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TECHNOLOGY

Robot teachers 'will replace humans in the next 10 years'

By John von Radowitz

Inspirational teachers of the future will be intelligent machines rather than humans, the influential head of one of Britain's most famous public schools predicts.

Within 10 years a technological revolution will sweep aside old notions of education and change the world for ever, according to Sir Anthony Seldon, vice-chancellor of the University of Buckingham and former head of Wellington College, Berkshire.

Teachers will lose their traditional role and effectively become little more than classroom assistants, he says. They will remain on hand to set

up equipment, help children when necessary and maintain discipline. But the job of instilling knowledge in young minds will be done wholly by artificially intelligent (AI) computers.

Sir Anthony, a historian and political commentator who has written biographies of former prime ministers David Cameron, Tony Blair, John Major and Gordon Brown, said: "It certainly will change human life as we know it. It will open up the possibility of an Eton or Wellington education for all.

"Everyone can have the very best teacher and it's completely personalised: the software you're working with will be with you throughout your education journey. It can move at the speed of the learner. This is beyond anything that we've seen in the industrial revolution or since with any other new technology.

"These are machines that adapt to individuals. They will listen to the voices of the learners, read their faces and study them in the way gifted teachers study their students.



Pepper, a humanoid robot launched in 2014, is able to 'read' emotions and is already used in hospitals and schools in Europe and the Far East. AP/GETTY

"We're looking at screens which are listening to the voice of the student and reading the face of the student. Reading and comprehending."

Sir Anthony outlined his vision in a talk at the British Science Festival in Brighton last week. He expected

the National Union of Teachers to be "very alarmed" by the prospect, a feeling he shared. "The technology has already beginning to arrive," he added. "It is already beginning to transform schools. I'm expecting this to happen in the next 10 years."

ii Asked if he was suggesting that machines would

replace the inspirational role of teachers, Sir Anthony said: "I'm desperately sad about this but I'm afraid I am. The machines will be extraordinarily inspirational."