

Reimagining Education with AI for Social-Emotional Learning and Intercultural Competence

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The growing presence of artificial intelligence in classrooms around the world has raised important questions about what it can offer and what is lost when digital tools facilitate the teaching and learning process in classrooms. Much existing research focuses on AI's capacity to produce and personalize academic content and streamline assessment. What tends to receive less attention is how AI interacts with the more human dimensions of everyday life, such as empathy, emotional well-being, cultural awareness, and inclusive communication, at the intersection of education. The study examines how AI-supported educational tools can contribute to social-emotional learning (SEL) and intercultural competence in culturally diverse classrooms, while analysing the ethical and pedagogical complications that come with this integration. This paper presents a conceptual framework aimed to empower educators and stakeholders in navigating these complexities, specifically with a focus on the ethical practice of AI in education in developing SEL and intercultural awareness.

The central aim of this study is to examine how AI-supported educational practices shape SEL and intercultural competence among learners in culturally diverse settings. In particular, it focuses on under which conditions digital tools foster empathy, inclusive communication, and cultural sensitivity, and identifies ethical risk factors such as the problem of algorithmic bias, misuse of data, and limited one-on-one human interaction in AI-mediated learning environments. This research seeks to propose a pedagogically responsible framework that helps in outlining a comprehensive approach with effective strategies to leverage AI as a powerful tool in shaping learners' emotional intelligence, social awareness, relationship skills, and intercultural competence.

This study used a thematic literature review method, drawing on 48 peer-reviewed studies, policy documents, and institutional reports published primarily between 2015 and 2025. Sources were identified through ERIC, Scopus, and Google Scholar, with particular emphasis on work published after 2020, the period in which AI tools entered mainstream educational practice at large, and the

related research expanded significantly. Thematic analysis was used to map patterns across the selected sources. In addition, the case analysis of AI-enabled platforms, including adaptive learning systems and multilingual collaboration tools, helped situate the findings in the context of classrooms.

The analysis suggests that AI-enabled platforms can support SEL and intercultural awareness in significant ways. The three main mechanisms appear most consistently in the studies: personalized feedback that is responsive to individual learners' emotional states and cultural contexts, multilingual platforms that reduce communicative barriers and focus on linguistic diversity, and collaborative task designs that create opportunities for cross-cultural communication and emotional mapping. When these features are combined with active teacher professional development and strategies equipping students with ethical AI integration in everyday classroom activities, the outcomes tend to be much stronger.

The concerns that emerge from the literature are worth exploring. Firstly, algorithmic bias in content recommendation systems can reproduce and amplify existing cultural hierarchies and marginalize minority learners. Secondly, more difficult to measure is the SEL, which depends on the emotional states and relationships of humans, something that AI-driven responsiveness cannot fully reproduce. Lastly, cultural homogenization appears in studies as globally implemented tools miss the local cultural input. These arguments are necessary as AI in education is growing rapidly in today's world, so designing and implementing it with considerable care and focus on social-emotional learning and cultural aspects of users becomes imperative.

The discussion draws on these findings to opt for an approach in which AI integration keeps human relationships, interactions, and cultural significance at the centre of learning. This means culturally responsive design, transparent systems, and teacher preparation that equips educators to work alongside these tools. It also means accepting that AI should support and improve education and can be used as an essential resource to enhance social-emotional learning and intercultural competence in classrooms, but it cannot take the place of the connection and care that human interaction provides. These findings urge for an ethical framework that places emotional well-being, equity, and cultural competence at the centre of AI-integrated education and not just as additions, but as foundational building blocks for designing educational materials with the

integration of AI. Previously, major emphasis has been placed on what AI can do in classrooms. This study suggests shifting our focus to what AI cannot do and what it risks doing. Which means that the more important and useful question in today's time for educators and policymakers is navigating the intersection of AI, Social-emotional Learning, and the development of intercultural competence.

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