

Harnessing Generative AI in Higher Education: Opportunities, Challenges, and Ethical Imperatives

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Abstract: Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) is poised to transform higher education, particularly in complex and diverse contexts such as India. This article critically examines the potential of generative AI to address longstanding challenges, including the digital divide, the need for scalable personalized learning, and the evolving role of educators. It explores how AI tools can enhance student engagement, support teacher empowerment, and enable inclusive learning, especially in under-resourced settings. The paper also interrogates key ethical concerns, such as academic integrity, data privacy, algorithmic bias, and equity, while analysing current government initiatives aimed at responsible AI adoption. Drawing on global comparisons and field-based perspectives, the article presents a balanced analysis of both the opportunities and limitations of AI in Indian higher education. It concludes by offering practical recommendations for policy, pedagogy, and future research to foster a more equitable, AI-enabled academic ecosystem.

Keywords: Generative AI, Higher Education, AI in Classrooms, Teacher Empowerment, Educational Equity, AI Ethics, AI-Ready Workforce

INTRODUCTION

The World Economic Forum highlights the transformative role of AI in Education 4.0, emphasizing that AI should complement rather than replace human teaching (World Economic Forum, 2023). AI holds the potential to automate administrative tasks, refine assessments, and personalize learning experiences, enabling educators to dedicate more time to engaging with students. It can also play a pivotal role in bridging digital literacy gaps and fostering critical skills essential for the future workforce (Samiksha, 2023). However, the successful integration of AI into education requires careful attention to equity, economic viability, stakeholder collaboration, and teaching about AI to ensure responsible and inclusive adoption that avoids disparities and maximizes benefits.

This study examines the role of generative AI in higher education through the perspectives of various stakeholders. It addresses key questions, including the need for generative AI to tackle the digital divide, its potential to enhance learning and teaching efficiency, its effective application areas, and the tangible benefits it offers to students and educators. The study also explores ethical considerations such as academic integrity and data privacy, challenges in integrating generative AI, and strategies to overcome them. It also evaluates government policies supporting responsible AI adoption, identifies the skills teachers require to effectively use generative AI in pedagogy, and investigates how AI can promote equitable access to quality education for students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

Defining Generative AI

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to a subset of AI models capable of creating new content, such as text, images, audio, code, or video, by learning patterns from existing data. Tools like ChatGPT, DALL·E, and Bard are examples of generative AI. This differs from predictive AI, which focuses on identifying patterns and making forecasts based on input data, such as predicting student dropout risk or recommending resources. Generative AI not only analyses but also produces novel outputs, making it especially influential in content creation, automated feedback, and interactive learning experiences in education.

The study addresses the following five key questions at a global level:

1. How can generative AI enhance student learning experiences and improve teaching efficiency across diverse educational contexts?
2. What specific areas of education can benefit most from generative AI, and what measurable advantages does it offer to both learners and educators?
3. What are the primary ethical considerations of integrating generative AI into education, particularly regarding academic integrity, data privacy, and equitable access?
4. What challenges are anticipated in the global implementation of generative AI in education, and what strategies can mitigate these obstacles?
5. What essential skills and competencies do educators need to effectively incorporate generative AI into teaching practices while fostering inclusivity and innovation?

RESEARCH APPROACH

This article adopts a qualitative, exploratory approach to examine the integration of generative AI in Indian higher education. The analysis is grounded in a synthesis of secondary data sources, including: Peer-reviewed academic literature on AI in education (2023-2025); National policy documents such as the National Education Policy (NEP, 2020), the Digital India Initiative, and the Digital Personal Data Protection Act (2023); Reports and frameworks from government agencies (e.g., MHRD, INDIAai.gov.in, NMICPS); Case studies of Indian EdTech platforms such as Byju's, upGrad, and Vedantu; Expert commentary, media articles, and practitioner insights from platforms such as LinkedIn and Times of India.

While this study does not incorporate primary data (e.g., surveys or interviews), it offers a comprehensive synthesis of current discourse, implementation strategies, and emerging concerns. Future work may expand this inquiry by incorporating empirical data from educators, students, and policymakers to validate the trends and hypotheses discussed herein.

OVERVIEW OF AI AND ITS GROWING ROLE IN EDUCATION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has rapidly advanced, transforming various facets of our lives and extending its influence into education. By processing vast amounts of data, recognizing patterns, and learning from experience, AI holds immense potential to revolutionize teaching and learning methodologies. Recent developments in AI have led to the rise of intelligent tutoring systems, personalized learning platforms, and automated grading tools (Alasadi & Baiz, 2023). These innovations enhance student engagement, improve learning outcomes, and contribute to making education more accessible and equitable. The convergence of the metaverse and generative AI (GAI) marks a significant evolution, with the global GAI market projected to reach \$428.9 million by 2032, growing at a compound annual rate of 31.5% (Mittal et al., 2024). This synergy is particularly impactful in education, where GAI's capabilities, such as personalized learning and fostering creative expression, can be amplified by integrating augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), creating immersive and dynamic educational experiences. The potential for immersive learning is further highlighted by the synergy between the metaverse and generative AI (Figure 1). This convergence allows for the creation of dynamic and personalized educational experiences, offering new avenues for student engagement and creative expression through virtual and augmented reality environments.

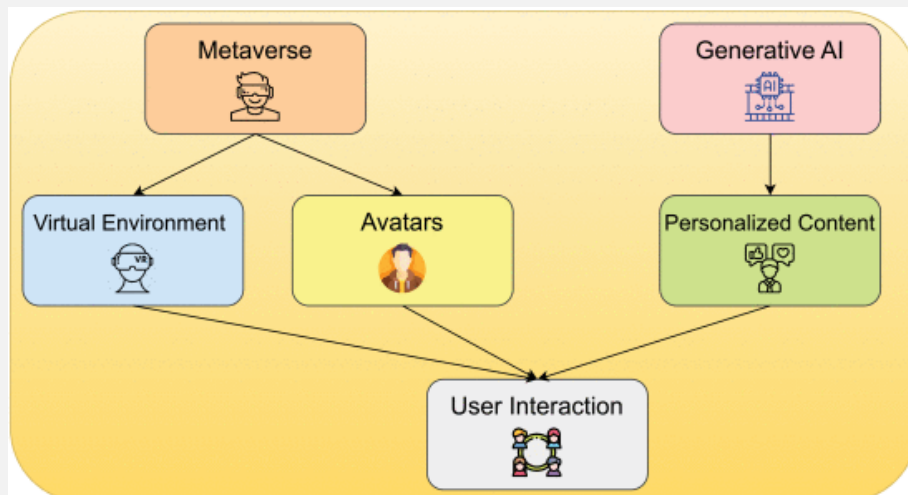


Figure 1. Metaverse and generative AI create immersive educational experiences.

Generative AI is a specialized form of AI that produces new content by concluding previously existing material. This learning process, therefore, culminates in forming a statistical model. Some research groups that should be credited for making Generative AI very popular due to their outstanding research and products include OpenAI, Hugging Face, Alphabet (Google), Microsoft, Synthesis AI, and Cohere. GPT, DALL-E, Bard, Midjourney, Stable Diffusion, diffusion models (a class of generative models that create images by gradually refining noise into structured data), and Synthesia are some of the products that have made a breakthrough in this technology. OpenAI's ChatGPT exceeded one million users five days after its launch, which is the highest ever recorded.

Generative AI, that focuses on creating new content, holds immense potential to transform Higher education (Gaurav, 2023). By leveraging this technology, personalized learning can be significantly enhanced, tailoring educational content to individual students' needs, strengths, and weaknesses, thereby ensuring a more effective and engaging learning experience. Intelligent tutoring systems, powered by AI, can provide personalized guidance, answer questions, and offer feedback, encouraging deeper understanding and problem-solving skills (INDIAai, 2024). AI can automate the creation of educational materials such as worksheets, quizzes, and lesson plans, saving teachers valuable time and effort. In language learning, generative AI can create immersive environments where students can practice speaking, listening, reading, and writing in a more authentic and interactive context. AI can help teachers in real-time feedback and assessment to monitor students' progress more effectively, identify areas where individuals are struggling, and make data-driven decisions about their instruction. AI-powered tools can overcome language barriers by translating languages, create multilingual learning materials, and facilitate communication in the classroom, creating a more inclusive learning environment for students with diverse linguistic backgrounds. AI enhances critical-thinking and problem-solving skills among students (Qawqzeh, 2024). For example, AI-generated answers can be used as a basis for classroom discussions, encouraging students to evaluate their correctness and reasoning. Students can also learn by analysing the problem-solving logic employed by AI. It also enhances accessibility by providing AI-powered tools that assist students with disabilities in tasks like reading, writing, and understanding complex concepts. Moreover, AI-driven tools can support teachers by streamlining administrative tasks, providing data-driven understandings into student performance, and offering personalized professional development opportunities, all of which contribute to a more efficient and impactful education system. The applications of generative AI are widespread within the education sector, as illustrated by Figure 2. These tools cover a vast landscape, ranging

from text and image creation to video synthesis and code generation, providing support for diverse aspects of learning, teaching, and assessment.

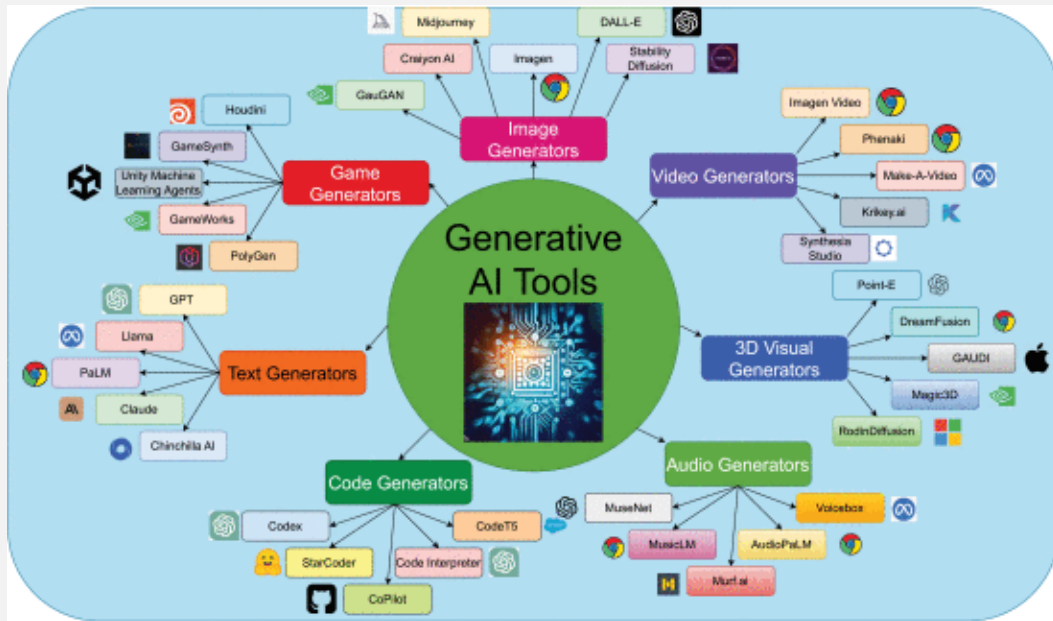


Figure 2. Generative AI tools support diverse educational applications.

Generative AI encompasses a wide range of tools, each offering unique applications across educational contexts. To help educators and policymakers better understand the landscape, [Table 1](#) summarizes some of the most prominent generative AI tools currently in use and their practical applications in learning environments. For instance, ChatGPT and Google Bard are widely used for real-time academic support, tutoring, and content generation, while tools like DALL-E and Midjourney are increasingly integrated into art and design curricula to foster creativity. Platforms such as Synthesia enable teachers to create multilingual video content, supporting diverse learners, while Khanmigo, piloted by Khan Academy, offers AI-assisted instruction aligned with school curricula. Understanding these tools and their capabilities is essential for making informed decisions about AI integration in educational settings.

Table 1. Overview of Popular Generative AI Tools and Their Practical Applications in Educational Settings.

Tool	Type	Educational Application
ChatGPT	Text generation (OpenAI)	Personalized tutoring, content explanation, Q&A, academic writing support
DALL-E	Image generation (OpenAI)	Visual aids for concept explanation, student projects, creative design tasks
Midjourney	Artistic image generation	Stimulating creativity in art and design courses, visual storytelling
Google Bard	Conversational AI (Google)	Research assistance, summarization, citation generation, interactive learning companion
Synthesia	AI video generation	Creating explainer videos, multilingual lesson content, flipped classroom materials
Hugging Face	Open-source ML platform	Model training and experimentation in AI/ML courses, research and curriculum development
Khanmigo	AI tutor (by Khan Academy)	Interactive support for math, science, and humanities—currently in pilot with selected users

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA POLICIES AND INITIATIVES

National Education Policy 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) in India aims to integrate technology into education, preparing students for the 21st century and the AI economy. The policy emphasizes imparting technical knowledge at all levels of education, exposing children to digital literacy, coding, and computational thinking from a young age. It integrates AI, 3-D machining, big data analysis, and machine learning with undergraduate education to train industry-ready professionals. Universities will offer doctoral and Masters programs in core areas like Machine Learning, and colleges may offer targeted training in low-expertise tasks supporting the AI value chain. The policy recognizes the potential of AI to revolutionize education and has outlined several initiatives to promote its adoption. These include providing digital infrastructure and resources to educational institutions, mandating teacher training in AI and digital technologies, encouraging AI-based learning resources like intelligent tutoring systems and personalized learning platforms, and emphasizing ethical AI adoption through guidelines and regulations.

Other Policies and Partnerships

The Indian government has implemented several policies and initiatives to promote AI innovation in education, including the National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NMICPS, 2023), Digital India Initiative, Public-Private Partnerships, and International Collaborations. These initiatives aim to develop cutting-edge AI technologies and applications, promote digital literacy and infrastructure, accelerate AI development and deployment in education, and exchange knowledge and expertise in AI education. The government is working to create an enabling environment for responsible AI adoption, ensuring AI is used to enhance learning outcomes, improve access to education, and create a more equitable and inclusive education system.

Enhancing Access to Quality Education in Rural India

Generative AI can play a crucial role in overcoming the digital divide in rural India. AI-powered tools can provide access to quality education, even in remote areas with limited resources. These tools can offer personalized learning experiences, intelligent tutoring, and interactive content in regional languages, breaking down geographical barriers. However, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure and digital literacy in rural areas need to be addressed. By investing in digital infrastructure and providing comprehensive digital literacy training, the government can ensure that rural communities have the necessary tools and skills to benefit from AI-powered education. AI-powered language translation can make educational content accessible to students from diverse linguistic backgrounds, promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities in rural education.

Revolutionizing Classrooms with AI

AI has the potential to support personalized learning experiences, particularly when integrated with thoughtful pedagogy and adequate infrastructure. However, measurable impacts in Indian classrooms remain under-researched. Between 2019 and 2023, over 34,000 students dropped out from higher education institutions, including central universities, IITs, NITs, IIMs, and others. Notably, more than half of these students belonged to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC). The majority of these dropouts occurred in postgraduate and PhD programs, with reasons ranging from poor academic performance and personal issues to better opportunities elsewhere. According to UDISE+ data for 2023-24, the national dropout rate at the secondary level (Classes IX to XII) is 10.9%, with higher rates observed among boys (12.3%) compared to girls (9.4%). State-wise, Bihar has the highest secondary-level dropout rate at 20.86%, followed by Ladakh (20.11%) and Assam (19.46%). The National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) emphasizes the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the education system. Initiatives include: Training teachers in AI and design thinking through

platforms like the DIKSHA portal. Introducing AI as a subject in school curricula, with CBSE offering it in classes IX and XI since 2019-2020. Implementing AI-enabled tools for personalized learning and teacher development.

By analysing student data, AI can identify individual learning styles, strengths, and weaknesses. This information can be used to create tailored learning pathways, ensuring that each student receives the appropriate level of support and challenge. AI can also adapt learning content in real-time based on student needs, providing immediate feedback and remediation. Case studies of AI-powered platforms in Indian Highers demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach. For example, platforms like Byju's (Byju's, 2024), valued at \$21 billion, and others like Unacademy, Emeritus, upGrad, Lead Higher and Vedantu, have been successful in improving student engagement, motivation, and academic outcomes through personalized learning experiences. These platforms leverage AI to analyze student data, recommend relevant resources, and provide personalized guidance, leading to significant improvements in student performance. Platforms like Byju's, once valued at \$21 billion, have showcased the commercial viability and scalability of AI-enhanced educational models in India. By leveraging data analytics and AI-driven personalization, Byju's has reached millions of learners across diverse geographies.

However, recent criticisms have brought its model under scrutiny. Reports have highlighted issues related to rote-based learning practices, high-pressure sales tactics, inadequate academic support, and declining profitability due to overexpansion and financial mismanagement. These developments underscore the importance of critically evaluating the pedagogical soundness and sustainability of AI-driven EdTech platforms. While AI holds promise for personalized learning, its impact must be measured not only by market reach but also by educational outcomes, student well-being, and long-term viability. Therefore, policymakers and educators should approach the integration of commercial AI tools with caution, ensuring alignment with pedagogical best practices and equity goals, especially in public education settings.

While generative AI offers the promise of personalized learning and equitable access, its implementation in low-resource settings reveals stark contradictions. For instance, AI tools depend heavily on stable internet connectivity, digital devices, and teacher training—all of which are often lacking in rural Indian schools. Promoting AI-driven personalization without addressing these infrastructural gaps risks reinforcing digital privilege, where urban or elite institutions benefit while under-resourced communities are further marginalized. The ethical question then arises: can personalization be truly equitable if access itself is unequal?

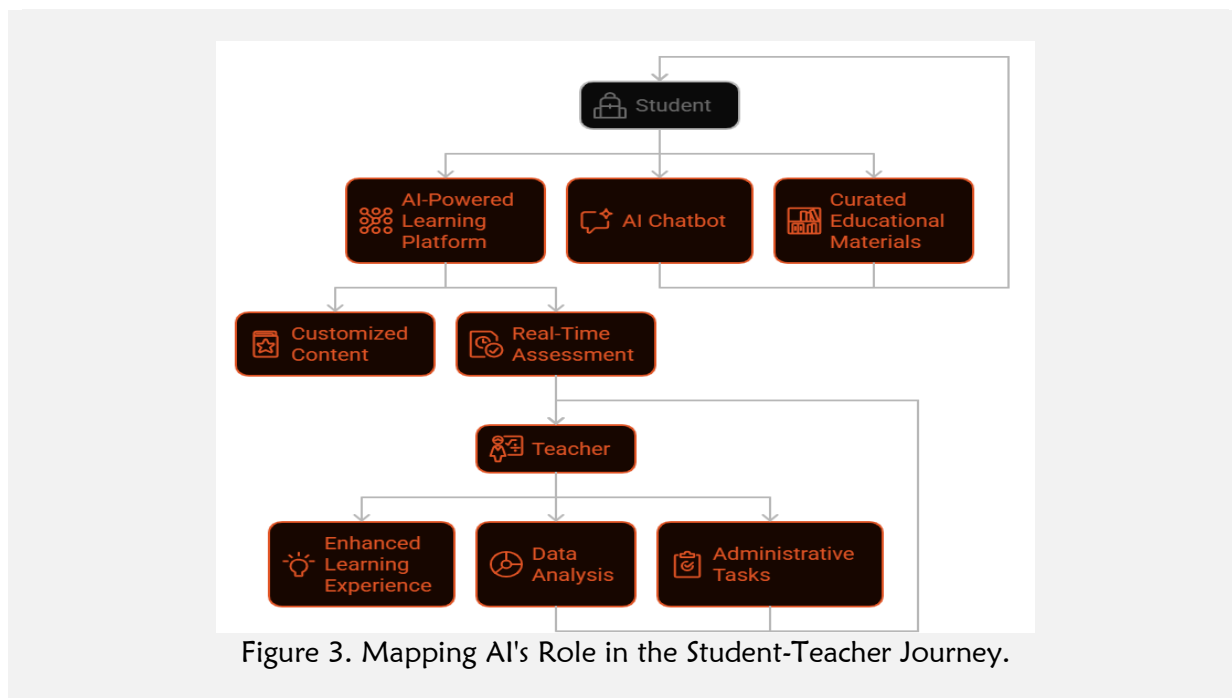
Moreover, while AI can automate adaptive assessments, such algorithms are often trained on urban, English-medium datasets, potentially disadvantaging students who use regional languages or follow non-mainstream learning trajectories. These structural biases, if unaddressed, could lead to misjudgment of student abilities, thereby deepening existing inequities rather than correcting them. Ethical deployment of AI must therefore go beyond technical functionality to include questions of social justice, linguistic inclusion, and infrastructural equity.

To better understand the practical integration of AI across the educational process, [Figure 3](#) presents a flowchart that maps AI's evolving role in the student–teacher journey. From pre-class preparation and personalized content delivery to real-time feedback, assessment, and post-class support, AI tools can support both educators and learners at multiple touchpoints. The diagram also illustrates how AI intersects with teacher workflows, such as lesson planning, student analytics, and content customization, while emphasizing the importance of keeping human agency central to the loop.

AI in the Classroom: Transforming Teaching Roles and Learning Environments

Generative AI is reshaping the fabric of higher education by simultaneously transforming teaching practices and student learning environments. In Indian classrooms—where teacher–student ratios can be overwhelming and resources uneven—AI offers scalable solutions to personalize instruction and optimize classroom time.

For educators, AI tools offer substantial support by automating repetitive administrative tasks such as grading, attendance tracking, and content generation (Alasadi & Baiz, 2023). Intelligent systems can assist in lesson planning by generating tailored learning materials, designing assessments, and even offering real-time suggestions based on student data. These efficiencies allow teachers to dedicate more time to interactive and student-centric instruction. Moreover, AI-powered analytics provide actionable insights into student performance, enabling timely interventions and differentiated support.



From the student perspective, AI facilitates a shift toward personalized and inclusive learning environments. Adaptive learning platforms analyse students' progress and adjust instructional content based on individual needs. Real-time feedback mechanisms guide learners through complex topics, while language translation tools and text-to-speech systems enhance accessibility for students from diverse linguistic and ability backgrounds. In a multilingual country like India, these tools can be especially powerful in bridging learning gaps across regional and socioeconomic divides.

Emerging co-teaching models position AI as a “digital assistant” in the classroom—supporting instruction without replacing the human touch. In such models, AI handles formative assessments or delivers supplementary content while teachers focus on mentoring, emotional engagement, and higher-order questioning. This collaborative model holds promise for more personalized and equitable education.

However, realizing the potential of AI in classrooms hinges on professional development and institutional readiness. Teachers need targeted training not just to use AI tools, but to understand their limitations, biases, and pedagogical value. Additionally, schools and universities must invest in reliable digital infrastructure, clear implementation frameworks, and ongoing support systems to ensure AI adoption enhances, rather than disrupts, the learning ecosystem.

Addressing Equity and Accessibility

Ensuring equitable access to AI-powered education is crucial to prevent deepening existing inequalities in India. To achieve this, several strategies must be prioritized. Governments should focus on making AI tools affordable, ensuring they are accessible to all students, regardless of socioeconomic background. Investments in digital infrastructure, such as reliable broadband and

devices, are essential to bridge the digital divide (Jones, 2024). Teacher training programs must be designed to equip educators with the skills to use AI effectively and inclusively. Curricula should integrate AI concepts in a way that is accessible to students from diverse backgrounds, while AI tools should include built-in accessibility features to accommodate students with disabilities. By this AI's potential can be harnessed to create a fairer and more inclusive education system for all.

Academic Integrity and Data Privacy

As AI becomes increasingly integrated into education, it is crucial to address the ethical concerns surrounding its use. One major concern is the potential for AI to facilitate plagiarism. While Educators leverage AI to generate original content, it can also be misused to create essays or assignments that are not the student's own work (Kumar et al., 2024). To prevent AI-enabled plagiarism, educators must develop strategies to promote original thinking and critical analysis. This can include teaching students about the importance of academic integrity, providing them with tools to detect AI-generated content, and emphasizing the value of creative and innovative work. Another important ethical consideration is data privacy and security. AI-driven learning environments often collect and analyse large amounts of student data, which raises concerns about the protection of sensitive information.

To ensure data privacy, educational institutions must implement robust security measures to protect student data from unauthorized access or misuse. Clear policies and guidelines should be established regarding the collection, use, and sharing of student data. India's Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDP) 2023 provides a much-needed legal framework for regulating personal data usage. However, critics argue that it suffers from weak enforcement mechanisms, broad exemptions for government entities, and limited avenues for redress. In educational contexts, particularly with minors and vulnerable learners, this raises concerns about how AI tools may collect, store, or share sensitive learning data without meaningful oversight. Many educational institutions and EdTech platforms lack clear privacy policies, and informed consent from students or parents is often ambiguous or absent. Without robust safeguards, the expansion of AI in Indian classrooms could inadvertently expose students to data exploitation, targeted advertising, or surveillance. Algorithmic bias in AI education tools is not merely a technical flaw, it can reinforce existing social hierarchies if left unaddressed. In the Indian context, caste-based exclusion, language diversity, and regional disparities pose significant risks. AI models trained on predominantly English-language or urban datasets may struggle to accurately interpret responses from students using vernacular languages or dialects, leading to misdiagnosis of ability, reduced personalization, or disengagement.

Furthermore, the absence of caste-disaggregated training data risks overlooking social inequities in learner experiences. For instance, students from marginalized castes may interact differently with AI tutors due to historical schooling disadvantages, yet AI tools may misinterpret this as low aptitude rather than a systemic gap. To ensure inclusive AI deployment, it is essential to use diverse datasets, apply fairness audits, and involve marginalized communities in tool design and testing. Beyond general concerns about data privacy, the Indian context demands a critical examination of how AI algorithms may perpetuate existing social inequalities. The potential for caste-based and language-based biases to skew AI tools requires careful consideration, particularly in a diverse nation where historical disadvantages could be further exacerbated by poorly designed or inadequately trained AI systems.

While generative AI can assist educators by automating routine tasks and providing data-driven insights, over-reliance on such systems may inadvertently diminish teacher autonomy and professional judgment. When AI tools begin to dictate lesson pacing, content recommendations, or student assessments, educators may feel pressured to follow algorithmic outputs, even when those do not align with their pedagogical instincts or contextual knowledge. This shift can reduce teachers to facilitators of pre-programmed content, undermining their critical role as curriculum designers, mentors, and decision-makers. In the long run, this may erode teacher confidence, innovation in instructional practice, and the relational aspects of teaching that are vital for student

motivation and socio-emotional growth. To avoid this, AI implementation must prioritize teacher-in-the-loop design, where educators retain control, interpretability, and flexibility in how AI tools are used.

Nurturing Creativity and Critical Thinking

As AI continues to advance, it is essential to equip students with the skills necessary to flourish in an increasingly automated world. Creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills are paramount in this context (Darwin et al., 2024). These skills enable individuals to adapt to change, innovate, and develop solutions to complex problems. To adopt these higher-order thinking skills while integrating AI, educators can employ various pedagogical approaches (Alasadi & Baiz, 2023). Project-based learning, for example, can provide students with opportunities to apply AI tools to real-world problems and develop creative solutions. Inquiry-based learning can encourage students to ask questions, explore different perspectives, and critically evaluate information. Incorporating AI into the curriculum can help students understand how AI works and its potential applications, nurturing a sense of agency and empowering them to use AI as a tool for innovation. Educators play a crucial role in guiding students on their AI-driven exploration and innovation journey. By providing mentorship, support, and challenging assignments, educators can help students develop the confidence and skills to leverage AI for creative and critical thinking. Encouraging students to experiment with AI tools, ask questions, and seek out new opportunities will induce a culture of innovation and prepare them for the future.

LEARNING FROM LIMITATIONS: CASE SNAPSHOTS OF AI CHALLENGES IN INDIAN CLASSROOMS

Case 1: Inadequate Infrastructure in Rural AI Pilot – Bihar, 2023

In 2023, a government-backed AI tutoring pilot was introduced in five rural schools in Bihar to support English-language learning using a mobile-based chatbot. While initial enthusiasm was high, the project stalled within three months due to unstable internet connectivity, lack of device maintenance, and low digital literacy among both teachers and students. Many students struggled to navigate the AI interface in English, and teachers reported confusion over how to integrate the tool into the syllabus. This case highlights the infrastructure-knowledge gap that must be addressed before AI tools can function effectively in rural Indian classrooms.

Case 2: Bias and Language Misinterpretation in an AI Writing Assistant – Maharashtra, 2022

A private college in Maharashtra piloted the use of an AI writing assistant (based on GPT-3) to support first-year students in writing assignments. Students from rural or non-English-medium backgrounds found the tool unhelpful, as it frequently misinterpreted their input, flagged grammatically sound sentences as incorrect, and offered suggestions that didn't align with Indian academic standards. Faculty noted that students became over-reliant on AI-generated phrasing, reducing their confidence in independent writing. This revealed a gap in linguistic localization and critical literacy training, showing that without adaptation and instruction, AI tools may hinder rather than help learning.

These cases serve as reminders that AI's success in education is not just a function of its capabilities, but of how well it aligns with contextual realities, pedagogy, and access.

ANECDOTES FROM TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

In Bhopal, where AI integration in education is still in early stages, teachers and students offer a mix of optimism and caution. A computer science teacher at a government college, remarked, "I used ChatGPT to generate coding exercises, but I had to tweak most of them, the tool doesn't always match the level of my students or the local curriculum." In contrast, an English teacher at a private college, shared, "AI helped me create vocabulary games tailored to my students' needs, but I worry they're depending too much on it and losing their confidence in writing without assistance." On the student side, a third-year B.Com student, explained, "I like using AI to prepare presentations, it saves time, but sometimes the content sounds too generic,

and I don't fully understand what I'm presenting." Similarly, a first-year BA student, noted, "I tried using an AI tool to summarize a sociology reading, but it missed some important points. It's useful, but I still rely on my professor for clarity." These everyday experiences highlight the promise of AI in higher education, but also underline the need for critical engagement, localized adaptation, and digital literacy to ensure meaningful learning outcomes.

COMPARATIVE INSIGHTS: INDIA AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH IN AI-DRIVEN EDUCATION

As of early 2025, approximately 62% of educators in India are utilizing AI tools for teaching, preparation, and student engagement. However, comprehensive data on the exact percentage of Indian higher education institutions (HEIs) formally integrating generative AI remains limited. While individual educators and students are increasingly adopting AI tools, institutional-level adoption varies, with many HEIs still in the exploratory or pilot phases.

While India is making significant strides in integrating AI into education through policies like [NEP \(2020\)](#) and initiatives such as INDIAai, its journey parallels, and diverges from, other Global South nations. In Brazil, AI adoption is being piloted through public-private partnerships, focusing on intelligent tutoring systems in public schools. However, Brazil faces similar infrastructural challenges, including uneven internet access and teacher training gaps. Nigeria, on the other hand, has emphasized mobile-first EdTech solutions due to low desktop penetration and unreliable power infrastructure. Despite government-led AI roadmaps, both Nigeria and Brazil struggle with fragmented implementation and limited rural outreach—challenges also seen in India. However, India stands apart due to its scale, linguistic diversity, and the presence of a robust EdTech sector that includes platforms like Byju's, upGrad, and Vedantu. India's state-sponsored AI curriculum pilots and regional-language AI tools are notable innovations not yet widely replicated in other Global South contexts. Yet, challenges remain, including the urban-rural digital divide, data privacy enforcement, and ensuring equity across caste, language, and socio-economic lines. By learning from and contributing to shared experiences across the Global South, India has the potential to shape inclusive AI policies that are both scalable and culturally grounded.

When comparing India's AI education strategy with that of China and the European Union (EU), distinct approaches to equity and inclusion emerge. India's policies, particularly through the National Education Policy ([NEP, 2020](#)) and the Digital India initiative, focus on bridging the digital divide by enhancing infrastructure in rural areas, promoting regional language content, and training teachers. However, implementation is still uneven. In contrast, China has taken a centralized, top-down approach, mandating AI education from primary school and investing in AI education bases to promote urban-rural parity. While expansive, this model prioritizes scale and technological fluency. The EU, on the other hand, emphasizes ethical AI deployment, with strong regulatory frameworks addressing data privacy, algorithmic bias, and digital inclusion. Its strategy ensures that AI education does not worsen existing inequalities, especially for underserved communities. While India's efforts reflect its diverse socio-economic realities, aligning them with the EU's ethical safeguards and China's implementation efficiency could help create a more balanced, equity-driven AI education model.

BARRIERS TO GENERATIVE AI ADOPTION IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Infrastructure and Digital Divide: Many HEIs, especially in rural and semi-urban areas, face challenges like inadequate internet connectivity, limited access to digital devices, and insufficient technical support. These infrastructural gaps hinder the seamless integration of AI tools into teaching and learning processes.

Faculty Training and Acceptance: A significant barrier is the lack of comprehensive training programs for faculty members on effectively integrating AI tools into their pedagogy. Additionally, some educators exhibit scepticism or resistance towards adopting new technologies due to unfamiliarity or concerns about AI replacing traditional teaching roles.

Policy and Ethical Concerns: The absence of clear institutional policies regarding the use of generative AI raises concerns about academic integrity, data privacy, and the ethical implications

of AI-generated content. Without established guidelines, institutions are cautious about fully embracing AI tools in their academic frameworks. Addressing these barriers requires a concerted effort involving infrastructure development, faculty training initiatives, and the formulation of clear policies to guide the ethical and effective use of AI in higher education.

DEVELOPING AN AI-READY WORKFORCE

As AI continues to transform the job market, it is essential to equip students with the skills necessary to thrive in an AI-driven future. Success in this new era will require a combination of technical competencies—such as programming, data analysis, machine learning, and understanding AI algorithms and human-centric skills like critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and adaptability (Sidhu, 2024). These capabilities enable individuals to effectively leverage AI tools, interpret complex data, and develop innovative solutions. AI can also play a key role in personalized career guidance by analysing student performance and preferences to suggest suitable career paths and skill development opportunities (Sidhu, 2024). By investing in AI education and creating supportive ecosystems, India can cultivate a future-ready workforce equipped to navigate the evolving demands of the digital economy.

ROLE OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Research and Development (R&D) play an essential role in advancing AI (Hundt, 2024), mainly in Higher education. By nurturing innovation and addressing specific challenges, R&D can ensure that AI tools are contextually relevant, effective, and accessible to students and teachers across the country. One of the key benefits of R&D is the development of AI tools that are tailored to the unique needs and circumstances of specific education. This includes addressing language barriers, cultural nuances, and diverse learning styles. By conducting research on these factors, researchers can create AI tools that are culturally sensitive, inclusive, and effective in promoting learning (Qin, 2024). Collaborative efforts between educators, technologists, and researchers are essential for the successful development and implementation of AI in education. Educators can provide valuable perceptions into the specific challenges and needs of the classroom, while technologists can contribute their expertise in AI development. Researchers can bridge the gap between these two groups by conducting studies, analyzing data, and developing innovative AI solutions. Through collaborative R&D, India can ensure that AI is used to enhance education, improve learning outcomes, and create a more equitable and inclusive learning environment for all students. Equality it is important that the governance of AI in India must adhere to all legal frameworks (Kumar & Tyagi, 2024) and applicable laws of the Government of India.

CALL TO ACTION

As India stands at the intersection of an AI-powered educational future and deep-rooted systemic challenges, action must go beyond rhetoric. Universities should mandate AI ethics modules in teacher training programs and technology degrees to build critical understanding of bias, privacy, and accountability. School boards and curriculum designers must pilot context-appropriate AI tools in multiple regional languages and evaluate their impact through empirical data. Policy-makers should invest in digital infrastructure equitably across rural and urban regions while instituting feedback loops with educators on ground realities. Finally, AI developers and EdTech firms should co-create tools with teachers—not for them—to ensure alignment with pedagogy and local needs. Only through such coordinated, inclusive efforts can India ensure that AI enhances, rather than displaces, the human core of education.

CONCLUSION

Generative AI holds significant promise for transforming higher education by enabling personalized learning, intelligent tutoring, and automated content creation. These capabilities can enhance student engagement, support inclusive access, and allow educators to shift their focus from administrative tasks to deeper pedagogical engagement. However, the effective integration

of AI is contingent on addressing persistent challenges—most notably, the digital divide, ethical concerns around data privacy and algorithmic bias, and the preparedness of both educators and students to engage meaningfully with these technologies. While early implementations suggest substantial benefits, there is a pressing need for policies and practices that prioritize equity, transparency, and contextual relevance. The global education community must adopt a cautious yet proactive approach, ensuring that AI is not just technologically advanced, but socially responsive and ethically grounded. With inclusive design, localized adaptation, and robust institutional support, generative AI can become a powerful force in shaping a more accessible, engaging, and just educational future.

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