



The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Reshaping Education, 2026: A Sociological Study

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DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20057072>

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Accepted: 05-04-2026

Published: 18-04-2026

Keywords:

Artificial Intelligence in Education, Personalized Learning, and Educational Technology.

ABSTRACT

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education has moved from experimental adoption to becoming a foundational operating system for learning by 2026. This article explores the transformative use of AI, highlighting its role in personalized learning, automated administrative tasks, and interactive content creation. Based on literature reviews and current trends, findings indicate that AI tools increase student engagement, provide tailored feedback, and reduce teacher workload, with adoption rates surpassing 86% among students globally. However, the study also highlights significant challenges, including data privacy, ethical concerns regarding bias, and the necessity of teacher training. The article concludes that AI should augment rather than replace human educators, focusing on a "human-in-the-loop" approach to foster critical thinking.

Introduction

Artificial intelligence is fundamentally reshaping education by enabling personalized, data-driven, and more accessible learning while also redefining teachers' roles and institutional practices. At the same time, its rapid deployment raises critical questions about equity, ethics, and pedagogical quality that must be addressed if benefits are to be widely shared. By 2026, the educational landscape has fundamentally shifted from a one-size-fits-all model to a dynamic, intelligence-driven ecosystem. Artificial intelligence has moved beyond a futuristic concept to become an indispensable tool in classrooms, from primary schools to higher education. AI-driven systems now analyze student behavior, learning patterns, and



engagement in real-time, offering 24/7 support through intelligent tutoring systems. The urgency of this transformation is driven by a skills crunch in the job market, necessitating a focus on 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and adaptability. As AI continues to automate administrative burdens such as grading and report, generation educators are transitioning into roles as mentors and facilitators, allowing them to focus on human connection. AI is fundamentally restructuring education from a standardized industrial model to a highly personalized, data-driven system. Key trends include AI-powered adaptive learning, automated assessment, and 24/7 intelligent tutoring, which enhance efficiency and accessibility. Sociologically, this shifts teacher roles toward mentorship, raises concerns about digital inequality, data privacy, and algorithmic bias.

The role of artificial intelligence in reshaping education in 2026 can be fruitfully examined as a **sociological study** of how AI reconfigures relations of power, inequality, and everyday educational practice, rather than merely as a neutral “tool.” In this framing, AI is treated as a *sociotechnical actor* that mediates teacher student relations, institutional governance, and access to knowledge, often amplifying existing structural inequalities if deployed without critical design and policy. From a sociological perspective, AI in education is not just technology but part of a broader **digitized governance regime** that reshapes how knowledge is produced, distributed, and monitored. Theories such as Actor-Network Theory and Critical Digital Sociology help trace how algorithms, platforms, teachers, students, and policymakers are entangled in networks where AI redistributes agency, authority, and surveillance.

Methodology:

A sociological study on “The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Reshaping Education, 2026” could use: Ethnographic fieldwork in schools and colleges to trace how teachers and students negotiate AI tools in daily practice. Policy and discourse analysis of national AI-in-education strategies and platform-level governance to uncover assumptions about equality, efficiency, and “good” learning. Quantitative and qualitative mixed methods to map access, usage patterns, and perceived impacts across different socio-economic and regional groups, foregrounding questions of power, representation, and agency. This article is based on a review of secondary sources, including systematic literature reviews (2020-2026), industry reports from organizations like OECD, UNESCO, and Microsoft, and case studies detailing AI usage in 2026. The qualitative analysis synthesizes findings to map trends, benefits, and risks.

Objectives of the study

1. To investigate the current applications of AI in education in 2026.



2. To analyze the benefits and challenges of AI integration in teaching and learning processes.
3. To examine the evolving role of educators in an AI-saturated classroom.
4. To propose strategies for responsible and ethical AI adoption.

Scope of the Study

This article focuses on the implementation of AI across K-12 and higher education institutions between 2024 and early 2026, focusing on generative AI (LLMs), intelligent tutoring, and personalized learning platforms. It considers both developed and developing contexts, acknowledging infrastructure disparities.

Artificial Intelligence and Education:

Artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming a core force in education, transforming how students learn, teachers teach, and institutions manage learning environments. It sits at the intersection of data-driven pedagogy, EdTech, and ethics, reshaping both classroom practice and policy-level debates.

“Artificial Intelligence in Education” refers to the design and use of AI techniques machine learning, natural language processing, adaptive systems to create smarter, more responsive learning environments. This includes intelligent tutoring systems, adaptive platforms, automated assessment tools, and analytics dashboards that inform teaching and policy.

Applications in practice:

1. **Accessibility and inclusion:** Chatbots, translation tools, and text-to-speech systems can support learners with disabilities and those in remote or low-resource settings, provided connectivity and device access exist.
2. **Personalized and adaptive learning:** AI-powered platforms analyze how individual students interact with content time spent, quiz responses, and error patterns and then adapt difficulty, pacing, and feedback in real time. This “one-size-fits-one” approach can improve retention, engagement, and completion rates, particularly in large-scale online courses and MOOCs.
3. **Automation, efficiency, and teacher support:** AI offloads routine tasks such as grading objective-type assignments, tracking attendance, and generating simple feedback, freeing up teachers for deeper pedagogical work. Institutions also use AI for analytics-driven interventions, such as identifying at-risk students early and tailoring support to reduce dropout risk.



4. **Content creation and accessibility:** Generative AI and smart content tools help educators create quizzes, lesson variants, and supplementary materials tailored to different learning styles or language levels. For learners with disabilities or in remote areas, AI-based tutoring systems and chatbots can provide 24/7 assistance and localized, low-cost resources, supporting inclusion if access barriers are mitigated. [learningsciences](#).
5. **Risks, equity, and ethical concerns:** UNESCO and other global bodies emphasize that AI in education can exacerbate inequalities if data infrastructures, connectivity, and digital literacy remain uneven. Issues such as algorithmic bias, privacy of student data, over-reliance on automation, and weakening of critical-thinking skills call for strong governance, teacher training, and clear pedagogical frameworks.
6. **Implications for India and global South:** In India and similar contexts, AI-driven EdTech promises to scale quality content and adaptive learning, especially in rural and under-resourced schools. However, meaningful impact depends on bridging digital divides, contextualizing content to local languages and curricula, and ensuring that AI supports rather than displaces teachers in practices rooted in social and cultural realities.

Changing roles of teachers and students

AI tends to **reconfigure professional authority** of teachers, shifting them from content-deliverers to “AI-mediators” who curate prompts, validate outputs, and manage algorithmic feedback. At the same time, students’ roles evolve toward “digitally monitored learners,” whose behaviours, attention spans, and errors are continuously tracked and modelled, which can enhance support but also normalize surveillance and performance-based identity.

Stratification, equity, and digital divides

Sociologically, AI in education often **intensifies digital stratification**: algorithmic bias, uneven data infrastructures, and variable access to devices and bandwidth mean that AI-enhanced benefits cluster among already-privileged groups. In low-income and rural contexts, this can reproduce or deepen existing class, caste, and regional inequalities if AI-driven platforms are rolled out without addressing connectivity, literacy, and contextual pedagogy. [scale](#).

Everyday life and institutional change

At the micro-level, AI reshapes the **rhythms and routines** of schooling homework done with chatbots, real-time feedback dashboards, automated grading which redefines what counts as “effort,” “originality,”



and “learning.” At the institutional level, universities and schools reorganize toward hybrid, data-driven models, where AI-based analytics shape enrolment, remedial support, and curriculum design, often privileging measurable outcomes over relational or affective dimensions of education.

Results and Discussion

1. **AI as a Pedagogical Partner:** By 2026, AI is a "thinking partner" rather than just a production tool, with over 50% of students using it for brainstorming and gathering facts.
2. **Hyper-Personalization:** AI systems analyze interactions, such as how long a student pauses on a sentence or where they struggle, to deliver scaffolding tailored to their "Zone of Proximal Development".
3. **Teacher Empowerment:** Weekly AI usage saves teachers an average of 5.9 hours per week. However, the 71% "training gap" (teachers receiving no formal AI training) is the primary crisis in adoption.
4. **The Rise of Specialized Education Intelligence (SEI):** The industry has moved away from general-purpose chatbots (like basic ChatGPT) toward specialized SEI models that understand the underlying logic of STEM subjects, LaTeX equations, and provide better accuracy.

Conclusion

The use of AI in education in 2026 is no longer optional; it is a fundamental shift toward an intelligent learning ecosystem. AI offers unprecedented opportunities for personalized learning at scale and reducing administrative fatigue. However, the future of education depends on "thoughtful integration." This means focusing on AI literacy, establishing strong ethical frameworks, and ensuring that technology empowers rather than diminishes the human educator. The schools that succeed in 2026 are those that train teachers to use AI as a collaborator, reinforcing the human-in-the-loop mentorship model.

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