultivating discernment, empathy, and responsibility as essential literacies for the age of synthetic video.

Author note

Keywords

Generative AI; AI literacy; children's rights; media ethics; educational policy; digital pedagogy; child safeguarding

Main Text

The release of OpenAI's Sora 2 in late 2025 marked a new stage in the evolution of generative artificial intelligence. For the first time, text-to-video models can create extended photorealistic scenes with synchronised dialogue, ambient sound, and narrative coherence. This leap from still to moving images represents not merely a technical advance but a transformation in the nature of visual media. Within days of its launch, Sora 2 was used to generate deepfakes of deceased public figures and insert individuals into fabricated or defamatory situations. The Safe AI for Children Alliance (2025), a non-profit child safeguarding coalition, warned that such misuse exposes young people to new forms of identity theft, reputational harm and emotional manipulation. For educators, parents, and policymakers, the question is no longer whether children will encounter generative videos but whether they will be equipped to interpret and navigate them safely, creatively, and ethically.

Generative video collapses the distinction between what is filmed and what is fabricated, creating what Floridi (2014) describes as an infosphere, a shared environment where human and artificial agents co-produce information and meaning. In this hybrid space, the epistemic stability of an image–and thus its capacity to testify to reality–becomes increasingly fragile. For adults, contextual literacy and critical reasoning can mitigate this instability. For children, whose cognitive and moral frameworks are still forming, the effect is more profound and long-lasting. The traditional pedagogical distinction between fact and fiction becomes blurred, while the ethical challenge of authenticity moves from philosophy to everyday experience. The question of 'What is real?' becomes a literacy problem as much as it is a philosophical one.

Empirical evidence shows that teachers are already encountering this frontier in education. Xu et al. (2024) experimentally compared 76 undergraduate and graduate students assigned to human-made instructional videos versus AI-generated videos and found comparable learning outcomes but lower perceived authenticity for AI-generated content than for human-made content. Student comprehension levels were similar, but learners described AI videos as less authentic and emotionally engaging, suggesting that authenticity now demands explicit discussion rather than tacit assumptions. In a related preprint, Lee et al. (2025) conducted interviews with ten K-12 teachers on their early use of generative video AI; teachers celebrated its creative potential but raised concerns about data provenance, bias, and consent, calling for institutional frameworks and support. These findings reveal a profession eager to innovate, yet aware of the social and moral weight that innovation carries.

According to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2021), children's rights in the digital environment extend beyond protection to encompass participation, agency, and access to information and expression. However, the rapid emergence of generative AI

poses risks that could undermine all three, compromising privacy, consent, and meaningful involvement in shaping digital experiences. Publicly available photographs and classroom recordings can be scraped into training datasets, repurposed, and redistributed without consent. The practice of 'likeness insertion', highlighted in the Safe AI for Children Alliance (2025), a non-peer-reviewed policy briefing for schools and parents, destabilises identity ownership and privacy. Livingstone et al. (2019) argue that digital-literacy education must extend beyond content to include algorithmic literacy, understanding how data and algorithms curate what children encounter, and the commercial purposes that shape these systems. This direction is reinforced by the UNICEF Innocenti review's call to equip children for datafication and automation (Stoilova et al., 2021). For young people, developing such literacy is not optional; it is essential to civic competence in the digital age.

The reconceptualisation of AI literacy as more than mere functional competence is well-aligned with educational frameworks that expand technical fluency into critical and civic capacities, for example, Long and Magerko's (2020) triadic model of tool use, human–AI collaboration, and critical evaluation, and more recent proposals to embed AI literacy in citizenship and data justice activities (Picasso et al. 2024; DiPaola et al. 2024). In this enriched framework, students are taught to not only prompt, generate, and edit responsibly, but also to interrogate the power dynamics, representation effects, and governance implications of algorithmic systems. Pedagogical design should shift from avoidance to guided engagement. Recent studies indicate that classroom engagement with both AI-generated and human-produced materials can deepen reflections on creativity and authorship (Amirjalili et al., 2024; Marrone et al., 2022). Similarly, when generative tools are integrated reflectively, students develop stronger ethical awareness of multimodal composition (Burriss et al., 2024). Sustaining such reflective practices depends on teachers' readiness and ongoing professional development.

To implement such approaches, teachers require sustained professional learning. UNESCO (2023a, 2023b) stresses that capacity building is foundational to responsible AI integration, highlighting that human capacity and collective action, not technology, are the determining factors in ensuring that AI benefits teaching and learning. However, most teacher-training programmes remain focused on generic digital competence, leaving algorithmic systems unexplored. Luckin et al. (2016) argue that educators should become designers of learning ecosystems in which human judgment and AI systems are blended thoughtfully; hence, she calls for collaboration among developers, researchers, and teachers to co-construct these environments. In more recent scholarship, Luckin and colleagues proposed that transparency in educational AI must be co-designed with educators, technologists, and domain experts, pointing to the value of formal partnerships and collaborative networks to ensure AI aligns with pedagogical goals (Chaudhry et al., 2022). These initiatives should not only explain how

tools function but also address their epistemological consequences and how they change what it means to know, create, and witness. Without such preparation, schools risk adopting generative systems as novelties rather than as critical pedagogy subjects.

Although the policy landscape is expanding, it remains fragmented. The OECD (2024a, 2024b) and European Commission (2025) have issued frameworks promoting trustworthy AI. In the United Kingdom, the Online Safety Act (2023) and ICO's Age-Appropriate Design Code (n.d.) provide a partial foundation for the safeguarding of minors. However, none of these approaches directly address the unique challenges of generative videos. Effective governance requires broad ethical principles to be operationalised through mechanisms of transparency and accountability. Many scholars have proposed that developers publish model cards (Mitchell et al., 2019) and datasheets for datasets (Gebru et al., 2021) that document training data provenance, known biases, intended use, and limitations, making hidden technical choices legible to users and regulators. Platforms accessible to minors should disable likeness insertion by default and activate it only with verified parental consent. Independent audits and accessible redress systems are essential for upholding accountability. These mechanisms, far from hindering innovation, reinforce public trust and align technological progress with democratic norms.

Although policy frameworks are necessary, they are not sufficient to ensure responsible innovation in generative systems. In How to Create Your AI School Guidance, Bauschard and Quidwai (2024) underscore that investment in human capacity through continuous professional development, institutional alignment, and capacity building is as crucial as technical capabilities. In the spirit of large-scale mission-driven initiatives, one might envision a *moonshot for digital safety*, a coordinated public–private research effort that integrates ethical education and participatory design throughout the lifecycle of generative tools, thereby bridging the gaps between innovation, accountability, and societal alignment. Thorn (2024) formed a cross-sector initiative with major technology companies to establish safety-by-design principles aimed at preventing AI-generated child sexual abuse material and related harms, such as non-consensual imagery. Their collaborative approach, which combines technology firms, civil society, and regulatory concerns, illustrates how shared governance can operationalise safety in generative AI. Although not yet specific to educational contexts, the essence of co-design and accountability suggests that educational AI governance would benefit from a similar ethos: one that positions children not just as users or recipients, but as co-creators of policy insights and design choices.

Ethical philosophy, particularly Noddings' (2013) ethic of care, provides a conceptual foundation for this approach. In an AI context, this suggests the need to design systems and curricula that acknowledge children's lived experiences, fears, and aspirations, and support their inclusion not merely as users but as active participants in shaping the

technologies that affect them. The growing literature on ethical AI for children points to participatory and co-creative approaches as necessary for safeguarding children's agency and ensuring relevance. James and Prout (2015) argue that children are active social actors, capable of shaping their own lives and influencing their social worlds. Extending from their theory, one can argue that involving children in discussions of AI imagery, privacy, and consent transforms protection from a paternalistic exercise into a shared moral practice that fosters resilience, empathy, and moral imagination.

The pedagogical implications are significant. Rather than confining AI ethics to stand-alone digital safety modules, schools should consider embedding media ethics and AI literacy across subjects such as art, citizenship, and computing. For instance, students could analyse how generative systems encode emotional affect, bias, or power, compare AI-generated imagery with documentary footage, or debate when manipulation becomes deceptive. Such integrative strategies resonate with UNESCO (2023a) guidance, which frames AI literacy as a cross-cutting dimension of education and calls for curricular innovation based on human-centred validation and ethical frameworks. Although the UK Department for Education (2023a, 2023b) has begun publishing leadership toolkits that encourage educators to explore AI's ethical and social implications of AI, the formalisation of "ethical AI readiness" across subjects remains aspirational. When children are invited to interrogate the algorithms and systems shaping their perceptions, they engage not only their critical thinking but also their capacity for civic reflection and agency in a technologised world.

Generative videos also challenge cultural institutions and parents to reconsider their roles. Media-literacy efforts that once centred on recognising misinformation must now evolve to include synthetic literacy, the ability to decode content that is neither wholly true nor wholly false but is computationally constructed. Families and schools share the responsibility of nurturing this interpretive capacity. By modelling critical curiosity rather than fear, adults can help children approach AI with wonder and discernment. Education has become an act of ethical stewardship, guiding the next generation to navigate complexity without cynicism.

Ultimately, Sora 2 exemplifies both the promise and the peril of the generative turn. It expands creative possibilities while testing society's capacity to preserve authenticity, privacy, and moral coherence. For children, whose lives are increasingly mediated by screens, the stakes are high. A coordinated response linking pedagogy, governance, and technological design can transform anxiety into agency. Education should not retreat from innovation but humanise it, cultivating discernment, empathy, and responsibility as the essential literacies of the twenty-first century. The challenge is to ensure that generative systems serve learning rather than exploit attention and that children's creative participation coexists with robust ethical guardrails. As Floridi (2024) argues, the aim of artificial intelligence is not to halt technological progress but to ensure that it

advances human flourishing and the quality of meaning in our shared digital environments. Equipping young people to live wisely and compassionately amid synthetic media is one of the defining moral projects of the current age.

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