

How the GenAI Revolution Shapes Opportunities for Higher Education: The Perceptions of the Israeli Academic Community

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Abstract

Between 2020 and 2025, Israel experienced four major events that affected its higher education system: COVID-19, the social protest and judicial reform, the October 7 Israel– Hamas war, and the GenAI revolution. This article presents findings from the seventh round of a three-year Delphi survey, aimed at identifying the impacts (losses and gains) of each event on Israeli higher education, from the perspective of academic and administrative staff. In this round, we examined whether each event was perceived as an opportunity or threat to higher education in Israel and assessed its impact on the losses and gains identified in previous rounds. Our findings show that the GenAI revolution is perceived as the opportunity with the highest potential to impact higher education in Israel, specifically through two gains: improving teaching and learning formats and designing study programs aligned with labor market needs. These results suggest that leveraging opportunities presented by the GenAI revolution may mitigate risks to higher education. In Israel, the four events that shook higher education in quick succession may be seen as springboards for renewal. Globally, the coming years will reveal whether universities can turn the GenAI revolution into an opportunity by enhancing the gains of improving teaching and learning formats while adapting the study programs they offer to the labor market.

Keywords: higher education, GenAI revolution, Delphi survey, opportunities and threats

1. Introduction

Over the past five years (2020–2025), while much of the world has experienced two major events with significant disruption to higher education, namely the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of GenAI, Israel has faced two additional large-scale events that have profoundly affected its higher education system: the social protest and judicial reform, and the October 7 Israel– Hamas war. These four events created an unusually condensed sequence of disruptions for Israeli society, and consequently, for higher education in Israel.

Each of these four events had both positive and negative impacts on higher education in Israel:

(1) The COVID-19 pandemic struck Israel in March 2020. As in many other countries, higher education institutions were required to rapidly transition to remote learning, a sudden shift that left many students and faculty members unprepared. This transition widened existing inequalities between those who were technologically equipped to adapt and those who were not. Despite these challenges, the crisis also generated new opportunities for international collaboration in research and teaching. The use of digital platforms accelerated, and new pedagogical models enabling meaningful remote learning were developed. Teaching and learning processes underwent transformations that fostered renewal within higher education systems, e.g., learning from anywhere, the implementation of active learning in classes, and the acquisition of new skills by students, such as critical and creative thinking (El-Azar, 2022; Treve, 2021).

(2) The social protest and judicial reform emerged in Israeli society in early January 2023. A wave of mass demonstrations swept across the country, as protesters filled the streets in opposition to the proposed judicial reforms. A profound public debate arose concerning the future of Israeli democracy, touching on issues of identity, values, and trust in institutions. On the one hand, the resulting polarization among students and faculty members threatened campus cohesion and contributed to a decline in trust in universities as neutral spaces. On the other hand, the situation positioned universities as vital forums for democratic debate and civic engagement, while increasing the demand for academic programs such as law, governance, ethics, and the social sciences (Albin et al., 2023; Hazzan, 2023).

(3) The October 7, 2023 war began when Hamas launched a large-scale surprise attack on Israel, killing civilians, breaching communities near the Gaza border, and taking 251 hostages. In response, Israel declared war and initiated an extensive military campaign in the Gaza Strip aimed at dismantling Hamas's military and governing capabilities and securing the return of all hostages. The trauma inflicted on Israeli society reverberated across universities, disrupting academic schedules and generating significant stress among students and staff in general, and particularly among those serving in reserve duty or residing in affected areas. The war also strained international research collaborations. Yet, within this darkness, acts of solidarity emerged: universities became community anchors, offering psychological support and safe spaces, and strengthening collaboration between academia and civil society organizations, reflecting the rapid recovery that characterizes Israeli society (Senor & Singer, 2023).

(4) The GenAI revolution began in Israel in November 2022, when OpenAI publicly launched ChatGPT. On the one hand, GenAI presents significant opportunities for higher education, including the redesign of curricula to incorporate AI literacy, the potential for personalized learning, and the expansion of cross-disciplinary research collaborations on AI applications. On the other hand, it raises serious concerns regarding the erosion of traditional assessment methods due to cheating and plagiarism facilitated by AI tools, the widening gap between rapid technological advances and faculty skills, and possible job-market shifts that could devalue existing academic programs (Lee et al., 2024).

While each of the four events was disruptive and could be examined as a separate individual crisis, viewing the sequence of crises as interconnected and analyzing their combined impact on higher education in Israel is essential and may provide valuable insights for shaping its future.

This article presents findings from the seventh and final round of a broader study we conducted over a period of three years. In this broader study, we implemented a Delphi survey (Green, 2014; Helmer, 1966; Linstone & Turoff, 2011) over six rounds, whose purpose was to identify both the positive and negative impacts – namely, gains and losses – of each event on higher education in Israel. We examined these impacts from the perspective of academic and administrative staff at universities and colleges in Israel.

In this final round, our objective was to compare the four events and, in particular, to examine whether each event was perceived as an opportunity or a threat to higher education in Israel, as well as to assess its impact on the losses and gains identified in previous rounds. Our findings show that the GenAI revolution is perceived not only as having the greatest potential to pose an opportunity for higher education in Israel, but also as the event with the most potential to enhance gains for higher education in Israel.

In light of these findings, we chose to focus this article on the positive potential transformation brought by the GenAI revolution to higher education systems, as perceived by the research participants. In the next sections, we present a theoretical review of the current change processes in higher education systems. In the research methodology section, we briefly present the framework of our broader study, focusing on the seventh round of the Delphi survey. The findings section presents the results of the seventh-round survey in relation to opportunities for higher education in Israel, as well as the gains associated with the GenAI revolution. In the discussion section, we elaborate on the potential of these gains to mitigate losses. Finally, the conclusion summarizes our findings and their implications for higher education systems worldwide.

2. Theoretical Review: Change Processes in Higher Education Systems

Change processes in higher education have accelerated over the past decade, driven by disruptive events such as the outbreak of COVID-19 and the rapid emergence of GenAI. Higher education institutions have had to undertake structural transformations, adapting existing systems and adopting new models for institutional governance, alongside the implementation of digital change. In this review, we outline three key issues currently confronting higher education systems: the adoption of structural change models; the adaptation of teaching, learning, and curricular frameworks; and the digital transformation reshaping higher education.

2.1 Structural Changes

Higher education is a complex system; therefore, the implementation of structural change processes requires integrative and systematic approaches. Dee et al. (2023) identify structural changes across multiple dimensions: hierarchies and authority relations, academic culture, regulatory and financial structures, and professional identities of faculty. A notable change is evident in the roles and identities of academics: the traditional model of the autonomous “all-around scholar-teacher” is increasingly being replaced by more differentiated roles that emphasize measurable outputs, collaboration, and performance.

Mirgorodskaya et al. (2023) situate higher education within global trends of post-industrialization, digitization, and the expansion of the knowledge economy, and propose a model of converged transformation in which higher education systems adopt common global patterns and technologies, such as increasing academic mobility and the use of digital learning. At the same time, it is recommended that national and cultural identity be maintained. In this model, higher education systems, viewed as foresight centers in their countries, serve as mediators between the individual, society, and the labor market.

The GenAI revolution introduced additional structural considerations. Katsamakas et al. (2024) present a model of “smart universities”, in which academic and administrative processes are redesigned through AI systems thinking. They present the feedback-loop model, which assesses the loops offered, e.g., if investment in AI increases the institution’s ability to improve teaching, learning, or research, then the loop is worth continuing; but if the feedback indicates problems, such as risks to academic integrity, the loop is terminated (Perkins and Roe, 2024).

2.2 Teaching and Learning Approaches

El-Azar (2022) defines teaching and learning trends that are shaping post-pandemic higher education: (1) learning from anywhere; (2) replacing lectures with active learning, by integrating teaching strategies such as inquiry-based learning, flipped classrooms, and asynchronous learning, thereby replacing the lecturer as the lead presenter (Mor et al., 2022); (3) an emphasis on teaching skills that remain relevant in a changing world: skills that cross disciplinary boundaries and improve learning, such as critical or creative thinking developed through project-based learning; and (4) the use of formative assessment instead of high-stake exams. In parallel, Guàrdia et al. (2021) propose the IDEAS framework (Intelligent, Distributed, Engaged, Agile, Situated) as a roadmap for next-generation pedagogy. The IDEAS model integrates data-driven decision-making, cross-institutional partnerships, active and problem-based learning, personalized and mobile learning pathways, and the situating of educational activities in real-world settings. Together, these developments reflect a broader reconfiguration of pedagogy driven by digital expansion and new demands on higher-education systems.

Noticeable changes are also evident in new learning program tracks. Varadarajan et al. (2023) analyze the process of introducing micro-credential programs and note that they are a flexible and relevant tool for improving skills and aligning with labor-market needs. They enable short, practical, and up-to-date training pathways, but they also create challenges: there is no uniform definition for these programs, nor for their assessment and accreditation methods, and questions remain about their credibility compared with traditional academic degrees. Nevertheless, this change process can operate within academia if institutions correctly assess their organizational capacities before entering the micro-credential market.

Taking into consideration the GenAI revolution, Wessels (2025) emphasizes the need for universities to develop pedagogical frameworks to guide how AI is used in teaching and learning. Dee et al. (2023) conclude that institutions must maintain a duality between innovation and preservation: between the desire to be innovative (market-driven research) and the need to preserve foundational missions, academic values, and tradition.

2.3 Digital Transformation

The changes in higher education institutions are currently characterized by a rapid shift from traditional learning models to “digitally appropriate” models. Singun (2025) identified several dimensions of digital transformation processes, including Digital Competence—the digital skills of faculty members and students—and Digital Academic—use of digital technologies in pedagogical processes of teaching and learning. The implementation of change is related to the institution’s ability to adapt to the changing demands of students, faculty, and administration associated with digital transformation. Gkrimpizi et al. (2023) argue that digital transformation involves not only the implementation of technologies but also multidimensional change. The main categories of barriers to digital transformation include environment, strategy, organization, technology, people, and culture. Mohamed Hashim et al. (2022) add that, in order to leverage the process of digital transformation, it is necessary to implement Evolutionary Learning, whereby organizations learn and adapt in real time.

In the context of the GenAI revolution, Soroker and Naier (2022) emphasize that universities have a crucial role in shaping the future of the workplace in society, not only through knowledge about the integration of AI systems in society, but also as an “accelerator of free thought”. Instead of teaching only static knowledge, universities should teach how to ask new questions, how to learn throughout life, and how to cope with rapid innovations and changes, as well as create learning environments that foster critical thinking, creativity, and adaptability.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Context: Higher Education in Israel

Higher education in Israel, as an active participant in the international academic environment, operates as a geographically isolated academic arena, yet recognizes the importance of interconnectedness with international academic institutions. Leaders of higher education institutions in Israel must work within professional networks and social networks to form partnerships that encourage the development and strengthening of relational systems both within and outside the institution (Getz et al., 2021).

3.2 Research Process: Seven Rounds of a Delphi Survey

In our study, we implemented a semi-Delphi survey (Green, 2014; Helmer, 1966; Linstone & Turoff, 2011). The Delphi survey is a research method based on multiple rounds of questions presented to experts in a specific field under examination, with the objective of reaching consensus regarding a new topic on which information is lacking. In the first round, experts are presented with open-ended questions about future trends in a specific field. The experts then respond anonymously while avoiding direct interaction with each other. In the second round, each expert is presented with all of the responses from the first round and is asked for feedback on the statements made by other experts. Subsequent rounds are conducted similarly until consensus is reached (Green, 2014; Helmer, 1966). The assumption is that with each round, disagreement decreases, enabling the formulation of a strategy agreed upon by most experts (Linstone & Turoff, 2011). This method is widely implemented in research across various fields, including policy design processes, e.g., in science and education (Mor et al., 2022); risk identification and assessment, e.g., in software projects (Nakatsu & Iacovou, 2009) and science and technology education in Israel (Even-Zahav & Hazzan, 2017).

We conducted the survey over seven rounds across three years, aiming to identify both the positive and negative impacts – namely, gains and losses – of each of the four events Israel experienced over five years: the pandemic, the social protest and judicial reform, the October 7 war, and the GenAI revolution, shortly after each occurred.

Table 1 presents the seven rounds of the Delphi survey process. Table 2 presents the six losses and six gains identified and validated through a comprehensive analysis of data from the first six rounds.

In the seventh round, our objective was to compare the four events, specifically to determine whether each was perceived as an opportunity or a threat to higher education in Israel, and to assess its impact on the losses and gains identified in previous rounds. This paper presents the analysis of the seventh round.

Table 1. Seven Rounds of Delphi Method: Date, Event, Objectives, Number of Responses, and Results

Round Event Date	Objective	No. of Responses	Survey Results
1 Post-Covid-19 September-October 2022	Identify losses and gains	239	- Five losses identified - Five gains identified
2 Onset of social protest February 2023	Rank losses and gains	117	- Five losses rated (based on severity of their impact on Israeli higher education) - Five gains rated (based on their potential to pose opportunities for Israeli higher education) - Additional loss and additional gain identified
3 Intensification of social protest May 2023	Agree on ranking of losses and gains	41	- Six losses and six gains re-rated - Gains characterized as ways of addressing losses
4 Initiation of legal reform – Attempt to cancel the Reasonableness Doctrine July 2023	Validate findings	20	- Agreement on findings from previous rounds examined
5 Two months into the Israel-Hamas War December 2023	Determine war's implications	68	- Implications of the war on severity of losses and importance of gains. - Three most severe losses and three most important gains determined.
6 GenAI is accepted as a pedagogical tool that cannot be neglected - Phase I April-June 2025	Determine the GenAI revolution's implications	135	- Most significant gains of the GenAI revolution are: ▪ Improving teaching and learning formats ▪ Designing study programs aligned with labor market needs - Most significant losses of the GenAI revolution are: ▪ Decline in quality of academic training ▪ Decline in demand for higher education
7 GenAI is accepted as a pedagogical tool that cannot be neglected - Phase II August 2025	Compare the four disruptive events	140 (134 agreed to include their responses in the data analysis)	- Ranking of the four events in terms of their potential to serve as opportunity or threat: ▪ Which event poses the most significant threat? ▪ Which event is perceived as having the highest potential to pose an opportunity? - Influence of the four events on intensity of losses or enhancement of gains identified: ▪ Which event significantly intensifies severity of losses? ▪ Which event significantly enhances the potential to materialize the gains?

Table 2. Losses and Gains Identified in First Six Delphi Survey Rounds

Losses	Gains
1. Constrained research budgets	1. Strengthening ties between academia and society
2. Underrepresentation of certain segments of Israeli society	2. Improving teaching and learning formats
3. Declining attractiveness of the academic career	3. Enhancing the status of academia
4. Decline in the quality of academic training	4. Promoting research collaborations in a renewed socio-geographic space
5. Declining demand for higher education	5. Designing study programs aligned with labor market needs
6. Politicization of Israeli higher education	6. Increased academic involvement in political discourse

3.3 Research Questions

In the seventh round of the Delphi survey, we addressed two research questions:

Q1. How do academic and administrative staff in Israel rank the four events that have occurred over the past five years in terms of their potential to pose an opportunity or a threat to Israeli higher education? Specifically,

(a) Which event is perceived as having the highest potential to pose an opportunity?

(b) Which event poses the most significant threat?

Q2. How does each event influence the enhancement of gains or the intensity of losses in Israeli higher education? Specifically,

(a) Which event significantly enhances the potential to materialize the gains?

(b) Which event significantly intensifies the severity of losses?

Due to space limitations, this article focuses on findings related to Q1(a) and Q2(a), which highlight the potential impact of the GenAI revolution on higher education systems worldwide.

3.4 Data Collection Tool: The Seventh-Round Questionnaire

To explore the research questions, we distributed a questionnaire through three mailing lists of Israeli academic communities, which were used for all seven rounds of the Delphi survey: Rama (Social Science Network), PostDoc-IL, and Academia-IL.

In the seventh questionnaire, participants were asked to compare the four events in terms of the extent to which they pose a significant threat or represent a significant opportunity for higher education in Israel. The question about opportunities was formulated as follows: “Please rank the four events that Israel has experienced in the past five years according to their potential to pose an opportunity for higher education in Israel.”

In addition, participants were asked to assess the losses (i.e., the negative impact of each event when perceived as a threat) and the gains (i.e., the positive impact of each event when perceived as an opportunity). The question on gains (which is the focus of this paper) was formulated as follows: “Below are the gains for higher education in Israel identified by participants in previous survey rounds. For each gain, please indicate the event(s) that have significantly increased or are expected to significantly increase its potential to materialize.”

Participants were asked to indicate their consent to participate in the research. A total of 140 responses were received; six participants did not consent to the inclusion of their data and were therefore excluded from the analysis.

3.5 Research Participants

Research participants included academic and administrative staff at universities and colleges in Israel. One hundred participants (71.4%) work at one of the nine Israeli universities; twenty-eight (20%) at one of the 52 colleges; and twelve (8.6%) in other institutions (e.g., think tanks) or with no academic affiliation. Table 3 presents participants’ distribution by rank, and Table 4 presents their distribution by academic field.

Table 3. Distribution of participants by academic position

Rank	Number	%
Administrative faculty member	3	2%
Academic faculty member	90	64%
Graduate student	15	11%
Postdoc	8	6%
Adjunct lecturer	3	2%
Others	21	15%
Total	140	100%

Table 4. Distribution of participants by academic field

Academic Field	Number	%
Social sciences	61	43.5%
Liberal arts	23	16.4%
Exact sciences	19	13.5%
Engineering	11	7.9%
Law	5	3.5%
Life sciences	3	2.1%
Medical sciences	4	2.9%
Arts	2	1.4%
Education	2	1.4%
Interdisciplinary	2	1.4%
Other	8	5.7%
Total	140	97.7%*

* Due to rounding, the percentages do not sum to 100.

4. Findings

4.1 Overview of Results

Answering Q1, our findings from the seventh round of the Delphi survey show that while the two local events—the social protest and judicial reform and the October 7 war—are perceived as the most significant threats for higher education in Israel, the two global events—COVID-19 and the GenAI revolution—have the highest potential to pose opportunities for higher education in Israel.

Answering Q2, not only is the GenAI revolution perceived as having the greatest potential to pose opportunities for higher education in Israel, but it is also identified as the event with the greatest influence on the enhancement of gains: Specifically, the improvement of teaching and learning formats, and the design of study programs aligned with labor market needs. At the same time, the disruptive local event, the social protest and judicial reform, is perceived as having the highest impact on the severity of losses for Israeli higher education, specifically the politicization of Israeli higher education and underrepresentation of certain segments of Israeli society.

These findings emphasize the potential of the global event – the GenAI revolution – to transform higher education in Israel and worldwide. Consequently, we focus on this disruptive event and its implications for higher education in Israel, answering Q1(a) and Q2(a).

4.2 GenAI Revolution as Having the Highest Potential to Pose an Opportunity for Israeli Higher Education

To answer Q1(a) – Which event is perceived as having the highest potential to pose an opportunity? – We analyzed how academic and administrative staff ranked the four disruptive events of the past five years in terms of their potential to pose an opportunity for higher education in Israel.

Our analysis shows that two events were consistently ranked at opposite ends of the scale. The October 7 war was perceived as having the least potential to pose an opportunity, while the GenAI revolution was seen as having the greatest. Specifically, most participants ranked the October 7 war as the event with the lowest potential (fourth place), with progressively fewer ranking it third, second, and first. This stepwise ranking indicates a consistent consensus that the October 7 war is not perceived as an opportunity for higher education in Israel (see Table 5).

The GenAI revolution exhibited the opposite pattern: most participants ranked it as having the highest potential, with progressively fewer ranking it second, third, and fourth (least potential). Here too, this stepwise pattern indicates growing consensus that GenAI is perceived as an opportunity for higher education in Israel. Table 5 illustrates the stepwise ranking patterns for both the October 7 war and the GenAI revolution. Calculating the average ranking (Table 5, last row) further reinforces the consensus view of the GenAI revolution as the event with the greatest potential to pose an opportunity for higher education in Israel. (Note: the lower the ranking, the greater the perceived potential.)

Table 5. Survey participants' Ranking of the Four Events by Perceived Potential for Opportunity (N = 134)

	COVID-19	Judicial reform & social protest	October 7 war	GenAI revolution
Highest potential for opportunity	20	13	10	91
Second-highest potential for opportunity	69	18	23	24
Third-highest potential for opportunity	24	54	43	13
Lowest potential for opportunity	21	49	58	6
Total	134	134	134	134
Average*	2.34	3.04	3.11	1.51

* The lower the average score, the more significant the perceived opportunity.

To summarize the consensus status, average ranking, and scope (local or global) of the events with respect to Q1(a), the GenAI revolution is consistently perceived as the leading opportunity, surpassing both the global event of COVID-19 and the local events of the social protest & judicial reform and the October 7 war.

Academic and administrative staff raised concerns that, if this opportunity is not properly leveraged, consequences could be severe/critical. In our survey, one participant, a graduate student in Social Sciences at one of the universities, commented:

“Opportunities – unlike risks – depend fundamentally on the actions of the universities and, in some cases, they may become risks. If the emergence of AI shakes the academic world out of its stagnation and rigid perceptions regarding publications, academic promotion, and faculty compensation, and forces academia to forge stronger connections with industry and beyond, then it will indeed constitute an opportunity. If not, it may mark the burial of academia itself.”

Next, we present the findings related to research question Q2(a). As shown below, these results further confirm the perception of the GenAI revolution as an opportunity for higher education in Israel.

4.3 The GenAI Revolution as the Greatest Opportunity for Enhancing Gains

To answer Q2(a) – Which event significantly enhances the potential to materialize the gains? – We analyzed how academic and administrative staff in Israel assessed each event in terms of its contribution to enhancing the gains.

Our data analysis shows that the GenAI revolution was identified as the event with the greatest influence on the enhancement of gains, particularly in relation to (1) improving teaching and learning formats by adopting more active, flexible, collaborative, and personalized approaches that leverage the capabilities of GenAI, and (2) designing study programs aligned with labor market needs.

Table 6 presents the six gains identified by the participants in the previous rounds of the Delphi survey (horizontally), the four disruptive events (vertically), and the participants' selection. For each gain, participants were asked to mark the event(s) that have significantly increased or are expected to significantly increase its potential. The rightmost column summarizes the number of responders per gain and reflects the scope of influence of each event. We define a significant impact of a specific event on a specific gain as one that was marked by over half of the participants, and so the vertical analysis of Table 6 shows the following:

(1) The GenAI revolution is perceived as the most influential event for Israeli higher education as an opportunity (284 votes across six gains).

(2) The GenAI revolution is the only event that significantly impacts two gains: improving teaching and learning formats and designing study programs aligned with labor market needs. (This finding is validated by the sixth Delphi round, in which these two gains were also identified as those with the highest potential to be strengthened due to the GenAI revolution.)

(3) The October 7 war not only received the lowest cumulative number of votes across the six gains (131 votes) but also did not significantly impact any gain. This further validates its status, identified in the response to Q1(a) and reflected in the consensus, as the least significant opportunity for higher education in Israel.

The orthogonal analysis of Table 6 shows that:

(4) Improving teaching and learning formats is perceived as the gain with the highest potential to materialize (120 participants indicated it, compared with 92-115 to the other five gains). As a globally potential positive impact of the GenAI revolution on higher education, this finding further highlights the opportunities that the GenAI revolution opens for Israeli higher education.

Table 6. Events (Opportunities) That Have, or Will Significantly Increase, the Potential to Materialize Each Gain (N = 134, excluding 6 participants)

	Strengthening ties between academia and society	Improving teaching and learning formats	Enhancing the status of academia	Promoting research collaborations in renewed socio-geographic spaces	Designing study programs aligned with labor market needs	Involving academia in political discourse	Sum for each event as an opportunity
COVID-19	44	62	27	53	35	12	233
Social protest /Judicial reform	47	7	34	17	9	89	203
October 7 War	35	7	16	20	13	40	131
GenAI	32	83	30	43	86	10	284
Number of participants who referred to the gain	115	120	92	111	112	113	

To highlight the positive impact of the GenAI revolution, we present the findings on its interconnections with the three gains of highest potential to materialize and the three losses most likely to occur (Note 1): (1) decline in demand for higher education; (2) unattractiveness of the academic career; and (3) decline in the quality of academic training (see Table 7).

Interconnections between the gains and losses (Table 7) were revealed from participants' responses to open-ended questions in Delphi rounds 6 and 7, where they explained their choices. Specifically, participants addressed the devaluation of degrees, disconnection from the public, and lack of relevance to practical life. Participants stated: *"There is no connection between degrees and earning potential or 'success' in the labor market... Lack of relevance, absence of prestige [of higher education], within a generation, the demand for it in the job market will decrease."*(Note 2) They also pointed to structural and organizational issues contributing to the unattractiveness of

the academic career, including lack of positions, difficulty dismissing faculty, and unfair promotion practices: "A rigid system structure that makes change difficult... the way faculty are promoted prevents public engagement and the creation of cluster leaders... The existing organizational politics within academic institutions".

Table 7 presents the number of participants who indicated that the GenAI revolution may intensify the severity of losses (left) or enhance the potential to materialize the gains (right). Analysis of Table 7 suggests that the above-mentioned losses could be mitigated by the three gains presented. If teaching and learning formats are improved and study programs are aligned with labor market needs, it is reasonable to expect an increase both in the demand for higher education and the quality of academic training. Furthermore, promoting research collaboration, as suggested by recent studies (Dee et al., 2025; Mirgorodskaya et al., 2023), may make academic careers more attractive.

Table 7. The GenAI revolution's Losses vs. Gains

Losses	#	Gains	#
L1: Decline in demand for higher education	74	G1: Designing study programs aligned with labor market needs	86
L2: Unattractiveness of the academic career	70	G2: Improved teaching and learning formats	83
L3: Decline in quality of academic training	53	G3: Promoting research collaborations in renewed socio-geographic spaces	43

These interrelationships between losses and gains are also reflected in the open answers, which highlighted how enhancing gains could help reduce the severity of losses. Participants expressed an optimistic view, suggesting that the GenAI revolution may help restore the status of professional expertise and the importance of academic knowledge within the public sphere, preventing its devaluation: "A renewed strengthening of the status of professional expertise [of academia] in society and the importance of knowledge." Participants suggested concrete actions for higher education institutions:

"Integrating students into social and environmental projects as part of their courses, and creating study formats that enable practical engagement alongside professional or industrial research... New study formats should be developed to allow students to engage in practical work while simultaneously conducting research or working in industry... The integration of GenAI into teaching, research, and social domains can help shape the future of academia in general and advance Israeli society in particular... There is an urgent need to revise academic curricula, make them more attractive, deepen the connection between theory and practice, and teach thoughtful applications."

5. Discussion

Our results show that Israeli academic and administrative staff perceive the GenAI revolution as having the highest potential to pose an opportunity for higher education in Israel, as reflected in the consensus and average ranking in Table 5. In addition, the GenAI revolution is perceived as the most influential disruptive event for enhancing gains in Israeli higher education (see Table 6).

These findings suggest that leveraging the opportunities presented by the GenAI revolution could mitigate risks facing higher education. Next, we elaborate on how the gains may mitigate losses. In Table 8, arrows indicate which gain may help address the corresponding loss, as discussed below.

Table 8. The GenAI revolution Gains vs. Mitigated Losses

Gains	Losses
G1: Designing study programs aligned with labor market needs	L1: Decline in demand for higher education
G2: Improved teaching and learning format	L2: Unattractiveness of the academic career
G3: Promoting research collaborations in renewed socio-geographic spaces	L3: Decline in quality of academic training

5.1 Designing Study Programs Aligned with the Labor Market (G1) May Mitigate Decline in Demand for Higher Education (L1)

The decline in demand for higher education is documented in studies on current administrative and management challenges in higher education institutions, which emphasize that academic programs often do not align with workplace needs or adequately prepare students for a changing workforce (Lee et al., 2024; Rahiman & Kodikal, 2024). Consequently, students seek alternative low-cost learning pathways (Deloitte, 2021). Enhancing G1 may help mitigate L1 through curriculum improvements and innovative institutional management approaches:

- (1) Curriculum adaptation to future workforce needs: Universities must prepare students for a rapidly changing professional world, ensuring that teaching reflects technological advancements, particularly the integration of AI across/into various industries and knowledge domains (Lee et al., 2024).
- (2) Design of new track learning programs: Varadarajan et al. (2023) note that micro-credential programs are a flexible and relevant tool for improving skills and aligning with labor-market needs. When implemented without compromising training quality, they can foster broad collaborations among stakeholders (learners, academic institutions, employers, and governments), while enhancing the prestige of higher education. These steps position universities as flexible and adaptive institutions in both policy and pedagogy (Lee et al., 2024).
- (3) Preparing students for a GenAI-driven workforce: Innovative pedagogy should provide students with interdisciplinary, maker-oriented, project-based learning experiences that link/connect theory to practice (Chiu, 2024).

5.2 Improving Teaching and Learning Formats (G2) May Mitigate Decline in Quality of Academic Training (L3)

The decline in the quality of academic training is represented in the literature in two ways: (1) Decline in students' cognitive abilities: Oakley et al. (2025) describe a decrease in core cognitive abilities among elementary and middle school students, including weakened working memory, slower information processing, difficulty connecting ideas, and challenges in constructing independent knowledge. Students demonstrate reduced capacity for sustained attention and deep comprehension, which in turn, may undermine mental flexibility and creativity; (2) Pedagogical challenges in the era of GenAI: Recent studies (Kenett, 2024; Lee et al., 2024; Rahiman & Kodikal, 2024) reveal significant ambiguity and inconsistency among faculty regarding best practices for integrating AI into teaching. Faculty members express concern that AI tools are often used to design and assess student evaluations, while the need is to assist students in evaluating the accuracy and quality of AI-generated information (Kenett, 2024).

The pedagogical and cognitive challenges underscore the need to redefine instructional methods, assessment approaches, and the role of student and faculty judgment in AI-supported education. Thus, L3 may be mitigated through improvements in teaching and learning formats (G2) using actions such as:

- (1) Research-driven pedagogical innovation: Ongoing research is needed to identify and refine best practices in AI-enhanced teaching and learning, integrating values and skills such as critical thinking, ethical awareness, and social responsibility (Lee et al., 2024).
- (2) AI-assisted personalized and adaptive learning: Integrating frameworks, such as the AI-ITLF (Artificial Intelligence-assisted Integrated Teaching–Learning Framework), enables tailored instruction, personalized mentoring, and data-driven prediction of learning outcomes (Chang et al., 2022; Rahiman & Kodikal, 2024).
- (3) Enhancing constructivist learning: Using tools such as intelligent chatbots and adaptive tutoring systems can foster active knowledge construction and critical inquiry while personalizing learning experiences (Imran et al., 2024). Changing educational paradigms: Reframing education to nurture students' ability to recognize unasked questions, tolerate ambiguity, and seek the unexpected. This shift emphasizes creativity, cognitive disorganization, hesitation, and non-linear thinking as desirable skills. Intelligence assessment evolves to include originality, questioning capacity, and tolerance for ambiguity (Kohan, 2025).
- (4) Design of National Initiatives: Education systems worldwide are preparing for a profound transformation in teaching and learning. In Israel, the Ministry of Education declared “The Year of Artificial Intelligence” (2025), launching initiatives that integrate AI-based tools into schools and teacher training (Israeli Ministry of Education, 2025).

5.3 Promoting Research Collaborations in Renewed Socio-geographic Spaces (G3) May Mitigate the Unattractiveness of the Academic Career (L2)

The unattractiveness of the academic career, identified as a risk for higher education in Israel, reflects a reduction in academic positions and research budgets, and an incentive system that limits professional advancement to research

and publication, alongside greater opportunities for substantial research funding abroad. Soroker and Naier (2022) highlight the importance of the national budget allocated to higher education in Israel, noting a positive trend over the last decade (2012–2022), during which the budget has nearly doubled. This signals the importance of academia as a central player in Israel's democratic and societal framework and the need for higher education to adapt to global technological transformations, including the GenAI revolution. However, current events in Israel, specifically the Israel-Hamas war, place this process at risk, as reductions in the state budget have already resulted in cuts to higher education funding (Detel, 2024). The unattractiveness of the academic career is also reflected in the changes in faculty professional identity (Dee et al., 2023) and a decline in their personal well-being. In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic increased academics' concern about their well-being and mental health, leading to expectations for more holistic institutional support (Ewing, 2021).

Enhancing G3 may mitigate L1 by strengthening international research collaborations that improve the attractiveness of the academic profession, along two dimensions:

(1) International collaborations. Mirgorodskaya et al. (2023) propose adopting a converged-transformation management model in which institutions expand global research networks through coalitions linking universities across countries. These international links may enhance the prestige of higher education institutions and increase their appeal as rewarding academic workplaces. Furthermore, the emergence of multi-stakeholder learning communities during the Covid-19 crisis contributed to rebuilding public trust in government at a time of uncertainty. Cross-sector partnerships involving higher education are expected to continue and may influence how faculty members evaluate the supportiveness and reputation of their institutions (Treve, 2021). In the Israeli context, the Abraham Accords, both those already signed and those potentially forthcoming, may open new opportunities for international research partnerships

(2) Improving faculty skills. Universities should equip faculty with skills to engage effectively with AI by providing institutional support, training, and ongoing professional development. Such commitments to capacity building may strengthen faculty satisfaction and retention (Lee et al., 2024; Rahiman & Kodikal, 2024).

6. Conclusion

In this paper, we assess the perceived impact of the GenAI revolution on the *losses* and *gains* identified in our broad Delphi study conducted over three years and seven rounds. Our findings indicate that the GenAI revolution is perceived as the event with the highest potential to pose an opportunity for higher education in Israel, specifically through two gains: improving teaching and learning formats and designing study programs aligned with labor market needs. The combination of these two gains is important since, if fulfilled, the GenAI revolution will enable higher education not only to offer better study programs in terms of teaching and learning quality, but also in terms of their alignment with labor market needs. As emphasized in this paper, this conclusion is supported by recent studies and is also relevant to the global higher education policy community (Kohan, 2025; Lee et al., 2024).

In the local context, Israeli society is characterized by its ability to act and adapt during crises (Senor & Singer, 2023). In light of the opportunity presented by the GenAI revolution, our results suggest/show that, since the cumulative impact of the four events resembles seismic shifts that shook Israel's higher education foundations in rapid succession, the challenge is to view them as springboards for renewal. In this context, we identify opportunities for higher education in Israel by enhancing the gains of improving teaching and learning formats while adapting programs to labor market needs.

From a broader perspective, the coming years will show whether universities can do more than adapt: can they turn crisis into opportunity and help shape stronger, more adaptive higher education systems that benefit both individuals and society?

From our research perspective, this study has limitations. We conducted Delphi surveys among academic and administrative faculty members but, at this stage, lacked input from other higher-education stakeholders: leaders and policymakers, students, and representatives of Israeli industry. We plan to further validate our findings through interviews with these stakeholders. In addition, further research will track trends in enrollment across different academic programs and changes in study programs in Israel. These data will be compared with global trends to determine the influence of national and global events as threats and opportunities for higher education.

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Notes

Note 1. We present the three losses with the highest scores (number of participants who believe the GenAI revolution intensifies each loss), listed from highest to lowest.

Note 2. Quotes from multiple research participants were combined (separated by three dots).

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Both authors contributed the same.

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Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Ethics Approval

Participation was voluntary, and no personal, sensitive, or identifying information was collected. Participants could stop completing the questionnaire at any time without providing a reason or incurring any consequences.

Data Availability Statement

Available upon request: The datasets generated and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

The authors used ChatGPT 5.6 solely for language editing and grammar improvement. The authors reviewed and verified all AI-assisted revisions and take full responsibility for the final content of the manuscript.

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