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Research Article

Content Analysis of Institutional Policies on the Use of AI in Top HEIs

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ABSTRACT

The unprecedented rise of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in 2022 has compelled leading universities to articulate formal policies governing its pedagogical and research applications. Yet coherent guidance for higher education systems—particularly in the Global South—remains underdeveloped. This study undertook a thematic analysis of AI policies issued by the top 50 institutions in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2023, employing Chan's (2023) pedagogical, governance, and operational dimensions as analytic lenses. The analysis demonstrates a global convergence around AI's pedagogical utility and research-enhancing potential, tempered by robust institutional commitments to academic integrity, responsible deployment, and the ethical management of AI-generated content. Universities are also investing in interdisciplinary AI initiatives, cultivating industry partnerships, and adopting differentiated approaches to instructor autonomy in regulating classroom AI use. These insights offer a critical foundation for Philippine higher education institutions seeking to articulate contextually grounded, ethically defensible, and future-oriented approaches to AI governance.

Keywords: *AI Policies, AI in education, fair use of AI*

Background

Should the use of generative artificial intelligence tools be banned from educational institutions?

The applicability of AI has sprawled across fields prompting the need to address the opportunities and challenges, as well as the impact these tools have on social and ethical issues such as privacy, fairness, bias, transparency, and accountability (Park, 2022).

An increasing number of universities had updated their plagiarism policies explicitly prohibiting the use of ChatGPT on essays and other coursework, including two of the top 100

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universities in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2023 (Wood, 2023). However, education culture tends to be sluggish in adapting to change (Villasenor, 2023). The UCLA professor posits that a student does not need to be a good writer to be able to produce good writing. He proposes that instead of banning the use of "labor-saving" and "time-saving" AI tools, students should be taught how to use them ethically and productively.

A 2023 report from the Commission on Human Rights confirmed that fresh graduates in the Philippines lack "soft skills," or traits that have to do with empathy, creativity, resilience and communication, making it a challenge in terms of employability. Philippine Senator Sonny Angara, chairman of the Senate Committee on Youth, agrees that this important skill has always been inadequate among young Filipinos. This is further aggravated by the occurrence of a worldwide pandemic alongside longtime concerns on the Philippine educational system (Torres, 2023).

As the name suggests, generative AI refers to models that generate responses based on existing examples and patterns. Generative AI tools can generate a vast array of contents including texts, images, music, videos, game content and 3D models. A form of AI, genAI tools also include design and creativity tools and data augmentation tools (Manzer, 2023).

An executive order from the White House was released on October 30, 2023, requiring developers of powerful AI systems to share results of their safety tests with the federal government before they are released to the public. The US government wants to regulate the risks of overabundance of AI tools and at the same time maximize its potential. In 2022, it released the AI Bill of Rights to offer guidance for protecting consumers using automated systems (Saenz & Liptak, 2023).

The issues attached to AI have become the topic of innumerable debates. Yet, both universities and governments have not fully adapted to the situation. The researchers of the present study conducted a thematic analysis of the AI-related policies created by academic institutions labeled as the top universities according to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2023.

Methods

The study analyzed the institutional policies of Top 50 universities in the world according to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2023. Thematic analysis was used in the study to identify patterns or themes within qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2007). The method is flexible and accessible, making it useful for qualitative research. Specifically, the researchers used a deductive approach, i.e. coming to the data with predetermined themes (Jones, n.d.) that were expected to be found on the website contents of the top 50 universities. These themes were based on existing knowledge about the topic.

Purposive sampling was utilized to meet the conceptual and substantial need of the research, with the following inclusion and exclusion criteria:

1. The researchers used the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2023 as a basis in identifying the universities whose institutional policies were reviewed.
2. Top 50 universities were investigated to check the presence of policies on AI use and prominent themes.
3. The policies shall be written in English and published in the official website of educational institutions.
4. The policies shall delve on the pedagogical dimension (teacher's methods and assessment), governance dimension (senior management), and operational dimension (teaching/learning and IT staff) outlined by Chan (2023).

Result and Discussion

To say that a university prohibits the use of generative AI tools is a sweeping statement. Hence, the researchers looked into common themes emerging from the audit of top 50 universities in the world as follow: Acceptability of AI in the Classroom, Acceptability of AI in Research Production, AI & Plagiarism, Investment of efforts towards AI research excellence, Instructor's Freedom to Manage AI use in classroom, and AI-proofing teaching and learning activities

The key themes generated in this research served as bases in crafting a website of resources to guide higher educational institutions and secondary schools in drafting their own AI policies. Figure 1 illustrates the generated themes, sub themes, and their relationships.

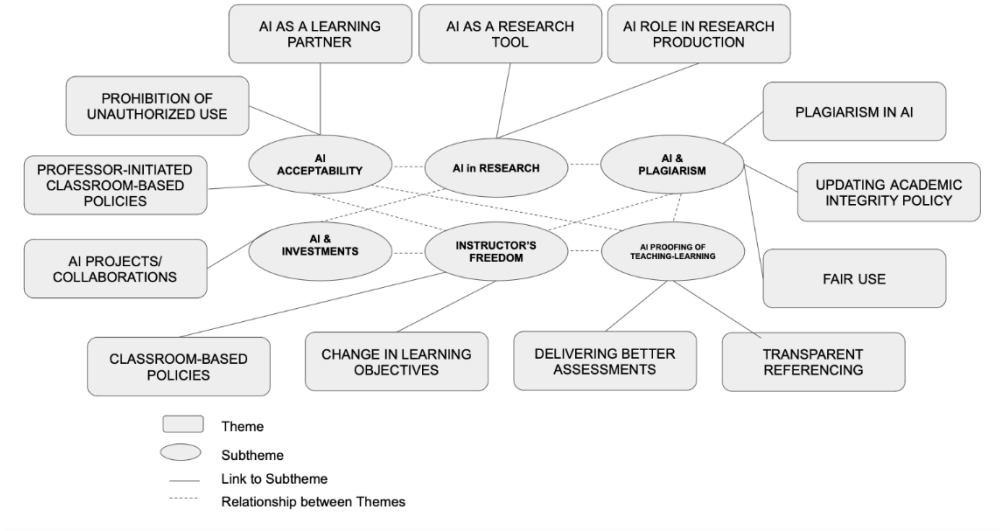

Figure 1. Thematic Map

Acceptability of AI in the Classroom

1. AI as a learning partner. Majority of the institutions/universities reviewed in this paper recognized AI as a powerful tool to enhance learning experiences. AI can be used to accomplish tasks, such as finding bugs in programming classes, correcting grammar, checking quality of written work, prompting new ideas, and generating simplified explanations of complex topics. This is also supported in the studies where AI applications in the classroom were investigated (Al Darayseh, 2023; Wael, 2023; and Manchala et al., 2023). With the overwhelming applications of AI, institutions/universities stand firm that AI is just a tool in the learning experience and any individual using it is responsible for any errors and in evaluating critically its accuracy. Yale University is cognizant that considerations on allowing or prohibiting AI use vary for each school, each division, each discipline. Universities that recognize the advantage of generative AI tools advocate the smart use of these tools in idea generation and planning.
2. Prohibition of unauthorized use of AI tools in assignments, examinations and assessments. Academic integrity is one of the pressing concerns in AI. According to the institutions/universities in this review, the use of AI in education is like having a collaboration with other people. The unauthorized use of AI tools in exams and other assessed work is prohibited. Doing so means cheating and is subjected to academic misconduct. Furthermore, institutions/universities in this study do not permit the use of any AI source or tools in assignments, examinations, assessments. Reconsidering assessment strategies to address academic integrity in the era of AI is recommended (Ali et al., 2023; Gyorgy, 2023; Ifelebuegu, 2023). For ETH Zurich, AI and loss of academic integrity are not inherently connected. Problems arise when this tool is used in dishonest ways or when its use is wasting human time.
3. Professor-initiated classroom-based policies. For some universities, setting a classroom-based policy on the use of AI is encouraged.

The next key theme generated is Acceptability of AI in Research Production. AI revolutionized the way knowledge is acquired and content is produced (Sharma, 2023), as such in this study, Acceptability of AI in Research Production among top universities is explored.

Acceptability of AI in Research Production

1. AI as a research tool. AI as an educational tool, can also be used as a tool in research. Top universities/institutions acknowledge the potential of AI models as tools to support students in raising the quality of their work. AI can be a tool in research for correcting grammar, generating ideas for research questions, synthesizing literature, and co-brainstorming research ideas. However, over reliance on AI generated information has its implications, and students should be responsible users of the said technology.
2. Role of AI in research production. Despite recognizing AI in research as a tool, AI cannot be listed as co author according to the universities/institutions in this review. This is also stated in the study of (Lapena, 2023) that chatbots, one of AI applications, cannot be authors because they cannot meet authorship requirements. However, if the use of AI is permitted by the instructor, clear limitations should be conveyed and a clear declaration of how AI was used should be acknowledged. American Psychological Association (McAdoo, 2023) published guidelines on citing ChatGPT, one of AI applications. It is notable that a great number of universities in the audited list do not have clear stipulations vis-a-vis use of AI in research production.

The proliferation of AI tools that can be used in generating information opened opportunities for students to accomplish school work easier and claim it as their own. This also introduces new challenges to the educators on detecting possible plagiarism of students' work. Thus, the next key theme aims to explore how the top 50 universities

Fair Use of AI

1. Plagiarism in AI. Students are always expected to work and submit original scholarly work, as such universities/institutions' existing policy on plagiarism also applies to any AI tools generated content. However, OpenAI platform is cognizant that Classifiers are helpful in detecting AI-generated content but may produce false positives. Efforts in ensuring academic integrity in the universities/institutions have also been reviewed in this study. Various plagiarism detection tools are assisting universities and institutions in their efforts to combat plagiarism in this AI era. Furthermore, different studies were also conducted which proposed plagiarism detectors (Majhi & Santra, 2023; Shangaranarayanee & Hemalatha, 2023) and a list of current AI-written content detectors (Kilickaya, Kic-Drgas, 2023).

   It is notable that although academic integrity policies are instituted in most universities, a great number of universities do not have direct stipulations about AI-specific plagiarism. University officials either leave it to the professors to draft classroom-based policies or simply have not yet updated their plagiarism policy to account for AI use.
2. Transparent referencing and acknowledging of AI sources and AI tools. In response to the proliferation of AI as a tool in generating ideas based on huge sets of information, American Psychological Association and Modern Language Association of America both released their guidelines on citing AI generated text. As for using AI in scholarly works, including research papers, essays, among others, learners must still adhere to the existing plagiarism policy of different universities/institutions. Some generated ideas from AI tools are still authored by humans and therefore referencing and citing their works are important. Universities/institutions also educate students of the consequences of academic dishonesty as stipulated in their honor codes.

Top universities/institutions reviewed in this study recognized the potential of AI in their organizations. Consequently, analysis into their AI investments was also conducted, generating another theme which is Investment of efforts towards AI research excellence.

Investment of efforts towards AI research excellence

1. AI projects and collaboration. Recognizing the societal impact of AI, top universities/institutions have dedicated resources to foster interdisciplinary collaboration. AI projects from these universities/institutions varied from healthcare, science, data engineering, business, climate change, among others. The creation of AI hubs, centers, consortiums, and institutes by these universities and institutions was also explored. It is noted that leading IT companies collaborated with these universities/institutions in AI projects, opening venues to address real-world scenarios, and eventually practical applications and/or commercializations of AI products. These efforts support the gaps in the exploration of AI in research which has been cited in Renman (n.d.), identifying avenues for research to examine collaborations between universities and the private sector across all parts of the AI Value chain. Meanwhile, Crompton (2023), suggested more research needs to focus on the unexplored affordances of Artificial Intelligence in education (AIEd).

AI can offer opportunities for instructors to manage and enhance the learning experience in the classroom. Another theme generated from the review is Instructor's Freedom to Manage AI use in the classroom.

Instructor's Freedom to Craft Classroom-based Policies on AI

An instructor's freedom to manage the use of AI in the classroom may depend on several factors, including but not limited to institutional policies, faculty members' decision or choice, and the kind of the AI tools being used. Faculty members are responsible for any content they produce that includes AI-generated material, as AI models can violate copyright laws and spread misinformation, protection of confidential data, restated academic integrity policies. ChatGPT and other generative AI presents challenges in maintaining academic integrity.

With the rise of ChatGPT, GitHub Co-Pilot, and other AI-powered tools, many faculty are wondering about the implications for their teaching. Most of the institutions reviewed in this study recommended thinking about how using AI-based tools might facilitate students and faculty teaching and learning process and decide on to what extent it is allowed to use and to come up with policies.

"The reality is that generative AI is going to be in everything, so it will be impossible to tell students they can't use it". Ryan Lufkin, Vice President of Global Strategy Instructure, recommended the following in his discussions on AI Applications in the Learning Experience during the Canvas Connect 2023 in Manila. Embrace AI as more than a cheating tool, establish clear policies and guidelines, and train educators. Generative AI, particularly ChatGPT, possesses considerable potential to enhance the educational experience, equipping students with vital skills for a rapidly evolving AI-influenced world. Students must learn to effectively delegate tasks and critically evaluate AI outputs.

Educators have a pivotal role in guiding this transformation. By revisiting syllabi, reshaping evaluation methods, and leveraging AI for tasks like grading, we can optimize learning outcomes. Destigmatizing AI usage and fostering responsible interaction can demystify this technology, ultimately cultivating high-quality, responsible AI use. This future-ready educational model can foster higher-order thinking abilities, ensuring students' success in an increasingly digital age (Kizilcec, 2024).

"AI-proofing" teaching and learning activities is another key theme generated in this study. Top universities/institutions' plan to effectively respond to the rapid evolution of generative AI tools includes ensuring that teaching and learning activities remain effective and relevant in an educational landscape that is increasingly influenced by artificial intelligence.

Innovation in teaching and learning

1. Change in learning objectives. Researchers recognize the need for innovative and sustainable teaching and learning tools in the AI era (Islam, 2023) and a balanced approach to AI adoption in university which involves recognizing both the potential benefits and limitations of generative AI technologies (Chan, 2023).

   Top universities/ institutions reviewed in this study adequately respond to the rapid changes of AI in education, and their contribution in ensuring effective and relevant learning activities are highlighted. Insights include restructuring learning objectives and to focus more on 21st-century skills and recognizing the importance of designing learning activities that not only uncover but also enhance these critical skills in students.
2. Delivering better assessments. Top universities/institutions reviewed in this study recognize that designing AI-proof assessments is a critical aspect of ensuring that educational evaluations remain relevant and meaningful in the age of artificial intelligence. While some researchers (Xiaoming & Nehm, 2023; Poretschkin et al., 2023; and Liu & Baucham, 2023) investigated the development of assessments that target AI-related issues to enhance the quality of educational experiences, top universities/institutions reviewed in this study contributed valuable insights to the process of assessment design. These are reinforcing the value of in-person examinations, ensuring that assessments are developed to assess learning outcomes that test and give credit for high-order skills which cannot be replicated by AI, designing authentic assessment that address a real world problem, designing assessments to make learning visible through connections, and incorporating more disciplinary, situational, and individual-based questions.
3. Fair use of AI. Ethical use is one of the pressing issues in AI in education, which is also part of the official AI governance framework from Singapore (Chan, 2023) and IDEE framework (Su and Yang, 2023). Top universities/institutions recognize the use of AI tools, systems, and applications in ways that promote learning, accessibility, and equity while respecting privacy and maintaining transparency.

Conclusion

The study performed a thematic analysis of AI policies from top 50 universities in the world according to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2023. Using the themes that had emerged in the thematic analysis, the researchers crafted a website that aims to provide a comprehensive guidance to Philippine high education institutions vis-a-vis AI use. The following conclusions are drawn:

1. AI in the field of education is beneficial but maintaining academic integrity and responsible AI usage in educational settings is also highly important.
2. AI's potential to support students in improving the quality of their work is evident but it is important to note that an overreliance on AI-generated information has implications, and students and educators should use this technology responsibly.
3. Awareness of plagiarism in the context of AI use in education is vital. Students and educators should be cognizant that AI-generated ideas are still authored by humans, and referencing and citing these works is essential.
4. Engagements among industries and educational institutions explored societal impact of AI and have allocated resources to promote interdisciplinary collaboration.
5. Instructors' freedom to manage the use of AI in the classroom is influenced by various factors, including institutional policies, faculty decisions, and the specific AI tools in use.
6. Efforts collectively aim to adapt education to the AI era, ensuring that students are equipped with relevant skills and that assessments effectively gauge their learning outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are hereby forwarded.

1. Encourage the development of AI policy in schools, taking into consideration the six (6) themes generated in this study. AI policies in schools are essential to ensure the responsible, ethical, and equitable use of AI technology in education while safeguarding the privacy and security of students and educators. These policies provide a framework for integrating AI into educational practices and ensuring that AI aligns with the school's educational goals and values.
2. To further educate students on smart AI use, creation of a course/subject across disciplines is recommended. It is essential to prepare them for the AI-driven world, promote responsible and ethical AI practices, and equip them with skills and knowledge that will be valuable in their academic, professional, and personal lives.
3. To conduct the same analysis in the Philippine context. After investigating the world's top universities, local regulations or settings can still be explored. This will provide a deeper understanding and address local issues, engage with the community, and develop solutions that are pertinent and beneficial to the Philippine context.
4. Another recommended enhancement to the study is to conduct a review on the six (6) different international attempts to regulate artificial intelligence. This guide is suggested by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Technology Review, where they reviewed six different international attempts to regulate artificial intelligence and set out the pros and cons of each (Heikkilä, M., 2023).

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