Press Release

HKU Faculty of Education organises the 40th Anniversary Seminar Series – "AI is developing at a phenomenal speed. What is AI literacy and how can it be learnt?"

The Faculty of Education at The University of Hong Kong (HKU) hosted the seminar, entitled "**AI is developing at a phenomenal speed. What is AI literacy and how can it be learnt?**" yesterday (October 31). This seminar, as part of the Faculty's 40th Anniversary Seminar Series, was delivered by Professor Nancy Law, Associate Dean (Research) of the Faculty. It attracted over 300 participants from various countries and backgrounds joining online and offline, including educators, students, and community members.

The event commenced with opening remarks made by Professor Lo Yuen Yi, Associate Dean (Learning & Teaching) of the Faculty. She welcomed attendees and gave an overview of the Faculty's long history and contribution in education. "This year marks the 40th anniversary of our Faculty, but our roots trace back to 1917 when we started as a department in the Faculty of Art," Professor Lo said. "Over time, we have grown into a cosmopolitan faculty with a diverse mix of students and staff. We remain dedicated to making a positive impact locally, regionally, and internationally through our partnerships and collaborations."

In the seminar, Professor Nancy Law provided a review of the history of internet search technology, starting from directory-based, human-crafted search engines to PageRank-based Google search. She highlighted that these changes in internet search technology not only bring new possibilities but also impose new requirements on digital literacy. Professor Law emphasised the importance of AI literacy in education and its implication for learning. She stated, "I would say that AI literacy should be learned through authentic inquiry integrated across the curriculum, and not as a standalone subject." She discussed how technological advancements have historically shaped literacy requirements, urging educators to adapt curricula that reflect these shifts. "So pedagogical design is the key. There is a way for our curriculum to co-evolve with a changing social and technological context. This approach not only makes learning more relevant but also prepares students for the complexities of the digital age," said Professor Law.

Professor Law outlined the expected learning outcomes for students, which include gaining foundational knowledge of AI technologies, developing skills to utilise AI applications ethically, and fostering critical evaluation of AI tools. She showcased successful examples from local schools where AI literacy was embedded into various subjects, enhancing students' critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative skills. She underscored the importance of preparing educators to navigate these developments effectively, ensuring that teaching practices keep pace with technology.

Professor Nancy Law also discussed the current cascade model of curriculum development and teacher training, describing it as top-down and insufficient for rapidly evolving technological landscapes. She highlighted its limitations in fostering integration across subjects and restricting the creativity of teachers and students. To foster innovation and adapt to the dynamic nature of technology-related curricula, Professor Law suggested that a more flexible model is needed.

Following the presentation, Professor Gary Wong, Associate Professor of the Faculty's Academic Unit of Mathematics, Science, and Technology, moderated the Q&A session. The audience raised thought-provoking questions, including inquiries about the potential for AI to replace teachers. Professor Nancy Law offered a visionary perspective. Her view is that any job, whether in teaching or other professions, if that can be clearly specified in terms of contextual settings and the sequence of actions, will be replaced by machines sooner or later. Instead, she suggested teachers could look for ways to offload whatever machine accomplishable work they are doing to AI/teaching robots, leaving them the capacity to act as coaches, supporting students to excel and perform better. She stressed the role of teachers as learning designers, creating environments that facilitate student learning. Moreover, she underlined the importance of humanity in education, emphasising that machines should complement and enhance human capabilities rather than replace them.

About the 40th Anniversary Seminar Series
The year 2024 marks the 40th anniversary of the Faculty of Education at The University of Hong Kong. The 40th Anniversary Seminar Series offers a historical narrative and a perspective on education that connects the Past, Present, and Future. The works of the Faculty are closely linked to the global community of educational research, while at the same time deeply rooted in Hong Kong local society. The seminar series will cover the major themes of research in the Faculty including Language Education, Early Childhood Education, Speech and Hearing Sciences, Information Technology, International and Comparative Education, and more.

To view the e-version of this press release and download related photos, please visit: http://web.edu.hku.hk/press/press-release-SeminarSeries-Oct2024.

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