

Review Article

Contextualising Artificial Intelligence in Inclusive Higher Education

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Abstract - Artificial Intelligence (AI) is an emerging tool with the potential to transform the trajectory of inclusive higher education. How does AI perform multiple roles simultaneously to ensure meaningful inclusion in education? Answering this question is difficult, as it lacks conceptual specificity. The present study attempts to converge the fragmented information to theorise AI in the context of inclusive higher education. This work adapts a five-stage systematic literature review technique and synthesises the multifaceted roles of AI. The result points out that AI fits in the context of inclusive higher education within the parameters of its advocacy, capacity-building, and awareness-creating roles, which is a fresh perspective. A solid strategic framework can be developed, integrating this finding with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Hence, this study offers foundational knowledge to develop complex strategic models tailored for inclusion in higher education. Researchers, institutions, and policymakers can adopt these findings to use AI as a strategic weapon to nail the complex challenges of inclusive higher education.

Keywords - Artificial Intelligence, Disability, Higher education, Inclusion, Inclusive education, Technology in education, Social sustainability.

1. Introduction

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are interrelated concepts that cultivate harmony in any system by offering value and respect to all individuals [1]. The term 'inclusion' is complex and context-oriented, and it is essential for social sustainability. Inclusion is important in multiple social contexts, including education. An inclusive education system eradicates special schools, and every child receives an avenue to coexist beyond the boundary of ability or disability. Across the world, marginalised individuals view inclusion as a ray of hope, but often it is a moral mandate or a tool to embellish a plain surface. UNESCO underscored that inclusive education is about the child's right to participate and the school's duty to admit them as they are. Inclusive education faces multiple challenges globally. The vital obstacles to inclusive education include social stigma bias, inadequate faculty training and resources, infrastructure issues, and a lack of policy reforms. In such a scenario, vision, strategies, and their successful implementation are germane for integrating meaningful inclusion in the education system. Strategy determines the plan of action that stems from the vision, so a global higher education system that drives peace and prosperity in the world must pioneer sustainable strategies for inclusive education. Inclusive education is multidimensional;

the system should consider curriculum, assessments, placements, and all other aspects of the teaching and learning process. This system prepares students for their future beyond the classroom learning stint [2]. In India, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) emphasise inclusion for quality excellence. Similarly, the global ranking Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) and the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Education (ESG), etc., have drawn attention to the importance of inclusion in quality education systems. With these developments, it is clear that meaningful inclusion contributes to a high-quality higher education system. Such systems contribute to a sustainable world where everyone has the opportunity to survive and succeed. In the context of AI-enabled inclusive education, humans and machines coexist to advance the learning outcome of a diverse group [3]. Students who have physical, sensory, intellectual, mental, communication, or other disabilities require special attention in an inclusive classroom, and AI offers it. Here, one must discuss or explore options for engagement, representation, and expression. With AI, an inclusive classroom can be more equitable, accessible, and insightful. Access to open educational resources, human-centric tools, and a regulatory environment with a clear



roadmap are essential in this collaborative education space. In the absence of the above, AI may deepen the pre-existing disparities in education [4, 5]. Here comes the importance of answering the complex question of how AI's supernatural power and intelligence influence the development of an inclusive higher education system during integration.

2. Objective of the Study

The article aims to contextualise artificial intelligence in inclusive higher education with a special focus on advocacy, capacity building, and awareness creation.

3. Background of the Study

Literature review is a prominent research approach that guides new theory formation and research gap identification. A systematic literature review offers a comprehensive view of the underlying topic based on the published articles during a specified time frame.

The current study examined the review articles published between 2020 and 2025 and available in the research repository to identify an area where further review is required. The existing pool of review articles covered the topics related to academicians' knowledge, faculty diversity, AI's applicability in domain-specific areas, etc. [6-9].

Many existing review articles concentrate on the integration of AI into education. Each of those published articles looks at inclusive education in different dimensions and provides different perspectives of AI-enabled inclusive education; however, there are many other dimensions that have yet to be explored. The review article published by [10] is a prominent work that presents an innovative AI learning framework, considering the needs of a diverse group based on the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Beyond the scope of AI learning, learning with AI is the focus of the current review article.

4. Scope of the Current Review Article

AI performs multiple roles simultaneously in the context of inclusive higher education. A clear distinction among these various roles is necessary to contextualise AI-enabled inclusive higher education better. The scope of this article is limited to AI integration in higher education; other levels, such as pre-primary, primary, upper primary, secondary, and higher-secondary, are not considered in this study. This study considers physical, sensory, intellectual, mental health, and communication disabilities. This work ignores all other dimensions of disabilities, including cultural, socio-economic, linguistic, and gender factors.

5. The Novelty of the Work

This article is an attempt to contextualise AI-enabled higher education within the boundaries of advocacy, capacity building, and awareness creation. Existing studies examine

these roles in a generic way, without emphasising advocacy, capacity building, or awareness creation. The current study examines how AI-enabled higher education fits within these three pillars, which is a fresh perspective.

6. Materials and Methods

This study adopts a five-stage Systematic Literature Review (SLR) framework [11]. After conducting a preliminary review, the researcher formulated questions and searched for the answers in the published articles. The primary and sub-research questions of the study are mentioned below:

How can AI be contextualised as a strategic weapon to advance disability inclusion in the higher education system?

- a) How can AI enhance advocacy for disability inclusion in higher education?
- b) How can AI advance capacity building for disability inclusion in higher education?
- c) How can AI aid in improving awareness creation for disability inclusion in higher education?

6.1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The study adheres to the PRISMA guidelines and determined the inclusion criteria for published materials. Articles were included on the basis of the following criteria:

- a) Research articles that focused on disabilities among higher education students and artificial intelligence were included.
- b) Research articles, which are supported by empirical evidence, were considered.
- c) Articles published between 2020 and 2025 were included.
- d) Articles published in Scopus-indexed journals or book chapters were considered.
- e) Articles written in English

The current review excluded articles on the basis of the following criteria:

- a) Articles focused on topics apart from inclusion and AI-enabled inclusive higher education were excluded.
- b) Review articles and editorials that do not support empirical evidence.
- c) Articles published before 2020
- d) Non-Scopus-indexed publications and published in conference proceedings.
- e) Articles written in any other language than English

6.2. Study Selection Process and PRISMA Flowchart

The research identified 524 relevant articles and shortlisted 156 of them for this review. The selected articles went through title and abstract screening, and 60 articles were included for the final full-text review. 'AI and higher education,' 'inclusive education,' and sustainable higher education' are the adopted search strings.

Table 1. Inclusion exclusion criteria

SI No:	Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
1	Period	2020 to 2025	Before 2020
2	Coverage	Supported by empirical evidence; Scopus indexed Journal	Not supported by empirical evidence; non-Scopus indexed, Published in Conference Proceedings
3	Focus	AI-enabled higher education 'Inclusion' is limited to disability	All other levels (Primary, Upper primary, Secondary, and higher secondary) of Education, 'inclusion' beyond the scope of disability.
4	Language	English	Originally published in any other language

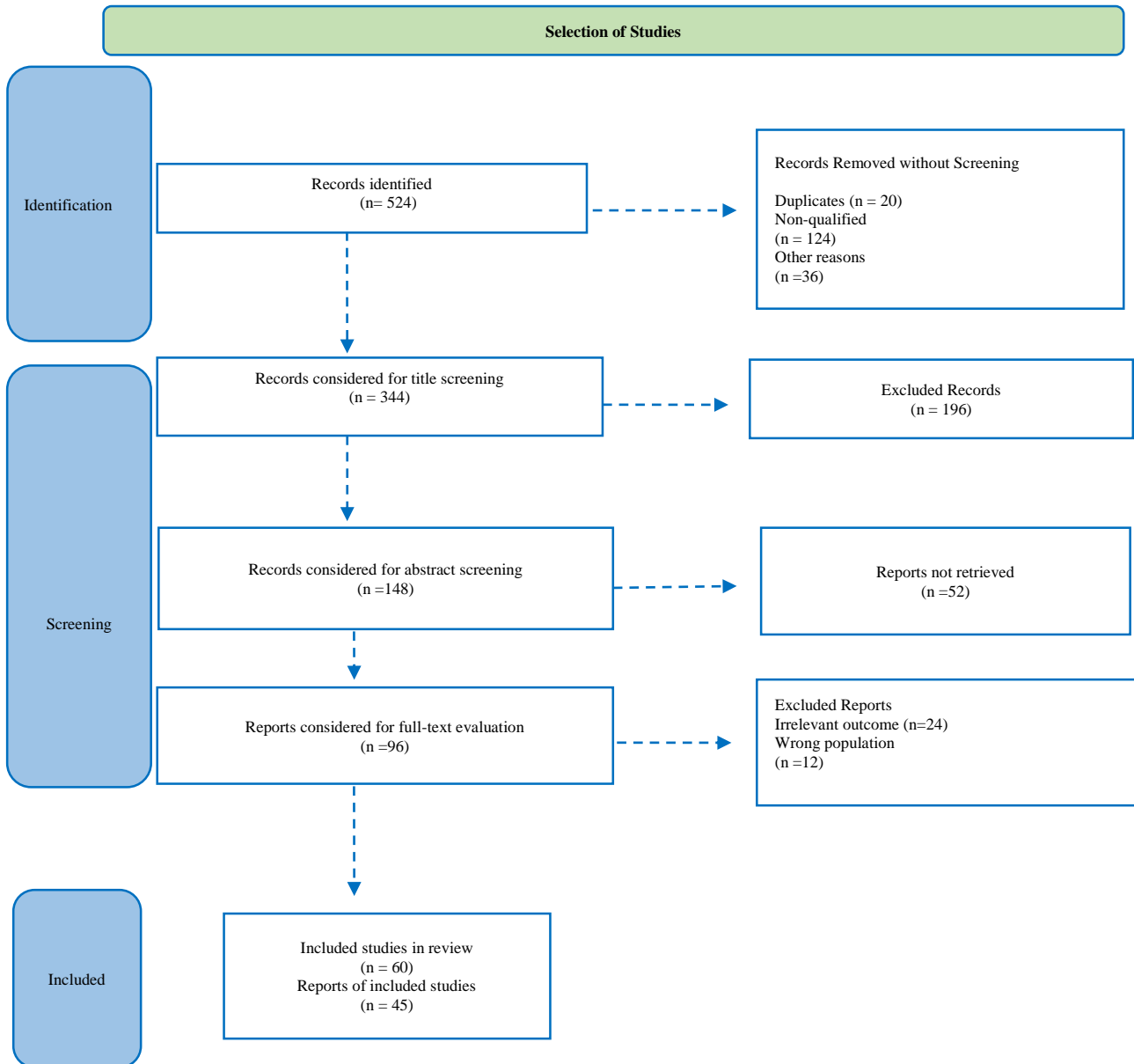


Fig. 1 PRISMA flowchart

7. Results

This review publishes results under three major categories. AI-enabled Advocacy for Inclusive Higher Education, AI as a Capacity Builder for Inclusive Higher

Education, and AI as an Awareness Creator for Inclusive Higher Education are the primary headings. Before this, the study introduced key terms connected to the work. Artificial intelligence, higher education, and inclusive education are

general terms in academia today, yet this article briefly explains them here. This section will provide the readers with a preliminary understanding of the underlying topic.

7.1. Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence refers to the supernatural intelligence that replaces human intelligence required in performing tasks. This way, machines can perform tasks with minimal or no human intelligence. Machine learning, deep learning, natural language processing, computer vision, and robotics are different AI technologies. Additionally, AI can be classified based on functionalities and capabilities. AI transforms the rhythm of mundane life by easing human efforts, complementing, and serving as a co-creator. AI even exceeds human intelligence by overpowering human creativity, emotions, and problem-solving skills. Speech recognition, understanding, and processing of natural language, image classification, AI-aided machine functioning, etc., are some examples of complex tasks that replace human intelligence with super artificial intelligence.

7.2. Higher Education System

Higher education institutions are potential organisations that can transform society. They are leading the way in sustainable development [13]. Based on the review, the current work states that a higher education system includes multiple clusters of organisations that are engaged with the design, development, and implementation of post-secondary-level courses [14]. These courses can fall within the broad definitions of arts, science, technology, commerce, or management. The respective courses may reward the students with certifications, diplomas, degrees, and doctorates upon successful completion. This system produces a skilled and knowledgeable workforce by fostering values and critical thinking, promotes research and innovation, and contributes to nation-building.

7.3. Inclusive Education

'Inclusion' is a common term applicable in multiple contexts, and it means 'including all'. It is complex and multidimensional [15]. In the context of education, inclusion provides equal opportunities to learn for all students, regardless of abilities, disabilities, background, or any other form of discrimination. The current study limits the scope of inclusion to abilities and disabilities; it progresses by treating inclusive education as admitting, nurturing, and preparing all the students for their higher-level learning needs without segregating based on their ability or disability [16]. A disability can be a physical, cognitive, sensory, or mental condition that hinders a person's accessibility and engagement with social systems. As per the WHO, 1.3 billion people, 16 percent of the total population, experience disability. Higher education institutions are the change agents; equity, equality, justice, and respect for diversity are the founding stones of every higher education institution. Building inclusive education should primarily focus on the knowledge

dimensions of a diversified group [17]. In the changing landscape of higher education, the number of students with disabilities is growing, and higher education institutions are struggling to implement an ideal inclusive institution model. Institutions should frame strategies to provide opportunities to learn together, free from stigma or discrimination, within the same educational environment. This way, an inclusive education system will pave the way for holistic growth in the generation.

7.4. AI-enabled Advocacy for Inclusive Higher Education

Advocacy represents the active support for a cause. Inclusion is a part of sustainability. Many studies that discuss sustainability as the main theme discussed inclusive education as well [15, 18-20]. This section of this review article examines how AI enhances advocacy for inclusive higher education.

The holistic concept of inclusive education has its own set of challenges. AI enhances inclusive education by supporting personalised learning through natural language processing, intelligent tutoring systems, machine learning, Augmented Reality (AR), and Virtual Reality (VR) technologies [21]. Augmented reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) offer immersive or engaging learning experiences; they alter the assessment and evaluation mechanism. Screen readers, voice assistants, and natural language processing technologies support students with visual, physical, and cognitive disabilities, but apt policy formulation and strategy implementation are required to uplift the differently abled. Blended learning offers a hybrid learning opportunity by combining the strength of offline teaching and the flexibility of modern technology [6]. Interactive video lessons, quizzes, and forum activities increase student engagement in a modern classroom. This format provides learner autonomy and higher-level engagement and inclusivity. Similarly, interaction with AI chatbots serves as an alternative to social reading and often leads to the evasion of isolated feelings within the learners [22, 23]. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) also reduce the opportunity gap and provide personalised learning spaces for students with special needs [16]. This practice advances the learners' knowledge based on individual involvement. AI-integrated teaching environments modernise the inclusive education system and restructure educators' roles as facilitators [24]. On the flip side, many faculties are unable to innovate their course plan and assessment pattern for learner-centric teaching, as it requires high-level faculty knowledge and engagement. This disruptive environment demands policy reforms to increase faculty engagement and to maintain an equilibrium between the needs of the differently abled and artificial intelligence technologies. Inclusive higher education is not connected to a particular stakeholder group; rather, it's an outcome of collective effort [25]. Upskilling students and educators to adopt inclusive measures and gather information from multiple sources is an essential part of inclusive education, and AI does that [26]. The emerging policies

impact the inclusion significantly [5]. It could bring genuine inclusion to the higher education system if implemented successfully, or it may increase the existing disparities between the abled and people with disabilities. In this scenario, policy and strategy alignment bring harmony to the inclusive higher education system [27]. Technology complements inclusion, and it may lead to technology dependence, but technology exclusion also plays a role in an

inclusive education system. When integrating technology for genuine inclusion, these dimensions must also be taken into account. When AI actively supports advocacy for inclusion in higher education, the system can be termed 'AI-enabled advocacy for inclusive higher education'. AI enhances advocacy in an inclusive higher education system by promoting policies, questioning discriminatory practices, and building harmony.

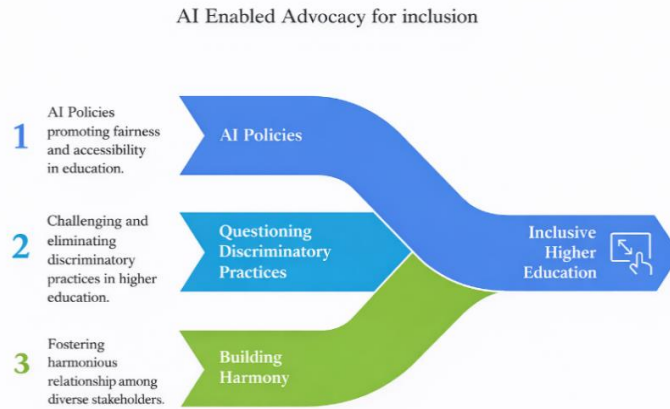


Fig. 2 AI advocacy enabled for inclusive higher education

7.5. AI as a Capacity Builder for Inclusive Higher Education

AI, as a capacity builder, strengthens skills, resources, and systems. An AI-enabled system enhances the educators’ capacity and develops a supportive system for an inclusive classroom. Fostering AI literacy among college students will prepare them for future workplace challenges. Further to that, AI advances institutional capacity for an inclusive education ecosystem. Based on the recent studies that highlight the role

of AI as a capacity builder, the author summarized the understanding as follows. The blended learning option provides remote teaching opportunities for Faculty, allowing them to enhance their digital teaching skills; inclusive technology addresses the needs of a diverse classroom, and AI equips educators to fulfil this purpose [5]. Faculty development programs offer opportunities to boost educators’ competency in handling an inclusive classroom [28].

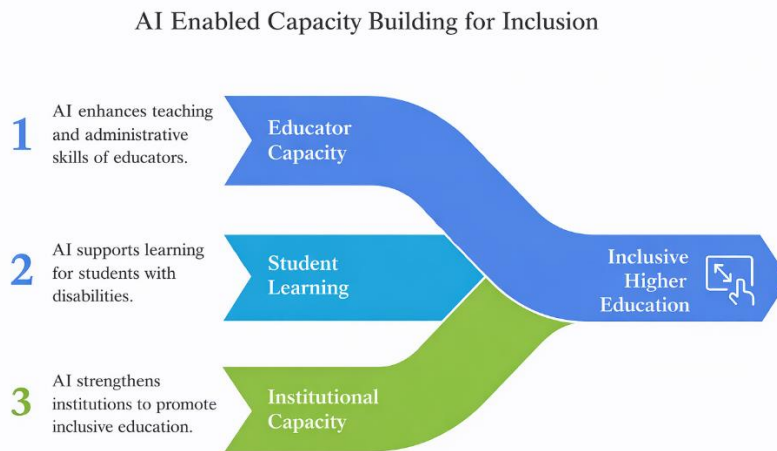


Fig. 3 AI-enabled capacity building

AI not only improves an educator’s inclusive teaching skills but also supports administrative and classroom

management activities. Human-machine integration, inclusive technology, data-driven insights, custom lesson plans,

innovative assessment and evaluation patterns, visual dashboards, etc., equip the teachers with advanced teaching and administrative skills to handle an inclusive classroom [29] [30]. AI advances the student capacity in various fields of study; the AI-aided adaptive feedback mechanism improves the learning outcome of an inclusive classroom [6]. Chatbots and translation software advance the learning outcomes and social engagements of students with disabilities [31]. Personalised support with assistive technologies helps students to overcome learning barriers in an inclusive education system. AI as a capacity builder improves the teaching and administrative capacities of an educator and the learning capacity of students with disabilities, and improves institutional capacity to create an inclusive teaching and learning ecosystem.

7.6. AI as an Awareness Creator for Inclusive Higher Education

AI serves as a tool to educate the stakeholders about the needs and challenges of an inclusive education. It promotes inclusive education aligned with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and increases awareness of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in education (Chalkiadakis et al., 2024). Educational chatbots, simulations, role-playing, personalised accessibility tools, and ethical AI literacy programs create awareness about inclusive higher education [32].

Educational chatbots offer anytime accessible diversity, equity, and inclusion practices in inclusive education [33]. Virtual assistants equip the educators and the students to report issues anonymously. Simulations and role play offer the opportunity to evaluate ethical dilemmas while shifting the

educational perspectives. AI tools help in real-time inclusivity through their practical application [34]. Analytics dashboards help track the progress of inclusivity practices and identify equity gaps. AI integration helps find biases in an inclusive classroom, shows different perspectives, and turns understanding into practical teaching methods. AI not only aids the inclusive teaching and learning process but also raises awareness among the stakeholders. AI aids in real-time data analysis; it can process large volumes of data. It can offer suggestions for marginalization in the student community based on their disability. By using these alarming inputs, educators, institutions, and policymakers can frame policies and strategies to address the underlying issue. AI builds the capacity for students, educators, and institutions, and it creates awareness of the need and the ways for inclusion. Personalized learning outcomes of an inclusive classroom can be analyzed. This analysis helps educators to assess student engagement with their teaching materials. Based on these insights, teachers can modify the materials to better meet the personalized needs of each student [35].

AI detects biases if there are any. AI can audit curriculum, language usage, assessment, grading patterns, etc., and take corrective measures. AI chatbots are common today; they can serve as support agents for children with special needs for their educational needs. Through recording information, chatbots will be able to spread awareness about the challenges or disparities the students face due to their varying levels of disabilities. AI facilitates immersive training for Faculty to understand the scenarios, such as how visually impaired students access campus facilities or how walking disabilities stop students from accessing learning resources.

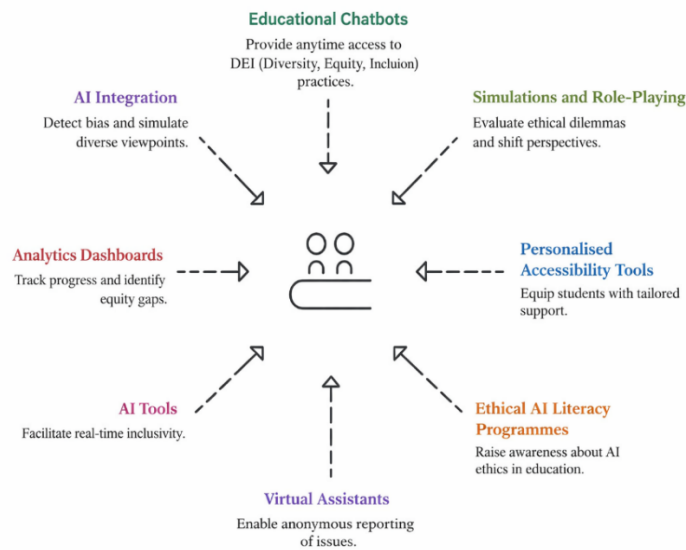


Fig. 4 AI-enabled awareness creation for inclusive higher education

This way, AI creates awareness and empathy among the educators. AI tools that analyze sentiments and process natural

language help collect student feedback and amplify their voices for a more inclusive education platform. In addition to

that, predictive AI models provide warning signs of dropouts. This awareness helps the institutions to take remedial measures to prevent dropouts at an early stage. Table 2 lists the role of AI as an awareness creator.

7.7. AI-Enabled Inclusive Higher Education

The above sections of this article examined how AI promotes advocacy, builds capacity, and creates awareness. A glimpse of those insights has been listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Multifaceted roles of AI

Sl No	Author	AI-enabled Inclusion
1	[5]	Faculty blended learning programs aim to increase educational accessibility for disabled students by promoting policy reforms for AI-inclusive training.
2	[27, 29]	AI technology's assistance increases harmony among diverse learners by standardising accessibility policies.
3	[24]	Generative AI diffusion policies question discrimination and access gaps and also promote global equity.
4	[22]	AI-driven feedback enhances the blended learning experience and assures inclusivity and accessibility in specific academic domains.
5	[16]	E-learning decisions question digital divides, pushing policies for equitable higher ed access.
6	[23]	Online practices for diversified groups promote transition policies, challenging access discrimination.
7	[25]	Multi-stakeholder inclusion decisions build harmony, challenging the avoidance of inclusive practices.
8	[26]	Belonging in collaborative groups promotes policies for structured inclusivity.
9	[36]	Inclusive opportunities question discrimination and advocate policy reforms.
10	[37]	An inclusive upskilling policy in higher education reduces the risks associated with AI automation and the labour market. disruption.
11	[5]	Inclusive technology, a customised lesson plan, and an assessment pattern are results of the Faculty's professional development.
	[28]	Human-Machine integration cultivates inclusive teaching skills.
13	[29]	Human-centred visual dashboard and real-time monitoring offer advanced administrative skills.
14	[38]	A large volume of diverse student data analysis offers data-driven insights for informed decision-making and an inclusive classroom.
15	[30]	AI offers custom lesson plans that advance faculty capacity and student engagement in an inclusive classroom.
16	[31]	Chatbots, ChatGPT, and AI-enabled rewriting technology help students suffering from ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and autism.
17	[27]	Predictive text tools and gamified Applications enhance autism spectrum learners' engagement.
18	[15]	Customised teaching and evaluation methods reduce student anxiety in an inclusive classroom.
19	[19]	The quality of AI training directly impacts AI-enabled student capacity building for inclusivity.
20	[39]	Student satisfaction in an inclusive classroom is a key indicator of quality education.
21	[21]	Sustainable academic delivery is significantly correlated with personalised learning, natural language processing, intelligent tutoring systems, and data-driven insights.
22	[40]	Automation of routine tasks builds an efficient administrative system. This system can tailor the services to students with disabilities.
23	[24]	Smart classroom infrastructure facilitates an inclusive classroom.
24	[41]	AI promotes quicker interaction with stakeholders in inclusive physical environments.
25	[38]	Offers easier data collection, segregation, and analysis that support inclusion.

Based on the above evidence, this article argues that AI integration into higher education not only aids it; rather, it has the potential to drive inclusive education in the higher education system.

8. Discussion

Inclusive education is the priority of the global higher education system, but the implementation of the same varies based on the socio-economic climate of the geographic location [33]. Low-income and high-income countries look at

pupils with disabilities differently. Low-income African countries face multiple hindrances, such as infrastructure, educators' training, and social stigma. Even with these challenges, countries like Nigeria and Ethiopia integrated Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and sign language training and subsequently developed a framework to support inclusion in higher education. On the flip side, high-income countries like Finland believe in and promote separate special education systems by empowering educators to focus on exclusive special education teaching [22]. This is a main

conflict point: low-income countries strategise for an inclusive higher education classroom, whereas high-income countries develop separate ecosystems for children with special needs. Today, technology is treated and used as a tool to bridge the inclusion gap. AI has the potential to redefine the future of inclusive education; it sets the trajectory for meaningful inclusive education [28, 31, 38, 42, 43]. Based on the domain and the type of disability, sessions can be tailored for individual needs in an inclusive classroom. Augmented Reality (AR) language translators reduce the disparity in education and cognitive load, though the rapid growth of generative AI opens complex ethical dilemmas. If AI is integrated into inclusive education effectively, it can reincarnate the traditional digital learning system into an AI-driven hybrid learning system.

This new system blends the merits of online and offline teaching and learning systems, though the governance gap and data privacy and algorithmic bias are growing concerns. Simultaneously advancing educators' capability for AI alignment is also essential. This way, AI necessitates policy reforms and new skills for educators. By examining the dimensions of advocacy, capacity building, and awareness creation, educators can refine policy and strategy formulation; this way, AI can drive inclusive education. In other words, refined policy and strategies can convert an AI-enabled inclusive higher education system into an AI-driven inclusive higher education. Figure 5 depicts this discussion outcome.

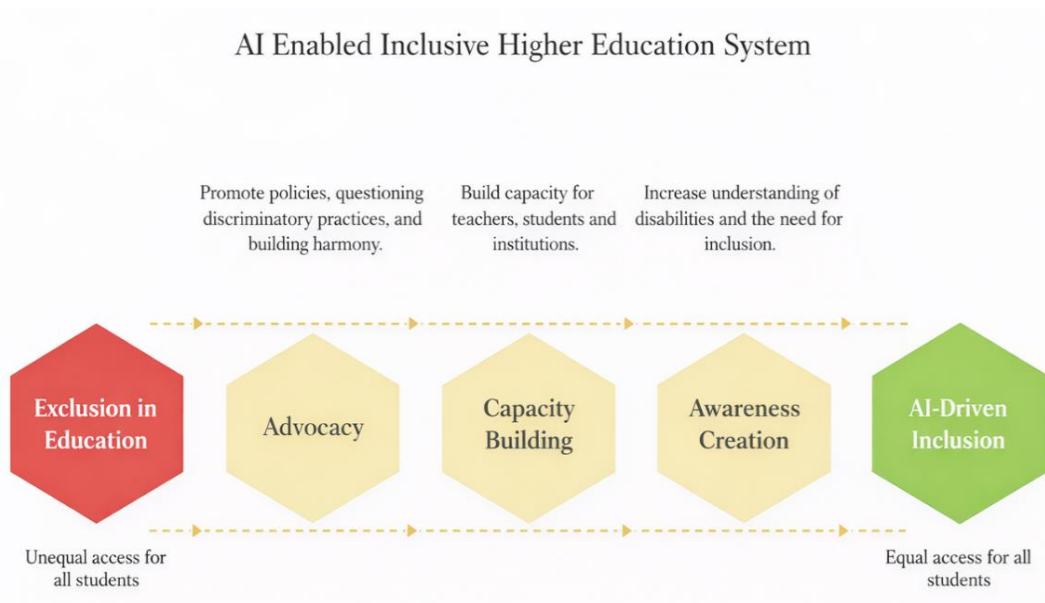


Fig. 5 AI-enabled inclusive higher education

9. Conclusion and Future Research Guidelines

AI has redefined the rhythm of mundane tasks, and this trend also impacts the higher education sector. Inclusive higher education is more meaningful when artificial intelligence serves as the core strategic component. Integrating AI into inclusive higher education requires renewed governance-level policies and operational strategies. Additionally, the gap between policy and practice needs to be nullified; otherwise, AI integration into inclusive higher education may deepen the existing disparities. The present article contextualises AI in the higher education system within the parameters of advocacy capacity building and awareness creation. Prior to the primary results, the current article briefly discusses the terms "artificial intelligence", "higher education", and "inclusive education", and it proceeds by examining AI's role in advocacy, capacity building, and awareness creation in an inclusive higher education context. A coherent AI-integrated strategic framework can be

developed for an AI-driven, inclusive higher education by keeping the current study's insights as a foundation. AI mimics human intelligence and intersects with technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) to enhance the learning experience of students with physical, mental, or cognitive challenges. However, closing the policy-practice gap by emphasising advocacy, capacity building, and awareness creation can lead to true inclusion in higher education. This article strongly argues that, within the context of AI-enabled higher education, the multiple tasks performed by AI fit within three pillars: advocacy, capacity building, and awareness creation. Research on AI in inclusive education is expanding, but there are still many unexplored areas. Future studies can address the relevance of AI tools for tackling complex academic assignments. Context-oriented educator capacity building is also a prominent area that requires attention. Diverse dimensions also exist to address infrastructure, access barriers, and ethical concerns.

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