Proceedings of ICSPHS 2026 Symposium:Ethics, Law, and Psychology: Interdisciplinary Reconstruction of Humanities in Medicine
DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.ZJU31647

A Study on the Impact of AI Intelligent Learning Tools on Students' Learning

Jeremy ChenXuan Li

Torrey Pines High School, San Diego, USA
jeremychenxuanli@gmail.com

Abstract. The introduction of artificial intelligence learning tools in educational environments highlights a noticeable gap between expected goals and actual impacts on student learning. This paper conducts a comprehensive analysis of 28 peer-reviewed studies published between 2018 and 2024, supplemented by direct classroom observations. Notably, the effectiveness of such tools appears to be more closely linked to how they are integrated into teaching practices rather than their technological complexity. Research findings suggest that AI tools are most beneficial when they are used to stimulate idea generation rather than simply providing solutions. This approach has been shown to enhance knowledge retention and transfer. Based on these findings, we propose three evidence-based recommendations for the effective integration of AI tools in educational settings: first, AI technologies should be designed to support and enhance student cognition rather than replace it; second, critical evaluation of AI should be integrated into formal curricula to encourage students to develop a deeper understanding of how these tools work; and third, policies should be implemented to ensure that all students have equal access to AI technologies, regardless of their socioeconomic background. By aligning the use of AI tools with the cognitive development goals of education, it is believed that schools and educators can achieve more meaningful and equitable outcomes for all students.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence in education, personalized learning, cognitive dependency, educational equity

1. Introduction

Most current research looks mainly at short-term results like test scores. It often misses how AI can change learning habits over time, for better or worse, and whether it helps or worsens learning gaps between different groups of students.

AI learning tools can change education in good ways. They can give personalized lessons and instant feedback, letting students learn in ways that fit their needs. They can help teachers spot where students need extra help. These tools can also make learning more interesting through games, simulations, and multimedia.

However, using these tools widely also brings problems. One worry is that they might make existing education gaps bigger. Students from poorer communities might not get the same access to good AI tools. There's also concern that AI might replace some teacher roles, missing the human

© 2026 The Authors. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.ZJU31647

connection that helps learning. Sometimes, AI tools might give unfair or wrong assessments of student work.

To deal with these challenges and make the most of AI's benefits, researchers need to study these tools more carefully. Studies should look beyond test scores to see how AI affects deeper learning. They should also examine the fairness of using AI in schools. Researchers, teachers, policymakers, and tech developers need to work together to use AI responsibly in education.

The current research aims to fill a void in the existing literature by delving into the various ways in which artificial intelligence (AI) influences students. The study specifically looks at how AI tools impact cognitive strategies, independence in learning, and overall academic motivation, taking into account differences among different demographic groups. To achieve this goal, a comprehensive approach is taken, involving a thorough review of scholarly articles published within the last six years, along with the collection of observational data from 15 educational institutions spanning various regions and economic backgrounds. The research methodology is structured around three main questions: How do utilization patterns of AI tools differ according to learner age, academic discipline, and socioeconomic background? Which underlying mechanisms account for both positive and negative learning outcomes associated with AI implementation? What practical approaches can educational institutions adopt to maximize pedagogical benefits while minimizing potential harms? Addressing these questions proves essential for constructing robust frameworks that leverage AI's potential without compromising learning integrity [1,2]. This paper offers a balanced analysis and implementable recommendations to inform responsible AI integration in educational contexts.

2. Current patterns and disparities in AI tool implementation

AI implementation in educational environments demonstrates considerable heterogeneity. Application and efficacy appear influenced by three primary factors: learner developmental stage, disciplinary characteristics, and institutional resource availability [3,4].

2.1. Educational level variations

Clear progression patterns can be seen across different educational stages. In primary education, which typically encompasses ages 6 to 11, there is a focus on cautious and highly structured implementation of educational tools. Educators often play a significant role in facilitating this process, utilizing gamified applications to help students develop foundational literacy and numeracy skills. As students move on to secondary education, between the ages of 12 and 17, there is a noticeable shift towards greater independence in utilizing educational technology. Students may rely on technology for assistance with homework, especially in subjects that require more structured learning, such as mathematics and foreign languages. Research shows that the adoption of educational technology accelerates the most during the middle school years, between ages 11 and 14. In higher education, artificial intelligence has evolved from being a peripheral supplement to becoming an integrated academic component. Writing, research, and discipline-specific tutoring tools powered by AI are becoming more common in universities and colleges. While this integration brings many benefits, it also presents challenges such as concerns about academic integrity and the possibility of creating "digital proficiency divides." This refers to the idea that students' confidence and ability to use AI effectively may be linked to their socioeconomic background, potentially widening existing inequalities in education. Overall, the use of AI in education follows a clear trajectory from early childhood to higher education, with each stage presenting its own unique

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.ZJU31647

opportunities and challenges. From structured learning in primary education to greater independence in secondary education and integration into higher education, AI is reshaping the way students learn and educators teach.

Table 1 clearly shows distinct AI usage patterns across educational levels: elementary students rely on teacher-guided use; secondary students practice more self-directed but often superficial use; college students exhibit high-frequency use with variable quality and academic integrity concerns. It is important for educators and policymakers to be mindful of these patterns and work towards ensuring that all students have equal access to the benefits of AI in education.

Table 1. AI tool usage patterns across educational levels

Education Level	Primary Implementation	Observed Usage Patterns	Notable Challenges
Elementary (6-11 years)	Teacher-guided literacy/numeracy apps	Occasional use during structured activities	Limited student independence; requires significant teacher preparation
Secondary (12-17 years)	Math and language learning tools	Daily use for homework support; 45% self-report competence	Surface-level usage; tendency to seek direct answers
Education Level	Primary Implementation	Observed Usage Patterns	Notable Challenges
College (18+ years)	Writing assistants and subject-specific tutors	High daily usage; 37% demonstrate advanced competence	Significant variation in usage quality; academic integrity concerns
Fairness Considerations	Based on analysis of 28 studies (2018-2024) and classroom observations from 15 diverse schools		

3. Dual effect analysis: cognitive enhancement versus cognitive impairment

AI's learning impact appears contextually determined rather than predetermined, fundamentally shaped by tool design and implementation context, yielding outcomes that may either facilitate or hinder cognitive development [1,5].

3.1. Cognitive enhancement pathways

When used properly, AI offers important benefits for learning. It can create personal learning paths by identifying what each student needs to work on, letting them learn at their own speed. Studies confirm that good AI tutoring systems help students learn better [6]. AI also gives students quick, specific feedback. This helps fix mistakes right away and stops wrong ideas from forming, which is very helpful for building skills and improving writing [7]. Fast feedback keeps students interested and helps them take on harder work. Also, AI makes learning more open to everyone. Tools like instant translation, speech-to-text, and adaptable materials help students with disabilities or those learning in another language join in fully [8]. By providing these tools, AI can create a more inclusive learning environment that allows all students to fully participate and engage in their education. The dual impact of AI on different learning dimensions is summarized in Table 2 below.

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.ZJU31647

Table 2. Dual impact analysis of AI learning tools

Learning Dimension	Productive Implementation	Problematic Implementation	Supporting Evidence
Thinking Skills	Supports mental framework building through exploration	Undermines deep processing through solution provision	[5,6,9]
Self Monitoring	Encourages reflection with structured prompts	Reduces self-assessment through over-assistance	[2,10]
Fairness Considerations	Expands access with thoughtful design	Exacerbates gaps through bias and unequal access	[6,8]
Knowledge Depth	Builds understanding with strategic feedback	Promotes surface learning for quick answers	[2,7,11]

4. Responsible integration framework

Navigating AI's dual nature necessitates transition beyond ad hoc adoption toward strategic, principle-driven implementation frameworks designed to systematically capture benefits while establishing safeguards against inherent risks [1,5].

4.1. Equity-focused policy implementation principle

To make sure AI helps all students fairly, schools and education leaders need to take clear steps. They must make sure every student can use AI tools. A key step is giving more money to schools with fewer resources, so they can get good technology and the internet. Schools should also make rules for buying AI tools. Companies selling these tools must explain if their systems might be biased, and check them regularly to make sure they are fair [6,8]. Teachers also need training to learn how to use AI well in their classrooms. Teachers need not only training on how to operate AI tools, but also on how to integrate them into their teaching practices in a way that supports diverse learners and ensures effective implementation of the tools. This will help to maximize the potential benefits of AI in the classroom and mitigate any potential risks or drawbacks. In order to promote equity through AI, educational institutions must prioritize equitable access to technology. This includes ensuring that all schools have the necessary infrastructure to support AI implementations, particularly those in under-resourced communities. By providing funding for infrastructure improvements, policymakers can help to level the playing field and ensure that all students have equal opportunities to benefit from AI technologies. In addition to addressing infrastructure deficiencies, institutions must also implement procurement standards that promote transparency and fairness in AI technologies. Vendors should be required to disclose any potential biases in their algorithms, and to conduct regular audits to ensure that their technologies are not perpetuating inequalities. By holding vendors accountable for the equity implications of their products, institutions can help to ensure that AI is used responsibly and ethically in educational settings. Investing in educator professional development is another key component of promoting equity through AI. Teachers need training not only in how to use AI tools, but also in how to integrate them into their teaching practices in a way that supports diverse learners. By providing educators with the knowledge and skills they need to effectively implement AI technologies, institutions can help to ensure that all students have access to high-quality educational opportunities. Overall, ensuring that AI functions as an equity-promoting force requires a concerted effort on the part of educational institutions, policymakers, and administrators. By investing in infrastructure, implementing procurement standards, and prioritizing educator professional development, institutions can help to maximize the potential benefits of AI while mitigating any potential risks or drawbacks. Through

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.ZJU31647

these deliberate institutional actions, we can work towards a more equitable and inclusive education system that leverages the power of AI to support all learners.

5. Conclusion

The integration of AI in education presents both significant potential and substantial risks. Research indicates AI can enable personalized instruction, provide dynamic feedback, and expand accessibility. However, realizing these benefits requires prioritizing pedagogical values over mere efficiency.

Studies document several risks when technology outpaces educational wisdom. Superficial learning occurs when students obtain answers directly from AI without engaging deeply with the material, limiting their ability to apply knowledge practically. Over-reliance on AI for self-regulation may hinder students' development of time management and organizational skills. Misinformation risks emerge when students lack critical evaluation skills to assess AI-generated content. Furthermore, unequal access to AI tools and digital literacy may exacerbate existing educational disparities.

Educators must approach AI with caution, focusing on pedagogical values rather than technological convenience. By emphasizing cognitive development and addressing these risks proactively, AI integration can support more meaningful and equitable learning outcomes.

AI tools are not inherently biased towards any particular teaching philosophy; rather, their impact is shaped by the decisions made by humans in how they are designed, implemented, and integrated into the learning environment. It is crucial for educators to take a human-centered approach, working closely with developers to ensure that AI tools are used in ways that benefit students and promote critical thinking skills. Equally important is the need to ensure that all students have equal access to these tools, preventing any further exacerbation of existing inequities. Instead of replacing teachers, AI should be seen as a tool that can enhance the teacher-student relationship and provide personalized support to meet the unique needs of each learner. Research on AI in education should focus on longitudinally tracking the effects on students' cognitive and social-emotional development to better understand how these tools can be most effectively used in the classroom. By working together across research, practice, development, and policy spheres, the adoption of AI in education can move towards a future that prioritizes thoughtful implementation, inclusiveness, and a reinvigorated focus on the human aspect of learning. This not only promises increased efficiency in education, but also a deeper commitment to nurturing the intellectual and emotional growth of all students.

Moving forward, a student-centered approach to AI integration is essential. This requires embedding teaching wisdom into algorithmic design, prioritizing deep thinking over efficiency gains. Educational institutions must implement structured critical AI literacy programs that equip students with skills to evaluate AI outputs and understand appropriate usage boundaries. Policymakers should prioritize fairness by ensuring resource-constrained schools have access to high-quality tools and by mandating bias audits for educational AI systems. The most effective implementations observed shared a common feature: not replacing teacher and student interactions, but enhancing them through strategic AI integration. Longitudinal studies suggest that schools combining thoughtful AI implementation with strong teacher and student relationships show the most significant improvements in both academic achievement and student well-being. Ultimately, the successful integration of AI in education must prioritize authentic cognitive development over technological novelty. The evidence suggests that when technology adapts to human learning needs rather than requiring students to conform to technological constraints, AI can contribute to more

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.ZJU31647

effective, inclusive, and intellectually rigorous educational environments. Only through intentional, evidence-based implementation can AI fulfill its potential to support meaningful learning for all students. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies tracking the long-term cognitive and social-emotional impacts of AI tool usage across diverse educational contexts. As educational AI continues to evolve, ongoing collaboration between researchers, educators, developers, and policymakers will be essential to navigate the complex landscape of AI in education responsibly.

References

[1] Chen L., Chen P., Lin Z. (2020) Artificial intelligence in education: A review. IEEE Access, 8: 75264-75278.
[2] Holmes W., Bialik M., Fadel C. (2021) Artificial intelligence in education: Promises and implications for teaching and learning. Center for Curriculum Redesign, Boston.
[3] Molenaar I. (2022) Towards human-AI co-regulation in learning. Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence, 3: 100054.
[4] Delcker J., Ifenthaler D., Schumacher C. (2024) First-year students AI-competence as a predictor for intended and de facto use of AI-tools for supporting learning processes in higher education. International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 21(1): 15.
[5] Shute V.J. (2008) Focus on formative feedback. Review of Educational Research, 78(1): 153-189.
[6] Zawacki-Richter O., Marín V., Bond M., Gouverneur F. (2019) Systematic review of research on artificial intelligence applications in higher education. International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 16: 1-27.
[7] Burgstahler S. (2020) Universal design in higher education: From principles to practice. Harvard Education Press, Cambridge.
[8] Cotton D.R.E., Cotton P.A., Shipway J.R. (2023) Chatting and cheating: Ensuring academic integrity in the era of ChatGPT. Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 60(5): 661-673.
[9] Winne P.H. (2017) Learning analytics, metacognition, and self-regulated learning. Proceedings of the 7th International Conference on Learning Analytics & Knowledge, pp.53-57.
[10] VanLehn K. (2011) The relative effectiveness of human tutoring, intelligent tutoring systems, and other tutoring systems. Educational Psychologist, 46(4): 197-221.
[11] Kulik J.A., Fletcher J.D. (2016) Effectiveness of intelligent tutoring systems: A meta-analytic review. Review of Educational Research, 86(1): 42-78.