Teaching and ChatGPT

■ Subhrangshu Sekhar Sarkar

eing for more than 30 years in the teaching profession, I have seen tremendous changes that are happening in the environment of teaching over these years. In our school, college days, the major source of knowledge had been our teachers, their marvellous classes, the textbooks that we used to read and for some of us, we might have used some reference books. Libraries, besides institution's library, the district libraries maintained by the Government were also a place in which we had to make a regular visit in a routine manner. We could find so many books, magazines, newspapers that added value to our knowledge base. For identifying and fine tuning of PhD research topic, one had to visit different University libraries, their PhD sections, to note down the topics on which PhDs were awarded by that particular university, There happened to be a register and one had to note down the topics of interest sitting there itself. It was a month-long exercise and also one had to travel to different places for the same, With the advent of photocopy machines, some universities allowed to take copies of some pages of a thesis, but majority did not. The only alternative was to sit in the library and note down relevant pages day after day. Now this has become history and may sound like a fairy tale to the neo-researchers. Now a days, they can visit websites like sodhganga and get all the thesis in different subjects at one place sitting at home. Even, they can download the entire thesis page by page. On one hand, it has brought a huge ease in their life for understanding the previous works but at the same time such easy downloading and access of information so easily may affect their innovativeness in finding out winning areas of research as many may fall in the trap of going in the same line where researches have already been carried out. It has also put a huge challenge in the form of intelligent plagiarism.

In the same way, we used to get so many queries from the students on the subjects that we taught to them and the same way, it was also our practice to go to our senior teachers to get our doubts cleared. With the advent of Google,

Youtube etc. the students are getting their answers to their queries very easily. There are many good souls in this earth who have uploaded excellent materials in almost all subjects in the form of texts or video lectures. When the students get better answers to their query by searching at google and their queries are addressed, they do not feel the need to come to the teachers. When I joined in IIM Shillong in 2009 for a stint of two years, in my first class, I could find all brilliant students were sitting with their laptops in a wi-fi environment. Now, whatever I teach, whatever topic I refer, they would immediately browse the topic and might also find a better teacher speaking on the topic. Then why should they listen to me or attend my classes. I must make my discussions in the class so different and interactive which will supplement the stuff that they are getting on the internet. The teaching community has somehow learnt to survive such challenges to make their classes interesting.

Google had brought a revolutionary change in the arena of search engines. Before Google came, we used to use yahoo, altavista, hotbot etc were used but the way of searching was completely different. One had to search for the particular word or the logic for searching two words together was different. Google, as a search engine, brought a total ease in this regard. This search engine is so smart and linked to Artificial Intelligence (AI) these days that it can predict the users' intention and accordingly, it provides the details. It has become very easy for the students, researchers etc to address their queries without help of the flesh and blood teacher. Students are getting ready answers from Google. Over and above, the AI is coming so hard and fast that a museum in San Francisco has imagined a memorial to the demise of humanity. Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) is a concept that is more nebulous than the simple AI that is cascading into everyday life, as seen in the fast emergence of apps such as ChatGPT or Bing's chatbot and the hype surrounding them. AGI is able to do anything that a human would be able to do.

ChatGPT is a very handy tool for the

students to get answers of anything under the Sun in a much better way than Google search can provide. For ready-made answers, students are turning to ChatGPT, an AI based chatbot created by a San Francisco based start up that has already given a big shock to Google and has created quite a stir in the education sector as well. Students find this Chatbot to lighten their load. To the amazement of all, ChatGPT can provide almost accurate, brief, and well-structured essay which one submits as query. The challenge for the teacher is the evaluation as the algorithm gives out different answers for different users. Educational institutions worry that free access to ChatGPT like software could impede the cognitive ability of their students and perpetuate a culture of plagiarism, which is already rampant since the invention of internet. Taking their cue from some educational institutions in the US and Europe, some Indian universities announced an on-campus ban on ChatGPT alongwith other AI tools like GitHub, Co-Pilot and Black Box. Till schools, colleges and universities decide which way to go, students are using this technology for more than fun and games. ChatGPT is bringing a total disruption in the teaching-learning sector. There are fears that students will lose creativity, innovative thinking and teachers' job will be insignificant. Banning Chat-GPT or such kind of AI tools may not be the right solution. Teachers must adapt to this environment to embrace Chat-GPT like tools in the process of teaching and learning. Teachers should use Chat-GPT to generate examples, ask students to generate questions for self-assessment, utilize it to improve communication, helping students to improve their referencing skills, nudging students to think. Teachers should follow innovative methods to redesign examination questions connecting to their personal experiences so that it is harder to use Chat-GPT to answer them. The evaluation of performance of students in the age of Chat-GPT should be based on assessing creativity, analytical skills, leadership, and social skills etc. Open book, open internal examinations will be the common rule. The role of teachers in the coming times should mainly focus to development of moral character, ethics, integrity among students.