ISSN 2811-6224

FEBRUARY 2025

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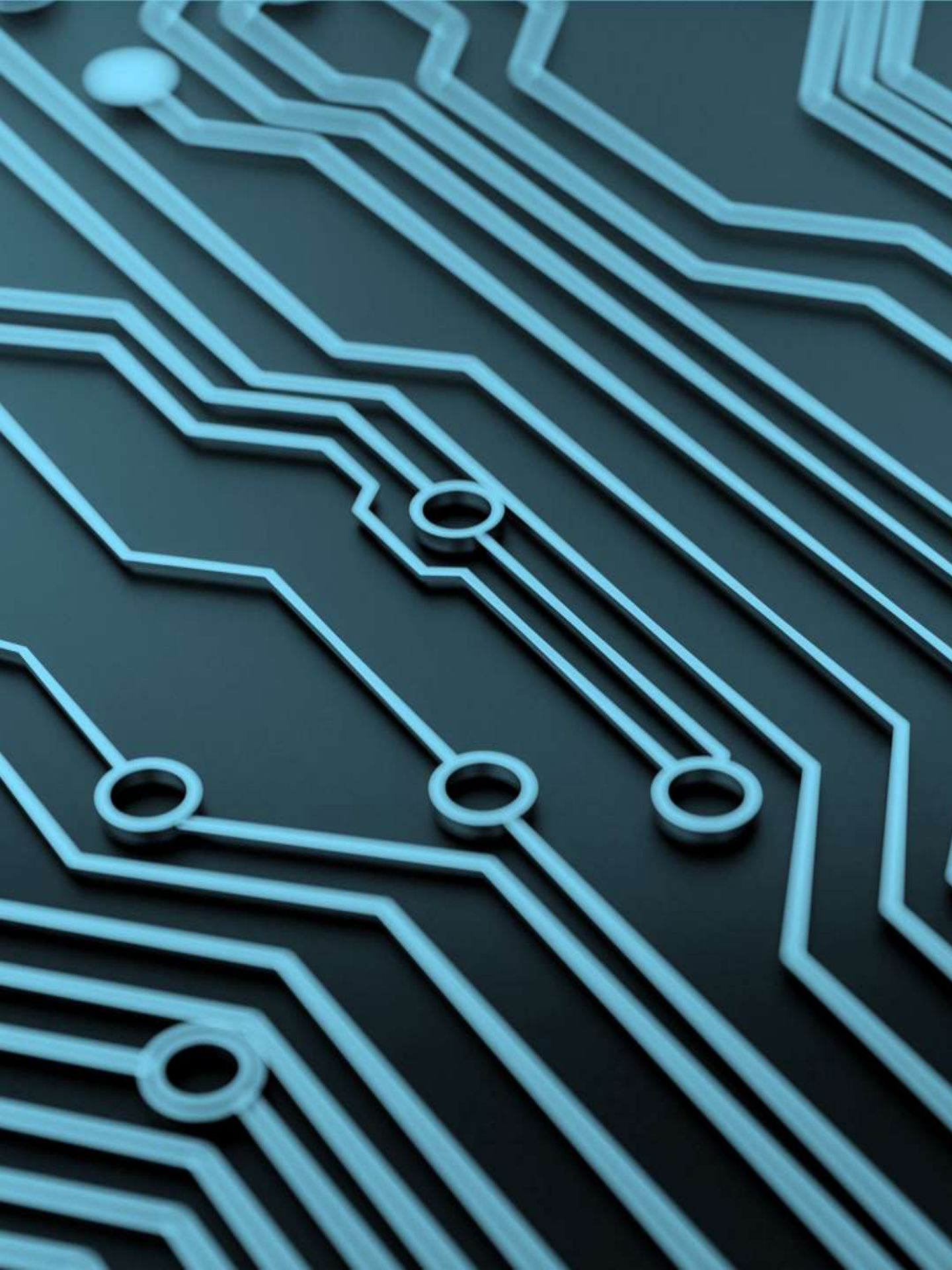

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Editor-in-Chief: Tim Lavery
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Publisher: World Explorers Bureau

Website: www.exploringedtech.ie
Email: info@exploringedtech.ie

ISSN 2811-6224

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EXPLORING EDTECH #10

February 2025

Editorial

Welcome to **Exploring EdTech #10**.

The edtech landscape in Ireland's education system at Primary and Second Level is undergoing a remarkable and rapid transformation. As we navigate through 2025, the convergence of artificial intelligence, digital wellbeing initiatives, and innovative teaching approaches is reshaping how we teach and how our young people learn. This issue of Exploring EdTech Ireland showcases several developments that merit our attention and consideration.

The launch of Ireland's first Digital Wellbeing Awards Programme, as part of an EU-wide rollout, marks a significant milestone in our educational journey. This initiative recognises that digital literacy extends beyond mere technical proficiency – it encompasses the holistic development of students who can thrive in an increasingly digital world while maintaining healthy relationships with technology. St Joseph's Secondary School in Rush has blazed the trail, demonstrating how schools can effectively integrate digital wellbeing into their educational framework.

Equally noteworthy is the nascent development of esports in Irish education. What some might dismiss as mere gaming has evolved into a powerful educational tool that develops strategic thinking, teamwork, and digital literacy. The Ireland Esports Collegiate Series aimed at Third Level and initiatives at institutions like SETU and the piloting of an Secondary School's esports league show how competitive gaming can be harnessed for educational purposes while creating new pathways for student engagement and development.

Dr. Daithí Ó Murchú's continued exploration of AI Singularity and its implications for education challenges us to reconceptualise traditional teacher-student roles. As we approach the latter half of this decade, the integration of AI in education isn't just about adopting new tools – it's about fundamentally reimagining how we teach and learn. Later this month we will be publishing Dr Ó Murchú's thesis in full and should be on every educators reading list this term.

However, amidst this digital transformation, we must remember that technology should enhance, not replace, the human, carefully crafted and perfected elements of education. As educators, our challenge is to embrace these changes while ensuring they serve our fundamental mission: providing the best possible education for our students. The initiatives and developments featured in this issue show that Ireland is not just keeping pace with global educational technology trends – we're helping to shape them.

Let's continue this journey together, sharing experiences and insights as we build an educational system that prepares our students for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow. The opportunities ahead are boundless, and together, we can shape an educational future that's more engaging, equitable, and effective than ever before.

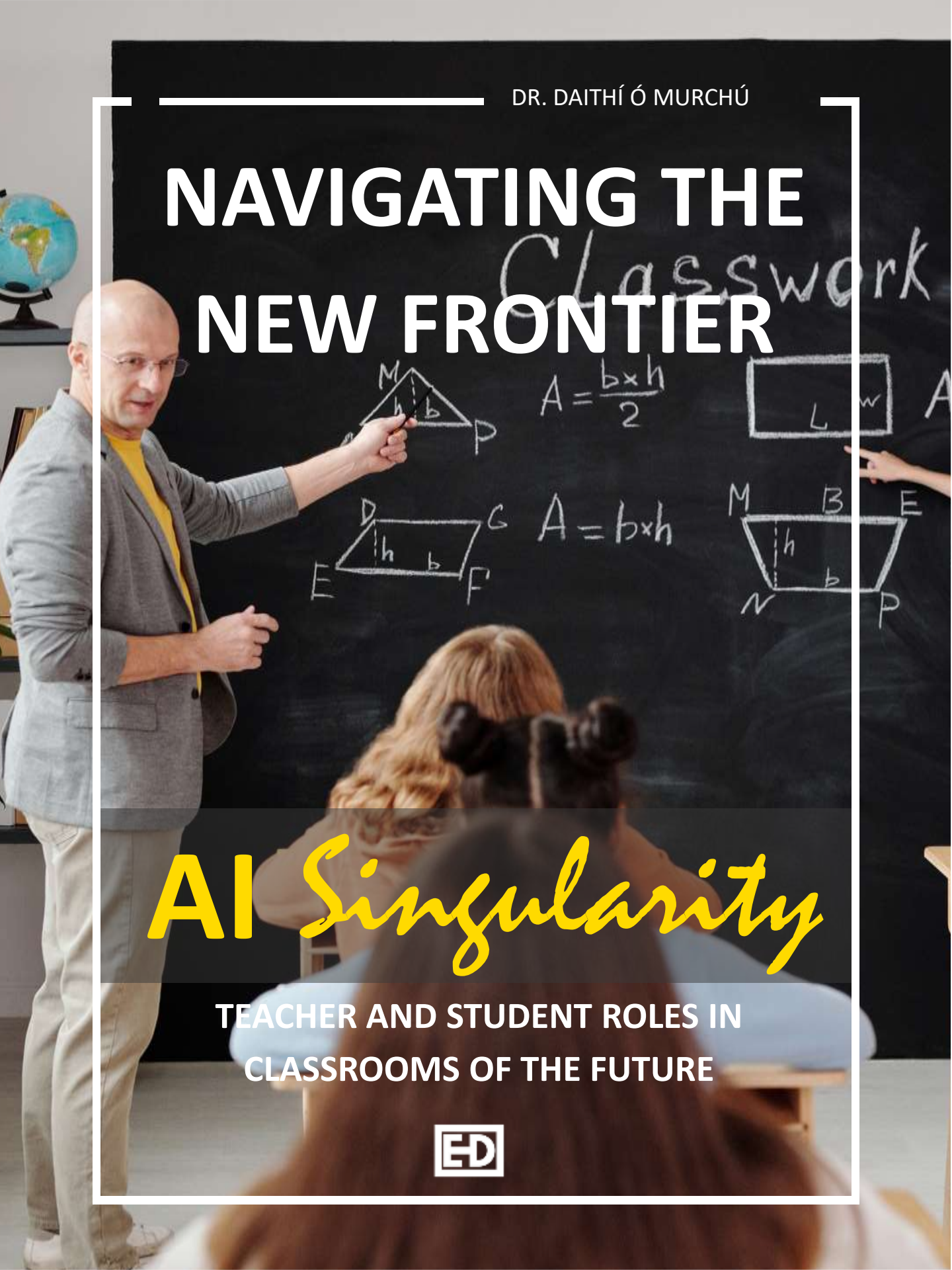
Visit our website to subscribe to our News service, which will keep you updated throughout the year on all things EdTech. By staying connected, we can collectively navigate this exciting technological frontier while ensuring that every innovation serves our core mission: providing the best possible education for our students. Please feel free to contact me with any ideas and suggestions for future issues.

Tim Lavery, Editor-in-Chief, February 2025

tim@exploringedtech.ie

DR. DAITHÍ Ó MURCHÚ

NAVIGATING THE NEW FRONTIER



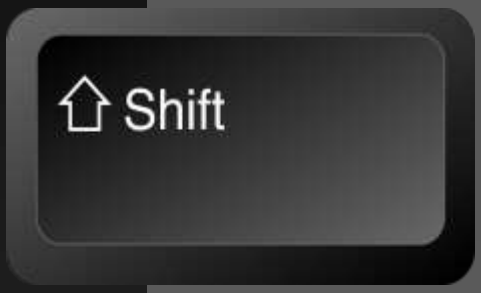
AI Singularity

TEACHER AND STUDENT ROLES IN CLASSROOMS OF THE FUTURE

ED

INTRODUCTION

The advent of AI Singularity heralds a paradigm shift, reshaping teacher and student roles within educational ecosystems. This second contribution to a series of online Blogs on this subject, builds on Ó Murchú's (2005) insights, examining the AI-enhanced classroom's dynamics, where teachers and students co-construct learning in a synergistic human-AI environment. Drawing from emerging studies on constructionism, quantum learning, and cognitive ecosystems, this article delineates actionable frameworks for educators to embrace these roles, underpinned by cross-reality, culturally adaptive, and ethically sound methodologies.



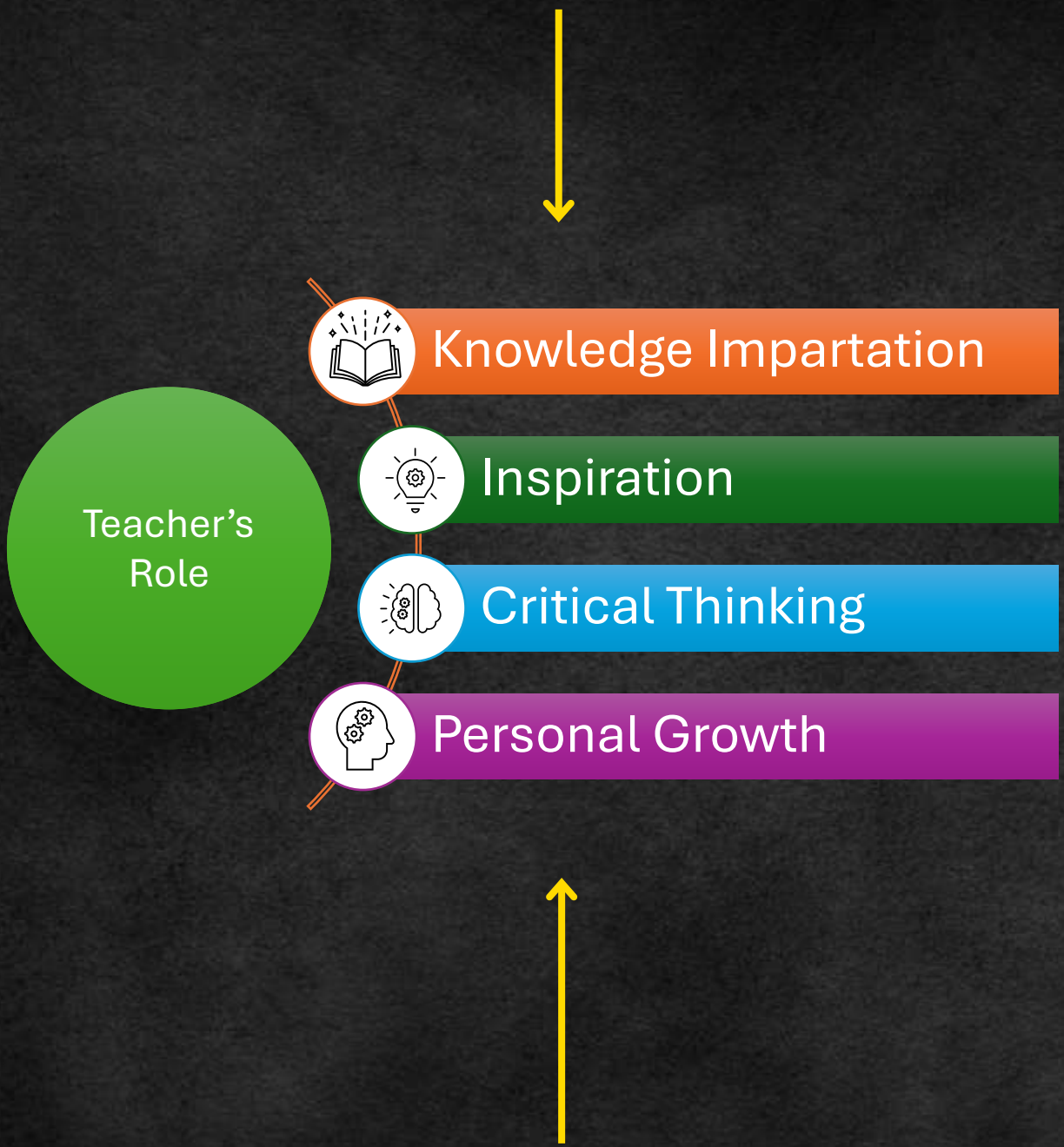
1. Introduction: Framing the Shift

Ó Murchú (2005) posited a radical transformation of teacher-student roles in technology-supported environments. With AI Singularity, this shift accelerates as human and machine intelligences converge (Zohuri & Mossavar-Rahmani, 2024). Teachers transition from knowledge transmitters to facilitators, co-navigating a landscape where AI amplifies student agency, adaptive learning, and knowledge networks (Ahmed & Martinez, 2024).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CONSTRUCTIONISM IN THE AI CLASSROOM

AI-enhanced classrooms call for constructioNism (Anderson & Zhang, 2024), where learning emerges from students' interactions with AI in context-rich environments. This model, rooted in Papert's (1980) constructivist principles, is augmented by AI's capability to model complex concepts in real-time. Practical applications include project-based learning, where AI tools guide students in solving global issues, from climate change to socio-economic challenges.

3. Teachers Roles in AI-Driven Learning Environments



- **3.1 AI Facilitator:** Teachers oversee AI systems to scaffold learning, promote metacognition, and design customised, AI-enhanced pathways (Davidson, 2024), and Personalised Intelligent tutoring 'tools' (PITs) to enable adaptive personalised learning scenarios.

3.1 Expanded: AI Facilitator Role: Daily Applications Examples

Learning Station Management

- **Set up 3-4 classroom stations where students rotate between:**

-> AI writing assistant station for brainstorming/ideas/'essay' drafting
-> Traditional peer review corner
-> AI-powered mathematics/STEM problem-solving station
-> Teacher-led small group instruction where students are empowered to 'coNstruct' their own learning.

Personalised Learning Pathways (PLPs)

- **Use AI learning platforms to:**

-> Create differentiated reading assignments based on student ability
-> Generate custom STEAM problem sets that adapt to student progress
-> Develop personalised vocabulary lists based on student writing samples

Metacognitive Development

- **Guide students to:**

-> Compare their work with AI-generated examples
-> reflect on their problem-solving strategies Vs AI approaches
-> Document their learning progress in digital portfolios
-> Understand the concept of 'Prompting' in AI

- **3.2 Cultural Mediator:** By harnessing culturally adaptive AI tools (Chang & Watson, 2024), teachers contextualise learning for diverse cohorts, fostering inclusive, globally relevant curricula that also address cultural 'bias' issues around AI.

3.2 Expanded: Cultural Mediator Role: Classroom Implementation

Cross-Cultural Projects

- **Implement projects where students**

-> Use AI translation tools to communicate with partner classes globally
->Create culturally-specific digital stories using AI art and multimodal media generators
-> Research and present cultural and en-cultured perspectives using AI-curated resources

Inclusive Content Creation

- **develop materials that:**

-> include diverse names and contexts in word problems
-> Feature multicultural perspectives in reading and multi-literacy materials
-> Offer content in multiple formats and languages using AI translation

Cultural Competency activities

- **Design activities where students:**

-> Use AI tools to explore different cultural celebrations
-> Create virtual (AR/VR/AI-enhanced) cultural museums using AI-enhanced presentations
->Analyse bias in AI-generated content about different cultures

- **3.3 Ethical Gatekeeper:** Teachers address ethical challenges in AI use, ensuring student agency while avoiding bias (Chen, 2024). This role aligns with hybrid ethical frameworks in AI, promoting transparency and data integrity.

3.3 Expanded: Ethical Gatekeeper Role: Practical Applications

Digital Citizenship Lessons

- **Lead discussions about:**

-> Proper citation of AI-generated content
-> Identifying AI-generated Vs. human-created work
-> Humanology and HumanAIology (Ó Murchú, 2023)
-> Responsible use of AI tools in assignments

Ethical Guidelines Implementation

- **Establish classroom protocols for:**

-> When AI tools can and cannot be used
-> How to document AI assistance in assignments
-> Maintaining academic integrity with AI tools

Student Agency Development

- **Create opportunities for students to:**

-> Choose between AI and traditional learning methods
-> Evaluate AI-generate content for accuracy and bias
-> Develop critical and creative thinking skills through AI interaction

Assessment Strategies

Balanced Evaluation Methods

- **Implement a mix of:**
  -> Traditional assessments
  -> AI-assisted project evaluation
  -> Self-reflection on AI tool usage
  -> Peer review incorporating AI feedback

Progress Monitoring

- **Track student growth through:** -> AI-generated progress reports
  -> Student self-assessment logs
  -> Regular check-ins on AI tool effectiveness
  -> Portfolio development with AI integration

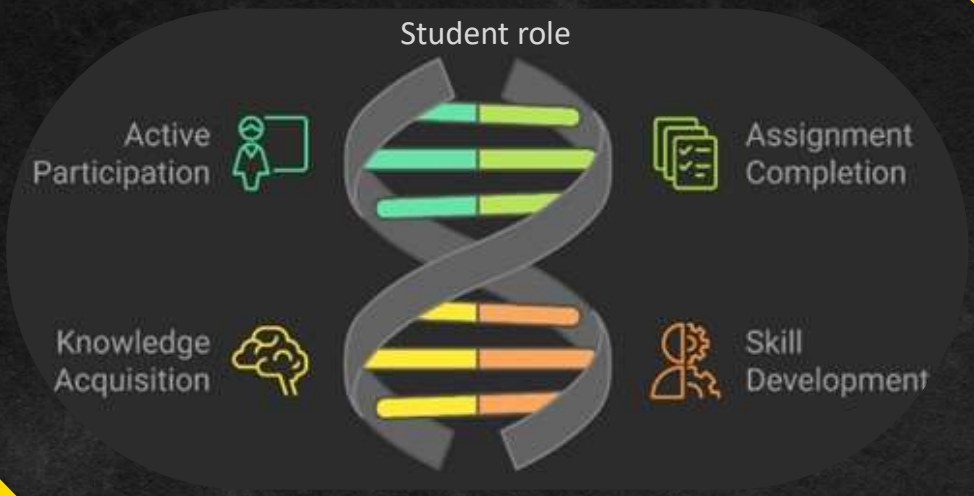
Safety and Privacy Considerations Data Protection Practices

- **Establishes protocols for:**
  -> Secure student data handling in AI systems
  -> Parent communication about AI 'tool' usage
  -> Student privacy protection in online environments
  -> Regular security audits of AI platforms

Responsible AI Usage

- **Create guidelines for:**
  -> Age appropriate AI 'tool' selection
  -> Content filtering and monitoring
  -> Regular assessment of AI tool impact
  -> Emergency response procedures

4. Students Roles in the AI Classroom



- **4.1 Active Knowledge Co-Creators:** Supported by dynamic competency tracking (Yamamoto & Singh, 2024), students engage as contributors in real-time knowledge networks, developing collective intelligence through AI (Li & Thompson, 2024).

4.1 Expanded: Active Knowledge Co-Creators

Daily Activities

Collaborative Knowledge Building

- **Student-Led Research Teams**

-> Groups use AI research tools to investigate topics
-> Students' fact-check AI-generated information
-> Teams compile findings into shared digital knowledge bases
-> Regular presentation, discussion and sharing of discoveries to classmates

Real-Time Knowledge Networks

- **Digital Collaboration Walls**

-> Students post daily discoveries on digital boards
-> AI tools help categorise and connect related concepts
-> Peers comment and build on each other's findings
-> Weekly synthesis of collective learning

Project-Based Learning

- **Community Problem Solving**

->Students identify local issues
-> Use AI tools to research solutions
-> Collaborate with experts via AI platforms
-> Create and share solution proposals

- **4.2 Self-Guided Learners:** In AI classrooms, students leverage quantum assessment frameworks (Martinez, 2024) to reflect on their learning paths, mastering metacognitive skills with AI as a co-regulator (Kumar, 2024).

4.2 Expanded: Self-Guided Learners: *Implementation Strategies*

Personal Learning Dashboards

- **Daily Learning Management**

-> Students track progress through AI analytics
-> Set personal learning goals
-> Monitor skill development
-> Adjust learning strategies based on feedback
-> Suggest and Setup their own PITs

Metacognitive Development

- **Learning Reflection Activities**

-> Daily learning journals with AI prompts
-> Weekly progress self-assessments
->AI-assisted goal settings
-> Peer-to-peer feedback integration

Personalised Learning Paths

- **Custom Learning Plans**

-> Students choose learning resources
-> Design personal project timelines
-> Select preferred learning methods
-> Track mastery of concepts

- **4.3 Cultural and Social Contributors:** Students in cross-reality or multimodal spaces bridge virtual and physical learning environments, blending local and global perspectives (Zhou & Peterson, 2024).

4.3 Expanded: Cultural and Social Contributors: *Practical applications*

Cross-Reality Learning Spaces

- **Hybrid Learning Activities**

-> Virtual field trips with global peers
-> Mixed reality collaborative projects
-> Cultural exchange through AI translation
-> Local-global connection activities

Cultural Bridge Building

- **International Collaboration**

-> Partner projects with global classrooms
-> Cultural perspective sharing
-> Virtual and/or multimodal cultural celebrations
-> Cross-cultural problem solving

Community Engagement

- **Local-Global Connections**

-> Community service projects
-> Global issue awareness campaigns
-> Cultural heritage documentation
-> International student mentoring

Daily Implementation Tools

Technology Integration

- **Digital Learning Tools**

-> AI writing assistants
-> Virtual reality platforms
-> Translation services
-> Collaboration software
-> Progress tracking apps

Assessment Strategies

- **Multi-Modal Evaluation**

-> Digital portfolios
-> Peer assessments
-> AI-assisted feedback
-> Self-reflection tools
-> Project presentation

Communication Platforms

- **Connectivity Tools**

-> Class discussion boards
-> Global collaboration spaces
-> Virtual meeting room
-> Cultural exchange forums
-> Parent communication channels

Support Systems

Student Resources

- **Learning Support**

-> AI tutoring access
-> Digital resource libraries
-> Technical support guides
-> Language assistance tools
-> Study skill resources

Safety and Privacy

- **Digital Citizenship**

-> Online safety protocols
-> Data privacy guidelines
-> Digital footprint awareness
-> Responsible AI usage
-> Ethical collaboration practices

Success Metrics

Progress Tracking

- **Achievement Monitoring**

-> Skill development logs
-> Project completion rates
-> Collaboration quality
-> Cultural competency growth
-> Learning goal achievement

Growth Assessment

- **Development Indicators**

-> Self-regulation skills
-> Cultural awareness
-> Technical proficiency
-> Collaboration abilities
-> Knowledge creation

5. Practical Applications and Pedagogical Implications

AI-Powered Constructionist Activities: By implementing AI-mediated projects that simulate real-world problems (e.g., climate modelling), teachers can cultivate resilience, critical and creative thinking, and empathy.

Quantum Learning Spaces (QLSs): These environments facilitate personalised learning trajectories or journeys within collective learning architectures (Williams & Johnson, 2024). Quantum-based adaptive models empower both high- and low-achieving students and those who are differently-abled to advance at their pace .

Cross-Cultural and Global Competencies: Culturally responsive AI interfaces help students cultivate global awareness, fostering cross-cultural collaboration (Nakamura & Chen, 2024).

Focused Analysis: Key Teacher and Student Roles in AI-Enhanced Learning

AI Facilitator (Teacher Role)

AI Powered Constructionist Activities

Design and Implement Real World Simulations:

-> Climate modelling projects using AI tools
-> Environmental impact analysis
-> Data visualisation and interpretation
-> Problem solving scenarios

Structure Learning Stations:

-> AI writing assistant pods
-> Problem-solving simulation centres
-> Data analysis workstations
-> Collaborative research hubs

Guide Project Development:

-> Real world problem identification
-> AI tool selection and integration
-> Data collection and analysis
-> Solution prototype development

Quantum Learning Spaces (QLSs)

Create Personalised Learning Pathways:

-> Adaptive assessment frameworks
-> Individual progress tracking
-> Flexible learning sequences
-> Custom difficulty scaling

Manage Dynamic Learning Environments:

-> Real-time student grouping
-> Pace-based station rotation
-> Skill-level adaptation
-> Progress-based resource allocation

Monitor and Adjust:

-> Learning trajectory analysis
-> Progress pattern identification
-> Intervention timing optimisation
-> Resource effectiveness evaluation

Cross-Cultural and Global Competencies

Facilitate Global Connection

-> International project coordination
-> Cross-cultural communication channels
-> Virtual collaboration spaces
-> Global expert networking

Integrate Cultural Perspectives

-> Diverse problem-solving approaches
-> Multicultural project themes
-> Global impact consideration
-> Cultural context awareness

Active Knowledge Co-Creators (Student Role)

AI Powered Constructionist Activities

Engage in Collaborative Research

-> AI assisted investigation
-> Data collection and analysis
-> Solution modelling
-> Peer knowledge sharing

Develop Project Solution

-> Problem identification
-> AI tool utilisation
-> Solution prototype
-> Impact assessment

Create Knowledge Resources

-> Digital documentation
-> Research findings compilation
-> Solution proposal development
-> Presentation creation

Quantum Learning Spaces (QLSs)

Participate in Dynamic Groups

-> Skill-based collaboration
-> Peer learning exchanges
-> Cross-level mentoring
-> Group project contribution

Navigate Personal Learning Paths:

-> Progress self-monitoring
-> Pace adjustment
-> Resource selection
-> Goal setting and tracking

Track Learning Progress

-> Competency documentation
-> Achievement recording
-> Skill development monitoring
-> Learning pattern analysis

Cross-Cultural and Global Competencies

Engage in Global Projects:

-> International collaboration
-> Cross-cultural research
-> Global perspective sharing
-> Cultural knowledge exchange

Build Cultural Understanding

-> Diverse perspective exploration
-> Cultural context consideration
-> Global impact awareness
-> Cross-cultural communication

Implementation Support Framework

Technology Integration

- **Essential Tools:**

-> AI research assistants
-> Data analysis platforms
-> Collaboration software
-> Progress tracking systems

Assessment Strategies

- **Multi-Modal Evaluation:**

-> Project-based assessment
-> Skill development tracking
-> Cultural competency measurement
-> Collaborative performance evaluation

Success Metrics

- **Progress Indicators:**

-> Learning objective achievement
-> Cultural competency development
-> Collaboration effectiveness
-> Problem-solving capability

Safety and Privacy

- **Protection Measures:**

-> Data security protocols
-> Privacy guidelines
-> Ethical AI usage
-> Safe collaboration practices

Practical Implementation Guidelines

Daily Integration

-> Regular AI tool utilisation
-> Consistent progress monitoring
-> Ongoing cultural engagement
-> Continuous feedback loops

Resource Management

-> Tool accessibility
-> Resource distribution
-> Support system availability
-> Technical assistance

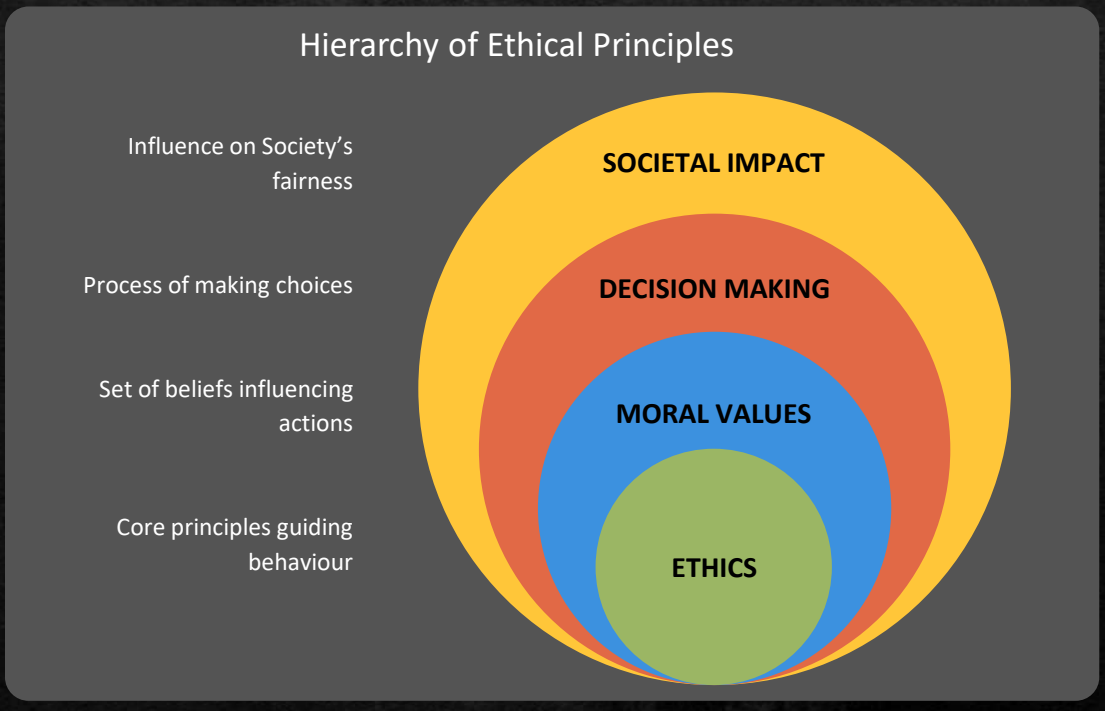
Growth Assessment

-> Skill development tracking
-> Cultural competency growth
-> Learning trajectory analysis
-> Impact evaluation

6. Ethical and Inclusive Considerations

Universal Design in AI Classrooms: Integrating universal design principles into AI-enhanced tools ensures equitable access and participation for all students, regardless of ability (Patel & Johnson, 2024).

Resource Optimisation for Sustainability: To address educational inequities, AI-powered resource management systems allocate learning resources efficiently (Wilson & Garcia, 2024).



Comprehensive Analysis: Ethical and Inclusive Implementation in AI-Enhanced Learning

Universal Design Integration

Teacher Roles

AI Facilitator

- **Design inclusive learning stations:**

->Multi-modal AI interfaces for diverse learning needs
-> Adaptive input/output methods for accessibility
-> Flexible timing and pacing options
-> Alternative assessment pathways

- **Resource optimisation:**

-> AI-powered resource distribution systems
-> Equitable access to digital tools
-> Efficient allocation of learning materials
-> Sustainable technology integration plans

Cultural Mediator

- **Inclusive cultural engagement:**

->Accessible cultural exchange platforms
->Multi-language support systems
->Adaptive cultural learning tools
-> Universal design in cross-cultural activities

Ethical Gatekeeper

- **Equity-focused protocols:**

->Fair AI usage guidelines
-> Inclusive data collection practices
-> Accessible privacy protocols
-> Universal ethical frameworks

Student Roles

Active Knowledge Co-Creators

- **Inclusive collaboration:**

-> Multiple means of contribution
-> Diverse expression options
-> Adaptive collaboration tools
-> Equitable participation structures

Self-Guided Learners

- **Personalised accessibility**

-> Adaptive learning interfaces
-> Flexible progress tracking
-> Multiple representation options
-> Individual resource optimisation

Cultural and Social Contributors

- **Universal cultural engagement**

-> Accessible cultural exchange tools
-> Inclusive global collaboration 14
-> Multiple participation pathways
-> Equitable cultural representation

Resource Optimisation Framework

Technology Distribution

- **Equitable Access**

-> AI-powered resource allocation
-> Device distribution systems
-> Internet access solutions
-> Adaptive technology provision

Learning Resource Management

- **Efficient Distribution**

-> Dynamic content allocation
-> Adaptive resource scaling
-> Need-based distribution
-> Sustainable resource use

Support Systems

- **Comprehensive Assistance**

-> Multi-modal technical support
-> Accessible help systems
-> Language support systems
-> Resource access guidance

Implementation Guidelines

Universal Design Principals

1

Multiple Means of Engagement

-> Diverse learning approaches
-> Flexible participation option
-> Varied interaction methods
-> Inclusive assessment strategies

2

Self-Guided Learners

-> Adaptive learning interfaces
-> Flexible progress tracking
-> Multiple representation options
-> Individual resource optimisation

3

Cultural and Social Contributors

-> Accessible cultural exchange tools
-> Inclusive global collaboration 14
-> Multiple participation pathways
-> Equitable cultural representation

Sustainable Resource Management

1. Efficient Allocation

-> Need-based distribution
-> Resource sharing systems
-> Optimisation algorithms
-> Usage monitoring

2. Environmental Considerations

-> Energy-efficient technology
-> Digital waste reduction
-> Sustainable practices
-> Green technology integration

Equity Measures

1. Access Equity

-> Universal tool access
-> Resource availability
-> Technology support
-> Connection solutions

2. Participation Equity

-> Inclusive engagement
-> Fair contribution opportunities
-> Equal voice in learning
-> Balanced representation

Success Metrics

Inclusion Indicators

- **Track:**

-> Participation rates across demographics
-> Resource access patterns
-> Learning outcome equity
-> Support system effectiveness

Resource Efficiency

- **Monitor:**

-> Resource distribution effectiveness
-> Usage optimisation
-> Access equality
-> Sustainability measures

Impact Assessment

- **Evaluate:**

-> Learning outcome equity
-> Participation balance
-> Resource accessibility
-> Support effectiveness

Continuous Improvement

Regular View

- **Assess:**

-> Implementation effectiveness
-> Resource distribution
-> Access patterns
-> Support needs

Adaptive Response

- **Adjust:**

-> Resource allocation
-> Support systems
-> Access methods
-> Implementation strategies

Community Feedback

- **Gather input from:**

-> Students
-> Teachers
-> Parents
-> Support staff
-> Community members

Recommendations for Sustainable Implementation

1. Regular Accessibility Audits

-> Technology access
-> Resource availability
-> Support effectiveness
-> Usage patterns

2. Resource Optimisation Reviews

-> Distribution efficiency
-> Usage effectiveness
-> Access equity
-> Sustainability measures

3. Community Engagement

-> Stakeholder feedback
-> Needs assessment
-> Implementation adjustments
-> Support refinement

This comprehensive framework ensures that AI-enhanced learning environments are not only effective but also inclusive, equitable, and sustainable. The integration of universal design principles and efficient resource management creates a learning ecosystem that serves all students while maintaining environmental and social responsibility.

7. Conclusion: The Future of Now

This Article reimagines Ó Murchú's vision for the technology-supported classroom through the lens of AI Singularity, proposing a future where teachers and students are co-creators in dynamic, ethically conscious learning spaces. With constructioNism as the underlying pedagogical framework, AI-driven education becomes a collaborative, adaptive, and culturally responsive ecosystem. Future research should further investigate AI's potential to personalise learning, cultivate agency, and promote cross-cultural competencies within ethical frameworks.

Graphics : Thanks to : https://app.napkin.ai/ & https://deepai.org/

Navigating The New Frontier: AI Singularity - Teacher and Student Roles in Classrooms of the Future

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Pioneering Digital Wellbeing

Ireland's First Ever Programme to Recognise and Celebrate Digital Wellbeing in Schools

Digital Wellbeing Award

Pioneering Digital Wellbeing

Ireland's First Ever Programme to Recognise and Celebrate Digital Wellbeing in Schools

> *Ireland has launched its first-ever Digital Wellbeing Awards Programme, aimed at recognising and celebrating digital wellbeing in schools. This initiative is designed to equip students and teachers with the tools to navigate the digital world responsibly. The Programme, which is open to all primary and secondary schools in Ireland, underscores the country's commitment to fostering healthier digital habits.*

Pioneering Digital Wellbeing in Irish Schools

On 29th January 2025, the EU's first Digital Wellbeing Award Programme for schools was launched, with St Joseph's Secondary School in Rush, Co. Dublin, becoming the first to be awarded the accolade. The awards framework has been developed by Digital Schools Awards in conjunction with webwise.ie, with the backing of major tech companies HP and AMD. This unique education-industry partnership aims to provide practical support and resources to help schools build positive attitudes and behaviors towards digital technology.

St Joseph's Secondary School participated in the pilot programme and became the first school to be awarded the Special Recognition Badge. The launch event called on all national and secondary schools in Ireland to join the Digital Wellbeing Award initiative. To achieve the award, schools must demonstrate that they have adopted a whole-school digital wellbeing strategy. This involves building positive attitudes and behaviors, and being able to anticipate, recognise, recover, and learn from online risks.

Anna Doody of the Digital Schools Awards commented, "The Digital Wellbeing Awards framework provides the roadmap, resources, and support to help each, and every school build tailored practices that promote healthy technology use and a positive digital culture. It's so important that schools embrace a digital wellbeing programme that works for their students and teachers, and we are looking forward to a much-expanded level of participation in the upcoming year."

The Special Recognition Badge for Digital Wellbeing requires schools to complete a self-assessment to identify their expertise.

Where gaps in knowledge exist, Digital Schools Awards will provide the necessary guidance to achieve accreditation. The badge is available to all schools that demonstrate a strategic approach to cyber resilience and internet safety.

Recent research by the UCD School of Medicine found that children aged 10 and 11 with a safe and positive understanding of technology and smart devices enjoyed higher levels of contentment compared to their less digitally savvy peers. The Digital Wellbeing Awards will help schools support students with the knowledge and tools to be responsible and confident online.

Speaking at the launch in St Joseph's Secondary School, Principal Daragh Nealon said, "Every school is different but digital wellbeing is universal and should be a core part of the full digital learning experience. I have observed firsthand the curiosity and creativity that flourishes in a safe and supportive digital environment, as showcased through our students' work and achievements. The promotion of wellbeing is at the core of the ethos of St Joseph's, and we are truly honored to be the first school in Ireland to be awarded this Special Recognition Badge for Digital Wellbeing."

Jane McGarrigle, National Coordinator at Webwise.ie, added, "We live in an ever-evolving digital world which offers many opportunities for learners. In order to support learners to thrive online, we need to equip them from a young age with skills and competencies to make sense of this complex digital world. We are delighted to be supporting Digital Schools Awards in launching the Digital Wellbeing Awards."

The Digital Wellbeing Programme represents a significant investment in the future of Ireland's youth. As students learn to harness technology for their benefit while maintaining balance, Ireland continues to lead the way in creating a healthier, more mindful digital culture. This journey will reap huge benefits in the years to come, as children who have experienced digital wellbeing in schools present enhanced digital literacy, healthier digital habits, improved career readiness, and the ability to adapt to technological developments.

To register for the Digital Wellbeing Award Programme, visit awards4SELFIE.eu @awards4selfie

Esports

Ireland's Digital Playground

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Education in Ireland is embracing a new frontier: esports. This digital revolution is not just about playing games; it's about harnessing the power of competitive gaming to enhance learning and development. Let's dive into how esports is making waves in Irish schools and what it means for our students.

Esports, or competitive video gaming, has exploded in popularity worldwide, and Ireland is no exception. With clubs like Belfast Storm, Nativz Esports Club, Munster Rugby Gaming, and Wylde leading the charge, esports is becoming a significant part of our cultural fabric. These clubs are more than just gaming hubs; they're communities where students can develop essential skills and build lasting friendships.

Esports offers a unique blend of fun and education. It's not just about winning games; it's about the journey. Students involved in esports develop strategic thinking, improve their hand-eye coordination, enhance their reaction times, and learn to communicate effectively with their teammates. These skills are invaluable both in and out of the classroom.

Kurt Pittman, Founder and CEO of Nativz Gaming, emphasizes the transformative potential of esports: "Park the image of a child glued to a screen and think about what they’re actually doing—creating strategy to win, developing hand-eye coordination, reaction speed is critical, communication skills with teammates, evaluation of defeat, decision-making under pressure… sound familiar?“

Since 2017, collegiate esports has been gaining momentum in Ireland. The Ireland Esports Collegiate Series, managed by Nativz Gaming since 2022, has become the largest esports competition on the island. With 17 top institutions participating in the 2024/25 academic year, the series is a testament to the growing interest and investment in esports. Students get hands-on experience in production, content creation, and presenting, with games broadcast live on Twitch and YouTube.

"*Our focus in the first year we took over was about giving the existing community a smooth transition from what was Legion Collegiate at the time*." says Pittman. "*We've seen steady growth over the past three years, operating as the Ireland Esports Collegiate Series*.“

Irish educational institutions are recognizing the potential of esports. Queens University Belfast and the South East Technological University (SETU) have launched gaming hubs on their campuses, with SETU even offering student esports scholarships.

Katie Redmond, Sports & Societies Manager at SETU, shares her excitement: "*At South East Technological University (SETU), we are incredibly proud to introduce our esports venue in Waterford—a space that brings gamers, creators, and competitors together at the heart of our university and local community. More than just a gaming space, this venue is a hub for connection, competition, and creativity. Whether you're here to play, compete, or simply be part of something bigger, this is your space—built for the future of esports at SETU and beyond*.“

Redmond also highlights the broader impact of the hub: "*We see the hub as a vehicle to link in with local schools for both gaming and education purposes. While it's important for the student population on campus, it's important to us that we do share this unique resource with the local community*.“

Belfast Metropolitan College has introduced a degree program, and Technological University Dublin offers a Bachelor of Arts in Game Design. Trinity College Dublin's School of Computer Science & Statistics is also actively involved in esports projects.

While Ireland has begun to develop its esports offering in education, across Europe, esports is being integrated into educational systems in innovative ways. The Network of Academic and Scholastic Esports Federations (NASEF) has launched NASEF Europe to foster educational opportunities and community building through esports. This initiative aims to adapt and expand the successful framework established by NASEF globally, ensuring its relevance to the unique cultural and educational contexts across Europe.

In Spain, GGTech runs the University Esports Masters brand, which has been a dominant player in collegiate esports. Their competitions attract competitors from 16 European countries, providing a platform for students to engage in competitive gaming while developing valuable skills.

The British Esports Federation, in collaboration with education publisher Pearson, has developed the world's first esports qualification. This initiative aims to teach students skills such as teamwork, leadership, communication, problem-solving, and strategic thinking through competitive gaming.

The future of esports in Irish education is bright. Plans are underway to establish a Collegiate Advisory Committee to foster further collaboration with university stakeholders and ensure the sustainable growth of collegiate esports. Additionally, the Ireland Esports Schools Series is set to launch in the 2025/26 academic year, starting with a local pilot program before expanding.

“*We’re really excited about the opportunity to connect with schools that want to step into esports. Unlike traditional sports, there aren’t clear pathways so, if we can provide schools a framework to engage the gamers within their community and give them access to competition then we’re filling a big gap. We aim to launch the Ireland Esports Schools Series with a phased rollout across the 2025/26 academic year*," Pittman explains. "*This journey will see us start with a local pilot program before scaling up*.“

Esports is more than just a trend; it's a powerful tool for learning and development. A proactive approach to integrating esports into education will pave the way for a new aspect of learning. As we continue to explore the potential of esports, one thing is clear: its future in education in Ireland is full of possibilities.


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