

# Overview of Keynote presentation “Preserving the participatory: Digital empowerment in an age of AI”

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## TESS 2023 - Overview of Keynote presentation “Preserving the participatory: Digital empowerment in an age of AI” by Dr. Bonnie Stewart

by Jeysruthee Jeyapalan, Co-op Student in the Teaching & Learning Centre

A captivating examination of the changing face of digital education in the age of artificial intelligence (AI) was provided by Dr. Bonnie Stewart in her keynote speech at eCampusOntario's Technology and Education Seminar and Showcase (TESS). Stewart's talk, "Preserving the participatory: Digital empowerment in an age of AI," explored the importance of maintaining interactive learning environments in the face of ever-increasing automated outputs and stressed the crucial role that educators play as catalysts for meaningful engagement in digitally enhanced learning settings.

Stewart emphasized ways to foster creativity, critical thinking, and teamwork in learning environments throughout her presentation. She correctly pointed out that AI has the ability to support teachers, but she also issued a warning against the widespread belief that technology would determine everything and against enclosing AI in educational settings.



**Dr. Bonnie Stewart**  
Associate Professor, Online  
Pedagogy & Workplace  
Learning, Faculty of Education,  
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Stewart's discussion focused mostly on advocating for participatory pedagogy as a crucial instrument for preserving participatory learning, which is at the center of the educational revolution in the digital age. She urged stakeholders, legislators, and educators to give top priority to digital participation that helps create a knowledge commons and abundance. Stewart's techniques attempted to protect human agency and inquiry in the modern learning process.

The lecture also highlighted how important it is for teachers to create a learning environment where students actively create knowledge instead of just absorbing data produced by AI-

driven systems. Through the promotion of participatory pedagogy, Stewart challenged the prevailing narrative of passive consumption in an AI-dominated world by outlining an ideal scenario that enabled students to meaningfully contribute to the learning process.

In the face of technological breakthroughs, Stewart's message struck a chord as a potent call to action, imploring the educational community to adopt tactics that maintain the core of human-centered learning experiences. Her observations highlighted the necessity of a well-rounded strategy that upholds the principles of human agency, critical thinking, and collaboration in education while utilizing AI to its utmost potential.

Dr. Stewart's keynote resonated deeply with me as a student navigating the complexities of learning in a technology-driven era. It shed light on how important it is for us to take charge of our educational path in the face of AI's growing influence. Her insights highlighted the dichotomy of utilizing technology as a tool for genuine learning versus succumbing to the temptation of shortcuts and misuse. Stewart's plea for teachers to support students' learning autonomy gave me the confidence to take responsibility for my education. It inspired a desire to make a significant contribution and created a renewed sense of responsibility for crafting our knowledge.

Not only did this keynote reiterate the importance of students in influencing the ever-changing field of education, but effectively sparked discussions and reflections among participants, cultivating a collective dedication to uphold participatory learning as a fundamental pillar of educational progress in our digital era.

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