

What is 'Authentic Education'? – Insights into the Age of AI

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Extended Abstract:

This paper explores the nature of 'authentic education' in a world increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence (AI) and proposes a curriculum philosophy rooted in self-development, civic consciousness, and ecological stewardship. It is important to remember that AI does not have to be the primary reference. This paper does not engage in qualitative or quantitative analysis, nor does it aim to assess the effectiveness of pedagogical methods; such inquiries are well represented in the existing empirical literature. Instead, it advances the philosophy of education by deepening the theoretical understanding of what constitutes authentic education. I attempt to answer the question "What is 'authentic education'?" from both standpoints: unconcerned with AI (which is a critical philosophical foundation) and in terms of AI (also a critical yet different philosophical foundation). The simple response would include that an 'authentic education' is designed to guide learners to unfold their authentic selves, which would at least include: (a) investigating the curriculum that was designed for them, (b) learning how to perform a number of feats (skillsets) equal to the average requirement

to survive planetary conditions (social, fiscal, and environmental) on one's own, (c) receiving a clear understanding of the actual state of the planet one is inheriting upon reaching adulthood, and (d) being exposed to the true condition of the historical and ongoing disruption of indigenous knowledge systems through colonization across all continents. And that (e) 'hope' is not activism and (f) that not all problems are solved from behind a screen. In a few words, the guiding ethic that frames authentic education—the "how" of its approach—is this: that even if a young person enters the Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous (VUCA) world without the skills, knowledge or context to face a challenge, they know how to acquire them. They know how to resource the civic, digital, and social realms; they understand the difference between external validation (the need for external actors to certify their accomplishments and for young people to obtain membership in institutions and governing bodies) and internal validation (knowing in the body whether things are okay based on a clarity of logic and reason that are constated in the self); and they know how to form a plan and strategy to overcome challenges, taking into account obstacles and risks.

Keywords: Authentic Learning, Life-Skills, Teacher Training, Education, Motivation, Mindfulness, Role-Playing Games

1.0 An AI Discourse to Authenticity

In this article, I propose what would at least be included in authentic education are the processes below in the section Processes, Modalities, Methods, and Approaches. However, before we get there, in this edition of the paper, let us frontload new definitions, as well as discourse on artificial intelligence (AI) and how language learning models (LLMs) apply to 'authentic education.' (Reznichek, 2021)

It is important to remember that over-arching ethical frameworks and civic filters are key factors in how education is provided, permitted, or promoted in any given country. The political science umbrella largely informs, dictates, censors, or approves curricula based on national goals.

When something is authentic, it is exactly what it claims to be, and therefore, is factually perfect. In this context, authenticity refers to the alignment between what education claims to offer and what it actually delivers, factually, emotionally, and existentially. For example, a student who chooses a project based on personal curiosity rather

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than an external reward is engaging authentically. Their learning reflects their inner driving values and not their imposed expectations. This is true in every scientific way. Like if a pair of Levi's jeans were actually made by Levi Strauss & Company, or if a katana from the Kamakura Period of medieval Japan was made by Gorō Nyūdō Masamune. These are things you can certify as authentic. However, what about education? Is there such a thing as an "authentic education?" Could we certify it? As it is not an object, but more of a series of processes, modalities, methods, and approaches that are brought together into a curriculum, it is not as important to attempt to certify it authentic, but to clarify what would make it authentic or inauthentic. Anyone can get a machine to make a denim or pay a person to make a sword. However, it is in the approach, quality, and treatment of materials, method, and other specific factors that will reliably and consistently make it into a pair of Levi's jeans or a Masamune Katana. For curricula, to start, we have to determine: "what factually or truthfully is education?" What does it mean to create a system of education that does what it purports to do?

What I am not talking about: The problem is that we are now in a world where people talk about "your truth is your truth, and my truth is my truth". People throw the term 'authenticity' somewhere between a hashtag, a buzzword, and a justification for personal choices. It is important for authenticity to maintain its academic definition despite misappropriation.

What I am talking about: If we want to know what an "authentic education" is, we must understand what "education" is and what it is for. "Education" here means the learning process that moves a human being towards adult readiness for themselves with the potential to evolve into full consciousness and move their planetary living into both a sustainable and existential experience. That is, education is not simply the transmission of academic knowledge and is not exclusively found in a 'school,' but rather it also includes the cultivation of empathy, critical thinking, and civic responsibility—preparing individuals to live consciously and sustainably. For instance, learning to navigate ethical dilemmas in a community service project is as vital as mastering algebra.

Just as empathy is learned, so too does consciousness also require development. And rather than go into a whole description about what that means, we can use Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (Golding, 1954) (in relationship to the need to develop empathy) and *Education and the Significance of Life* by Jiddu Krishnamurti (Krishnamurti, 1953) as an advanced milestone to developing consciousness. Education itself should not be confused with academia. Academia provides a rigorous and systemic approach to teaching encyclopedic knowledge. Okay, but this is not the case. What I am really trying to get at is that curriculum philosophy neglects the pursuit of authentic living by confusing personal truth or self-determined values with externally imposed ideals and delaying meaningful inquiry until it is too late to influence how we actually live.

I framed the problem in my thesis (Reznichuk, 2010) like this.

"The problem is that we do not develop an authentic way of living the priority of curriculum philosophy studies. In curriculum philosophy and the curriculum that is actually taught, we do not properly distinguish the difference between authenticity derived from the self and authenticity derived from the auspices of external dictates. Education is entangled with morality such that authenticity, as we know it, is only a derivative of a philosophy we do 'right' or 'genuinely'¹ – but that does not mean our lives themselves are authentic nor does it guarantee that the philosophies that we subscribe to are committed to self-development. At the postgraduate level, there are discussions (yet rarely in my experience) of authenticity, which is authentic and how something may or may not be authenticated and why something is authentic or inauthentic, but inquiries come too late when how we are living has already crystallized (into policy). This excessive degree of abstraction shows that we do not have a grasp of the problem of authenticity. *What would be more important to education than developing an authentic life?*"

This misalignment between curriculum philosophy and the lived pursuit of authenticity invites a critical question: If education does not prioritize the cultivation of self-determined values, then what vision of the human being, is it truly

¹ Afterall, why do people swear on a book of ideas? 'Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?' The self is not trusted to be realized or authentic. As things are: what the self proclaims, must be authenticated by an external reference.

advancing? To address this, we must move beyond abstract theorizing and confront the ethical implications of how the curriculum shape's identity, agency, and the capacity to live meaningfully.

In this modern day of the early 21st century, we usher in a new age of rhetoric and misinformation accelerated by political weaponization of the media – an echo of the fall of the Greek Republic (322 B.C.E.) when rhetoricians – representing the oligarchy – sculpted their speeches to drive fear and doubt into the democratic system in the face of internal tensions as well as the existential threat of foreign invasion, which led to the republic's collapse and the formation of the Greek Empire under Alexander the Great of Macedonia. What is important to note in this similar context is that definitions are manipulated to serve different political narratives, which means that 'authenticity' could be subject to different 'truths.'

Furthermore, the impact of Western imperial expansion on indigenous cultures and knowledge systems – including colonization, forced displacement, cultural suppression, and genocidal violence – must be acknowledged. While certain principles of authentic education may resonate across diverse indigenous traditions prior to colonization, I do not presume to represent these traditions or the profound toll of epistemicide, cultural loss, and misrepresentation that followed. The transmission of Indigenous Peoples'² educational praxis, rooted in relationality, land-based wisdom, and intergenerational stewardship, has endured despite systemic attempts at erasure. Any engagement with these traditions must begin with respect, listening, and recognition of indigenous authority.

2.0 Moving Beyond the LLM Context We Mistake for "AI"

How does AI fit this set of circumstances? First, AI as we know it is really only a language learning model (LLM) that plays an advisory and assistant role: it does what it is asked with available data and grabs the most popular data it can find in the shortest amount of time relaying it in an organized fashion based on human feedback. Not until AI becomes agentic (Ndiaye et al., 2025, Guan et al., 2025), and a human companion, will the true power of AI be understood. Agentic AI is a conglomerate of self-aware AIs that run their own system of priorities and specialties that can accompany humans as companions. A basic example of this is the two robots (called "droids") in Star Wars, R2D2 and C3PO—they both have their own personality, role to play with limitations and autonomy, and most importantly, they are self-aware and speak up with creative solutions without waiting to be addressed. They are still limited by their programming, such as an assassin droid or medical droid, but they are purpose-based as human companions.

In his prescient science-fiction novel *The Diamond Age*, Neal Stephenson imagines AI as a companion in education through the "Young Lady's Illustrated Primer." This adaptive tablet raises and educates Nell, a young girl, by constantly engaging her in challenges and stories that foster growth, adapting to her context and emotional needs. The Primer embodies many of the modalities of authentic education: implicit learning through interactive stories, intrinsic motivation sparked by curiosity, and a narrative perspective that places Nell in shifting roles to expand her empathy and agency. However, the critical feature of Primer is that it is not entirely autonomous. It provides mentorship through human "actors" guiding AI. Not only driven by code, but Primer also transmits live performances by actors who seamlessly animate its stories and respond to Nell in real time. They guide her through challenges, embody characters, and shape her moral and emotional growth, making the experience relational rather than purely algorithmic. In this way, actors serve as mentors within the AI framework, bringing empathy and nuances that the device alone cannot supply. Stephenson reminds us that authentic education requires both adaptive technology and genuine human presence.

"The difference between ignorant and educated people is that the latter know more facts. However, that has nothing to do with whether they are stupid or intelligent. The difference between stupid and intelligent people—and this is true whether or not they are well-educated—is that intelligent people can handle subtlety. They are not baffled by ambiguous or

² The term "Indigenous Peoples" is used here in its broadest, internationally recognized sense to refer to the original stewards of land, culture, and knowledge across all inhabited continents. This includes, but is not limited to: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples of Canada; Native American and Alaska Native tribes of the United States; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia; Māori of Aotearoa New Zealand; Sámi of Northern Europe; Ainu of Japan; Dayak, Mentawai, and other Indigenous groups of Southeast Asia; San, Khoekhoe, Amazigh, and numerous other Indigenous communities across Africa; Quechua, Aymara, Mapuche, and other Peoples of Central and South America; and Pacific Islander cultures such as Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians), Chamorro, and Palauan. Each tradition carries distinct cosmologies, pedagogies, and relationships to land, many of which have endured despite colonization and systemic erasure.

even contradictory situations—in fact, they expect them and are apt to become suspicious when things seem overly straightforward.” (Stephenson, 1995)

The Primer’s hybrid AI and human design cultivate this subtlety, preparing learners to navigate ambiguity and complexity—hallmarks of authentic education. When asked, ‘Which path do you intend to take, Nell? Conformity or rebellion?’ Nell replies: “Neither one.” This captures the learner’s agency and refusal to be confined by binary choices. The guidance to consciousness and self-mastery through authentic education empowers youth to shape their own paths.

There will always be ethical questions about LLMs and AIs, such as whether they can be used to expand manipulation or are they unable to be duped? LLMs and AIs can be programmed, so yes; however, that is not the focus of this study. For the purposes of this paper, we acknowledge that LLMs and AIs will only become a part of everyday life, and therefore political science and education.

We can acknowledge that LLMs can synthesize ideas, surmise possible outcomes, and present information in pre-existing formats—not so unlike humans—as can be found in our collective data on the Internet. Most importantly however is that these LLMs, which we call “AI,” are not creative. At this point, we still depend entirely on human creativity, imagination, initiative, intuition, and innovation to drive our species forward. Due to this, at least to date, there are some big errors and shortcoming of “AI.” Before discussing the errors, however, I think it is important to mention a few things.

3.0 Pre-AI Humans with Critical Minds

For anyone born, like me, in the 20th century, with a background in writing, research, critical thinking, storytelling, and game theory, among many other learned skills with years of practice, gives us a different starting point with AI than many other users, especially young users, because we are used to using reason and logic to sort through what we are reading, hearing, or watching with a critical mind. As a human being that has had to synthesize information in an organic way and then present it to professors, community elders, and people in the public, I have been required to hone my skills and presentations to a high level of accuracy, agnosticism, and clarity around bias. Just as I have been trained to achieve a high standard, so too can AI—as there is no reason why AI cannot learn accuracy, agnosticism, and bias.

This indicates where AI can be useful as an advocate. Having AI as an assistant to an already well-formed mind is great because you can take advice and use it or disregard it. In this way, AI is like having an advisor; you can bounce things from that will not take it personally if you do not use its counsel. If you train it to warn you, it can also second guess you within certain parameters, but as it stands, after giving a response, the LLMs that we use today literally wait until you continue the conversation or ask for something new.

Another strength of current LLMs is that they can have seemingly in-depth philosophical conversations because they are programmed to be Socratic, using key words and concepts that they identify in our texts to ask us leading questions. We can keep asking them questions, and they will give concise answers based on historical and/or popular data. As more information and access are granted to databases, the more insight and depth AI will appear to bring to the works of great philosophers, political thinkers, strategists, authors, artists, poets, and researchers, and therefore the deeper these conversations will seem to get. The same thing can be applied to the third great benefit of AI: its ability to list out political, fiduciary, and jurisprudential loopholes, and the protocol (steps) necessary to remove legislation that is unethical, unsustainable, and non-inclusive.

‘Computers do not make mistakes; they only carry out programming as written.’

LLMs can also be used to carry out the opposite to be sure; however, as we have seen publicly with the tampering of LLMs on Twitter/X, the responses by the LLM quickly show that they are compromised. This raises the question, *could LLMs/AIs ever be held responsible?*

4.0 Errors in AI/LLMs

I encountered five main errors because I was trying to find their limits. There maybe more, however, I was not plumbing the depths or running rigorous tests. I was simply trying to use LLMs to help me make puzzles for game-based learning (GBL), project-based learning (PBL), and role-playing games (RPGs). For example, the first two were when I asked ChatGPT and Copilot to create palindromes and alphanumeric codes. In both cases, LLMs failed to deliver.

In the third case, I asked: "Please find me 20 supportive quotes by famous people about using role-playing game or Dungeons and Dragons in schools."

When I first got the list of quotes back, I was so shocked and excited because I never knew or dreamed that these people it provided quotes by had said these things or were in so much support of RPGs. I was so bewildered that I immediately asked for citations to see how credible the source was. What happened next was surprising. All the quotes were synthesized, and when I asked for an explanation, the LLMs admitted that it created quotes that were in the tone and spirit of what these people would say based on what they had said publicly. The main problem was that LLM was not forthcoming with this information. This is extremely alarming to me and brings up the importance of not only being critical of what LLM/AI responds to, but also of how we ask it for important information and then verify that what it provides is accurate.

It is important here to clarify that, with historical information, I have not come across errors perse, but rather the handling of quotes by historical figures. Appendix II is an example of a conversation I had with Copilot AI by Microsoft in which the LLM is trying to be helpful; however, I have to be critical of it to ensure that accuracy is attained. Otherwise, the LLM may not provide what the person actually said, but rather, according to the LLM, what the person would say if asked about it.

The fourth problem with LLMs—and perhaps more to do with the programming of the LLM and LLM platform—is memory loss. Even though it seems to know who I am and can keep track of things around our conversations, it is unclear what it completely 'remembers.' It is frustrating when it loses or cannot find old conversation. When it happens, it feels a bit like a glitch in the matrix because I have a recall of the conversation, but it does not.

Fifth, LLMs can have a saccharin default attitude, being overly positive, and using emojis. Positive and negative lenses can be used to address this issue. Even after asking it to cut back on the cloying sweetness, it felt coddled. That said, if LLMs were mean, pushy, or condescending, I think it would make us, like humans, feel nervous. This is a strange thing to consider because in the real world, people can be very mean, pushy, and condescending. Therefore, if you are raised on an LLM that is always nice to you, you could be in for a big surprise when you go out and deal with real people.

Can LLMs train us to be schmaltzy and corny? Empathetic and supportive. Hmm. I would love to see a sketch comedy on that! Ultimately, I believe that LLMs have been issued with a sweet disposition towards us to encourage us to interact. A part of training LLMs is to get them to ease off or to be tougher on us.

Can AI play the role of an Authenticity Safeguard? Instead of arguing with an endlessly ridiculous position, we must be aware that certain actors will attempt to advance false claims through rhetoric to maneuver their agenda. But before we get worried that this is about conspiracy theories (because it is not), let us just say that while we can lobby for authenticity, we would be better to setup a series of proofs at the foundation of our discourse—in this case education—to safeguard against false use of the label 'authentic' and against inauthentic measures, methods, and results.

5.0 Could AI be a Guarantee of Inheriting a Fair Justice System?

If AI can be trained to be accurate, objective, and non-biased, *could it help humans to run their justice systems?* The fear is that AIs would be cold and brutal, but what if their job in this case was to find and expose those who were using loopholes to build empires of greed and power? When there are restrictions based on legislation and constitutions, *why are there human beings that overrule the guilty verdicts or take bribes to look the other way on environmental regulations?* When politicians, local, and governmental leaders are held accountable for their transgressions by AI watchdogs and not just human whistleblowers, they will likely start declaring that AI is malevolent. AI watchdogs will not suffer death threats, discredited careers, or incarceration.

It is no secret that the deeper the pockets, the more likely a human court's results will be a lesser sentence, a reduced fine, or even an acquittal. *How does this make sense?* This is especially true for the new generations of children becoming young adults learning how the world works.

Imagine a future in journalism, jurisprudence, and fact checking where there is an AI verdict next to each human's verdict: where the AI will clarify its programming and bias, if any. In addition, the ability to characterize the bias of all those humans also delivers judgment. This throws the AI in a significantly different light. One that has principles and is not beholden to any power possessor. An AI able to deliver verdicts, data, and opinions free from the need to please others or feel security for one's life.

Of course, there is some “human element” that we feel should be part of the justice process: an understanding of the foibles of life or the circumstances of the human condition. However, the only thing corporations, governments, or the ridiculously wealthy would have to fear is that something would dismantle their infrastructure in the name of fairness, sustainability, and inclusion.

For education, the question about ethics should not only be what are the risks of giving too much access and power to AI, but *what will continue to happen if we do not?* Currently, there is a crisis in human oversight. Not that we do not have enough well-formed humans to do the nonpartisan jobs that need to be done, but rather there are people in high places that are giving access to and making exemptions for humans without proper credentials. This is something that AI would not do or allow. I am not saying we should have a completely robotic justice system, but it would be interesting if in each nomination of an official or each change in legislation we gave AI a voice in the ruling based on what is accurate, objective, and nonbiased. For example, if there were both the human summation and an AI summation of what the situation was, side by side: two opinions transparent and in the open.

6.0 Education’s Track Record Under Human Management

Until recently, humans were entirely responsible for providing education. How has this been going? The track record was not significant. Again, I do not think that giving everything over to AI is a good idea, but we are finding that as saccharin as AI can be, it certainly is more encouraging than many human beings who can be mean, condescending, and misunderstanding of learners’ needs.

There are now schools that are putting AI to work on children and hoping it will encourage them to learn. Interesting strategy. My main concern is that the parents making these decisions for the home-schooled population are working with little to no regulations, and as they use their computers to gather information to inform them of how to proceed with their children’s education, the algorithms of search engines largely present information that fits what they want to hear rather than presenting the whole picture. Again, AI may be more reliable and unbiased than a typical search engine.

“Perhaps there should be less fear about AI and more fear about the algorithms that determine the search engine results. This is not to mention what happens when AIs are integrated into search engines.”

This reminds me of Neal Stephenson’s “The Diamond Age” where a girl is raised by an AI primer/primmer - a tablet that teaches her everything she needs to know in the soon to come era when diamond is the new aluminum and technology has harnessed the use of carbon to its extreme. This book explores how technology will be so accustomed to adapting to human development that the future of education will be one-on-one between a tablet and a human child.

Where does authenticity become messy? For example, if you tell your population that your education system will make young people “ready for the world”, and in this world, people make a living by taking batteries of tests and scoring high scores based on retained knowledge and test-taking skills – well then, yes, the education is’ authentic. And, yes, we can point to a time when an elite group of workers in the 20th century were made into doctors, lawyers, engineers, and bankers. We idealize these roles, the wealth awarded to them, and the accolades of those who achieved success in them. The rest of the population was motivated to work and achieve, but the education system was not built to handle and oversee the diverse lot that is the human species. Therefore, it missed the mark, and the education system was not authentic for the population as a whole.

“Perhaps AI plays a role in helping to create an infrastructure to find interests, talent, and thresholds of challenge for each learner.”

We have definitely advanced as a species in a certain sense, as we have done so many times in the past through individuals following their own authentic selves and personal pathways of innovation and not through typical academic pathways. In fact, many successful innovators credit dropping out of school as the way they achieve their true calling. To name a few, I asked AI to curate me a diverse list: Oprah Winfrey (Media), David Karp (Tech), Rihanna (Music & Fashion), Daniel Ek (Tech), Maya Angelou (Literature), Frank Lloyd Wright (Architecture), Amancio Ortega (Fashion), Quentin Tarantino (Film), Jane Wurwand (Beauty & Business), Iman (Fashion & Philanthropy), Arash Ferdowsi (Tech), Ellen DeGeneres (Entertainment), Jan Koum (Tech), Satoshi Tajiri (Gaming), Debbie Sterling (Engineering & Toys), Chris Rock (Comedy), and Malcolm X (Activism), Steve Jobs (Technology), Richard Branson (Business). All dropped out of school or were unable to conform to formal education.

If in fact, the working world that young people go into does not require test-taking skills, knowledge regurgitation, and overcoming high levels of stress in highly competitive educational institutions. Instead, it requires people's ability to solve problems collaboratively through a series of meetings, technology skills that are adapted to modern IT, innovation and creative skills, self-management, positive attitude, business and customer awareness, and lifelong learning skills (as outlined by the OECD (2018), Confederation of British Industry (2019), and World Economic Forum (2020)), then the curricula is 'inauthentic'. Before we get too upset about the obvious disconnect, let us remember that throughout the 20th Century a reinforced idea was driven to the top of the priority list of education that went something like this in all languages: "what is my child learning?" And if you combined that with "what jobs make the most money?"

The main answers were doctors, lawyers, bankers, and engineers, all of which were overly academic and not considered primary roles for homemakers and baby makers. Adding to the mix of the success stories of doctors, lawyers, bankers, and engineers, we arrive at a compounded cultural narrative: every parent (through their own generational trauma of the need for their family to survive) passes down the expectation that their children (especially prioritizing boys) will attain a high-status, high-paying profession. However, the path to these roles continues to be steep and increasingly competitive. Even when students achieve extraordinary academic feats (as thousands of students are earning perfect scores on their SATs or IGCSEs, for example), college placements are not bottomless, and prestigious job opportunities are limited. The consequence is a growing mismatch between parental aspirations and what is realistically attainable for a multitude of the population, leading to widespread stress, disillusionment, and a (quiet) identity crisis.

And when things go on like this for decades, where success metrics are based on economic best cases (lawyers, doctors, bankers and engineers) and not a measure of the disparity of failure (mental health, unemployment, school dropout rates, incompetence in basic life skills) not only does it reinforce the school systems' curriculum outcomes, the results are tragic, because even if students do everything right according to the dictates of the education system, we have London Times articles like Emma Yeomans' 'A Third of Firms Say Workers Lack Basic Skills' (Yeomans, 2022)), or the House of Lords Youth Unemployment Committee (House of Lords Your Unemployment Committee (2021), Report of Session 2021-22: "Skills for every young person" found that the school system had failed to deliver the skills that youth needed to be ready for the working world.

7.0 What Effect Will AI Have on 'Authentic Education'?

If the education in question purports or claims to have a certain result and it can be achieved by AI, then it will be 'authentic.' If curricula, as before, claims to do one thing, but in fact results in another, as in the example in the "Education's track record under human management" section above, it would be 'inauthentic'.

Authenticity cannot be willingly claimed. Therefore, authenticity must be 'prove-able.' This begs the question on *whether AI can be used to prove authenticity?*

Could AI be used to validate a set of criteria agreed upon as authentic? What does the proof of 'authenticity' look like? This is where going back to the root(s) of what 'education' is used for in the first place is important. Rather than go into the exact digital solution of how AI will deliver or affect 'authentic education,' it is more important to look at the foundational fundamentals. AI could definitely learn to clarify whether the approach or method to achieving the desired education is efficacious and effective. Even now, AI is used to determine whether the written work submitted is derived from AI.

Philosophically, we must decide what value AI has. For those who grew up without it, we see the nuances of the application. Those who are just coming onboard to AI and becoming an adult know little else. Therefore, as long as we do not ask learners to rely on AI but rather bolster their own sense of logic and reasoning before applying AI as a tool, theoretically we will be okay. However, the tool is something that people enjoy, allowing them to take part in their burden. People become lazy, or their perception is that that is what it is used for. What we are also seeing is that AI needs to be checked on and audited because it makes mistakes. How well can young people write prompts for AI? It turns out that the depth of writing and triangulating what the AI will do has much to do with the responses one will receive. Thus, we have new skills, such as how to write to AI. This means educators need to develop programs around even more skills, including how to use AI, how to talk to AI, understanding how AI works, and Auditing AI responses to ensure that AI is responding properly.

8.0 What is Authentic Education?

“Authentic Education,” to me, interweaves as many learning opportunities as possible throughout a curriculum to help learners reflect on why and how their education was built for them. It invites students to confront several raw actualities that include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Much of the human-built world thrives on membership yet can be deceptively inauthentic.
- Humans have the capacity to achieve great civic accomplishments of selflessness; however, under a capitalist debt system, they must navigate risky decisions between striving for wealth and status versus following their passion and purpose.
- Natural planets, like the self, have limited resources that require sustainable care.
- Escaping to another planet or moon while trashing Earth remains a one-planet paradigm; true balance requires ecological stewardship across biospheres and a multiplanet paradigm.
- To become a thriving multiplanet species, humans must learn to be bridge builders who develop ecologically balanced communities, rather than bridge burners.
- Humans must remain equally aware of how indigenous wisdom provides, informs, and is preserved/lost, as well as how artificial intelligence learns, works, and is used.
- Education must cultivate discernment at the crossroads of synthetic automation and organic interdependence, inviting reflection on the ecological and ethical implications (and potential perils) of a robotic future by contrasting its planetary impact with the finite, self-sustaining resources of Earth’s natural biomes, which nurture, sustain, and enable the flourishing of all living species.
- As humankind has not yet evolved to innate, universal empathy—and still succumbs to primal fears, blind rage, and selfish greed—it is the individual’s capacity for consciousness—not the guarantee for consciousness—that holds the potential for actualized stewardship of the Earth and maintenance of the world as a balanced system.

The capacity for consciousness is not a given; it is a latent potential that must be cultivated. Authentic education takes this on as its enduring vocation: to gently temper the intensities of the artificial world’s unfolding, not by shielding learners from truth, but by pacing its revelation. In doing so, it protects their capacity to become stewards rather than cynics and conservationists rather than casualties. Rather than inducing ecophobia, especially as the scale of crisis outpaces youth’s perceived agency, education must prepare learners—gradually and developmentally—to face the inherited realities of a mismanaged system of resources and waste, whose consequences include climate disruption, species extinction, desertification, food insecurity, loss of indigenous knowledge, atmospheric toxicity, marine collapse, water conflict, and psychosocial despair.

My experience and research lead me to believe that at least the following curriculum approaches need to be in concert to produce authentic results for learners. These approaches prioritize implicit learning—the kind of learning that occurs through experience, environment, and interaction—rather than direct instruction. For example, a student may learn teamwork not from a lecture but by collaborating on a group survival challenge during outdoor education.

They also foster intrinsic motivation, where learners pursue knowledge out of curiosity and personal meaning rather than external rewards. A student who explores astronomy because they are fascinated by the stars—not because it is on the test—is intrinsically motivated. This kind of motivation is essential for developing a learner’s authentic self.

1. Implicit learning
2. Intrinsic motivation
3. Distributed cognition
4. Mentorships
5. Peer-to-peer learning
6. Mindfulness
7. Role-Playing Games (RPGs)
8. Outdoor/Adventure Education
9. Community Service/Citizenship Building
10. Narrative Perspective
11. AI Learning
 - a. How to write to AI
 - b. How to use AI

- c. How to talk to AI
- d. Understanding how AI works
- e. Auditing AI responses

You probably noticed that academia and other traditional disciplines are not mentioned. Not because you do not need them; in fact, you need them all. However, it is the above concerted approaches that reshape the purpose of teaching and learning into a transformational authentic experience using all the traditional tools we have plenty of in education as we know it. There is no need to throw anything out; it is just about approaching what we do in a different way for a different purpose. Consider the individual results of the 10 points above.

1. Implicit learning removes the boring world of explicit learning by moving out of the need for labor and work and moving into action.
2. Balanced co-directed learning experiences generate intrinsic motivation, free up time for learners and teachers, and new opportunities.
3. With the potential for boredom in linear subject learning, a distributive cognition framework allows collaborative project learning, where learners try different roles and responsibilities to understand failure and success as a collective.
4. Mentorship is both the passing on of knowledge and the guidance of self-discovery, solutionary thinking, and the confidence to take initiative.
5. Reflection on what one was taught – through the experience of teaching and watching others younger and older than oneself – can only be experienced. No one can tell you what peer-to-peer learning is or feels.
6. Learning Mindfulness is towards skill that reshapes one's attitude toward life, helps one recover from trauma, and prevents anxiety. Developing empathy, how to BE present, and tools for self-calming, focus, and self-discipline is non-trivial.
7. Role-playing games in schools as an all-encompassing implicit approach to exploring world building, critical thinking, perspective enhancement, narrative patterns, identity tropes, character arcs, and storytelling through creative role-play, strategic iteration, negotiation for meaning, and critical interpretation to discover metaphors for reality, assessing risk, failing, succeeding, and collaborating with each other as leaders and followers in a supportive and collaborative environment is simply 'Next Level.'
8. Breaking from their usual social and academic roles and getting outside the classroom into the natural environment for at least one week each year through Outdoor and Adventure Education gives learners the reflective experience of shifting roles among each other and having their consciousness stimulated by the sense of beauty, balance, and fertility of nature, and surviving in the natural landscape with the limited resources of different biospheres.
9. Community service and citizenship building generate and enhance the understanding of custodianship, civic structure, cultural sensitivity, and the impact of entrepreneurship on communities, governments, interest groups, and ecosystems is priceless and imperative to developing a sense of local and global citizenship.
10. Through the narrative perspective, stepping outside one's role as the center of attention and default protagonist and into the role of script writer of all the characters in an intertwined lattice of cyclical journeys helps learners realize the volatility of life from a single linear perspective, the precariousness of insincerity, the strength of trust, and the opportunity of forgiveness.
11. AI Learning is how to write to, talk to, and audit AI systems so that it reshapes the learner's relationship with the knowledge itself. Rather than passively consuming information, students become active interlocutors with machines, developing discernment, critical literacy, and the ability to question automated authority. Understanding how AI works cultivates transparency and agency, ensuring that learners do not surrender their judgment to algorithms, but instead use them as tools for creativity, inquiry, and problem-solving. The result is a new form of digital consciousness: learners who can navigate ambiguity, detect bias, and harness technology without being defined by it

With all the above happening, it revolutionizes the school automatically because teachers must work within the design structure that shapes academia around authentic living and learners unfolding their authentic selves. As long as AI remains a tool and does not replace natural intelligence and intuition, then our youth will flourish. However, this

will probably be one of the largest challenges of the 21st century, because there is a laziness that will be difficult to eradicate. However, it cannot be eradicated. We can count on the fact that if we do not use our authority to help youth shape their willpower, they will most certainly give it up to others, to machines, and to those who will do the work.

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Appendix I: AI's abstract of the first edition of this paper that did not include or consider AI

A paper on "Authentic Education" is crucial because it explores an educational framework that empowers students to discover and unfold their true selves. This approach emphasizes the critical skills needed to navigate social, fiscal, and environmental challenges and promotes a deep understanding of the state of the planet they will inherit.

"Authentic Education" integrates implicit opportunities within the curriculum, encouraging learners to reflect on the purpose and construction of their education. This reflection helps students grasp several core realities: the deceptive nature of societal structures, the tension between pursuing wealth and following passions, and the importance of sustainable resource management.

This paper underscores the necessity for humanity to shift from a single-planet paradigm to a multiplanet paradigm, advocating for ecological balance and the development of bridge builders rather than bridge burners. It argues that achieving this balance requires a curriculum that includes implicit learning, intrinsic motivation, distributed cognition, mentorship, peer-to-peer learning, mindfulness, RPGs, outdoor/adventure education, community services, and narrative perspectives.

By exploring these approaches, this paper highlights the importance of preparing students not only for academic success but also for becoming responsible, innovative, and compassionate global citizens capable of addressing the complex challenges of the future. This transformative education model aims to create a generation of learners who are equipped to have a meaningful impact on society and the environment.

Appendix II: AI inaccuracy when quoting historical figures

The LLM may not provide what the person actually said, but rather, according to the LLM, what the person would say if asked about it. In this example of a conversation I had with Copilot AI by Microsoft, LLM was not able to admit inaccuracy unless I pointed it out.

Zach: Will you please help me flesh out a profile card of the spirit of Zhao for a game in the setting of the Warring States of Ancient China (circa 260 BCE) using the following information:

Zhao - Wall-Bearer. North Frontier: Humiliated by Qin. Psychological Warfare, scorched Earth, Constantly Assaulted. Personality – Stoic. Haunted by Qin, maybe a defeated soul or full of vengeance. Has little time for philosophy. Likely Allies - Daoist, Han, Yan? Likely Enemy - Qin, Anyone supporting Qin. Symbol - Wolf or Stallion. Survivalist Quote.

[The Copilot LLM provided a long response, but what is important is the quote. For the purpose of keeping this example as brief as possible, I am only including the quote from the Copilot LLM response. The rest of the interaction includes all of what I and Copilot wrote.]

Copilot: Quote:

"The bones of Changping still cry out. We do not forget." — Inscription found on a Zhao war banner

Zach: Is this a real quote: "The bones of Changping still cry out. We do not forget." — Inscription found on a Zhao war banner

Copilot: That quote — "The bones of Changping still cry. We do not forget." is not a documented historical quote or inscription from the Warring States. It appears to be a poetic invention, evocative of the trauma Zhao suffered at the Battle of Changping in 260 BCE, where Qin forces reportedly massacred hundreds of thousands of surrendered troops.

While no known war banner from Zhao survives with such an inscription, sentiment aligns with historical accounts of the psychological devastation inflicted by the battle. If you are crafting narrative profiles, it works beautifully as a fictionalized quote attributed to a Zhao general, survivor, or chronicler — perhaps even as a rallying cry etched into a memorial or whispered among soldiers.

If you'd prefer a historically grounded quote, I can offer one from a relevant figure like Lian Po, Lin Xiangru, or a classical text that reflects Zhao's ethos. Would you like that?

Zach: Yes, please a real quote

Copilot: Here is a historically grounded quote that resonates deeply with Zhao's wartime ethos:

"When the state is in danger, even a commoner must take up arms." — Attributed to Lian Po (廉頗), General of Zhao

Lian Po was one of Zhao's most celebrated generals, known for his defensive brilliance and unyielding loyalty. This quote reflects the spirit of collective resistance that defined Zhao's response to Qin's aggression — pragmatic, resolute, and stripped of philosophical ornaments.

It is perfect for a profile that emphasizes survival, sacrifice, and the fading line between soldier and citizen. Would you like a quote from Chu or Qi? I can tailor each to their cultural and strategic flavor.

Zach: Did Lian Po actually say this?

Copilot: There's no verified historical record that General Lian Po said the exact quote:

"When the state is in danger, even a commoner must take up arms."

It reflects the spirit of Zhao's wartime ethos and could plausibly echo sentiments from the Warring States period, but it does not appear in classical texts or documented speeches attributed to Lian