Faculty of Natural and Applied Sciences Journal of Mathematics and Science Education Print ISSN: 2814-0885 e-ISSN: 2814-0931 www.fnasjournals.com Volume 6; Issue 2; March 2025; Page No. 102-108.

Integrating STEM Education and Artificial Intelligence (AI): A Catalyst for Global Scientific And Technological Advancement in Nigeria

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Abstract

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education is essential for fostering scientific and technological advancement in Nigeria. As AI continues to shape industries worldwide, equipping students with AI-driven STEM skills is crucial for Nigeria's economic growth and global competitiveness. This paper explores how AI-enhanced STEM education can catalyze innovation, addressing national challenges in healthcare, agriculture, energy and digital transformation. AIpowered educational tools, including adaptive learning systems, virtual laboratories and intelligent tutoring systems, offer personalised and interactive learning experiences that enhance problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Despite its potential, several challenges hinder AI integration into Nigeria's STEM education. These include inadequate infrastructure, limited access to digital resources, lack of AI-skilled educators and policy gaps. Addressing these barriers requires strategic investments in educational technology, curriculum reform and capacity-building programs for teachers. Public-private partnerships and government-led initiatives can help bridge the digital divide and ensure inclusive AI-STEM education across urban and rural areas. This paper presents the impact of AI-driven STEM on student learning outcomes and innovation potential. It also provides policy recommendations to foster a robust AI-STEM ecosystem in Nigeria. By embracing AI in STEM education, Nigeria can cultivate a future workforce equipped to drive scientific discoveries, technological breakthroughs and sustainable development, positioning the nation as a key player in the global knowledge economy.

Keywords: STEM Education, Artificial Intelligence, Technological Advancement, Nigeria Development, Scientific Innovation

Introduction

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is characterized by rapid advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI), robotics and automation, reshaping global economies and industries (Wang, 2019). AI is increasingly becoming a crucial driver of innovation, transforming how knowledge is acquired and applied in various sectors (Strohm et al., 2020; Selwyn et al., 2022; Cevik et al., 2023). In Nigeria, where economic diversification and technological advancement are priorities, integrating AI into STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education presents an opportunity to equip students with future-ready skills. STEM education is widely recognised as a foundation for national development, fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and innovation (Xu & Ouyang, 2022). Saidakhror (2024) stated that by incorporating AI-driven tools into STEM learning, students can engage with complex scientific and technological concepts in more interactive and efficient ways. However, Nigeria faces several challenges in implementing AI-enhanced STEM education, including infrastructural deficits, limited digital resources and a lack of AI-skilled educators (Eze et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2020; AI-Raimi et al., 2024).

The Role of AI in STEM Education in Nigeria

Coelho and Reis (2023) stated that Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to revolutionise STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education in Nigeria by enhancing learning experiences, bridging skill gaps, fostering innovation and preparing students for the future workforce. As Nigeria aims to strengthen

¹⁰² *Cite this article as:*

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its technological and scientific capabilities, integrating AI into STEM education can help overcome traditional learning challenges, improve student engagement and equip learners with the necessary skills for a knowledge-driven economy (Maity, 2019; Ofori et al., 2020; Ibrahim, 2024).

Below is a detailed exploration of the role of AI in STEM education in Nigeria:

- 1. Enhancing Learning Experiences through AI-Powered Tools
 - AI offers innovative learning solutions that make STEM education more interactive, efficient, and accessible (Coelho & Reis, 2023). Traditional STEM education in Nigeria often relies on outdated teaching methods, large classroom sizes, and limited practical exposure. AI-driven tools provide personalised learning, real-time feedback, and interactive experiences that improve student comprehension and performance (Chiu et al., 2022; Lavidas et al., 2024).
- 2. Adaptive Learning Systems AI-powered adaptive learning platforms customise educational content based on a student's learning pace, strengths, and weaknesses (Bakhmat et al., 2024). These systems analyse individual performance and tailor coursework accordingly, ensuring that students grasp fundamental STEM concepts before progressing to more complex topics. Examples include AI-driven educational platforms like Coursera, Udemy, and Google's Teachable Machine, which could be adapted for Nigerian classrooms (Abubakar et al., 2024; Aravantinos et al., 2024).
- 3. Intelligent Tutoring Systems (ITS) ITS use AI algorithms to provide personalized tutoring and guidance to students. Unlike traditional teaching, where one teacher manages an entire classroom, ITS allows students to learn at their own pace with automated feedback and support. This is particularly beneficial in Nigeria, where teacher shortages are common, especially in rural areas. AI tutors can bridge this gap by offering round-the-clock assistance (Chen et al., 2020; Alam, 2023)
- 4. AI-Driven Virtual Laboratories One of the challenges of STEM education in Nigeria is the lack of access to modern laboratory equipment in schools. AI-driven virtual labs enable students to conduct scientific experiments in simulated environments, allowing hands-on learning without physical lab infrastructure (Hsiao et al., 2018). Platforms like Labster and PhET simulations can be adapted for Nigerian STEM curricula, making practical STEM learning more accessible (Howard, 2019; Coelho & Reis, 2023).
- Bridging the STEM Skills Gap in Nigeria
 As global industries become increasingly reliant on AI, automation, and data science, STEM education
 must evolve to equip students with relevant skills. AI in STEM education plays a crucial role in
 preparing students for future careers in technology, engineering, and scientific research (Johnson et al.,
 2016; Eze et al., 2018).
- 6. Development of AI and Computational Thinking Skills

AI-powered STEM education exposes students to coding, robotics and data science from an early stage, helping them develop computational thinking skills essential for problem-solving and innovation (Holmes & Bialik, 2016; Strohm et al., 2020). Learning programming languages such as Python, Java, and R, along with AI-driven analytical tools, prepares Nigerian students for careers in software engineering, cyber security and artificial intelligence research (Ofori et al., 2020; Utterberg et al., 2021).

7. Encouraging Hands-On Learning with Robotics and Automation

AI is integral to robotics and automation, which are becoming increasingly relevant in manufacturing, healthcare, and agriculture. STEM education incorporating AI-powered robotics programs can help Nigerian students understand automation processes, mechanical engineering, and control systems. Initiatives such as robotics clubs, AI-powered STEM competitions, and partnerships with organizations like STEM Cafe Nigeria can boost students' interest in AI and robotics (Kapoor & Xu, 2022; Sapci & Sapci, 2020; Cevik et al., 2023).

8. *Up skilling Teachers and Educators*

For AI integration in STEM education to be effective, Nigerian teachers must be trained in AI literacy. AI-driven teacher training programs can equip educators with the knowledge and skills needed to incorporate AI-based tools into their teaching methodologies (Aghaziarati et al., 2023; Samuel et al., 2025). Online AI training platforms like Google AI for Educators and IBM's AI curriculum for teachers can be leveraged for capacity building in Nigerian schools (Chiu et al., 2022).

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AI Impact in Driving Scientific and Technological Innovation

Lavidas et al., (2024) stated that the modern society is being faced by several socio-economic challenges that require innovative STEM-based solutions. AI-powered STEM education can inspire young Nigerians to use technology to address national issues, fostering a culture of scientific discovery and entrepreneurship (Maity, 2019; Alam, 2023).

1. AI in Healthcare Education and Medical Research

Chen et al., (2020) stated that AI-driven STEM education can contribute to Nigeria's healthcare sector by training students to develop AI-powered solutions for medical diagnostics, drug discovery, and personalized medicine. AI applications such as image recognition for disease detection and predictive analytics for outbreak forecasting can be integrated into biomedical engineering and medical research programs in Nigerian universities (Samuel et al., 2025).

2. AI in Agricultural Science and Food Security

Agriculture remains a critical sector in Nigeria, yet many farmers lack access to advanced farming techniques. AI-powered STEM education can equip students with knowledge on precision agriculture, smart irrigation systems, and AI-driven pest control. By introducing AI into agricultural engineering programs, Nigerian students can develop innovative farming solutions to improve food production and security (Aghaziarati et al., 2023; Lavidas et al., 2024).

3. AI in Renewable Energy and Climate Science

Nigeria faces significant energy challenges, with frequent power outages and reliance on fossil fuels (Chin et al., 2022; Coelho & Reis, 2023). AI-driven STEM education can support the development of renewable energy solutions, such as AI-powered solar energy optimization and smart grid systems. Educating students in AI applications for energy efficiency and climate science can contribute to Nigeria's sustainable development goals.

Addressing the Challenges of AI Integration in STEM Education in Nigeria

Alam (2023) stated that despite the immense potential of AI in STEM education, several barriers must be addressed to ensure its successful implementation in Nigeria. They include

1. Infrastructure and Digital Divide

Many Nigerian schools lack access to electricity, internet connectivity, and digital devices needed for AIpowered education. The government and private sector must invest in digital infrastructure to provide schools with smart classrooms, reliable internet, and AI-compatible hardware (Paranjape et al., 2019; Xu & Ouyang, 2022; Aghaziarati et al., 2023).

2. High Cost of AI Implementation

AI-driven STEM education requires substantial investment in software, teacher training and maintenance. Public-private partnerships can help subsidize the cost of AI-based educational tools and make them more affordable for schools (Tang & Tang, 2022; Chan, 2023)

3. Teacher Training and Curriculum Reform

Aravantinos et al., (2024) stated that AI integration requires well-trained educators who understand AI applications and STEM methodologies. Nigeria's education system must update its curriculum to include AI-related topics such as machine learning, robotics, and big data analytics (Utterberg et al., 2021; Saidakhror, 2024).

4. Ethical and Social Considerations

AI introduces concerns related to data privacy, bias and unemployment due to automation. AI ethics should be incorporated into STEM curricula to ensure responsible AI development and use among Nigerian students (Aghaziarati et al., 2023; Bakhmat et al., 2024).

5. Enhancing Learning Experiences

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AI-powered educational tools, such as intelligent tutoring systems and adaptive learning platforms, offer personalized instruction tailored to students' learning styles (Paranjape et al., 2019; Ibrahim, 2024). Virtual labs and AI-driven simulations allow students to experiment with real-world scientific concepts without the need for expensive physical infrastructure (Ofori et al., 2020; Lavidas et al., 2024). These innovations make STEM subjects more engaging and accessible (Aggarwal, 2023; Alam, 2023).

6. Bridging the Skills Gap

As industries become more automated, the demand for AI-related skills is growing. By integrating AI into STEM education, Nigerian students can develop competencies in programming, data science, and machine learning skills that are increasingly valuable in the global job market (Selwyn 2022; Tang & Tang 2022).

7. Driving Scientific and Technological Innovation

AI enhances research and innovation by enabling faster data analysis, predictive modeling, and problem-solving (Coelho & Reis, 2023; Lavidas et al., 2024). AI-driven STEM education will nurture a new generation of innovators who can tackle pressing challenges in healthcare, agriculture, energy and other critical sectors in Nigeria (Kapoor & Xu, 2022; Cevik et al., 2023)

Challenges in AI Integration into STEM Education in Nigeria

Some of the limitations faced in AI integration into STEM education in Nigeria include :

i. Infrastructural Deficiencies

Many schools in Nigeria lack access to basic digital infrastructure, including reliable electricity, internet connectivity, and modern computing devices. These limitations hinder the adoption of AI-driven educational tools (Utterberg et al., 2021; Aghaziarati et al., 2023).

ii. Limited Access to Digital Resources

A significant percentage of students, especially in rural areas, do not have access to computers or the internet, creating a digital divide. AI-driven education remains out of reach for many due to affordability and accessibility issues (Holmes & Bialik, 2016; Ofori et al., 2020).

iii. Lack of AI-Skilled Educators

Many teachers in Nigeria are not trained in AI or emerging technologies. Without adequate teacher training and professional development programs, integrating AI into STEM curricula will be challenging (Mohammed et al., 2022; Abubakar et al., 2024).

iv. Policy and Curriculum Gaps

The current Nigerian education system has yet to fully integrate AI and modern STEM methodologies into the national curriculum. There is a need for a comprehensive policy framework that promotes AI-driven STEM education (Aghaziarati et al., 2023; Chan, 2023)

AI in Nigerian STEM Education

There have been some AI-driven educational initiatives in Nigeria, such as the introduction of coding and robotics programs in select schools. However, these efforts remain fragmented and require a more structured national approach (Papadakis et al., 2023).

Benefits of AI in STEM Education

i. Personalized learning

AI can provide students with customized content, feedback, and experiences, with tailored instruction that meets individual learner's needs (Venkatasubramanian, 2018; Sanasintani, 2023; Kim, 2024).

ii. Collaborative learning

AI can facilitate collaborative learning among students, regardless of their geographical location, physical disabilities and diverse interests (Luckin et al., 2016; Popenici & Kerr, 2017; Wood et al., 2021)

iii. Higher-order thinking

AI can automate routine tasks, enabling students to engage in complex problem-solving tasks irrespective of the distant among others (Johnson et al., 2016; Utterberg et al., 2021).

iv. Entrepreneurship

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- v. AI simulations and virtual environments can offer practical experience in decision-making and strategic thinking, thereby improving learners' experience of real world problems through simulations (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2020; Tang & Tang, 2022).
- vi. AI are applied in the health sector
 AI is used in various treatments e.g. radiology, diagnosis and drug dispensary (Strohm et al., 2020; Kapoor & Xu 2022; Cevik et al., 2024)
- vii. Enhancing Creativity through AI in STEM Education
 By adoption of AI in STEM education in Nigeria, this will help in revolutionizing STEM education by fostering creative thinking through personalized learning, intelligent tutoring, immersive simulations, enhanced collaboration, automated feedback, and the development of computational thinking (Li et al., 2020)

Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence is transforming STEM education globally and Nigeria must embrace this trend to enhance learning outcomes, bridge skill gaps and drive technological innovation. AI-powered tools offer personalized learning experiences, prepare students for high-demand careers and foster problem-solving abilities essential for national development. However, challenges such as digital infrastructure deficits, teacher training gaps and high costs must be addressed through strategic investments and policy reforms. By integrating AI into STEM education, Nigeria can cultivate a workforce equipped to compete in the global knowledge economy and drive sustainable scientific and technological advancements in the 21st century.

Recommendation

The study hereby recommends for AI Integration in STEM Education in Nigeria. To fully harness the benefits of AI in STEM education in Nigeria, the following policy actions should be implemented:

- 1. Investment in Digital Infrastructure All stakeholders in education sector and government should prioritize funding for AI labs, smart classrooms and high-speed internet connectivity in schools.
- 2. AI Teacher Training Programs Comprehensive AI training programs should be provided for teachers at all levels of education to enhance their teaching skills and learner experiences.
- 3. STEM Curriculum Reform AI-related topics such as machine learning, robotics and automation should be incorporated into the national education system.
- 4. AI-STEM Innovation Hubs The government and private sector should establish AI innovation hubs where students can develop AI-powered solutions for indigenous and immediate society problem solving.
- 5. Public-Private Partnerships Collaboration between all stakeholders such as educational institutions, tech companies, and policymakers can provide funding, resources, and expertise for AI-driven STEM education

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