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Navigating AI in Higher Education: Exploring Graduate Students' Perspectives on Teacher-Provided AI Guidelines

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Abstract : The current years have witnessed a rapid evolution and integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in various fields, prominently influencing the education industry. Acknowledging this transformative wave, AI tools like ChatGPT and Grammarly have undeniably introduced perspectives and skills, enriching the educational experiences of higher education students. The prevalence of AI utilization in higher education also drives an increasing number of researchers' attention in various dimensions. Departments, offices, and professors in universities also designed and released a set of policies and guidelines on using AI effectively. In regard to this, the study targets exploring and analyzing graduate students' perspectives regarding AI guidelines set by teachers. A mixed-methods study will be mainly conducted in this study, employing in-depth interviews and focus groups to investigate and collect students' perspectives. Relevant materials, such as syllabi and course instructions, will also be analyzed through the documentary analysis to facilitate understanding of the study. Surveys will also be used for data collection and students' background statistics. The integration of both interviews and surveys will provide a comprehensive array of student perspectives across various academic disciplines. The study is anchored in the theoretical framework of self-determination theory (SDT), which emphasizes and explains the students' perspective under the AI guidelines through three core needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This framework is instrumental in understanding how AI guidelines influence students' intrinsic motivation and sense of empowerment in their learning environments. Through qualitative analysis, the study reveals a sense of confusion and uncertainty among students regarding the appropriate application and ethical considerations of AI tools, indicating potential challenges in meeting their needs for competence and autonomy. The quantitative data further elucidates these findings, highlighting a significant communication gap between students and educators in the formulation and implementation of AI guidelines. The critical findings of this study mainly come from two aspects: First, the majority of graduate students are uncertain and confused about relevant AI guidelines given by teachers. Second, this study also demonstrates that the design and effectiveness of course materials, such as the syllabi and instructions, also need to adapt in regard to AI policies. It indicates that certain of the existing guidelines provided by teachers lack consideration of students' perspectives, leading to a misalignment with students' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. More emphasize and efforts need to be dedicated to both teacher and student training on AI policies and ethical considerations. To conclude, in this study, graduate students' perspectives on teacher-provided AI guidelines are explored and reflected upon, calling for additional training and strategies to improve how these guidelines can be better disseminated for their effective integration and adoption. Although AI guidelines provided by teachers may be helpful and provide new insights for students, educational institutions should take a more anchoring role to foster a motivating, empowering, and student-centered learning environment. The study also provides some relevant recommendations, including guidance for students on the ethical use of AI and AI policy training for teachers in higher education.

Keywords : higher education policy, graduate students' perspectives, higher education teacher, AI guidelines, AI in education
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