

Speaker: Gavin Sherratt

Hi everybody, I'm Gavin and I'm from GoodShip. I've got two T's in my name everybody, so always remember that. Are you Googling me?

So I'm here to talk to you about using AI in the world of education. It's a scary subject. Do we all embrace it or do we all hate it?

AI, what is it? Is it a good thing? Is it a bad thing? We've got to take that decision. Some people see AI as cheating. Some people see AI as accelerating. I'm in the camp that it's an accelerator.

It's a tool. It's not the end output. We've got to think about that a bit more.

It isn't going to go away. It's only going to get more prevalent. It's going to get more controlling of our lives. Every advert that you see on TV now is AI-enabled, AI-powered. But what does it mean to us?

It's like saying there's a smart microchip sitting somewhere building a clone of us, learning about us, doing more and more different things to help us do different things in different ways.

We have to embrace it. We really do.

The UK government's had, I think, about £5 billion invested by big tech in the last couple of weeks. It's only going to get bigger and it's going to affect education even more.

How do we police that? How do we embrace that? How do you, as educators, mark the work?

You hear stories of recruitment agencies having AI-enabled software that is actually reading AI-created CVs, and it's just bouncing between each other.

I'm a true believer that AI is about people, not just the tools.

So what are the rules? What are the rules of engagement? How do we use it?

Obviously, if you're using it, be careful about what you're putting in there. We've had conversations about cyber security and data. We've got to look at the different ways of what we put into it.

I'm going to go through a project that we worked on. We tried something new. We used AI as an enabler in education.

We got 15 students to work with us for a week, acting as if they were a business. We're going to go through their story and some of the different things that we did with them.

That project was called **AI Activator**. It's available for everybody—I'm selling! But it was about activating minds, not activating the AI, because the AI tools keep changing.

We took 15 students from different perspectives and different career goals, and we used AI at the heart of everything we were doing. We used that to enable them. We

used that to empower them because what we didn't want was people getting left behind.

The world that I work in now contains hundreds and thousands of companies in the Liverpool City Region that aren't AI educated. We've got to enable the younger generation and my generation to embrace these tools, because that makes us the future employers. It makes us the future entrepreneurs of this world as well.

We're going to be of an age where there are more micro-entrepreneurs than big businesses, and we've got to get enabled to do that.

When we took the 15 students, we took them from diverse backgrounds—from criminology through to computer science. None of them had actually worked together before.

We brought them into a virtual business. We created a virtual GoodShip.

We spent two days giving them insight into tools and understanding the different things we can do. We based a lot of our work around Google tools.

We gave them little tasks. We did some fun things. We created games.

The key thing about learning is that if we play, we learn more. If we educate, sometimes we switch off. Sometimes, when we're in an environment where we can have our phones, we are scrolling.

We got our cohort building different things, from Snake through to Pac-Man, teaching them that this was available to them just by asking a computer to do something—or by learning how to ask the computer to do different things.

We looked at tools like Notebook LM. Did you know that you could put all your work into Notebook LM and it could create a podcast just about you, with presenters?

We did ask one to do a Scouse accent. It wasn't very good. But that stuff is getting better.

We've got to remember that we are creating content, and that content can go into these machines. Learners are using that as well. We are seeing people writing essays quicker and doing things differently.

We used these tools to empower people.

There's a tool on there called Firebase Studio.

How many of you have heard of vibe coding?

Vibe coding means that you don't need to be a software engineer anymore. You can describe what you want and these tools will build it for you.

The problem with some of these tools is that data security isn't always the best. But you get a concept going.

We brought that into our Activator programme. We had a criminology student creating a piece of software.

There are millions of tools out there.

How many of you use ChatGPT?

How many of you use Google Gemini?

How many of you use Perplexity?

When we were doing our programme, we based it around content writing and research. These tools open up a Pandora's box of different ways of articulating ideas.

How many of you are sick of seeing an em dash? The very long comma that just sits there.

We can train our GPTs and AIs to remove them.

If you use ChatGPT, you don't even need to go into the settings anymore. You can just tell it, "Stop doing that. I don't like it." It remembers because it's building a picture.

We've got to remember that we're creating writing tools. We've got to look at the different ways that they can be used.

Again, we've got ChatGPT and Google Gemini, but we've also got QuillBot, which can paraphrase.

Students are using these tools to work quicker. What we have to do as educators is get them to understand the content that comes out of them.

I think this is where we slow down.

A lot of my work is based on a principle of 40% boring and 60% fun. If we get that 40% boring right by checking and understanding outputs, it'll help us understand much more.

Tom spoke earlier today about literacy and language. This is what it's all about.

To use these tools, we need great literacy. We need to be able to understand how to ask questions and how to do different things.

We don't necessarily need to write because we can talk to them, but we need to use these tools effectively.

I did a very scary thing with Perplexity last week. I asked it to write about me.

The last paragraph said:

Gavin Sherratt is quite famous for wearing red and white stripy T-shirts when he's public speaking.

How did it learn that?

It learned it from all the photographs that appeared on LinkedIn and social media. Nobody told it that.

Perplexity tells you where it gets the information from. Again, we've got to understand that AI can hallucinate.

This is what we brought into our programme. We taught students about AI hallucination. We taught them how to create content.

Me personally? I'm dyslexic. I had to do that. It helps me understand written language more. It helps me correct it.

But I don't just say:

Dear ChatGPT, tidy up my grammar and spelling.

I ask:

Educate me on how I can write these words better first time around.

We've got to encourage proactiveness, not laziness. AI is an enabler. It is a tool.

It's really important for the future, but we've got to understand what comes out of it as well.

I'm actually using another piece of software called Granola right now. All the talks this morning have helped me take notes.

This allows me to write my own content afterwards. Because of my neurodiversity, I'll take those notes and rewrite them so I get the context of the day.

These tools are enablers for different ways of learning.

I left school with zero qualifications.

My PE teacher said:

Sherratt, you'll have mastered nothing.

Mr Vickers, I'm standing in front of a room full of educated people.

There are lots of people like me. It's about how we empower them.

We can use these tools for research and validation.

That's what we did in our programme. We created a virtual business and enabled students to research actual customers for my business.

All of a sudden, I had a dataset of 200 leads.

We gave them something commercially viable in the real world, making them useful employees going forward.

Ten out of fifteen have jobs now. I'm quite proud of that.

One of them who hasn't got a job—I really want to employ him.

These tools are great for summarising. My Granola notes will help me summarise the major points from today very quickly.

These tools are super enablers.

As educators, we've got to use that too.

Do you know that you can take a photograph of handwritten content and it will transcribe it instantly?

Even my scrawly dyslexic writing.

Again, it's an enabler.

I was at a talk recently and somebody said:

We don't need research students anymore. We don't need researchers anymore because we can just do this.

We still need these people.

We still need education.

But we all have the power to access information.

Learners have the power too.

If someone creates a 60-page document, are they going to read it? Maybe not.

But if they put it into Notebook LM, they can create a podcast and listen to it.

They can still be the smartest person in the room.

That's what we did with our groups. We empowered them to do more.

Then there's the big debate:

Creativity.

Is AI a creativity killer or an enabler?

I believe it's an enabler.

Yes, it's taking certain things away, but you can do amazing things using these tools.

We created a TV-ready advert in two days.

Would you say that's a creative process or an AI process?

The idea was sparked by humans. We just used the tools to create what we were trying to do.

I'm a big advocate for people with neurodiversity because I am one.

We think differently.

Sometimes we can't write it down, but we can create something inspiring.

That's what we did with our programme. We inspired learners to do things differently.

The question is: how do we police it? How do we manage it?

For educators, it's about defining your rules of engagement and rules for using these tools.

On our programme we increased critical thinking through student research. We built a story around what they were trying to do.

The biggest outcome was confidence.

Some students would never have stood in front of a room.

By the end of the programme, they were presenting confidently to a room bigger than this one.

Public speaking improved.

Confidence improved.

People stepped forward.

Student Testimonial (quoted by Gavin)

What I've learned in one week of this is probably worth six months of university. It has been more effective because it's much more hands-on.

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We challenged the way we teach and the way we work.

One student, Corbin, struggled to express himself and communicate how he felt.

I kind of mentored him unofficially.

Now he's got an interview with Conwy Council, and I'm really proud of him because he used the things we learned.

That's what we've got to do—empower those who want to learn.

Student Testimonial Video – Isabelle

My experience on the programme has been amazing. I never thought I could have so much fun doing something so far out of my comfort zone.

I've learned so many new skills, obviously one of them being AI, which coming from English is something so different and so new.

I've really increased my confidence with people, especially in a business environment.

I've had so much fun being creative and putting my own spin on everything.

My biggest AI takeaway is that it's helpful in pretty much everything we've done, particularly research.

I would definitely recommend this programme to final-year students. It's been incredibly helpful in navigating what you want to do after university.

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That was AI-enabled again—using these tools to build confidence.

Isabelle points out the creativity aspect. She became creative because of these tools.

I implore you to embrace AI.

We have to.

But we have to do it safely and securely.

Don't put personal details into these systems.

Never put in your bank details or passwords.

I've actually seen someone about to do that.

They said:

I was going to use ChatGPT to tell me if anybody had got my password.

That's what people do.

People also put medical concerns into these tools before they see a doctor.

It used to be:

Did you Google it?

Now it's:

What did ChatGPT tell you before you came in here?

It's a smart person's tool.

I'll leave you with this.

We've got a report from the programme. I'll send it to Open Awards so it can be shared.

That's my LinkedIn profile.

I'd love to have conversations with you all.

Thank you very much.