Artificial Intelligence in Accounting Education: A Critical Review of Student Perceptions on Emerging Opportunities and Challenges

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly influencing the landscape of accounting education, prompting a shift in the way knowledge is delivered, skills are developed, and professional readiness is assessed. With the increasing global integration of AI into financial systems and professional accounting practices, the academic sector faces both the challenge and the opportunity to prepare students for this technological shift. This study critically examines the perceptions of undergraduate accounting students in Sri Lanka regarding the emerging opportunities and challenges associated with AI integration in accounting education. This study used a qualitative methodology, and information was gathered from undergraduate accounting students at Sri Lankan state universities through interviews and focus group discussions. According to a thematic analysis, accounting students in Sri Lanka see AI as a game-changing tool that may improve learning effectiveness and customize educational experiences. Through interactive tools and adaptive technology, students think AI has the ability to make complicated accounting ideas easier to understand, especially in areas like financial reporting and auditing. Students also recognized the significance of AI literacy for future professional success in the digital age, identifying it as a critical competency that would improve their employability and competitiveness in a global labor market that is changing quickly. Notwithstanding these encouraging prospects, the study also raises several important issues. Students expressed apprehension about the lack of structured AI-related content in the existing accounting curriculum, limited access to AI tools and infrastructure, and insufficient training for academic staff. Furthermore, there were underlying concerns that AI would someday replace humans in accounting positions, which could have an effect on future graduates' job security. The findings underscore the importance of proactive policy measures and institutional reforms to support the meaningful integration of AI in accounting education. Universities must prioritize curriculum updates, invest in digital infrastructure, and provide capacity-building programs for educators. Policymakers and academic leaders are urged to create a supportive framework that promotes innovation while ensuring equity and ethical considerations in AI adoption.