PREDICTIVE LEARNING ANALYTICS

The promise of AI

| H3 | | ACT | PLAN | TRACK | PARK | | OPP | THR | NEU |

Contributing to www.campustechnology.com's article on 25 Ed Tech Predictions for 2021, Deep Uppal, VP Innovation and Technology, Public Sector, Information Builders commented that "2021 has the potential to fulfill the promise of many artificial intelligence-driven analytic offerings to ed tech. Educators will be able to pair AI and machine learning models with the social, emotional intelligence of their students to augment curriculums with learning strategies that resonate most with students. With these models, educators have the opportunity to observe learning styles and behaviors in a comprehensive way. Educators can develop teaching strategies that support developmental strengths and sidestep comprehension roadblocks. With AI-guided roadmaps, students will be able to tailor the pace of their curriculum, allowing them to self-actualise learning objectives by consuming content that they are more prone to identify with and execute on.

"Enhanced analytics will further allow instructors to support multiple options for the consumption of course content through process-driven automation, allowing students to take a lead role in how they would like to be taught parallel to outcomes-based objectives.

"Lastly, advances in automation will also allow for constant instructor availability supported by multiple methods for communication (i.e., video, forum, chatbots) programmed to supply immediate feedback to commonly asked questions related to course structure, resources and instructor availability.

"The era of iTeacher hasn't happened yet, but we are definitely getting closer."

HE'S ROLE IN RECOVERY

Serving society's needs

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The HE sector could play a role in recovery

In February, the Higher Education Policy Institute published a report calling for a reassessment of the role that universities can play in serving society's needs.

This report calls for a focus on skills at both a local and national level, through a foundation of a National Skills Council with access to £400 million worth government funds. It also proposes that a share of national funding for innovation is rerouted to local investment, and a civic index is created to help monitor institutions' local engagement. To improve access, the report tables the scrapping of first-year fees for those who are the first in their family to attend to university, and that outreach programmes are strengthened.

Though this report was written and published before the coronavirus pandemic had hit the UK, it outlines the ways in which universities can be the backbone of recovery. By focusing on the creation of skills, civic engagement, and widening access – particularly at a time of lower employment – the worst damage could be at least mitigated. The regional focus also would serve to boost local economies and job creation, rather than just looking to London.

This report builds on the Augar Review, published in May 2019. This headline recommendation of this report was the lowering of annual tuition fees from £9,000 to £7,500 and the reintroduction of means-tested grants up to £3,000. The review also advocates moving away from structuring loans around undergraduate degrees, and instead packaging them as a lifelong learning allowance.

These recommendations consider FE and HE as being part of one system, geared towards plugging national and regional skills gaps. It also pushes for giving universities the right to award certifications at lower levels than a full-length degree. This greater flexibility would be intended to allow universities to serve the needs of a more diverse student base, and to effectively meet collective needs.

FURTHER READING