

The challenge of AI for higher education institutes

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The establishment of AI labs, simulation labs are imperative for contemporary quality education dissemination

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It has become imperative for higher education institutes to become future-ready with optimal employment of AI and its many manifestations.

The higher education landscape in India is under constant flux. The challenges on the home front are multiplied by stiff competition presented by competition from overseas institutions of higher learning. Meanwhile, higher education institutions have a love-hate relationship with AI. The apprehensions of AI replacing human jobs and taking control over human resources present it as a monstrosity; but overt and covert use of AI is a reality that cannot be denied.

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The requirements, expectations and aspirations of the stakeholders, i.e., students and society, are changing at lightning speed. As the world becomes technology driven, the ease of access to information has facilitated informed stakeholders who are goal oriented in their choices of institutions, career and courses. Therefore, HEIs wishing to flourish in the future need to bring about visible change in their academics and administration to remain relevant.

The advancement from Education 4.0 to Education 5.0 will have to include AI at every step, be it student learning, academic integrity, research or institutional administration. The role of AI in student learning can be gauged from the viral popularity of “cobots” and “teacherbots”, assisted learning, personalised learning, machine-based learning, etc., which cater to individualistic needs of the learner. These AI tools have potential to assist the student in honing their skills sans spatio-temporal limitations.

Get future-ready

It thus becomes imperative for HEIs to become future ready with optimal employment of AI and its many manifestations. The limitation of AI to generate original ideas is where humans score over it. Its core strength lies in its accuracy and agility in data processing. This strength can be harnessed by faculty and researchers to process complex and copious data to aid in building and processing of hypotheses.

Such institutional readiness requires work on ensuring speed, accuracy and transparency in the governance of HEI. AI tools can build a seamless administrative system across counselling, admission, curriculum development, examination, result declaration and subsequent relationship of student with the institution.

The input provided to students has to be in sync with output, i.e., the skill expectancy of the job market. AI is “the necessary evil” which needs to be incorporated in the curricula.

HEI’s also need to factor in infrastructural revamping and adequate equipment availability in their budgeting and syllabi to give students a first-hand experience of what they are to face when they step in to the ‘real world’. The establishment of AI labs, simulation labs, etc., are imperative for contemporary quality education dissemination.

Concerns over ethical use of AI has been a point of debate. The strengthening of mental faculty of students should not fall prey to tools like Chat GPT and the like. Students should be trained to be morally responsible and not compromise their competence by engaging in academic dishonesty.

HEIs which aim to continue to survive and become game-changers need to become AI-friendly and master it to their advantage before AI masters them. HEIs, especially universities, can take a leaf or two out of their history books and turn these challenges into their strengths. An AI image on internet which succinctly sums up the role of AI in fostering and nurturing education, reads thus, “Teaching with AI is about harnessing the future to inspire the present”.

The writer is Vice Chancellor, University of Lucknow. Views are personal