

ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IN ENHANCING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CALABAR, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into higher education has significantly transformed the teaching and learning process across the globe. Artificial intelligence technologies are increasingly being adopted in universities to enhance learning outcomes, support academic research, and improve students' academic performance. This paper examines the role of artificial intelligence in enhancing students' academic performance in the University of Calabar, Nigeria. Using an analytical and opinion-based approach grounded in contemporary literature, the study explores the conceptual foundations of artificial intelligence, its applications in higher education, and its implications for student learning outcomes. The paper argues that artificial intelligence has the capacity to improve students' academic performance through personalized learning systems, intelligent tutoring technologies, automated feedback mechanisms, and AI-assisted research tools. These innovations enable students to access educational resources more efficiently, enhance critical thinking skills, and improve the quality of academic research. However, the adoption of artificial intelligence in higher education also raises important concerns relating to academic integrity, digital inequality, ethical considerations, and the risk of overdependence on automated systems. Drawing from global experiences and the Nigerian educational context, the study concludes that artificial intelligence can significantly improve students' academic performance if properly integrated into institutional learning systems. The paper recommends that Nigerian universities should develop institutional policies regulating the ethical use of artificial intelligence, integrate AI literacy into academic curricula, and invest in digital infrastructure that supports innovative learning environments.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Academic Performance, Higher Education, University of Calabar, Nigeria.



Introduction

Innovations in technology have constantly transformed educational systems across the world. Recently, the emergence of artificial intelligence has introduced new opportunities for improving teaching methodologies, learning outcomes, and academic productivity. Artificial intelligence refers to computer systems designed to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, including reasoning, learning, pattern recognition, and decision making (Russell & Norvig, 2021). The application of artificial intelligence in education has grown rapidly due to advancements in machine learning, big data analytics, and cloud computing. Educational institutions across the world are integrating AI technologies into their teaching and learning systems to improve quality of education and promote innovative learning practices. According to Holmes, Bialik, and Fadel (2019), artificial intelligence has the

potential to revolutionize educational systems by providing personalized learning experiences that adapt to the specific needs and abilities of individual learners.

In many developed countries, tertiary institutions including universities have adopted AI-based learning technologies such as intelligent tutoring systems, automated grading platforms, adaptive learning software, and academic research assistants. These technologies enhance teaching efficiency and improve students' engagement with learning materials. Luckin et al. (2016) noted that artificial intelligence can considerably improve educational outcomes by supporting individualized learning processes and providing real-time feedback to students (Igyu et. al, Obi et. al 2020; Adie et. al, 2026; Etoma & Patrick, 2020, Olofu & Patrick, 2019, Patrick et al., 2025).

Artificial intelligence also plays a crucial role in improving students' academic performance. Academic performance refers to the extent to which students achieve their educational goals through measurable indicators such as examination results, grade point averages, research productivity, and intellectual development (York, Gibson, & Rankin, 2015). AI technologies assist students in various academic tasks, including literature review, data analysis, academic writing, and problem solving.

In developing countries such as Nigeria, the adoption of digital technologies in higher education has increased considerably in recent years. The expansion of internet connectivity, the availability of mobile technologies, and the growing importance of digital knowledge have encouraged universities to embrace technological innovations. Nigerian universities are increasingly adopting digital learning platforms, online academic resources, and artificial intelligence tools to enhance teaching and learning processes.

The University of Calabar, one of Nigeria's leading federal universities, has witnessed increasing integration of digital technologies into academic activities. Students frequently utilize AI-based tools for research development, academic writing, data analysis, and access to digital learning materials. These technologies have transformed the way students interact with academic content and conduct research. However, despite the growing adoption of artificial intelligence in higher education, several concerns remain regarding its implications for educational integrity and learning outcomes. Scholars have expressed concerns about academic dishonesty, overdependence on automated systems, and unequal access to digital technologies among students (Selwyn, 2019; (Patrick, et al. 2025; Patrick et al. 2026; Patrick, et al, 2025). These issues highlight the need for critical examination of the role of artificial intelligence in improving academic performance while ensuring responsible usage.

This paper therefore examines the role of artificial intelligence in enhancing students' academic performance in the University of Calabar, Nigeria. It explores the conceptual foundations of artificial intelligence, theoretical perspectives, benefits, challenges, and policy implications for higher education institutions.

Conceptual Clarifications

Concept of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to the development of computer systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence, including learning, reasoning, problem solving, perception, and language understanding. According to Russell and Norvig (2021), artificial intelligence is a branch of computer science that focuses on designing intelligent agents systems that perceive their environment and take actions that maximize the likelihood of achieving specific goals (Adie et. al 2019; Adie et. al 2022; Meremikwu et. al 2022; Adie et. al 2022). AI technologies rely heavily on machine learning algorithms, neural networks, natural language processing, and data analytics to interpret complex datasets and generate meaningful outputs.

The concept of artificial intelligence has evolved significantly since its emergence in the mid-twentieth century. Early AI systems were primarily rule-based and limited in functionality. However, recent advances in machine learning and computational power have enabled the development of sophisticated AI systems capable of performing complex tasks such as speech recognition, image analysis, predictive modeling, and automated decision making (Patrick et al., 2025; Patrick, et al, 2026; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019).

Artificial intelligence can generally be classified into two main categories: narrow AI and general AI. Narrow AI refers to systems designed to perform specific tasks such as facial recognition, recommendation algorithms, and automated translation. General AI, on the other hand, refers to systems capable of performing a broad range of cognitive tasks similar to human intelligence. While general AI remains largely theoretical, narrow AI has become widely integrated into various sectors including healthcare, finance, transportation, and education (Agbade, et al. 2019; Agbade, et al 2017; Agbade, et al 2023; Agbade & Ukpanukpong, 2022).

In educational contexts, artificial intelligence refers to the application of intelligent technologies to support teaching, learning, assessment, and research activities. AI-driven educational technologies enable automated feedback, personalized learning experiences, predictive learning analytics, and intelligent tutoring systems that adapt to individual learning patterns (Luckin et al., 2016; (Olofu et al. 2024; Olofu et al. 20245; Olofu et al. 2026; Olofu et al. 2022)

These technologies have significantly changed how students interact with educational content and how instructors deliver instruction. The growing relevance of artificial intelligence in education is largely driven by the need to improve learning outcomes in increasingly complex knowledge environments. As the volume of information available to students continues to expand, AI systems provide valuable tools for organizing knowledge, identifying relevant academic resources, and facilitating efficient learning processes.

Artificial Intelligence in Education

Artificial intelligence has become a major catalyst for innovation in educational systems across the world. Educational institutions are increasingly integrating AI technologies into teaching and learning processes to improve efficiency, accessibility, and effectiveness. According to Holmes, Bialik, and Fadel (2019), AI technologies enable educational systems to transition from traditional teacher-centered models toward more student-centered learning environments.

One of the most significant contributions of artificial intelligence to education is the development of adaptive learning systems. These systems analyze students' learning patterns, strengths, and weaknesses in order to provide customized learning materials that match individual needs. Adaptive learning platforms enable students to learn at their own pace while receiving targeted support in areas where they experience difficulty (Meremikwu, Ibok, Adie, Idoko, Tawo & Arikpo, 2022; Agbor et. al 2026; Adie, Obi, Okri & Ogbe, 2020; Adie & Anditung, 2019; Ibu, Adie & Andortan, 2019).

Another important application of artificial intelligence in education is intelligent tutoring systems (ITS). Intelligent tutoring systems simulate the role of human tutors by providing students with guidance, explanations, and feedback during the learning process. Research has shown that ITS technologies can significantly improve students' understanding of complex subjects by providing individualized instruction and real-time feedback (Luckin et al., 2016).

Artificial intelligence also supports learning analytics, which involves the use of data analysis techniques to monitor students' academic progress and identify patterns in learning behavior. Learning analytics systems help educators identify students who may require

additional academic support and enable institutions to design targeted interventions that improve learning outcomes.

Furthermore, AI technologies facilitate automated assessment and feedback mechanisms. Automated grading systems enable instructors to evaluate assignments and examinations more efficiently while providing students with instant feedback on their performance. This reduces the administrative workload of educators and allows them to focus more on pedagogical activities.

Another important area where AI is transforming education is academic research support. AI-powered research tools help students locate relevant scholarly materials, organize literature reviews, and analyze research data. These tools enhance research productivity and enable students to produce higher quality academic work.

In developing countries such as Nigeria, artificial intelligence has the potential to address several challenges in the educational sector, including limited access to quality educational resources, large class sizes, and inadequate instructional support. By providing digital learning platforms and intelligent tutoring systems, AI technologies can help bridge gaps in educational access and improve the overall quality of higher education.

Students' Academic Performance

Students' academic performance refers to the measurable educational outcomes achieved by students during their academic studies. It is commonly assessed using indicators such as examination scores, grade point averages, assignment performance, research productivity, and overall intellectual development (York et al., 2015).

Academic performance is influenced by a wide range of factors including teaching quality, learning environment, access to educational resources, student motivation, socioeconomic conditions, and technological support systems. In contemporary educational systems, technological innovations such as artificial intelligence have become increasingly important determinants of academic performance.

The integration of artificial intelligence into educational environments enhances academic performance by improving access to information, facilitating efficient learning processes, and supporting students' research activities. AI-based learning tools enable students to obtain academic information more quickly and accurately than traditional learning methods.

Additionally, artificial intelligence supports self-directed learning, which encourages students to take greater responsibility for their educational development. AI-powered learning platforms provide interactive learning environments where students can explore concepts independently while receiving automated feedback on their progress.

Artificial intelligence also contributes to academic performance by promoting collaborative learning. Digital learning platforms enable students to engage in group discussions, share academic materials, and participate in collaborative research projects. These interactions enhance knowledge exchange and improve students' problem-solving skills.

Moreover, AI technologies facilitate efficient time management for students. By automating routine academic tasks such as information retrieval and data analysis, AI tools allow students to focus more on critical thinking, creativity, and intellectual exploration.

Theoretical Framework

The adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education can be better understood through the integration of Human Capital Theory, Constructivist Learning Theory, and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). These theories provide complementary perspectives on how AI influences learning processes, outcomes, and adoption behavior.

Human Capital Theory posits that investment in education and skill acquisition enhances individual productivity and performance (Becker, 1964). Within the context of AI in education, this theory suggests that the use of AI-driven tools contributes to improved learning outcomes by enhancing students' cognitive abilities and academic efficiency. Empirical evidence supports this view, as AI technologies such as adaptive learning systems and intelligent tutoring platforms have been shown to improve students' academic performance through personalized instruction (Adewale et al., 2024).

Constructivist Learning Theory, on the other hand, associated with scholars such as Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky emphasizes that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction, experience, and engagement. AI aligns strongly with this theory by enabling personalized, interactive, and learner-centered environments. AI-powered tools facilitate individualized learning pathways, immediate feedback, and interactive content, which enhance student engagement and knowledge construction. Studies have shown that AI integration significantly improves students' understanding and academic performance when learning is tailored to individual needs (Hassan, 2026).

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) explains how users adopt new technologies based on perceived usefulness and ease of use (Davis, 1989). In the context of AI in education, students are more likely to adopt AI tools if they perceive them as beneficial and easy to use. Research indicates that the acceptance of AI technologies in education significantly influences their effectiveness in improving academic performance (Garzón et al., 2025).

In triangulating these theories, it is evident that while Human Capital Theory explains the outcomes of AI adoption and TAM explains the adoption process, Constructivist Learning Theory provides the most comprehensive perspective by explaining how AI transforms the learning experience. Therefore, Constructivism offers the strongest theoretical foundation for understanding AI adoption in learning.

Artificial Intelligence and Students' Academic Performance

The relationship between Artificial Intelligence and students' academic performance has attracted increasing scholarly attention, with many studies reporting positive outcomes associated with AI integration in education. Adewale et al. (2024) conducted a systematic review and found that AI significantly enhances students' academic performance through personalized learning, adaptive instruction, and real-time feedback. The study emphasized that AI tools enable learners to study at their own pace, thereby improving comprehension and retention. Similarly, Hassan (2026) reported that AI integration leads to improved student engagement and academic achievement, particularly when combined with structured instructional support.

In addition, Mallillin (2024) found that AI positively influences students' motivation, study habits, and learning efficiency, all of which contribute to improved academic performance. The study highlighted that AI tools encourage independent learning and foster a more positive attitude toward education. Supporting this, Ward et al. (2024) observed that the use of AI tools improved students' grade point averages and reduced study time, indicating increased learning efficiency.

However, the literature also suggests that the effectiveness of AI depends on how it is integrated into the learning process. While AI has the potential to enhance academic performance, its benefits are maximized when it is used as a complement to traditional teaching methods rather than a replacement. Overall, the literature indicates that AI has a significant positive influence on students' academic performance, particularly through personalization, engagement, and efficiency.

Challenges of Artificial Intelligence in Academic Learning

Despite the numerous benefits of AI in education, several challenges have been identified in the literature. One major challenge is the issue of ethical concern and academic integrity. Ateeq et al. (2024) and Bittle and El-Gayar (2025) noted that AI tools can facilitate plagiarism and make it difficult to distinguish between original and AI-generated work, thereby undermining the credibility of academic assessments (Agbade & Adeyeye, 2021; Usua, et al. 2023; Agbade, et al 2022; Agbade, et al 2023).

Another challenge is the issue of infrastructure and cost. Garzón et al. (2025) reported that the implementation of AI in education requires significant financial investment and technological infrastructure, which may not be readily available in many institutions, particularly in developing countries. Similarly, Kamalov et al. (2023) highlighted the lack of trained personnel and technical expertise as barriers to effective AI integration in education. Furthermore, concerns have been raised about the reliability of assessment in AI-supported learning environments. Castillo-Martínez et al. (2024) argued that traditional assessment methods may not be adequate in the context of AI, as they may fail to accurately measure students' true understanding and abilities.

Other challenges of AI adoption include digital inequality, overdependence on technology and issues of ethical considerations which are particularly significant. Digital inequality refers to disparities in access to digital tools and infrastructure necessary for AI adoption. Garzón et al. (2025) emphasized that unequal access to technology limits the benefits of AI, particularly for students in low-income or rural areas. This inequality creates a digital divide, where some students benefit from AI-enhanced learning while others are excluded. Ward et al. (2024) also noted that students with better access to digital resources tend to achieve better academic outcomes, thereby widening educational disparities.

Overdependence on technology is another critical concern. Ward et al. (2024) found that excessive reliance on AI tools may reduce students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, as learners may depend on AI for answers rather than engaging in independent reasoning. Similarly, Kamalov et al. (2023) warned that overreliance on AI could undermine traditional learning processes and limit cognitive development.

These challenges suggest that while AI has significant potential to improve education, its adoption must be carefully managed to ensure equitable access and to maintain the development of critical thinking skills among learners.

Conclusions and policy recommendations

This study examines the role of artificial intelligence in enhancing students' academic Performance in the University of Calabar, Nigeria. The study established that the integration of artificial intelligence into our educational system enhances academic performance by improving access to information, facilitating efficient learning processes, and supporting students' research activities. The study also concludes that regardless of the several benefits, the integration of artificial intelligence into education is bedeviled with issues of academic integrity where some students misuse the use of AI. Other challenges include digital inequality, risk of overdependence on technology, among others.

Based on the conclusions of the study, the study therefore stressed that the effective integration of artificial intelligence into higher education requires appropriate policy frameworks and institutional support. Universities in Nigeria should develop comprehensive guidelines regulating the ethical use of artificial intelligence in academic activities. These guidelines should clearly define acceptable and unacceptable uses of AI technologies in assignments, research, and examinations.

Higher education institutions should also invest in digital infrastructure such as high-speed internet connectivity, digital libraries, and AI-enabled learning platforms. Improved

digital infrastructure will ensure that students have equal access to technological resources. Another important policy recommendation is the integration of AI literacy programs into university curricula. AI literacy will enable students to understand how artificial intelligence systems function and how to use them responsibly in academic contexts. Furthermore, universities should provide training programs for lecturers to help them effectively integrate AI technologies into teaching practices.

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