Journal of Information Systems Engineering and Management
2025, 10(36s)
e-ISSN: 2468-4376
https://www.jisem-journal.com/

Research Article

Education 4.0 in Latin America: Comparative Analysis of the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Innovative Teaching Practices

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: 22 Dec 2024
Revised: 12 Feb 2025
Accepted: 20 Feb 2025

ABSTRACT

The digital transformation has had a significant impact on the educational field, giving rise to the so-called Education 4.0. This approach incorporates emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) to personalize teaching, automate processes, and foster innovative pedagogical practices. This article presents a comparative analysis of the use of AI in teaching practices in Latin America, with emphasis on Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, and Argentina. Through a qualitative methodology based on documentary review and semi-structured interviews with innovative teachers, similarities and differences in the adoption of AI are identified. The results highlight promising advances, but also structural challenges, such as the lack of teacher training and technological gaps. The study concludes with recommendations to promote an effective implementation of AI in Latin American educational contexts.

Keywords: Education 4.0, artificial intelligence, Latin America, teaching innovation, educational technologies

Introduction

The emergence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution has generated profound transformations in all sectors, including education. This new paradigm, driven by emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), robotics, and big data, has given rise to an educational model known as Education 4.0. This model not only involves the use of technological tools, but also a complete reconfiguration of the teaching-learning process, aimed at the development of skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and digital collaboration (Ramírez-Montoya et al., 2023).

Education 4.0 responds to the need to prepare students for increasingly automated, changing and multidisciplinary work environments. This approach promotes active student-centered methodologies, such as personalized learning, project-based learning, collaborative work, and gamification, supported by intelligent digital platforms (Silva et al., 2021). Within this ecosystem, AI plays a key role, enabling dynamic content adaptation, automated feedback, and predictive analysis of academic performance (Ferri et al., 2020).

Latin America, although it still faces important structural challenges such as the digital divide, the lack of technological infrastructure and the scarce specialized teacher training, also presents itself as a fertile region for educational innovation. Several countries have begun to integrate AI into learning environments through pilot projects, public-private partnerships, and initiatives by international

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organizations (ECLAC, 2021). However, progress has been uneven, with marked differences between urban and rural contexts, public and private institutions, and educational levels (UNESCO, 2023).

The objective of this article is to carry out a comparative analysis of the use of artificial intelligence in innovative teaching practices in Latin America, specifically in Mexico, Colombia, Brazil and Argentina. Through a documentary review and semi-structured interviews with teachers involved in Education 4.0 experiences, we seek to identify common patterns, institutional barriers and opportunities for improvement in the implementation of these technologies in the classroom. This exploration allows us to understand not only the current state of the use of AI in the region, but also to propose strategies that promote its ethical, inclusive, and pedagogically relevant integration.

Theoretical Framework

1. Education 4.0: Towards a transformation of the educational paradigm

The concept of Education 4.0 arises as a response to the demands of today's socio-technical environment, characterized by accelerated digitalization and process automation. This trend promotes student-centered, active, collaborative, and personalized learning, supported by emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality, big data, and educational blockchain (Ramírez-Montoya et al., 2022). Unlike previous models, Education 4.0 emphasizes the development of soft and digital skills necessary for the knowledge economy.

Education 1.0 to 4.0: Evolution of the educational paradigm

Table 1. Distinctive characteristics of educational models

Version	Key features	Role of the teacher	Student Role
1.0	Knowledge transfer, traditional model	Content Issuer	Passive Receiver
2.0	ICT as support tools	Facilitator	Active participant
3.0	Social Web, Collaborative Learning	Content curator	Co-creator of knowledge
4.0	Personalization, AI, smart technologies	Experience Designer	Protagonist of learning

Source: Adapted from Ramírez-Montoya et al. (2022) and López-Meneses et al. (2023).

2. Artificial Intelligence in Education

AI in education refers to the use of computational systems that simulate human intelligence processes, such as learning, decision-making, and adaptation, to improve teaching-learning processes (Holmes et al., 2022). Among its most relevant applications are intelligent tutoring systems, learning analytics, conversational agents (chatbots) and automated assessment.

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Table 2. Applications of AI in educational contexts

Application	Description	Example
Smart Tutoring	Systems that adapt content and pace according to student performance	Squirrel AI (China)
Learning Analytics	Data processing to predict learning difficulties	Canvas Analytics
Educational chatbots	Virtual assistants that answer questions in an automated way	IBM Watson Assistant
Automated Assessment	Real-time correction and feedback	Gradescope

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Holmes et al. (2022) and Luckin et al. (2021).

Empirical evidence suggests that AI can increase the efficiency of the educational process, improve student retention, and favor personalized education (García-Peñalvo et al., 2020). However, it also poses ethical and pedagogical challenges, such as data privacy, algorithmic transparency, and the potential dehumanization of the educational link.

3. Challenges and opportunities in Latin America

The incorporation of AI in Latin American education faces multiple barriers, such as poor technological infrastructure, fragmentation of public policies, and limited teacher training (UNESCO, 2023). Despite this, several countries have made progress through pilot programs and emerging regulatory frameworks that promote educational digital transformation (ECLAC, 2021).

Table 3. Status of progress in the integration of educational AI in Latin America

Country	Relevant initiatives	Implementation level	Main obstacles
Brazil	"Connected Education" program, use of AI in ENEM	Medium-high	Regional inequality, low training
Colombia	Project "National Digital Education Plan"	Middle	Urban-rural digital divide
Mexico	Partnerships with EdTech companies and universities	Low-medium	Limited access in public schools
Argentina	AI experiments at national universities	Low	Little investment in pedagogical innovation

Source: Adapted from UNESCO (2023) and ECLAC (2021).

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, exploratory and comparative approach, aimed at understanding in depth how artificial intelligence (AI) is being implemented in innovative teaching practices in Latin American countries. The research focuses on experiences developed in Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, and

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Argentina, selected for their geographical diversity and for having implemented concrete initiatives in the field of Education 4.0 in recent years (ECLAC, 2021; UNESCO, 2023).

Research Design

The qualitative research design is justified by the contextual and complex nature of the phenomenon studied. This type of approach allows us to explore meanings, perceptions, and strategies from the perspective of the actors involved, particularly teachers (Mertens, 2020).

Table 4. Key dimensions of methodological design

Methodological element	Characteristics
Approach	Qualitative, Comparative
Type of study	Exploratory, descriptive
Main techniques	Documentary review, semi-structured interviews
Sample	25 documents + 12 teachers (3 per country)
Analysis	Thematic coding (Braun & Clarke, 2019)

Data collection techniques

1. Documentary review

A systematic review of academic literature and institutional reports was carried out between 2020 and 2024. Databases such as Scopus, Scielo and Google Scholar were consulted, prioritizing peer-reviewed articles and documents from international organizations (UNESCO, IDB, ECLAC). In total, 25 documents were selected that met the following criteria:

- Publication date: 2020-2024.
- Thematic relevance (AI, Education 4.0, Latin America).
- Applied or empirical approach.

2. Semi-structured interviews

12 semi-structured interviews were applied to teachers from public and private institutions at the middle and higher levels. The sample was selected through purposive sampling, considering their participation in educational experiences with emerging technologies.

Table 5. Profile of interviewed teachers

Country	Educational level	Type of institution	Gender	Featured Project
Mexico	University	Public	Female	Academic Assistance Chatbot
Mexico	High school	Private	Male	Adaptive platform with AI

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Mexico	University	Private	Male	Course with automated feedback
Colombia	High school	Public	Female	AI Performance Analysis
Colombia	University	Public	Male	Smart Virtual Lab
Colombia	University	Private	Female	Virtual Academic Writing Tutor
Brazil	University	Public	Female	Automatic evaluation with machine learning
Brazil	High school	Public	Male	Educational Conversational Assistant
Brazil	University	Private	Male	AI for curriculum management
Argentina	University	Public	Female	Implementing AI in a Hybrid Classroom
Argentina	High school	Private	Female	Educational chat for reinforcement
Argentina	University	Private	Male	Algorithm for churn prediction

Analysis phases

The information collected was analyzed through thematic coding, following the approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2019), which includes the following stages:

1. **Familiarization with the data**: cross-sectional reading of interviews and documents.
2. **Initial code generation**: identification of recurring patterns.
3. **Topic search**: grouping codes into thematic categories.
4. **Review of topics**: contrast between countries and validation with literature.
5. **Definition and naming of topics**: formulation of findings.
6. **Writing the report**: integration with theoretical framework and objectives.

Table 6. Emerging categories of thematic analysis

Category	**Subcategories**
Types of AI use	Tutoring, assessment, personalization, analysis
Barriers to implementation	Teacher training, infrastructure, resistance
Facilitators	Institutional support, alliances, teaching curiosity
Impacts on teaching	Pedagogical innovation, personalized follow-up

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The use of qualitative software such as **Atlas.ti** facilitated the organization and systematization of data, improving the traceability of the analytical process (Nowell et al., 2017).

Ethical considerations

The research was carried out in accordance with the ethical principles of respect, confidentiality and informed consent. All participants were informed of the objective of the study, and were guaranteed anonymity in the publication of the results. Participation was completely voluntary and unpaid.

Results

The analysis of the data obtained through interviews and documentary review allowed us to identify four major dimensions related to the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in innovative teaching practices in Latin America: **types of use of AI, level of implementation**, **barriers and facilitators**, and **pedagogical** impacts. The most relevant findings are presented below, organized by each emerging thematic category.

1. Types of use of AI in teaching practices

The interviewed teachers described various ways of integrating AI into their pedagogical activity, mainly in:

- **Automated assessment** of tasks and exams.
- **Personalized recommendation of content** on adaptive platforms.
- **Conversational assistants** (chatbots) for academic tutoring.
- **Predictive analysis of student performance**, using learning analytics tools.

Table 7. Types of AI use by country (n=12 teachers)

Main use of AI	Mexico	Colombia	Brazil	Argentina	Total
Automated Assessment	2	1	2	1	6
Personalized content recommendation	1	2	2	1	6
Chatbots for academic support	2	2	1	2	7
Learning Analytics and Prediction	1	2	2	1	6

Source: Authors' elaboration based on interviews (2025).

These uses are aligned with the trends identified by Holmes et al. (2022), who highlight the potential of AI to support teaching decisions, personalize learning experiences, and free up time for more creative tasks.

2. Level of AI implementation

An implementation was still incipient, but growing, with a greater presence at the university level and in private or urban institutions. The use of AI in public and rural school contexts is limited, evidencing a technological access gap.

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Table 8. Level of implementation by type of institution

Type of institution	High implementation	Medium implementation	Low implementation
Private universities	3	3	0
Public universities	2	3	1
Private schools	1	1	1
Public Schools	0	2	4

Source: Authors' elaboration based on interviews and documentary review.

These differences have also been reported by UNESCO (2023), which warns of the urgency of closing the educational digital divide to prevent the widening of existing inequalities.

3. Barriers and Enabling Factors

Teachers identified various obstacles to the implementation of AI in their practices, including:

- **Lack of specific training** in educational AI.
- **Limitations of connectivity and technological equipment**.
- **Resistance to change on the** part of some colleagues or managers.

However, important enablers were also identified:

- Support from innovation centers and educational technology departments.
- Participation in teaching networks or international projects.
- Institutional autonomy to implement disruptive strategies.

Table 9. Frequency of mentions of barriers and facilitators (n=12)

Category	No. of mentions
Lack of teacher training	10
Technology gap	9
Resistance to change	6
Institutional support	8
Curiosity and teaching autonomy	7
Strategic alliances	5

Source: Authors' elaboration with thematic coding.

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The evidence coincides with Ramírez-Montoya et al. (2022), who point out that teacher human capital is one of the critical factors in the sustainable adoption of emerging technologies in the region.

4. Impact on pedagogical innovation

Despite the challenges, teachers recognized significant improvements in the personalization of learning, in the efficiency of feedback, and in student motivation. For example:

- 75% of the teachers reported **greater active participation** of the student body.
- 66% observed **a reduction in the time spent on repetitive tasks**.
- 58% indicated improvements in **retention and academic follow-up**.

In addition, it was mentioned that AI has favored experimentation with new methodologies, such as the flipped classroom, gamified environments, and automated microlearning.

These results reinforce the conclusions of previous studies that affirm that AI, well implemented, can strengthen the quality of the educational process without replacing the role of teachers (López-Meneses et al., 2023).

Conclusions

This study reveals that the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into innovative teaching practices in Latin America is in an early stage of development, with significant advances in some university and urban contexts, but still with strong structural challenges in more vulnerable education sectors. Education 4.0, as an emerging paradigm, offers transformative opportunities to redesign teaching, promoting personalized, active, and competency-oriented learning for the twenty-first century (Ramírez-Montoya et al., 2022).

One of the main findings was the **diversity in the uses of AI**, from automatic assessment systems to learning analytics tools and conversational assistants. These applications have allowed teachers to optimize processes, provide timely feedback, and design more interactive experiences for students (Holmes et al., 2022). However, most of these practices are still limited to individual initiatives or pilot projects, indicating the need to consolidate public policies that institutionalize their use in the formal education system (ECLAC, 2021).

The **role of the teacher** continues to be fundamental in this new ecosystem. Beyond unfounded fears about teacher replacement, the results show that AI can strengthen the role of teachers by freeing them from routine tasks, allowing them to focus on mentoring, emotional accompaniment, and pedagogical design (López-Meneses et al., 2023). To this end, it is crucial to **strengthen teacher training in digital skills and critical thinking on the ethical use of AI,** a dimension that is still little addressed in initial and continuing education curricula.

Key enabling conditions **were also identified**, such as institutional support, pedagogical autonomy and participation in collaborative networks. These variables act as catalysts for change, especially in environments with less technological infrastructure. Collaboration between teachers, universities, governments, and the private sector will be essential to scale these innovations and ensure that they do not deepen existing inequalities (UNESCO, 2023).

In short, this study invites us to reflect on the **potential of AI as an ally for educational innovation in Latin America**, as long as its implementation is guided by principles of inclusion, equity, and sustainability. Education 4.0 is not a technological goal, but a **cultural and pedagogical transformation** that requires a holistic vision, sustained investments and political will.

Future studies could deepen the quantitative impact analysis of these practices, as well as explore experiences in other countries in the region, including rural areas and indigenous peoples, where digitalization faces even more complex challenges.

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