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AI-driven educational transformation under the wave of artificial intelligence: An integrated discussion of policy governance, teaching practice, ethical risks, and lifelong learning

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ABSTRACT

2026 is widely regarded as the "Year Zero of Global AI Education" [1, 11], marking that artificial intelligence (AI), especially generative AI, has evolved from sporadic technology introductions into a core force driving the profound reconstruction of the global education system [4]. Governments and international organizations around the world have introduced special policies with unprecedented strategic determination, incorporating AI literacy into the core of national education, forming an educational reform race that concerns the future national strength [2, 9, 17]. However, the rapid iteration and large-scale application of technology have also exposed systemic dilemmas in the education field, such as insufficient governance framework, lagging teacher training, impact on assessment systems, and difficulty in regulating ethical risks [3, 5, 28]. This paper aims to respond to this era and, from an "inclusive" perspective, cover all stages from basic education to lifelong learning, to conduct a balanced and integrated analysis of the current "policy governance" and "teaching practice" of AI education.

This paper first reviews the AI education strategic layout of major global economies (China, the US, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, etc.) around 2026, presenting a development model where "national will-driven" and "diversified autonomous exploration" coexist [1, 9, 29]. Secondly, it delves into the "real problems" and "pseudo-prosperity" at the teaching practice level, exploring the core debates regarding AI's role positioning (assistant vs. substitute), application scenarios (administrative burden reduction vs. thought-provoking), and human-machine collaboration models [5, 14]. The paper pays particular attention to the evolution of AI literacy from "tool use" to "coexisting wisdom," and discusses its fundamental requirements for curriculum design and assessment reform [1, 3, 6]. Finally, this paper integrates policy and practical insights, proposing a systematic governance framework encompassing "top-level design, support system, ethical safeguards, and ecological collaboration," arguing that only by adhering to "technology for good and education as the foundation," and upholding the original aspiration of education amidst the technological wave, can we ensure that AI truly empowers the comprehensive development of individuals [5, 10].

KEY WORDS: The first year of AI education, generative AI, AI literacy, education governance, human-machine collaboration, policy framework, teaching practice, lifelong learning

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1. Introduction: Standing at the historical turning point of 2026

ChatGPT at the end of 2022, generative AI has completed the leap from the "wow period" to the "application period" at an unexpected speed [3, 6]. By 2026, AI education has entered a more profound paradigm shift stage - the "Agent era" or the "coexistence era" [3]. AI is no longer just a tool that passively responds to instructions, but an "intelligent agent" that can actively plan, allocate resources, and perform complex tasks [3]. This transformation has gone beyond the simple superposition of technical tools and directly targets the core of the education ecosystem, reshaping learning methods, teaching relationships, and the definition of ability [4, 15].

Globally, policymakers have recognized the strategic importance of this transformation. Five departments in mainland China jointly released the "Artificial Intelligence + Education" Action Plan [2]. The United States has included AI in the priority consideration of federal education subsidies [22]. South Korea plans to fully introduce AI digital textbooks by 2025 [9]. Taiwan is promoting this through a combination of government and private sector efforts, and regards 2026 as the first year that AI will officially enter education [1]. This wave driven by national will aims to fully incorporate AI literacy into curriculum standards and daily teaching, and cultivate future citizens who can collaborate with AI and solve complex problems [9, 18].

However, there is a huge practical gap between the rapid development of technology and the grand vision of policy. The dilemma faced by front-line teachers has changed from "not knowing how to use AI" to "what to do about assessment after using it? What do parents think? What is the policy basis?" [3, 6]. This widespread anxiety highlights the core contradiction of current AI education: **the speed of technology adoption far exceeds the speed of maturity of ethical norms, teacher training and institutional support** . Under the wave of "AI empowerment", there are real risks of utilitarian application, mental inertia, and damage to data privacy and educational equity [5].

Therefore, the purpose of this study is not to reiterate the potential of AI, but to confront and respond to these "real problems." This paper attempts to establish an integrated analytical framework that juxtaposes macro-level "policy governance" with micro-level "teaching practice" to explore how the education system should adapt and innovate at the systemic level in today's AI-dominated world. The research scope will adhere to the principle of "inclusivity," focusing not only on the K-12 stage but also on the needs of higher education and lifelong learning in society, aiming to provide a clearer blueprint for transformation for education policymakers, researchers, and practitioners in Taiwan and the Chinese-speaking world.

2. Global AI Education Policy Competition and Cooperation: Multiple Paths and Common Challenges

Around 2026, the layout of major countries in the field of AI education will show distinct national characteristics and strategic trade-offs, forming a "war of education" without the smoke of gunpowder [9]. Although the paths are different, the common goal behind them is to seize the commanding heights of future talent competition.

2.1 State-led large-scale promotion model: Taking mainland China and South Korea as examples

China has adopted a typical top-down strong promotion strategy. In 2026, the Ministry of Education and five other departments jointly issued the "Action Plan for Artificial Intelligence + Education" [2], and the previously released "Guidelines for Artificial Intelligence Education in Primary and Secondary Schools" [9], which together constructed a complete policy chain from top-level design to specific implementation. Its characteristics are:

- **Systematic layout** : The policy covers multiple aspects such as teaching application, curriculum development, and security system construction, and selects pilot provinces, cities and universities across the country to promote it in an integrated manner [16, 17].
- **Full-scene coverage** : AI applications have penetrated into core scenarios such as enrollment examinations, teaching evaluation, employment services, and campus governance, aiming to realize the intelligentization of the entire education process [30].
- **Industry ecosystem integration** : Relying on the industry advantages of technology giants such as Baidu, Alibaba, and Tencent, a wealth of AI education products and platforms have been rapidly implemented [9, 23].

South Korea has shocked the world with its radical "AI digital textbook" plan, which aims to gradually replace traditional paper textbooks with AI textbooks in all schools starting in 2025, with the goal of covering all major subjects by 2028.[9] This move demonstrates the South Korean government's determination to reshape education with technology, but it has also raised social concerns about the weakening of the teacher's role, excessive screen time, and educational equity.[9]

The advantage of this model is that it has strong policy implementation and large-scale resource investment, and can quickly form a scale effect. However, its challenges are also significant, including the general lag in teacher training, the potential for a widening digital gap between urban and rural areas and regions, and the tendency for courses to focus on technical operation rather than critical AI literacy [9].

2.2 Diverse Exploration and Standard-Leading Models: A Case Study of the United States and Taiwan

the United States is characterized by “federal guidance, local autonomy, and diverse innovation”. The federal government has incorporated AI into the national strategic priority through the National Artificial Intelligence Policy Framework [29] and the Department of Education’s policy guidance [20], and guides its development direction through discretionary subsidies and other means [22]. However, its implementation depends heavily on the autonomy of each state and school district, as well as the standard setting by non-profit organizations.

- **Standards and community-driven** : Professional organizations such as CSTA (Computer Science Teachers Association) and AI4K12 have played key roles in the development of K-12 AI education standards [9].
- **A strong culture of innovation** : Top universities (such as MIT and Stanford) and technology companies provide a large number of free and open-source educational resources to encourage grassroots innovation and experimentation [9].

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- **Legislation and regulation go hand in hand** : As of 2026, more than 30 states have introduced bills or official guidelines related to AI education, focusing on issues such as data privacy, classroom use guidelines and ethical guidance [21, 34].

Taiwan 's development model presents a vibrant trend of "official and private sector cooperation and dual-track development". Since 2019, the Ministry of Education has promoted the overall strategy of AI education, based on the 108 curriculum guidelines to develop supplementary teaching materials and diverse elective courses [1]. After 2024, through projects such as the "AI Talent Ark Project" and the "Smart Teacher Training Alliance", the development of digital teaching materials, teacher training and AI learning system construction will be systematically strengthened [1]. Private sector forces are also active. Tech giants (such as Google and Microsoft) cooperate with schools to launch teacher certification, project projects and educational AI tools, forming healthy competition [1]. For example, the "AI ALL IN" project promoted by the New Taipei City Education Bureau not only introduces AI into administrative management to improve efficiency, but also takes the lead in formulating ethical norms and teaching guidelines, demonstrating the local government's proactive role in governance [8].

The advantage of this model is its high flexibility, which can stimulate grassroots innovation. However, its challenge lies in the extremely uneven development in various regions, the lack of a unified framework may lead to uneven quality, and the digital divide problem is equally serious [9].

2.3 Curriculum Integration and Humanistic Approach: Case Studies of Japan and Finland

Japan has adopted a more gradual and cautious approach to curriculum integration. Its focus is not on offering AI courses separately, but on integrating the basic knowledge of AI and data science into existing compulsory subjects such as "Information I" and linking it to university entrance examinations to ensure that it is valued.[9] This approach emphasizes using AI as a tool for analyzing scientific data and solving disciplinary problems, and closely integrating it with the foundation of STEM education.[9]

Finland offers a unique example of "human-centeredness". Its national AI project does not pursue technological depth, but aims to enable the general public (with a plan to enable 1% of the population) to understand the basic principles and social impact of AI [9]. The Finnish Ministry of Education integrates AI literacy into the existing curriculum framework, emphasizing the cultivation of students' critical thinking and ethical judgment abilities, rather than simply technical operation [9].

2.4 Common Challenges: Faculty, Equity, and Governance Frameworks

Despite the diverse approaches, all countries face three common challenges in advancing AI education:

1. **Teacher training is lagging behind** : Teachers are the last mile in the implementation of policies, but most teachers are pushed to the front line of AI teaching without systematic training, and generally feel anxious and inadequate [1, 9, 28].
2. **Educational equity** : The gap in hardware resources and the uneven distribution of high-quality teachers may be further widened by the introduction of AI, exacerbating the digital divide [9].
3. **Lack of governance framework** : There is a general lack of clear "guardrails and guidelines" on data privacy, algorithmic bias and academic integrity, leaving schools and teachers in a dilemma between innovation and risk [3, 28].

Overall, global AI education policies have moved from the discussion of "whether or not to do it" to the deep waters of "how to do it well". A successful educational reform requires not only investment in technology and funds, but also a sound teacher training system, a fair resource allocation mechanism and a sound ethical governance framework as support[25].

3. Opportunities and Challenges in Teaching Practice: "Genuine Problems" and "False Prosperity"

When AI tools enter the campus on a large scale, the teaching scene presents a seemingly prosperous scene: AI grading of homework, smart learning platforms, personalized learning paths and other applications are emerging one after another [5, 23]. However, under this wave of technology, educators must maintain a clear "cold eye" and distinguish which are the "real problems" that truly promote the development of students' thinking and which are just "pseudo-prosperity" that pursue formal efficiency [5].

3.1 The Debate on the Role of AI: A "Facilitator" for Liberating Teachers vs. A Standardized "Replacement"

The most valuable role of AI in education should be as an "assistant" that "liberates" teachers from tedious and repetitive work, rather than a decision-maker that attempts to "replace" teachers in making value judgments [5, 10].

- **Exploration of real problems (human-machine collaboration)** : Many front-line teachers are exploring the collaborative model of "AI+HI" (artificial intelligence + human intelligence) [14]. For example, in the teaching of high school argumentative writing, AI does not directly score students' articles, but undertakes basic analysis work such as sorting out the writing structure, checking logical fallacies, and providing diverse examples. Teachers, based on the objective data provided by AI, combined with their own professional judgment and understanding of students, conduct more targeted in-depth comments and personalized guidance. This model can save teachers nearly 60% of the time spent correcting essays, allowing them to focus on capturing students' flashes of thought and unique insights [5].
- **The Trap of False Prosperity (Utilitarian Misconception)** : Some studies show that the difference between pure AI essay grading systems and human teachers' scores can be as high as 60%. AI not only tends to give higher scores, but more seriously, it often ignores the unique insights and critical thinking in students' essays, and instead rates "standardized" works with fluent language but mediocre ideas as excellent works [5]. If such applications are promoted without analysis, they are actually stifling the most cherished individuality and creativity in education in the name of technology.

Therefore, the key to judging the quality of AI applications lies in whether they amplify teachers' educational wisdom rather than using standardized algorithms to diminish the warmth of education [5]. High-quality AI educational applications must be "teaching-driven technology" rather than "technology-standardized teaching" [5].

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3.2 Shift in Learning Objectives: From "Acquiring Knowledge" to "Cultivating Higher-Order Thinking Skills and AI Collaboration Competence"

With the popularization of generative AI, traditional learning objectives focused on knowledge memorization and information replication have rapidly become devalued. The core objective of education must shift to cultivating students' higher-order abilities that are difficult for AI to replace.

- **The deepening of AI literacy** : The connotation of AI literacy has evolved from the early "learning how to use AI" to the more profound "learning how to coexist and collaborate with AI" [3, 6]. This includes:
- **Questioning and questioning ability** : Can ask AI precise and in-depth questions and critically evaluate the accuracy, bias and limitations of AI-generated content. For example, students at Longpu Elementary School in Taiwan have learned to find the mistakes in AI answers and take screenshots to report them in class [1].
- **Collaboration and Creativity** : Knowing how to use AI as a collaborator to complete complex and creative tasks together. For example, in project-based learning (PBL), students can use AI to conduct preliminary data collection and brainstorming, but the final problem definition, solution design and value judgment still need to be led by themselves. The case of Professor Yang Ya-ting of National Cheng Kung University leading elementary school students to design a "smart medicine box" is a model of this kind of practice [1].
- **Ethics and sense of responsibility** : understand the impact of AI on society and ethics, and be able to use AI responsibly and abide by the principle of academic integrity [1].
- **The impact and reform of assessment systems** : Traditional paper-and-pencil tests and report writing face enormous challenges in the AI era. Education systems must promote assessment reform, shifting the focus from "end results" to "learning process," such as requiring students to submit records of their AI usage, conduct oral presentations, or complete real-time inquiry tasks in class to assess their true thinking and collaboration abilities.

3.3 Systemic Dilemmas in Practice: Lack of Resources, Talent, and Support Systems

Despite the enthusiasm of many teachers for innovative exploration, they generally face insufficient support from schools and the education system, which is the biggest obstacle to AI education moving from a "bonsai" to a "landscape".

- **Infrastructure and cost dilemma** : Although some areas have built AI demonstration zones with large-scale computing power, this high-cost model is difficult to popularize in every ordinary class [5]. What the education site needs is a low-cost, easy-to-deploy "small kitchen" that serves front-line teaching, rather than a "showroom" for only visits. The low-cost desktop AI server solution adopted by Singaporean schools provides useful inspiration for this [5].
- **A severe shortage of professional talent** : Traditional school "audiovisual instructors" are no longer adequate to meet the complex demands of AI-integrated education. Schools urgently need cross-disciplinary talent who understand both education and technology, such as Chief Information Officers (CIOs) or specialized technology coaches. However, there is a significant gap between domestic schools and the industry in terms of salary and evaluation mechanisms for attracting and retaining such talent [5, 10].
- **Weak support and evaluation system** : Many schools outsource technical services to enterprises and lack the ability to integrate and develop school-based technologies [5]. At the same time, teachers' efforts to innovate in AI education are often difficult to be recognized in the existing evaluation system such as professional title evaluation and project application, which to some extent inhibits teachers' innovative motivation [5].

In summary, the true value of AI in teaching practice lies in its ability to act as a catalyst for promoting deep learning among students and professional growth among teachers. To achieve this goal, we must confront and address the existing "real problems" such as utilitarianism and weak support systems, avoiding the "pseudo-prosperity" of merely pursuing technological coverage. This requires the education system to provide more flexible policy space, more pragmatic resource support, and more scientific evaluation guidance from a top-level design perspective.

4. Integrated Governance Framework: From Implementation to Ecological Collaboration

Faced with the systemic challenges of AI education, simply introducing technology at one point or providing fragmented teacher training is far from sufficient. The education system needs to establish a multi-layered, comprehensive, and integrated governance framework to ensure the healthy development of AI education along the path of "technology for good, education as the foundation."

4.1 Top-level design: Formulate a clear, flexible policy framework with ethical bottom lines.

National and local education authorities must play a dual role as "navigators" and "escorts".

- **Formulate ethical safeguards and usage guidelines** : The primary task of the policy is to define clear ethical bottom lines and behavioral boundaries for the application of AI in education. For example, the New Taipei City Education Bureau took the lead in formulating the "Supplementary Regulations on Artificial Intelligence" and the "Recommended Reference Guidelines for Teachers to Use AI to Assist Learning," establishing a graded usage principle to ensure that AI applications take into account safety, privacy, and educational value, providing a reference model for other regions [8]. These "safety safeguards and guidelines" are the premise for teachers to dare to innovate [28].
- **Promote the inclusion of AI literacy in the core curriculum** : AI literacy should be clearly included in the curriculum standards from elementary to high school, and corresponding teaching materials, lesson plans and assessment tools should be provided [1, 18]. The indicator framework for PISA 2029 testing AI literacy by international organizations such as the OECD provides an important reference for curriculum design [1].
- **Establish data governance standards** : For student data involved in AI applications, strict data privacy protection and governance standards must be established, the data collection, storage, use and destruction process must be

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clarified, and compliance requirements must be put forward for suppliers [21].

4.2 System Support: Building a professional development and resource system to empower teachers and schools.

The vitality of a policy lies in its implementation, and the key to implementation lies in providing systematic support to frontline teachers and schools.

- **Systematic and continuous teacher training** : A hierarchical and categorized teacher professional development system should be established. For example, Taiwan's "Smart Teacher Training Alliance" starts with normal universities to train future seed teachers [1]. For in-service teachers, multi-level workshops from basic practice to advanced application should be provided, and teachers should be encouraged to form professional learning communities to carry out peer support and case sharing [10, 32].
- **To create an open-source and shared educational resource ecosystem** : In order to break the technological monopoly of commercial companies, we should encourage and support the construction of open-source platforms such as "Educational GitHub " so that high-quality AI teaching tools and models can serve a wide range of teachers and students at a lower cost [5]. At the same time, the government should support the continuous optimization of public learning platforms such as Taiwan's "In-Care Network" and introduce AI functions to make them into inclusive educational infrastructure [1].
- **Establish cross-disciplinary professional support positions** : Similar professional positions to Chief Information Officers (CIOs) should be established at the regional or school level to be responsible for the introduction and evaluation of AI technology, support for its integration into teaching, and control of ethical risks. Sufficient incentives should be provided in terms of salary and evaluation system to attract and retain cross-disciplinary professionals [5, 10].

4.3 Ecological Collaboration: Promoting Multi-Party Cooperation Among Families, Schools, Communities, and Enterprises

The success of AI education is by no means a solo effort by schools, but requires the collaborative efforts of the entire social ecosystem.

- **Establishing a consensus between home and school** : Schools should take the initiative to communicate with parents to alleviate their dual anxieties about their children's over-reliance on AI or falling behind the times [3]. By holding parent workshops and issuing AI usage guidelines, schools can guide parents to understand the true meaning of AI literacy and form a joint educational force between families and schools.
- **Deep integration of industry, academia, and research** : Encourage closer cooperation between enterprises, universities, and primary and secondary schools. Enterprises can provide technology, resources, and real-world application scenarios; universities can provide cutting-edge theoretical research and teacher training; and primary and secondary schools can serve as bases for practice and feedback. This model not only integrates learning and application but also effectively alleviates the pressure on schools in terms of resources and technology [1, 5].
- **Integration of lifelong learning system** : AI literacy is an essential ability that runs through an individual's entire life. AI education should be integrated into lifelong learning institutions such as community colleges and senior learning centers to help members of society of different ages and professions adapt to the challenges and opportunities of the AI era [13].

4.4 Driving force of assessment reform: Using higher-order competency assessment to guide teaching innovation

Assessment is the guiding force. As long as the exam content remains unchanged, the teaching methods are unlikely to undergo substantial changes. Therefore, promoting assessment reform is a key lever to drive the entire transformation of AI education.

- **Emphasis should be placed on process-oriented and performance-oriented assessments** : reduce reliance on summative and standard-answer tests, and increase assessment methods that can demonstrate students' higher-order thinking and collaborative abilities, such as project reports, portfolios, oral presentations, and group collaborations.
- **Assessing AI Collaboration Skills** : Use "how to use AI effectively and critically" as an evaluation metric. For example, require students to include a prompts log of their interactions with AI when submitting assignments, explaining how they selected, integrated, and optimized the AI-generated content.

Through integrated governance across these four levels, the education system can embrace the transformative power of AI technology while preserving the essence of education, ensuring that technological advancements ultimately serve to cultivate well-rounded individuals with independent thinking, creativity, and social responsibility.

5. Conclusion: Upholding the Original Aspiration of Education Amidst the Technological Wave

2026, marked by the landmark year of AI education, ushered in a new decade of global educational innovation and restructuring [4, 11]. This AI-driven revolution is unprecedented in its depth and breadth; it is not only an innovation in technological tools but also a comprehensive challenge to educational philosophies, teaching models, teacher-student relationships, and even educational governance. Looking back at the policy competition and cooperation among various countries and the unique experiences of their teaching practices, we can draw the following core conclusions:

First, AI education has changed from an "optional" to a "required" subject, with its core being literacy rather than technology. Global policies are converging to incorporate AI literacy into the core of national education, which means that the goal of education is no longer to cultivate simple technology users, but future citizens who can coexist critically with AI and innovate collaboratively. Educators must shift their focus from the transmission of knowledge to the cultivation of higher-order thinking, problem-solving skills, and ethical judgment [1, 3].

Second**,** "human-machine collaboration" is a realistic path for AI to empower education, and its key lies in "amplifying teachers' wisdom." Numerous cases in teaching practice show that the best

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role of AI is as a "wise co-pilot" for teachers rather than "fully autonomous driving." Successful AI applications are those that can liberate teachers from tedious work, allowing them to focus on core aspects of education such as emotional interaction and intellectual enlightenment [5, 10]. Any attempt to replace teachers' professional judgment with standardized algorithms may lead to a "pseudo-prosperity" and damage the personalization and warmth of education.

Third, systemic governance is the fundamental guarantee for the steady and long-term development of AI education. The current common dilemma of "technology outpacing institutions" highlights the importance of a governance framework. A successful AI education ecosystem requires clear ethical safeguards, continuous teacher empowerment, equitable resource allocation, and collaborative participation from families, schools, communities, and enterprises. Education policymakers cannot be satisfied with merely introducing technology; they must simultaneously build an institutional environment that supports innovation, manages risks, and promotes fairness [3, 8, 25].

Standing at the forefront of 2026, we must embrace the great opportunities brought by AI, and also maintain a sober and steadfast attitude as educators in the face of its challenges. The technological wave will eventually change, but the original intention of education—to promote the free and comprehensive development of everyone—will never change. The future of AI education does not lie in developing more intelligent algorithms, but in whether we can build a smart ecosystem of "technology for good and education as the foundation". As one educator said, "AI education is not a test of our ability to use technology, but our determination to uphold the original intention of education." [5] This determination will be the compass that guides us through the fog of technology and to the other side of the ideal of education.

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