How AI tools for recruiters and students are reshaping campus placements

AI integration in campus placements presents challenges and opportunities for HEIs, recruiters, and students in the job market.

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File photo of a campus interview at the Kerala Institute of Tourism and Travel Studies in Thiruvananthapuram. HEIs today should provide students access to the AI tools and platforms adopted by recruiters so that the students are better prepared to face the evaluation processes and come out successful. | Photo credit: S. Gopakumar/The Hindu

Campus placements at business schools as well as engineering institutions have been going through challenging times due to macro-economic factors accentuated by the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on jobs. The rapid integration of AI into global job markets presents both a challenge and a strategic opportunity for Indian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to enhance campus placements.

This article analyses how AI tools and platforms can be used effectively by all the stakeholders - recruiters, HEIs and the students - to automate the entire placement cycle and improve overall placement outcomes. It also identifies the challenges faced in deploying them and how they can be addressed .

Key challenges in campus placements

The job market is increasingly becoming more competitive. On the one hand, the growth of openings for fresh graduates has entered a slow lane and, on the other hand, recruiters are resorting to multiple channels to source the candidates including job portals, in-house or through recruiting agencies. Companies are moving beyond traditional degrees and are prioritising candidates with hands-on skills in areas such as data analytics, digital business, AI literacy, and cross-functional agility.

With the reduction in corporate placement budgets driving operational efficiency, there is more reliance on remote recruitment through digital hiring tools . While the traditional bulk recruiting sectors like banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI) and IT companies have slowed down intake of freshers, HEIs need to expand the pool of recruiters to include new growth sectors such as Global Capability Centres (GCCs), ConsumerTech, FinTech, and renewable energy and align the skills of the students accordingly.

It is challenging to meet the career aspirations of the graduating students who have not yet reconciled with the ground realities. As the cohorts are diverse, due to their prior academic and social back grounds, their digital and communication skills need to be improved, necessitating personalized coaching at scale.

AI deployed in recruitment

Due to cost and efficiency considerations, a number of companies are using AI tools and solutions for the entire recruitment cycle. The Automated Applicant Tracking System (ATS)

is a software platform, which collects, sorts, and ranks resumes, filtering out unqualified candidates before a human recruiter ever sees the application. It provides transparent "match scores" with explanations for selection as well as rejections, thereby promoting fair and consistent hiring decisions. End-to-end technology platforms that offer such services include CodeinGame, Manatal ,HackerRank , iSmartRecruit and HireView.

Recruiters across the sectors are standardising on evaluation tools such as SHL/AMCAT, Aon, smartPredict and Mercer/Mettl for conducting remote proctored aptitude tests and tools such as HirePro, Talview, HireVue and VERVOE for evaluation of domain skills in areas like finance, analytics, HR, Programme coding etc. Consulting companies like McKinsey use gamified assessment case studies such as Solve for testing analytical and problem solving skills. Tools such as Hogan, Haver and Pymetrics are used for assessing behavioural and leadership skills, whereas Xobin is deployed to assess collaboration skills.

The role of AI in recruitment extends beyond the issuing of job offers. Companies are using AI-led virtual onboarding platforms to provide real-time responses to the new employee queries, which helps to foster deep engagement and reduces attrition rates. This focus on a "retention-first" approach ensures a seamless transition for graduates into their new roles.

AI for streamlining placement operations

Traditional campus placement processes in India are often characterized by manual data management, fragmented communication, and a lack of real-time access to data analytics for decision making. AI-powered platforms are transforming this by centralizing and automating the entire placement lifecycle. They can analyse job market trends and recommend curriculum adjustments in collaboration with recruiters. Tools like Superset and Unstop are being used to widen employer funnel and automate slotting, testing, and documentation.

The widespread adoption of AI by recruiters creates an urgent challenge for the students and the institutions alike: how to successfully navigate a system, where the first screening is done by a computer algorithm, not a human being. This calls for alignment of their placement strategy with recruitment strategy of the companies. HEIs should equip the students with the necessary skills and access to platforms such as Careerflow, Superset, Infy Resume Copilot and VMock that allow them to pass through these automated gates successfully.

This integrated approach can help the HEIs to manage large student cohorts and provide them with the personalized career counselling needed to navigate an increasingly complex job market. HEIs are adopting platforms such as ProTeen, Mindler, and Coach to conduct psychometric assessments in order to help the students identify their strengths and choose appropriate career paths well before the placement season commences. AI tools can also analyse a student's profile including their academic performance and skills and offer personalized upskilling recommendations.

Platforms such as Creatrix Campus and Superset provide a centralized data hub for all placement activities, bringing together students, recruiters, and placement officers on a single platform. This streamlines the communication by eliminating the clutter of the scattered emails and Excel sheets thereby reducing administrative workload.

These systems can handle job postings, instantly match candidates to job openings based on skills and academic performance, and automatically shortlist them for the next stage. The automation improves the quality of candidates presented to recruiters and increases placement success rates.

Platforms such as Saarthi offer AI-powered simulations and instant feedback, strengthening communication and job readiness for students. Video-based digital interviews can be simulated to prepare the students adequately for facing the job interviews. Large Language Model (LLM)-based models like SimInterview can simulate multilingual interview training system to create realistic virtual recruiters capable of conducting personalized, real-time conversational interviews.

Integrated dashboards can provide assessment history, interview recordings and real-time analytics on placement progress and success rates. This allows placement teams to identify the bottlenecks, refine the strategy, and continuously improve the placement outcomes with data-driven insights.

AI tools for students during placements

The challenge for students today is to create personalized and compelling Curriculum Vitae (CVs) in a job market saturated with applicants and increasingly reliant on automated screening systems. Tools such as Careerflow, Rezi.ai and VMock offer a suite of self-service tools for job search, preparation of AI-assisted resumes, and creation of

optimised LinkedIn profiles. The use of these tools, when done responsibly, empowers students to quickly generate ideas and refine their communication, making them more efficient and competitive.

Once students have identified their target roles, AI tools can assist in preparing at every stage of the recruitment process. Students can practice with tools such as PMaps Aptitude Assessment for cognitive and logical reasoning tests or simulate real-world scenarios on platforms like Harver/pymetrics for gamified behavioural assessments. Students can prepare themselves for interview using Final Round AI and Huru.ai, which offer students unlimited mock interview practice with AI-powered feedback and suggestions for improvement on their responses, body language, and vocal delivery. These platforms can generate questions tailored to specific job descriptions providing for targeted preparation.

Challenges in deploying AI solutions

Deployment of AI tools has enabled a number of HEIs achieve better recruiter satisfaction, reduced manual workload for placement cells, and enhanced student readiness for AI-driven hiring processes. However, there are a number of challenges to be addressed.

While a few hundreds of AI-based solutions are available, it is a daunting task to select the right ones for the HEI. Though help may be taken from portals such as SourceForge for comparative evaluation of the tools, there is no substitute for due diligence by the individual HEI.

The Data Privacy and DP Act 2023 mandates clear consent, purpose limitation, and breach reporting. Handling sensitive student data ethically and maintaining trust are imperative. HEIs must institute robust privacy policies and transparent data governance.

There could be issues with regard to the relevance and accuracy and also the in-built bias of the AI algorithms, which calls for robust testing, monitoring and continuous feedback to the vendors so as to update the AI models, if needed. There are also risks of impersonation and deepfakes in digital assessments, which can be addressed by using advanced AI proctoring and educating the students.

Multiple standalone tools can create more practical problems in deployments . HEIs can either go in for integrated solutions or integrate them into their existing student

information systems. Besides, faculty members and placement teams need to be trained adequately so as to ensure responsible and ethical deployment of the tools.

Conclusion

In today's challenging job market, it is imperative for HEIs to align their placement strategies with the job market trends in order achieve placement outcomes. Besides equipping the students with market oriented skills, they should provide students access to the AI tools and platforms that are adopted by the recruiters so that the students are better prepared to face the evaluation processes and come out successful. Due diligence is needed to select the right tools and deploy them ethically and responsibly.

(Prof O.R.S. Rao is the Chancellor of the ICFAI University, Sikkim. Views are personal)

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