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The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Enhancing Classroom Learning: Ethical, Practical, and Pedagogical Considerations

Mr. Olukayode Emmanuel Apata, Texas A&M University

Olukayode Apata is a third-year Ph.D. student in Research, Measurement, and Statistics at Texas A&M University. He has a master's degree in educational studies at the University of Southern Mississippi. He also received another master's degree in educational evaluation from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. He had a bachelor's degree in physics education at Adekunle Ajasin University, Nigeria. His research interests are Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education and STEM education research.

John O Ajamobe, Texas A&M University

John Ajamobe is a doctoral student in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M University. He was a former high school educator and has an interdisciplinary background in economics and educational leadership. His research focuses on improving educational systems through advocacy for school safety, economics of education, and school accountability.

Segun Timothy Ajose

Mr. Peter Oluwaseyi Oyewole, Kent State University, Kent

Peter Oyewole is a doctoral candidate and teaching instructor at the School of Teaching Learning and Curriculum, Kent State University.

Grace Iyinoluwa Olaitan

Session 5

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Olukayode E. Apata[1*]
Department of Educational Psychology
Texas A&M University

John Oluwaseun Ajamobe[2]
Department of Teaching, Learning and Culture
Texas A&M University

Segun Timothy Ajose[3]
Department of STEM Education
University of Kentucky

Peter O. Oyewole[4]
School of Teaching Learning and Curriculum
Kent State University

Grace Olaitan[5]
Department of Industrial Technology, Instructional Design, and Community College Leadership.
Mississippi State University

Abstract

This paper examines how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can enhance personalized learning, simplify assessments, and support collaborative work in engineering education. We used constructivist learning theory to provide a foundation for understanding how AI tools can create dynamic and individualized learning experiences. AI's adaptive capabilities allow educational content to be tailored to each student's unique needs, help them sustain engagement, and support differentiated instruction. To guide educators in applying AI strategically, we developed a framework that categorizes AI applications in the classroom into three core areas: personalized learning and engagement, automated assessment and feedback, and collaborative learning. This framework offers a structured approach for educators and institutions to understand and implement AI tools that best align with their teaching goals. However, AI integration in education introduces several ethical and practical challenges, particularly regarding data privacy, academic integrity, and equity. To address these concerns, this study recommends establishing clear data protection protocols, guidelines for ethical AI use, and training programs that empower educators to use AI responsibly. Finally, we conclude with recommendations for responsible AI integration and suggest areas for future research, particularly longitudinal studies examining AI's impact on educational outcomes over time and across diverse learning populations. This study provides valuable insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers aiming to create a balanced, ethical, and effective framework for AI integration in learning environments.

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has recently influenced the educational landscape. It provides new tools that enhance teaching efficiency and student engagement. AI-driven applications, such as ChatGPT, are increasingly used in classrooms to deliver personalized learning experiences, streamline grading, and support diverse student needs (Chen et al., 2020). Studies indicate that AI's ability to tailor educational content to individual learning styles can foster student engagement and improve academic outcomes (Huang et al., 2021). For instance, AI-powered assessment tools can provide real-time feedback and help educators focus on more important instructional tasks (Slimi, 2023).

However, integrating AI into engineering education also brings ethical and practical challenges. Data privacy is a significant concern, as AI systems often require extensive data collection, raising risks around sensitive student information (Bennett & Abusalem, 2023). Academic integrity is another pressing issue, as AI tools capable of generating content may raise concerns about plagiarism and dishonesty in assessments (Okello, 2023). Additionally, bias within AI algorithms can result in unequal learning experiences, potentially favoring specific demographic groups and exacerbating educational inequalities (Kamalov et al., 2023).

This paper examines AI's use and ethical implications in educational settings, especially engineering education. It aims to provide insights for educators and policymakers. It offers a balanced perspective on how AI can be responsibly integrated into the classroom ethically.

Theoretical Framework

Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist Learning Theory suggests learning is an active, constructive process where students build new knowledge based on their experiences and prior understanding. In this model, learners are not passive recipients of information but active participants who engage with, interpret, and apply knowledge meaningfully (Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978). This theory supports the use of technology in classrooms, particularly AI tools, as they can facilitate personalized, interactive, and student-centered learning experiences that align with constructivist principles. Research by Apata (2019) affirmed that students' prior knowledge of mathematics is a cognitive foundation for constructing a deeper understanding of physics, demonstrating the role of prior experiences in shaping new learning. In line with Constructivist Learning Theory, students actively build on existing knowledge to engage with complex problem-solving tasks. Similarly, AI tools can leverage these foundational skills to provide tailored support and enhance learning outcomes. For instance, AI-powered tutoring systems can assess a student's proficiency in engineering and offer targeted interventions to address gaps, enabling smoother progression in engineering subjects (Frankford et al., 2024).

POTENTIAL APPLICATIONS OF AI IN THE CLASSROOM

Personalized Learning and Student Engagement

AI's capacity to deliver personalized learning experiences is one of its most impactful educational contributions. AI systems analyze students' progress and tailor educational content to match their learning style, speed, and needs. This personalized approach can significantly encourage student engagement and improve academic outcomes by ensuring that each student progresses at a pace suitable to their abilities. AI-powered reading platforms, for example, can adjust reading materials based on fluency and comprehension levels, providing targeted exercises and immediate corrective feedback to address specific student's weaknesses (Akavova et al., 2023). This personalized feedback allows students to feel supported

and engaged, as the learning experience is tailored to their unique challenges and progress.

In engineering education, AI-based platforms adjust the difficulty of problems according to a student's performance, keeping them engaged and challenged without feeling overwhelmed (Slomp et al., 2024). Similarly, language learning applications use AI to adjust lesson difficulty dynamically, which ensures that students are constantly improving without encountering content that is too easy or too difficult (Gutta Essa et al., 2023). These adaptive systems create a personalized learning environment that fosters motivation and engagement.

Automated Assessment and Feedback

Automated assessment and real-time feedback are essential to AI's impact on education. AI-driven assessment systems allow instructors to evaluate assignments, quizzes, and even open-ended responses swiftly, leveraging machine learning models to process academic data and provide timely insights that can be used to adjust instruction according to each student's needs (Alsariera et al., 2022). This feedback helps learners quickly identify and correct mistakes, reinforcing their understanding and enabling incremental improvement in their skills. Interestingly, tools such as adaptive e-learning platforms offer detailed feedback on student performance, which not only aids students in self-correction but also assists educators in identifying and understanding individual learning patterns for more targeted instructional support (Vittorini et al., 2020).

Moreover, automated grading systems reduce the administrative workload on educators, allowing them to focus on higher-order instructional tasks. For instance, in large classrooms or online courses, where manual grading can be time-consuming, AI-driven platforms can handle assessments at scale, thus streamlining the grading process and ensuring consistent evaluation standards (Aggarwal et al., 2023). AI's efficiency in assessment enhances students' educational experience and contributes to more sustainable educational practices by maximizing educators' time and resources.

Facilitating Collaboration and Group Work

AI can also facilitate collaborative learning by providing virtual spaces and tools that support teamwork. AI-driven platforms allow students to collaborate on projects by coordinating tasks, monitoring individual contributions, and offering feedback on group dynamics. These tools help to ensure balanced participation and effective communication within student groups and foster essential teamwork skills that are valuable in academic and professional settings (Altaleb et al., 2023). For example, platforms like Google Workspace integrate AI features to enhance collaborative tasks, enabling students to co-edit documents, track contributions, and make real-time edits. These AI-supported collaborative environments allow students to experience teamwork in an organized, interactive format that mirrors real-world collaborative scenarios (Rad et al., 2018).

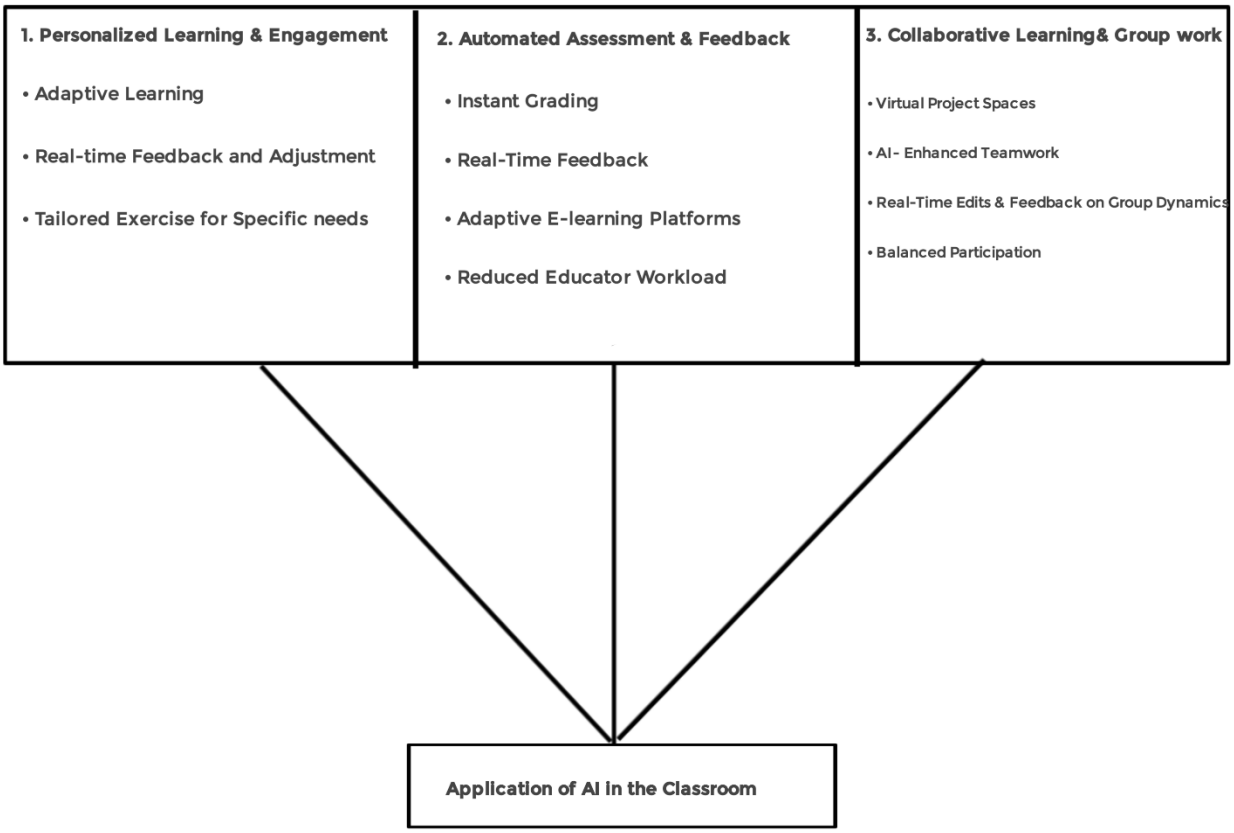

Figure 1: Framework of AI Applications in the Classroom

Ethical and Practical Considerations

Data Privacy and Security

Data privacy and security are paramount concerns in the application of AI in education. AI systems often require extensive data collection to personalize learning, posing risks related to data storage and unauthorized access. Irfan and colleagues (2023) highlight the importance of strict data protection measures to handle sensitive student information safely. Educating students and faculty on data protection practices is also crucial in mitigating these risks because it fosters a culture of privacy awareness within educational institutions (Wang, 2020). Furthermore, integrating transparency in AI systems allows stakeholders to understand how their data is used, building trust and compliance with privacy standards (Shi & Xuwei, 2023).

Academic Integrity

AI tools in education, such as ChatGPT, present new challenges to academic integrity, making it easier for students to engage in AI-assisted cheating. The work of Xie et al. (2023) emphasizes the need for educators to design assignments that require critical thinking and originality, making it harder for students to misuse AI for academic dishonesty. Moreover, AI-driven plagiarism detection systems can support educators in identifying AI-generated content, which helps maintain academic standards (Farrelly & Baker, 2023). Educators are also encouraged to communicate clear guidelines on acceptable AI use in their courses (Figueroa & Eaton, 2023).

Equity and Fairness

AI systems may unintentionally strengthen biases and impact underrepresented groups in education. Studies show that algorithmic biases in AI can exacerbate educational inequities, particularly affecting students from marginalized backgrounds (Ma & Jiang, 2023). Kuhlman et al. (2020) encourage educators and developers to scrutinize AI models to ensure that these tools do not favor specific demographic groups, supporting equitable educational outcomes. Moreover, developing AI systems with built-in fairness checks and bias testing can mitigate these issues, promoting a fairer learning environment for all students (Holmes et al., 2021).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EDUCATORS AND INSTITUTIONS

Guidelines for Responsible AI Use and Recommendations for Future Research

To incorporate AI responsibly, educators and administrators should establish clear usage policies that define appropriate AI applications in educational settings. Institutions can ensure that students and staff know about AI's benefits and ethical considerations by fostering an AI-literate culture. Practical steps include creating guidelines for data handling, ensuring transparency in AI system operations, and educating stakeholders on the responsible use of AI tools. For instance, Bai et al. (2023) highlight the importance of involving educators in the integration process to maintain human-centered teaching approaches while benefiting from AI advancements. Furthermore, integrating ethics and data privacy training in AI literacy programs helps cultivate a conscientious AI culture within educational settings (Silva & Janes, 2023). Similarly, Zhai et al. (2021) asserted that creating structured policies around AI can mitigate potential risks that misuse of AI can cause, ensuring a secure and supportive learning environment. Building on these insights, AI tools offer opportunities to foster personalized learning and support diverse educational needs.

As AI’s role in engineering education continues to evolve, additional research is essential to understand its long-term impacts fully. Suggested areas for future studies include longitudinal research to monitor AI's effects on engineering education over extended periods and across diverse student demographics. Research calls for examining AI’s influence on critical skills, equity, and teacher-student relationships, providing insights into optimizing AI applications in various educational settings (Zhang & Aslan, 2021). Furthermore, studies that focus on interdisciplinary collaborations can support the development of comprehensive frameworks for AI in education, helping institutions to navigate ethical, social, and pedagogical challenges (Shi & Xuwei, 2023).

Conclusion

The Integration of AI into engineering education has led to a tremendous transformation in the educational sector by promoting quality learning experiences in the classroom. This has also gone a long way in addressing many long-standing educational challenges that have plagued teaching and learning. This study highlights how AI can be applied in the classroom to foster personalized learning, automated assessment and real-time feedback, and collaborative learning among students. Teachers can leverage AI’s adaptive ability to design an individualized learning experience to meet students' diverse educational needs, which consequently can help close the learning gaps among students and maintain student engagement. In addition, AI’s capacity to provide an automated assessment and real-time feedback can greatly lessen teachers’ administrative loads and give them more time to focus and prepare an effective and efficient teaching and learning experience for students. AI can also help promote teamwork, critical thinking, and

communication skills among students.

Despite the undeniable application of AI in education, its integration into classrooms is still faced with some challenges. The major challenges confronting the full integration of AI into the classroom are ethical considerations such as data privacy and security, academic integrity, and equity. There is a concern about data security and privacy of personalized learning systems, which often require extensive student data as this poses a data security threat to students. Also, the possibility of AI tools encouraging academic dishonesty requires strict guidelines and a strong plagiarism detection system. To address these challenges, all educational stakeholders and AI technologists must work together to create ethical standards and regulatory frameworks for AI integration in education. This study acknowledged the need for further research to use longitudinal studies to investigate the long-term impacts of AI on teaching and learning outcomes. Although the value of AI in advancing classroom teaching and learning cannot be overemphasized, its application and integration must be guided by ethical considerations that can stop its misuse.

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OLUKAYODE E. APATA
Mr. Olukayode E. Apata is a third-year Ph.D. student in Research, Measurement, and Statistics at Texas A&M University. He has a master's degree in educational studies at the University of Southern Mississippi. His research interests are Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education and STEM education research.

JOHN OLUWASEUN AJAMOBE
Mr. John Oluwaseun Ajamobe is a doctoral student in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M University. He was a former high school educator and has an interdisciplinary background in economics and educational leadership. His research focuses on improving educational systems through advocacy for school safety, school climate, economics of education, and school accountability.

SEGUN TIMOTHY AJOSE
Mr. Segun Timothy Ajose is a PhD student in the Department of STEM Education, University of Kentucky. He is a professional Science teacher and educational researcher with experience in leadership and administration. His research interests are on teacher's mathematical content knowledge, teacher noticing of students' mathematical thinking and Students' interest in STEM.

PETER OYEWOLE
Peter Oyewole is a doctoral candidate and graduate instructor in the School of Teaching Learning and Curriculum at Kent State University, Kent, Ohio.

GRACE OLAITAN
Grace Olaitan is a doctoral student in the Department of Industrial Technology, Instructional Design, and Community College Leadership. Mississippi State University. Her research focuses on evaluating the effectiveness, usability, and engagement of Virtual Reality-based educational resources, with the role of AI-driven instructional guides in STEM education.