

## **AI IN THE CLASSROOM: FROM CHEAT TOOL TO SMART PARTNER IN LEARNING**

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Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a game-changing tool in today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, transforming the way students learn and teachers teach. Initially, people were unsure about the use of AI in the classroom. Many teachers thought it was a way to cheat or a threat to traditional teaching methods. Students were also wary of AI because they were concerned it would replace their own thinking or lead them to rely on shortcuts. However, when AI is used effectively, it is no longer just a "tech toy"; it becomes a powerful learning partner that can personalize education, make it more engaging, and enhance results.

One of the most significant advantages of AI in education is that it can make learning more personalized and tailored to individual needs. Every student learns in their own way and has their own strengths and weaknesses. Traditional classrooms often struggle to meet these needs. AI tools can help fill the gap in the Philippines, where class sizes can be big and resources are limited, by providing personalized exercises and adaptive learning modules. For instance, platforms like Quipper and AI-powered learning apps analyze students' answers, track their progress, and provide them with personalized feedback. If a student is having trouble with math, they might get extra practice problems and step-by-step help. If a student is excelling in reading comprehension, they may be assigned more challenging texts and creative exercises. This personalized approach enables teachers to spend more time mentoring and guiding students, rather than repeating the same tasks over and over.

AI is more than just a way to personalize things; it can also be used to engage people and encourage creativity. Gamified AI lessons, virtual simulations, and interactive platforms make learning a fun and engaging experience. For example, AI-powered simulations can help science students conduct virtual lab experiments that mimic chemical reactions or physics experiments, eliminating the need to purchase expensive materials. Filipino students, particularly those residing in rural areas with limited access to laboratories, greatly benefit from these virtual options. AI chatbots can also serve as virtual tutors, answering students' questions, providing hints, and explaining concepts when requested. This allows students to learn at their own pace, which encourages curiosity and critical thinking.

AI also assists teachers with administrative and evaluative tasks, which can be time-consuming and tedious. AI can handle tasks such as grading multiple-choice quizzes, tracking attendance, and monitoring student participation. This allows teachers to spend more time mentoring, counseling, and providing personalized instruction. In the Philippines, where public school teachers often have to deal with large classes with limited support, AI tools can help them perform their jobs more effectively and with less stress.

However, there are issues with utilizing AI in the classroom. Students may become too reliant on AI tools for answers, which means they don't learn how to solve problems independently. There are also ethical concerns, including data privacy, bias in AI algorithms, and the potential for unfair access. Many students living in remote or impoverished areas may lack access to reliable internet or suitable devices to utilize AI platforms fully. In this situation, teachers are still necessary because they are mediators, guides, and moral mentors. They show students how to use AI responsibly, think critically about information, and find a balance between digital learning and reflection and discussion.

The Department of Education in the Philippines (DepEd) has recognized the potential of AI and technology in schools. There are many efforts to bring AI tools into public schools. For example, there are AI-powered educational apps and teacher training programs that teach digital literacy. Some private schools, including the Philippine Science High School, have experimented with using AI for personalized tutoring, virtual labs, and AI-driven grading systems. These pilot programs have yielded positive results, with students becoming more engaged, learning more effectively, and teachers becoming more efficient.

AI also helps people learn the skills they need to succeed in the 21st century. Filipino students who use AI tools know how to use technology safely, think critically about data, and work with others online. These skills are essential for preparing students for jobs that require proficiency in computer use, problem-solving, and adaptability. AI doesn't replace teachers; it enhances their work and transforms classrooms into vibrant spaces where technology and teaching converge.

Ultimately, AI in the classroom is no longer just a futuristic idea or a tool that some people dislike; it is a valuable asset in education. When used wisely, AI enhances personalized learning, supports teachers in their work, fosters creativity, and equips students with the skills they need to thrive in the digital age. The key is to find the right balance between AI's efficiency and interactivity and the empathy, guidance, and mentorship of human teachers. In the Philippines, AI can help fill resource gaps, engage students in meaningful ways, and provide teachers with the tools they need to be better mentors. Instead of viewing AI as a threat, Filipino teachers and students can see it as a valuable partner in their learning journey.

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