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## We must shield education from the growing miasma of nonsense that has come to afflict the world

Anurag Behar | 4 min read | 04 Feb 2026, 03:14 pm IST



Education and the vast systems created for it are the primary organized societal mechanism for developing children's capacity to deal with the world and shape it. (istockphoto)

### SUMMARY

The very foundation of education is under threat—and with it the ability of students to think critically. As AI-driven slop, techno-faith and utter nonsense pervade public life, we must do our utmost to safeguard education or forever live in regret.

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'word of the year' for 2025 by some publications. Its sound evokes what it means—low-quality, high-volume digital content generated by artificial intelligence (AI). The word once meant 'wet food waste or mud,' but now in its new avatar, it fills an urgent void and helps us label what we are inundated by.

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Across the world, there is also a deluge of utter nonsense that makes the poison around us more lethal. Often in the form of slop, but in too many other forms to list comprehensively here. For example, the speeches of some self-proclaimed gurus, politicians and businesspeople, media articles and shows that masquerade as research, and unsolicited directions from self-anointed leaders of neighbourhoods. Various outlets have been spewing this stuff at us.

I wrote about the philosopher Harry Frankfurt's book *On Bullshit* and its core concept a few months ago. This newspaper, out of politeness, preferred to call that core concept 'talking nonsense,' although it is one of the two words in the name of the book and does not fully capture what it conveys. 'Utter nonsense' is also inadequate, but since it is closer, that is what I will use.

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Some slop is utter nonsense, but not all of it. Quite a bit of it does not meet Frankfurt's precise criterion: of something that "has no relationship to the truth."

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Frankfurt, the utter nonsense spewer is not concerned with getting it right or wrong, but with getting away with it.

'Technoholics' and 'techno-zombie' ideas are another set of forces that are generating miasma in our world today. 'Technoholics' are fanatically devoted to the idea that technology is the solution to all problems and the only real path to progress.


'Techno-zombie' ideas are those that have been repeatedly proven to be wrong and often harmful but are brought back to life again and again. For example, in education the idea that 'technology can teach.' Not everyone in technology is a technoholic and not every tech idea is a zombie idea; nevertheless, there are too many of these.

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Among the current crop of technoholics is the vanguard of the artificial intelligence (AI) world. Their faith seems complete that AI can solve all problems for humanity, and some appear to believe that it will in fact be the resolver and redeemer of the human condition. Certainly, there are many sane voices in the world of AI, but too many are too far gone. Either because of true faith in AI or the glittering sight of hundreds of billions of dollars.

How poisonous and aggravating the miasma of our world is becomes evident when people and institutions that have been cheerleaders or complicit start abandoning ship.

*The Economist*, a London-based publication with a record of calling people's views 'Luddite' at the slightest provocation, published a piece titled 'Ed tech is profitable. It is also mostly useless'—an unequivocal condemnation of tech in education. To quote, "The prevalence of tech in schools owes less to rigorous evidence than aggressive marketing" and "long-term trends raise the possibility that the rise of in-class devices is responsible for an alarming decline in performance in reading and other subjects." It is good that this venerable journal has recognized the hype around ed-tech.

Another of a growing number of canaries in the coalmine of jobs was the recent pronouncement of the CEO of a large energy company about a coming "jobs debacle" because of AI at the World  Forum at Davos. Many in the world of business now accept that AI will destroy hundreds

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education have realized that education is actually under AI attack at its very foundation. Those who are immersed in the field of education have seen first-hand how students' capacity to think is being stunted and demolished by AI. They are clear that AI-driven apps are like all tech in education—mostly useless in the real world.


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We have not even scratched the surface of the deep and wide effects of slop, utter nonsense and tech on politics, our social fabric, human relationships and individuals. This miasma infiltrates almost every aspect of human society and the hearts and minds of people.

In our modern world, education and the vast systems created for it are the primary organized societal mechanism for developing our children's capacity to deal with the world and shape it. We must protect education from corrosion by this miasmatic poison—because it must play a central role in countering this global chaos. And for that, education must develop our children's ability to think critically and deeply, act empathetically and live honestly.

If that sounds very hard, it is. But still, that is our best bet.

*The author is CEO of Azim Premji Foundation.*

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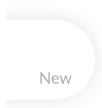
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# Climate change is costing the economy—whether climate-deniers admit it or not


Mark Gongloff | 5 min read | 06 Feb 2026, 01:00 PM IST



Extreme spells of winter weather can still happen in an atmosphere made more chaotic by rising heat. **(AFP)**

## SUMMARY

Cold snaps may delight climate-change deniers, but they don't come cheap. From billion-dollar winter storms to a \$20 trillion global cleanup bill, extreme weather—hot or cold—is draining economies fast. Snowballs may melt away but the costs remain.

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I be able to hold this snowball otherwise? Check and mate.

Unfortunately, extreme spells of winter weather can still happen in an atmosphere made more chaotic by rising heat. The fact that a record-smashing summer heat wave is happening in Australia at the same time that a brutal winter cold is punishing the US illustrates the point. And all these weather extremes endanger people and make them poorer, costs that will keep mounting the more we waste time pretending the problem doesn't exist or hoping half-measures will suffice.

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It's no coincidence that, as temperatures have risen in this century, so has the damage from

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