THE STRAITS TIMES
EDUCATION FORUM 2026

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH **SMU** SINGAPORE MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY

ST Education Forum 2026

What: The Straits Times Education Forum 2026, held in partnership with Singapore Management University.

Topic: AI In Higher Education: Hype Or Hope?

When: Wednesday, April 1, 2.30pm to 4.30pm.

Registration is currently full. To be put on the waitlist, go to str.sg/STeduforum26_waitlist

In the last instalment of a three-part series on AI in higher education, The Straits Times speaks to edtech veteran Raghav Gupta about how AI should be used as a tool to maximise and customise learning, rather than a shortcut for assignments.

AI a personal tutor, not shortcut to a grade: OpenAI's Asia education head

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Mr Raghav Gupta, OpenAI's head of education for India and Asia-Pacific, believes that learning takes "friction", which means spending time with the materials. Thus, he says, the ChatGPT creator is taking steps – through institutional partnerships and new software features – to ensure students engage with AI in a way that preserves the "friction" needed for true learning. PHOTO: COURTESY OF RAGHAV GUPTA

With global data showing that university students are now the primary users of ChatGPT – OpenAI's flagship chatbot product – the rise of such tools has sparked intense debate about their role in learning.

Is generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) fostering genuine understanding or merely providing an easy way out?

This issue has been in the spotlight in Singapore since June 2025, when students at autonomous universities were caught using Gen AI tools to produce entire essay assignments.

Mr Raghav Gupta, head of education for India and Asia-Pacific at OpenAI, says that the onus is on students to treat the tool as a personal tutor rather than a shortcut to a grade.

"Learning takes friction, it takes effort. That means spending time with the materials," he said.

He highlights that OpenAI is now taking proactive steps – through institutional partnerships and new software features – to ensure students engage with AI in a way that preserves the "friction" necessary for true learning.

Now, his mission is to ensure that AI serves as a tool for academic opportunity for all rather than a privilege reserved for a few, by working closely with governments and universities, including a recent partnership with the National University of Singapore.

Q There is a concern that AI is being used by students as a tool for cheating. How can schools ensure that AI is not used in the wrong way?

A AI is here, and it's available to all of us. AI skills are going to be extremely important for students' success in the workplace.

I liken it to using a calculator. If you're a primary school pupil learning multiplication, but you're given a calculator, you will eventually not end up learning multiplication or division because you've got a shortcut tool.

If ChatGPT or other AI tools are used similarly as a shortcut or a cheating tool, it will not lead to learning.

So, it is extremely important to provide guidance to students about how to use AI, such that it advances and does not dilute learning.

We work with institutions to provide training so that students use AI for the right cases. The idea behind our recent partnership with NUS School of Computing is manyfold and a great example of this.

NUS computing students will be introduced to OpenAI tools like ChatGPT Edu as part of their learning experience.

It is a new ChatGPT version designed for tertiary institutions to provide AI capabilities to students, faculty, researchers and campus operations.

They will also get to use Codex, an AI-assisted software development tool, powered by the latest GPT5.4 frontier model, which assists developers with software development tasks such as generating code and identifying bugs.

Not only are we bringing them our latest technology and agent-like capabilities, but we are also providing training and enablement so that students use them correctly and are workplace-ready.

So providing that guidance is extremely important, which is where the adults in the room – leaders and educators in the institutions – have a big role to play as well.

Q With students having such easy access to these tools, does the way we assess students need to change?

A That needs to happen for sure.

The core skills needed in the workplace are shifting. There is now a much bigger emphasis on critical thinking, creativity and judgment.

When AI gives you three options, your value lies in the judgment to pick the right one.

Assessments are rapidly changing. Some universities are allowing AI as part of the process, while others return to traditional pen-and-paper for specific subjects.

To help, we recently announced the "Learning Outcomes Measurement Suite" in partnership with Stanford University and Estonia's University of Tartu.

It looks at how educators can measure actual learning, given the context that AI is now a part of the education process.

Q How is OpenAI navigating the introduction of AI in pre-school versus higher education?

A When we work with pre-schools, the focus is primarily on teachers and staff. Teachers are incorporating AI into a lot of their work when it comes to education.

We recently announced a partnership with EtonHouse in Singapore where staff use ChatGPT Enterprise to streamline administrative work.

We are very conscious that introducing AI too early is not always appropriate for students.

ChatGPT is not meant for children under 13, and we encourage children between the ages of 13 and 18 to obtain parental consent before using it.

However, once you reach high school and university, the evidence shows AI can be a powerful learning assistant. Our single largest use case globally is learning, with over 900 million weekly users.

For college students, AI helps personalise education. OpenAI has introduced three features within ChatGPT for this purpose.

To ensure it remains a learning tool rather than a shortcut, we launched "Study Mode" in 2025, which acts as a Socratic tutor – it doesn't just give you the answer, it guides you towards it.

That same year, we also launched QuizGPT, a flashcard-based quiz feature that transforms learning into an interactive experience.

Most recently on March 10, we announced how we're making learning 70 core maths and science concepts in ChatGPT even more interactive with new dynamic visual explanations.

If you were to say to ChatGPT, "I want to understand the Pythagoras theorem", for example, it'll not just give you text, but also a visual explanation, which you can play around with.

Q What impact have OpenAI's university collaborations had on the learning ecosystem so far?

A While many of these partnerships are still in their early stages, we are already seeing three areas of impact.

First, for students, ChatGPT is evolving into a personal tutor that understands their specific subjects and learning styles because it has memory and context. It empowers them to do things previously out of reach.

For instance, a liberal arts student can now use AI as a coding assistant to build a mobile app.

Second, it transforms the faculty experience. Professors are using AI to reduce administrative and prep time, allowing them to spend more energy on direct student mentorship. It also acts as a research assistant, helping them draft grant applications and research papers more efficiently.

Finally, these collaborations are critical for preparing students for a future where AI is an integral part of the workplace.

Q Are students maximising the full potential of AI, or are they just scratching the surface of what this technology can do?

A Our models are advancing very rapidly, moving through versions like GPT5 and beyond.

There are power users who are able to keep up and are getting a lot of benefit out of what the technology can do. But the average user utilises only a fraction of that power.

We call this a "capability overhang".

Singapore, however, has a much smaller capability gap than other countries, given the national focus on AI and the EdTech Masterplan (the Education Ministry's blueprint on how schools can better use technology to enhance teaching and learning).

Singaporean students are fairly well-positioned to keep pace with what the technology can actually do.

Q How has AI changed your own perspective on education?

A My son just graduated in computer science and we're having conversations at home about how his field is being redefined in the age of AI.

My daughter is in Year 3 of economics and she did this super exciting internship in the winter where she helped two companies in India adopt AI in their work processes.

I was more excited about her internship than she probably was, but we have a lot of conversations about AI in education, in work and at home as well.

I often say I wish I were a student today. The learning is supercharged. My own learning has accelerated tenfold since joining OpenAI because I have these tools as assistants.

For a young person today, the ability to launch a start-up or master a new field like robotics, which is revitalising my original field of mechanical engineering, is incredible.

The possibilities are just beginning.

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About Mr Raghav Gupta

Based in New Delhi, Mr Gupta joined OpenAI as its head of education for India and Asia-Pacific in 2025.

In the region, he had previously spent eight years at Coursera, an online course provider, where he served as its managing director and built the business from the ground up.

Earlier, he launched and scaled BlaBlaCar, a ride-sharing service, in India. Before that, he worked as a management consultant at Booz & Company and KSA Technopak.

Mr Gupta graduated from Pune University in India with a Bachelor of Technology in mechanical engineering, before obtaining a post-graduate diploma from the National Institute of Fashion Technology in New Delhi.

He also holds a Master of Business Administration from graduate business school INSEAD in France.

With over 25 years of experience, Mr Gupta is widely recognised as a business builder and tech leader, having grown high-impact companies across the education, travel and consumer sectors.

At OpenAI, he is leading efforts to strengthen AI's role in education across India and Asia-Pacific, working to expand access for students and teachers, foster institutional partnerships and drive meaningful improvements in learning outcomes through the responsible use of AI.