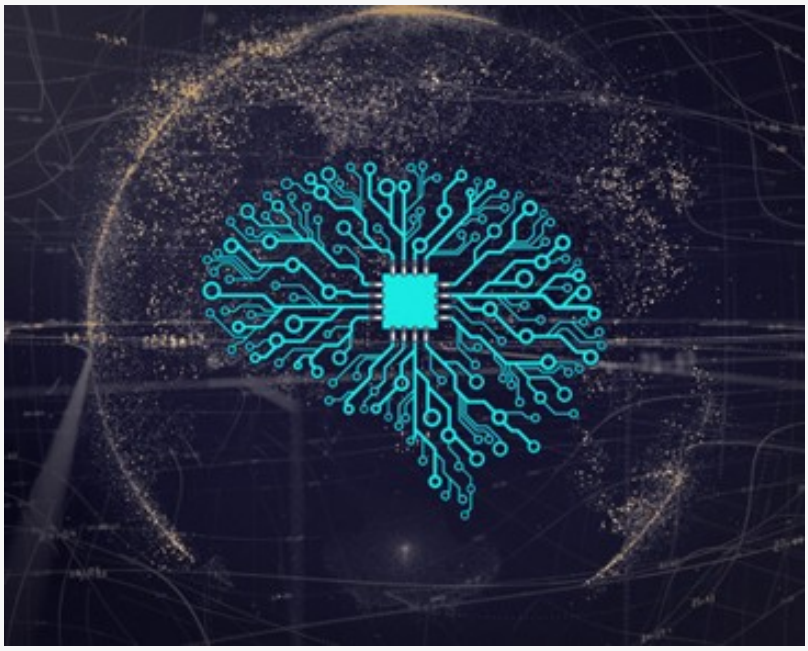
End of an Era: New Study Urges Radical Rethink of Schooling in the AI Age

A recent study argues that AI should transform—not just enhance—schooling by ending fixed curricula, age-based classes, and standardized tests



A new study advocates using artificial intelligence (AI) to radically transform education—replacing fixed curricula and standardized tests with personalized, student-driven learning paths supported by AI, and redefining teachers as mentors guiding real-wo

SHANGHAI, CHINA, December 26, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As artificial intelligence (AI) continues to reshape industries worldwide—from healthcare and finance to transportation and communication—its potential to revolutionize education is garnering significant attention from researchers, educators, and policymakers. With the rapid pace of technological advancement and the evolving demands of the global workforce, there is an increasing urgency to rethink traditional models of teaching and learning. Conventional systems, built for the industrial age, often struggle to meet the diverse needs of today's learners and prepare them for an uncertain future. As a result, conversations around integrating AI into education are shifting from tools that merely enhance efficiency to ideas that fundamentally challenge and redesign how we educate.

In a compelling new article, Dr. Yong Zhao—an education scholar and Distinguished Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology at the School of Education and Human Sciences, University of Kansas—contends that artificial intelligence offers a historic opportunity to fundamentally reimagine education, rather than simply improve existing traditional models. The study, published online on July 23, 2024, in ECNU Review of Education, urges for a complete departure from the rigid, outdated model of standardized curriculum, age-based grouping, and teacher-centered instruction that has defined schools for over a century. "Schools today still operate much as they did over a century ago," explains Zhao, "Even after decades of reform, we

continue to funnel all students through a uniform curriculum and judge success by standardized tests. AI gives us a powerful opportunity to move beyond this outdated model and reimagine education entirely."

In his paper, Zhao critiques the conventional definition of personalized learning, which he argues is still a one-size-fits-all model in disguise. Instead of simply allowing students to move at their own pace within a fixed curriculum, he proposes a radically different vision of education—one that embraces each student's unique strengths, interests, and learning pathways. "Education should not aim to make all students meet the same expectations. Instead, we should help each learner develop their own greatness," emphasizes Zhao.
Rather than viewing AI as a tool to automate traditional instruction or boost efficiency within existing school structures, Zhao contends that it should be used to dismantle the rigid framework of conventional education entirely. He proposes eliminating the fixed curriculum so that students can pursue knowledge aligned with their individual strengths and aspirations. Age-based classes, he argues, should be replaced with flexible, interest-driven learning groups made possible through AI. He also calls for a redefinition of the teacher's role—from content deliverer to mentor, coach, and facilitator—guiding students in identifying and solving real-world problems. Additionally, he advocates replacing outdated standardized tests with AI-powered, continuous, and competency-based assessments tailored to individual progress.

Zhao also advocates for a shift from memorization-based education to problem-finding and problem-solving. "Students should not just be passive learners of existing knowledge. They should be encouraged to find and solve meaningful problems that create value for others," he explains. AI, he argues, can enhance human creativity and collaboration, allowing students to engage in real-world problem-solving at a much deeper level. The article argues that marginal reforms are no longer adequate in a rapidly evolving world, and urges for a complete reimagining of education—one that is AI-augmented, student-centered, and rooted in real-world problem-solving. "If we simply use AI to improve traditional schools, we are missing the point. This is a pivotal opportunity to redefine education for the future," cautions Zhao.

As AI continues to transform our society, this article presents a timely and compelling vision to move beyond outdated educational paradigms and envision a transformative system—one that genuinely empowers each learner through personalized and meaningful learning experiences.

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Reference
Title of original paper: Artificial Intelligence and Education: End the Grammar of Schooling
Journal: ECNU Review of Education
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