

## **THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN A DIGITALIZED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

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Education, like any other area, has been affected by present-day, or rather future technologies. Visual demonstration equipment is being augmented by digital software, virtual reality and even artificial intelligence, which raises the question if teaching will survive as profession at all. There are numerous examples of technologies being able to successfully perform many of the teacher's functions and making the process of teaching more individualized or student-centered and therefore more efficient. This requires that teachers should not only adjust to the changing environment, but assume new roles and functions in the education process.

If we speak about university education, large amounts of various information on this or other subject are presented to future specialists in their specific field. Technology can substitute teachers in this respect, but the role of the educator is to assess which information is relevant at this particular period of time for a specific area of human activity, which examples should be chosen to achieve the best effect, which material should be added, altered, or removed, how to adjust it to a particular students group and their learning needs, what aspects are to be highlighted, and so on. It has to be the teacher who will determine and regularly review and update the course program.

Another important aspect is students' progress evaluation. At the university level, it is not enough for the student to reproduce the presented material. In engineering design, for instance, it must be seen how the student has arrived to this or other solution, why (s)he chose a particular way of solving a problem.

One more significant aspect of learning is interaction and communication. Technology can imitate communication quite convincingly, but most students need to be motivated, encouraged, reassured, or appreciated by another person. Even in the distance learning the awareness of the teacher's presence is important to most of students, although to various extent. In this respect, a teacher should become a facilitator in the process of learning, form a friendly atmosphere in the classroom, direct and inspire students, demonstrate that (s)he cares of their progress. Software of AI can be embodied in the form of a robot or a hologram, but learners will bear it in mind that the response they get from the system is only an imitation of real communication.

Therefore, technology, regardless of its sophistication, is only a tool, and it is up to the teacher and the students how to apply it to the learners' benefit. The teachers should be prepared and duly trained to use it efficiently, which is the topic for further discussion.

### **References:**

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