All-Party Parliamentary Group on Artificial Intelligence

Evidence Meeting 2 – Education

Monday, 18 March 2019 | 5:30-7:00 PM - Committee Room 2, House of Lords

Sir Anthony Seldon, Vice Chancellor, University of Buckingham | Author of The Fourth Education Revolution

Biography: Sir Anthony Seldon, Vice-Chancellor of The University of Buckingham since 2015, is one of Britain’s leading contemporary historians, educationalists, commentators and political authors. He was a transformative head for 20 years, first of Brighton College and then Wellington College. He is author or editor of over 35 books on contemporary history, including the inside books on the last four Prime Ministers, was the co-founder and first director of the Institute for Contemporary British History, is co-founder of Action for Happiness, honorary historical adviser to 10 Downing Street, UK Special Representative for Saudi Education, a member of the Government’s First World War Culture Committee, was chair of the Comment Awards, is a director of the Royal Shakespeare Company, the President of IPEN, (International Positive Education Network), Chair of the National Archives Trust, is patron or on the board of several charities, founder of the Via Sacra Western Front Walk, and was executive producer of the film Journey’s End.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

AI can be the best thing for humanity – or the worst. It all begins and ends with education.

As someone who spent 20 years as the head of two of the country’s top academic schools, and the last three years as head of the university which comes top of the government’s teaching excellence framework, I have no pleasure in recording that neither government nor parliament comprehends at all the full impact of AI on education. Not only on the way education will be delivered far better than at present, but on the jobs and skills that we are preparing our young people for.

In my recent book ‘The Fourth Education Revolution - will AI liberate or infantilise humanity,’ I argue AI has the power to transform today’s ‘factory’ education model. There are five key challenges our current education system faces: the inability to defeat entrenched social immobility, students forced to progress at the same speed, teachers overwhelmed in mountains of bureaucracy, lack of personalise learning, and a focus on a narrow set of knowledge and skills. AI will impact on all five levels of
teaching and learning at schools, colleges and universities: selection of material, organisation of time and learning spaces, delivery of the material to optimise and stimulate learning, assessment and feedback to optimise learning, and finally, suitability of each student for progression to the next level of study.

AI can be the solution. AI can help ensure our education system liberates humankind providing them with a truly transformative learning experience. However, there are potential dangers we must address. These include data misuse, manipulation, technological unemployment, and a passive learning mindset. Ultimately, the benefits of AI in education will far outweigh the downsides, and we need to pave the roadmap for how to reap the former while mitigating the latter.

The revolution will not happen without the support of policymakers. Policymakers need to comprehend the scale and speed AI will transform education and steer the national education system in a way that truly prepares our younger generations for their futures.