Artificial Intelligence and the Shaping of Democracy

Didactic Materials

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AI.Dialogue

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Project Number: 2023-1-DE02-KA220-VET-000165375

Method Sheet 'AI.Dialogue'

The method 'AI.Dialogue'[1] is part of the teaching unit "Local, Regional, National, and European – AI Governance at a Glance". The method is designed for use during training activities with teachers/non-formal educators, but it can also be applied in classrooms with students, at VET workshops, and even with a group of co-workers.

About the Method

Inspired by pre-structured group discussions, three different and potentially controversial positions were developed for the purpose of this dialogue (anxious, sceptical, optimistic). An expansion to include an analytical perspective and creative thinking is also possible. If there are more than three groups, the roles can be duplicated, or speakers for each position can alternate by 'tapping in'. Alternatively, additional perspectives may also be developed.

Objectives

The overarching topic of this method is AI Governance. Employing the 'AI.Dialogue' with a group fosters a bottom-up approach to AI self-governance in the individual context. Participants should discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using generative AI (GenAI) in school, non-formal education, their workplace, as well as their private life in general. They will develop creative ideas for how its use can be governed appropriately and effectively in the individual setting. Using the 'AI.Dialogue' method, complex topics can be examined and discussed from different perspectives in a future-oriented manner. Participants thus experience constructive participation in discourse.

The skills required for this, such as obtaining information, communicating with each other, working together, making independent judgments and presenting one's concerns appropriately, are of particular importance.

[1] This method is retrieved and adapted from: Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle Multimedia-Diensteanbieter e.V. & Google Germany GmbH (Ed.), (2019). *Machine Learning. Intelligente Maschinen im Projekt » Medien in die Schule « – Materialien für den Unterricht* –, 1st edition. Published under the Creative Commons License BY-SA 4.0: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/

Instructions

1. Preparations

The roles are assigned: there is a group of the anxious, a group of the sceptical, and a group of the optimists. To prepare for the group discussion, each group collects and analyses the arguments and positions of their role. They research information about GenAI and gather arguments for and against its use in their specific context (e.g. a school class, VET workshops, non-formal educational settings). One person assumes the role of moderator, and another person becomes the recording clerk for the duration of the debate. The moderator and the recording clerk prepare their roles together and develop an outline for the structure of the debate.

2. Debate

The groups present their opening statements and position (approximately 2 minutes per team), which serves as the basis for further discussion. The groups then present further statements and arguments in discussion to contribute to their perspectives. The moderator guides the discussion, in which arguments and counterarguments are exchanged through speech and counter-speech. The moderator's task is to ensure a balanced speaking time for each position. Likewise, the recording clerk will note down the most important points from all discussants. The recommended time for the debate is 15-25 minutes, but it may vary depending on the setting.

3. Deriving recommendations and poster creation

Following the discussion, a shared vision is developed, taking into account the different perspectives. In their groups, participants design a poster that reflects their vision for the responsible use of GenAI. The minutes created by the recording clerk will be available to all groups. The aim is to create a personalised approach to AI governance that is as close as possible to the group's specific needs, engaging with AI from a current perspective. It may also help to identify open questions and problems that can be the subject of further discussions.

4. Reflection

Each group presents its vision of the future. This can be done through short presentations or role-plays. In a concluding reflection session, participants share their thoughts on the debate, the role of each group, and the use of GenAI in their specific setting. This allows them to step back from their roles and reflect on and expand their opinions.

The Anxious Users

Characteristics:

- Risk-sensitive, threat-focused
- Quickly orients to worst-case scenarios
- Gives extra weight to signals of danger
- Tends to prioritise protection and precaution over potential benefits

The anxious users signal alertness. This primarily refers to negative feelings, such as fears, doubts, and frustrations about the topic. As the discussants for this position, you can express whatever you feel about the topic. Put yourself in the shoes of people who approach the topic of artificial intelligence with an anxious perspective and view technological progress with great reservations.

Arguments could include data protection concerns, job losses in education, social isolation, and the potential reliance on technology in education. You're also concerned with the issue of biases in AI applications. Could algorithms trained on discriminatory data negatively impact students' academic performance and future prospects?

This group often argues, for example, that AI could completely "replace" humans in certain professions, leaving many people unemployed. Could AI pose a threat to us, or is this fear exaggerated? For you, it is a clear case: AI is a major threat. You fear that AI could become smart enough to make humans seem about as smart as insects. You envision horror scenarios like algorithms taking over the world and political decision-making.

But these scenarios aren't just a popular motif in science fiction films. In some countries, surveillance and the takeover of certain areas by machines are already becoming a reality. One example is social scoring systems in China. The dangers these and similar new technologies pose for the future, especially regarding data protection and privacy, are already becoming more and more apparent.

The Sceptic Users

Characteristics:

- Inquiry-driven
- Actively looks for uncertainties, possible harms, and opportunities
- Seeks out conflicting information
- Willing to revise their views when new evidence emerges

This position is about sceptical and critical consideration – that is, all the arguments for and against generative AI in the classroom. You're not afraid of it but want to be convinced whether there's any technical added value or not.

Arguments could include data protection concerns and the potential dependence on technology in education. However, you also see benefits such as personalised learning, improved teacher support, and more efficient educational processes. It's important to you that AI applications are used responsibly and ethically.

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The sceptics consider the exaggerated fear of AI unnecessary. They are less optimistic about technological progress. The emergence of killer robots is just as absurd to them as the overpopulation of Mars. There are many examples in your favour in which artificial intelligence has mutated into artificial stupidity, and the general performance of AI is clearly overestimated

You are convinced that it will always be humans who program the algorithms and ultimately give the machines their intelligence. It will be particularly important not only to involve scientific disciplines in the development process, but also to consider the moral and legal responsibilities surrounding algorithm ethics.

The Optimistic Users

Characteristics

- Opportunity-focused, benefit-oriented
- Attends more to potential gains and solutions
- Assumes problems can be managed
- Tends to give greater weight to positive experiences and success stories

This group has a positive attitude towards the use of GenAI applications in the school environment. The discussants stand for optimism, for creativity, and for new ideas. Members of this group are allowed to formulate anything that leads to new ideas and approaches, regardless of how crazy or unrealistic the ideas are.

Arguments could include improving personalised learning plans, automating administrative tasks for teachers, and promoting creative writing and thinking skills through generative text generators. **Special note**: Critical remarks are dismissed by discussants from this group.

Many (intelligent) digital applications make our lives much easier. Be it the suggested film or music recommendations on our personalized Netflix or Spotify homepages, the Amazon AR (augmented reality) View with which furniture or other products can be virtually placed in one's own home for testing, the navigation function of Google Maps which determines the shortest and easiest route based on millions of data points, or software that can be used to verify the authenticity of a text. These examples represent many other areas and applications outside of school education. And they show one thing: intelligent applications are already an integral part of our lives, even if we don't always realise it. Often, we have simply become accustomed to the convenience that this technological progress brings, but it is important to implement these technologies in school already.

We are still at the very beginning of exploring new technologies that will support us as humans. You are certain that humanity can reach the next level with intelligent machines and algorithms. You see change as an opportunity for new visions. The question "What do we as humans want to do ourselves in the future, and what will machines do?" is particularly central to your position.

Moderation

Characteristics

- Neutral, organising, and moderating thinking
- Overview of opinions and content

The AI.Dialogue is a type of role-playing in which participants take on different positions. Therefore, it is important to integrate the exercise into a larger narrative and prepare the group for the context of the conversation.

The moderator plays a crucial role in the introduction. In addition to providing sober explanations, starting the discussion and getting the participants in the mood are particularly important.

Assuming this role involves taking on the so-called meta-level, looking at the entire process from a higher perspective, so to speak, and thus gaining an overall view. The moderator's tasks include, for example, summarising the results, posing questions to the discussants, and ensuring equal speaking time.

Tips for moderation:

- Prepare at least one question per position.
- Take short notes during the discussion so that you can create new questions based on what has been said by the discussants.
- If you ask a question, address one or two discussants directly rather than posing it to all at once.
- Do not take sides for either position and remain neutral.
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Recording Clerk

Characteristics

- Neutral, organising, and active listening
- Overview of opinions and content

The recording clerk prepares the role along with the moderator. Together, both roles can structure the discussion beforehand and prepare different topics and questions to ensure a productive exchange between the different positions. Depending on the group of participants, two people may assume this role, as taking minutes during an ongoing discussion can be stressful.

During the discussion, the recording clerk will take notes of the main arguments made by each discussant as well as moments of agreement or disagreement. Instructors can provide a template for the minutes (e.g. a table with specific columns for each position), which may help the recorder to structure the minutes. Later, the minutes can also serve as a handout for all group members.

Tips for Adaptation

The method 'AI.Dialogue' can be adapted to various educational settings. However, instructors must prepare the method and materials above according to their specific setting and group of learners. To deploy this method in an educational setting, participants need some prior knowledge of AI as the overarching topic and must be able to formulate an opinion. It thus may be most productive at the end of a seminar, teaching unit, workshop, etc.

Potential modifications:

- Add or remove roles to cater for different perspectives and the needs of your group of learners.
- Prepare role cards for each group with attitudes, potential arguments, links and other resources (extra: leave some space for notes!).
- Record the discussion and let an AI tool summarise the discussion. Later, learners can compare the minutes and posters with the AI-generated results.
- Variation A: If someone from a group wants to add an argument to their position, they can either whisper it to their discussant or tap in and become the discussant themselves – this is up to you!
- Variation B: Once the groups have prepared their position, each discussant is on their own. The other group members become neutral and function as journalists and will write a news article about the discussion. Be creative and add some context. The role of the reporting clerk is redundant in this variation.
- You can remove the moderator and reporting clerk. Make sure you implement another way to capture the different arguments and positions.

More materials, learning videos, and webinars can be found on the project website "AI.D – Artificial Intelligence and the Shaping of Democracy."

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Project No: KA220-VET-000165375

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