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Transitional challenges in integrating AI into the curriculum: The case of higher education in the Philippines as a developing country

Jason V. Chavez[1+]
Alprince King Biri[2]
Rolly G. Salvaleon[3]
Michael Angelo A. Legarde[4]
Erwin B. Berry[5]

[1,2]*Zamboanga Peninsula Polytechnic State University, Zamboanga City 7000, Philippines.*
[1]*Email: jchavez@zppsu.edu.ph*
[2]*Email: alprincekingabdulabiri@gmail.com*
[3,5]*North Eastern Mindanao State University, Rosario, Tandag City 8300, Surigao del Sur, Philippines.*
[3]*Email: rgsalvaleon@nemsu.ed*
[5]*Email: ebberry@nemsu.edu.ph*
[4]*Palawan State University, Puerto Princesa City 5300, Philippines.*
[4]*Email: malegarde@psu.palawan.edu.ph*


(+ Corresponding author)

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ABSTRACT

Despite the rapid integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education worldwide, existing studies are predominantly focused on the opportunities and technological benefits of AI adoption, while paying limited attention to the transitional challenges experienced by higher education institutions in developing-country contexts, such as the Philippines. This gap is problematic because uneven institutional readiness, technological inequality, faculty adaptation struggles, and ethical uncertainties may hinder sustainable and equitable AI integration within higher education systems. Understanding these transitional realities is essential for developing context-sensitive educational policies and institutional strategies that support responsible and inclusive AI-driven transformation. This study employed a qualitative exploratory narrative design involving selected higher education educators and academic personnel from institutions in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao in the Philippines. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic narrative analysis. The findings revealed that institutional unpreparedness, curriculum disruption, technological limitations, faculty adaptation struggles, ethical tensions, and unequal institutional capacity shape AI integration. Educators likewise perceived AI as an inevitable educational shift while expressing concerns regarding declining critical thinking, loss of human connection, and unequal readiness for future AI integration. The study highlights the need for responsive policies, faculty development initiatives, ethical AI governance, and sustainable educational planning for developing-country higher education systems.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to the growing discourse on artificial intelligence in higher education by offering a developing-country perspective that foregrounds the transitional, institutional, pedagogical, and human realities of AI integration in the Philippine context. Its originality lies in its qualitative narrative exploration of educators' lived experiences, emphasizing not only technological adaptation but also the ethical, emotional, and organizational tensions that accompany AI-driven curriculum transition.

1. INTRODUCTION

Although existing studies have extensively examined the opportunities, innovations, and transformative potential of artificial intelligence in higher education, much of the current literature remains predominantly centered on technological advancement and institutional adoption rather than on the transitional struggles accompanying AI integration, particularly within developing-country educational systems. International and local studies have

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explored AI readiness, pedagogical innovation, academic integrity, and curriculum adaptation; however, these investigations remain fragmented and often focus on isolated dimensions of AI implementation rather than providing a holistic understanding of the institutional, organizational, and human challenges encountered during curriculum transition. Furthermore, there remains limited qualitative research on how higher education institutions and educators navigate AI integration amid infrastructural limitations, policy uncertainties, technological readiness gaps, and resource-constrained educational environments. This lack of comprehensive understanding raises significant concerns, as the rapid adoption of AI technologies without adequate preparation may contribute to curriculum misalignment, uneven implementation, ethical uncertainty, institutional instability, and widening educational inequalities. In developing countries such as the Philippines, where higher education institutions continue to experience disparities in access to technology and organizational capacity, the absence of context-sensitive research on the transitional integration of AI risks undermining the sustainability and effectiveness of educational transformation efforts. Hence, examining the transitional challenges associated with AI integration in Philippine higher education is essential for informing responsive educational policies, sustainable curriculum reforms, faculty development initiatives, and ethical AI implementation strategies that are grounded in the realities of developing-country educational systems while also contributing to the broader discourse on technological transition and institutional adaptation in higher education.

The rapid emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) has significantly transformed the landscape of higher education worldwide, compelling institutions to reconsider traditional pedagogical structures, curricular frameworks, and institutional policies. Universities worldwide are increasingly integrating AI technologies into teaching, assessment, and curriculum development in response to the growing demand for technologically competent graduates and digitally adaptive educational systems (Popenici & Kerr, 2017). The transition toward AI-integrated education has been accelerated by the expansion of generative AI technologies, which have introduced both opportunities and disruptions in academic environments (Michel-Villarreal, Vilalta-Perdomo, Salinas-Navarro, Thierry-Aguilera, & Gerardou, 2023). Scholars have emphasized that higher education institutions now face the challenge of balancing innovation with ethical governance, institutional preparedness, and pedagogical sustainability as AI continues to reshape educational practices (Chan, 2023). Moreover, the integration of AI into higher education has extended beyond technological adoption to encompass a broader institutional transition involving policy reform, curriculum redesign, and organizational adaptation (Marengo & Pange, 2024).

Globally, the integration of AI into higher education has generated extensive discussion about institutional readiness, technological transition, and the future direction of educational systems. Existing literature highlights that universities are under increasing pressure to modernize their curricula to align with rapidly evolving labor market demands and technological advancements (Luan et al., 2020). Despite growing enthusiasm for AI integration, several scholars argue that many institutions remain insufficiently prepared for the complexities of AI implementation, particularly in terms of faculty readiness, governance structures, and infrastructural support (Araiza-Vazquez, Brosig Rodriguez, & Figueroa Garza, 2024). The adoption of AI in higher education has also disrupted traditional assessment methods and academic practices, raising concerns about academic integrity, the ethical use of AI-generated content, and the reliability of conventional pedagogical approaches (Swiecki et al., 2022). Additionally, studies have shown that while AI offers substantial opportunities for innovation and personalized learning, it simultaneously introduces contradictions and tensions that challenge long-established educational norms and instructional practices (Warschauer et al., 2023).

The global transition toward AI-integrated education is further complicated by disparities between developed and developing nations, particularly in access to technology, digital infrastructure, and institutional capacity. While technologically advanced countries have made significant progress in integrating AI into educational systems, developing countries continue to face substantial barriers stemming from resource limitations, unequal access to technology, and insufficient institutional preparedness (Krishna, 2024). Scholars have argued that the rapid

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globalization of AI risks deepening educational inequalities, particularly in countries of the Global South, where digital divides and infrastructural gaps remain prevalent (Krishna, 2024). Furthermore, the adoption of AI in higher education is not merely a technological shift but a systemic transition that requires organizational adaptation, policy responsiveness, and critical AI literacy among educators and students alike (Schiff, 2022). As institutions attempt to navigate these transitions, the need to critically examine the challenges, tensions, and realities surrounding AI integration in developing-country contexts becomes increasingly essential.

The transition toward AI-integrated educational systems has exposed profound inequalities between developed and developing nations. Existing literature suggests that the rapid expansion of AI technologies has disproportionately benefited institutions with advanced technological infrastructure, substantial financial resources, and established digital ecosystems. In contrast, institutions in developing countries continue to struggle with infrastructural deficiencies and unequal access to AI resources (Krishna, 2024). Scholars have argued that increasing reliance on AI risks widening the educational gap between the Global North and Global South, particularly as many developing nations remain constrained by unstable internet connectivity, inadequate technological infrastructure, and limited institutional readiness for AI adoption (Wall, Saxena, & Brown, 2021). In emerging educational contexts, the digital divide has become a major obstacle to equitable AI integration, with many institutions lacking sufficient access to advanced AI tools, faculty training programs, and technological support systems necessary for sustainable implementation (Matjie, Nethavhani, & Matlakala, 2026). Furthermore, studies have emphasized that AI adoption in higher education is not solely a matter of technological acquisition but also involves broader structural inequalities that affect institutional capability, curriculum responsiveness, and educational accessibility (Wulandari, Savitri, Rahmawati, & Zakaria, 2024).

Institutional disparities, resource limitations, and uneven technological preparedness across higher education systems further intensify the challenges surrounding AI integration in developing countries. Comparative studies conducted in developing-country contexts reveal that many universities continue to experience significant inequities in AI accessibility, digital infrastructure, and organizational support, resulting in uneven implementation and limited educational outcomes (Al-Sowaidi & Clarke, 2025). The transition toward AI-driven education also places considerable pressure on institutions to reform policies, restructure curricula, and adapt governance mechanisms despite persistent economic and technological constraints (Tanveer, Hassan, & Bhaumik, 2020). Scholars have likewise noted that the adoption of AI in higher education often faces barriers such as institutional resistance, implementation complexity, and insufficient strategic planning, particularly in resource-constrained educational environments (Chatterjee & Bhattacharjee, 2020). Although AI is frequently promoted as a transformative force capable of enhancing innovation and educational efficiency, the realities experienced by developing countries demonstrate that technological transformation remains deeply entangled with systemic inequalities and the pressures of transition (Bahroun, Anane, Ahmed, & Zacca, 2023). Consequently, understanding the realities of AI integration within developing-country contexts requires a critical examination of how educational inequalities, infrastructural limitations, and institutional readiness collectively shape the transition experiences of higher education institutions.

The transition toward integrating artificial intelligence into Philippine higher education has intensified discussions about institutional readiness, curriculum restructuring, and the adaptability of educational systems in a developing-country context. As generative AI technologies continue to reshape global educational landscapes, Philippine higher education institutions are increasingly compelled to reform their curricula to remain responsive to rapidly evolving technological demands (Vergara, 2024). Scholars have emphasized that AI integration in the Philippines goes beyond the mere adoption of technological tools and entails broader institutional transitions requiring policy adjustments, curricular innovation, and organizational adaptation (Picardal, 2026). Existing studies further reveal that while many Philippine institutions recognize the importance of AI integration, significant disparities persist in technological preparedness, faculty competence, and institutional implementation strategies (Asirit & Hua, 2023). This uneven readiness reflects the broader challenges experienced by developing countries,

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where educational institutions must navigate technological transformation despite infrastructural and resource limitations.

Moreover, the successful integration of AI into Philippine higher education remains heavily dependent on the readiness and competence of educators tasked with implementing AI-driven instructional practices. Studies indicate that many educators continue to experience difficulties with AI literacy, technological confidence, and professional preparedness, highlighting the urgent need for faculty development programs and institutional support mechanisms (Ngongpah & Omolara, 2025). The evolving role of AI in Philippine education has also raised concerns about implementation barriers, stakeholder preparedness, and the long-term implications of AI-driven curricular reforms in local educational settings (Co, 2025). Despite growing enthusiasm for AI adoption, scholars argue that Philippine higher education institutions continue to face transitional challenges related to policy alignment, pedagogical adaptation, and sustainable AI integration (Vergara, 2024). These realities demonstrate that the integration of AI into the Philippine educational system is not simply a technological advancement; rather, it is a complex institutional transition shaped by readiness gaps, structural limitations, and ongoing adaptation challenges.

However, numerous studies have shown that the transition to AI-driven educational systems is often accompanied by institutional resistance, organizational uncertainty, and pedagogical tensions. Scholars have argued that educators' acceptance of AI technologies is often influenced by concerns regarding technological complexity, professional displacement, and the disruption of traditional instructional practices (Kalmus & Nikiforova, 2025). The integration of AI within universities requires not only technological adoption but also organizational adaptation, including policy restructuring, faculty readiness, and institutional support systems (de Silva, Song, Yang, & Humayoun, 2026). Existing literature further emphasizes that many educators remain cautious about implementing AI due to unresolved ethical concerns, insufficient training opportunities, and uncertainty about the long-term implications of AI-assisted teaching and assessment (Kalmus & Nikiforova, 2025). These transitional tensions demonstrate that the integration of AI in higher education is not merely a technical process but a complex organizational transformation that challenges existing educational norms, professional identities, and institutional structures.

In the Philippine context, the transition toward AI-integrated education has similarly generated significant challenges related to resistance to innovation, technological adaptation, and institutional restructuring. Studies reveal that many higher education educators remain hesitant to adopt AI because of limited technological preparedness, inadequate institutional guidance, and difficulties balancing traditional pedagogical approaches with emerging AI-driven practices (Bertumen & Ong, 2024). Furthermore, transitional challenges in Philippine higher education are compounded by digital literacy gaps, insufficient faculty development programs, and the pressure to rapidly adapt to technological changes despite constrained educational resources (Treceñe et al., 2025). Institutional transformation within Philippine universities has also been characterized by ongoing efforts to restructure educational systems, modernize instructional delivery, and enhance faculty competencies to align with the demands of digital and AI-driven learning environments (World Bank, 2022). These findings suggest that the integration of AI into Philippine higher education is deeply shaped by organizational adaptation struggles and transition-related tensions that influence how institutions, educators, and learners navigate technological change.

The growing integration of artificial intelligence in higher education has not only transformed instructional practices and curricular structures but has also intensified concerns about educators' preparedness, technological confidence, and psychological adaptation. Existing international literature suggests that, although AI technologies offer opportunities for innovation and educational efficiency, many educators remain uncertain about their ability to integrate these technologies effectively into teaching and learning (Celik, Dindar, Muukkonen, & Järvelä, 2022). Scholars have emphasized that the transition to AI-assisted education often exposes gaps in technological competence, institutional training, and professional readiness, particularly among educators with limited exposure to emerging digital systems (Celik et al., 2022). Furthermore, the increasing use of AI tools in educational settings has raised

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concerns about ethical decision-making, instructional reliability, and the evolving role of teachers in technology-driven learning environments (Celik, Muukkonen, & Siklander, 2026). These concerns contribute to growing apprehension among educators who perceive AI integration as both an opportunity for innovation and a source of professional uncertainty, particularly in institutions undergoing rapid technological transformation.

The challenges associated with educator readiness and AI-related anxiety are likewise evident in the Philippine educational context, where higher education institutions continue to navigate the complexities of technological transition amid resource and infrastructural limitations. Studies reveal that many Filipino educators experience varying levels of anxiety and hesitation toward AI integration due to insufficient training, limited technological confidence, and concerns regarding the ethical implications of AI-assisted instruction (de Guzman, Tenedero, Gapas, & Deabanico, 2024). Research further indicates that pre-service teachers in the Philippines often recognize the inevitability of AI in education while expressing uncertainty about their preparedness to use AI technologies effectively in their future teaching practices (Lacuna, 2025). These readiness gaps are further intensified by disparities in AI literacy, access to technological resources, and institutional support systems, resulting in uneven levels of confidence and acceptance among future educators (Balasa, 2025). Such findings suggest that the transition toward AI-integrated education in the Philippines is not solely a matter of technological implementation but also involves significant psychological, professional, and institutional adjustments among educators and learners alike.

Moreover, local studies examining AI integration in Philippine educational settings highlight growing tensions over academic integrity, adaptation pressures, and shifting educational attitudes toward generative AI technologies. Educators from science, mathematics, and technical-vocational disciplines have expressed concerns about the ethical implications of AI use, particularly regarding academic dishonesty, assessment reliability, and the changing nature of student learning behaviors (Del Mundo et al., 2024). Similarly, studies on the emergence of generative AI platforms such as ChatGPT have led to significant mindset shifts among educators and students, shaping perceptions of creativity, productivity, and technological dependence in academic work (Duhaylungsod & Chavez, 2023). In addition, concerns about AI-related accusations, perceptions of fairness, and students' distrust of education further demonstrate how AI integration introduces psychological and ethical tensions within educational institutions (Biri et al., 2025). Collectively, these studies underscore that the transition toward AI integration in Philippine higher education is deeply intertwined with issues of educator preparedness, technological anxiety, ethical uncertainty, and institutional adaptation.

This study was anchored in three interrelated theoretical perspectives that explain the complexities surrounding the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into higher education curricula, particularly within developing-country educational contexts. First, the study is grounded in the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) Framework developed by Tornatzky and Fleischer (1990), which explains how institutional technology adoption is influenced by technological readiness, organizational capacity, and environmental conditions. The framework is relevant for examining how higher education institutions in the Philippines navigate AI integration amid infrastructural limitations, institutional preparedness issues, and external technological pressures. Second, the study is informed by Innovation Resistance Theory (IRT), proposed by Ram and Sheth (1989), which posits that individuals and organizations may resist technological innovations due to perceived complexity, uncertainty, risk, and disruption to established practices. This theory supports the investigation of faculty hesitation, institutional resistance, and adaptation struggles associated with AI-driven curriculum transitions. Lastly, the study draws from the Diffusion of Innovations Theory proposed by Rogers (2003), which explains how new technologies and innovations are adopted, communicated, and gradually accepted within social systems over time. This theory is particularly useful for understanding the varying levels of AI acceptance, readiness, and implementation across higher education institutions and among educators in the Philippine context. Collectively, these theories provide a comprehensive lens for analyzing the institutional, organizational, and human dimensions of the challenges involved in integrating AI into higher education curricula.

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2. RESEARCH METHODS

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative, exploratory narrative research design to examine the transitional challenges faced by higher education institutions in integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into the curriculum in the Philippine context. A qualitative exploratory approach was deemed appropriate because the study sought to obtain in-depth insights into the experiences, perceptions, and realities encountered by educators and institutions during periods of technological and curricular transition. According to Creswell and Poth (2018) qualitative research is particularly effective in exploring complex social phenomena that require detailed understanding of human experiences within their natural settings. Furthermore, the narrative design enabled the researchers to capture participants' lived experiences, personal reflections, and institutional encounters as they navigated AI integration in higher education settings. Narrative inquiry is well-suited to studies involving transitions, adaptation processes, and evolving professional experiences because it enables participants to describe how they interpret and make meaning of their experiences over time (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Through this design, the study generated rich, contextualized accounts of institutional readiness, faculty adaptation, technological anxieties, and curriculum-related challenges associated with AI integration.

2.2. Population and Sampling

The participants in the study were higher education faculty members and curriculum-related academic personnel from selected public and private higher education institutions in Luzon, the Visayas, and Mindanao in the Philippines. These participants were chosen because they possess direct experience and insights into curriculum transition, AI-assisted instructional practices, and institutional adaptation in higher education settings. The study used purposive sampling, specifically criterion purposive sampling, to ensure that participants met the criteria necessary to provide relevant, information-rich data aligned with the research objectives. According to Patton (2015) purposive sampling enables researchers to intentionally select participants who possess substantial knowledge and experience regarding the phenomenon under investigation. Similarly, Palinkas et al. (2015) emphasized that criterion-based purposive sampling is highly appropriate in qualitative research because it allows the inclusion of participants who satisfy predetermined characteristics relevant to the study.

Table 1. Research's coding of participants.

Participant code	Academic discipline	Years of teaching experience
P1	Education	5 years
P2	Information Technology	8 years
P3	Business Administration	12 years
P4	Engineering	6 years
P5	Humanities and Social Sciences	15 years
P6	Education	9 years
P7	Information Technology	4 years
P8	Business Administration	18 years
P9	Engineering	7 years
P10	Humanities and Social Sciences	10 years
P11	Education	14 years
P12	Information Technology	11 years
P13	Business Administration	5 years
P14	Engineering	20 years
P15	Humanities and Social Sciences	22 years
P16	Education	13 years
P17	Information Technology	3 years
P18	Business Administration	16 years
P19	Engineering	9 years
P20	Humanities and Social Sciences	17 years

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Participants in the study were required to be (1) currently employed in a higher education institution in the Philippines, (2) have at least one year of teaching experience, and (3) possess exposure or involvement in AI-related educational practices, curriculum transition initiatives, or technology-assisted instructional delivery. The study targeted approximately 20 participants to ensure sufficient depth, diversity of perspectives, and data saturation. Table 1 presents the participant (P) coding.

2.3. Research Instrument

The primary instrument used in this study was a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide comprising open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed narratives about participants' experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to AI integration in higher education curricula. Semi-structured interviews are highly appropriate for qualitative studies because they allow flexibility in questioning and enable participants to provide rich, comprehensive responses to complex experiences (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). The interview guide included questions focusing on institutional readiness, curriculum adaptation, technological preparedness, faculty experiences, ethical concerns, and transitional challenges associated with AI integration. To establish content validity, the interview guide was subjected to expert validation by three professionals with expertise in educational research, curriculum studies, and educational technology. Their suggestions and recommendations were incorporated to improve the clarity, coherence, relevance, and alignment of the interview questions with the study's objectives. Furthermore, a pilot interview was conducted with selected participants not included in the final study to assess the instrument's consistency, comprehensibility, and reliability. Necessary revisions were made following pilot testing to enhance the interview guide's effectiveness in generating meaningful qualitative data.

Table 2 shows the research instrument used for the study.

Table 2. Research interview questions.

Objectives	Interview Questions
To examine the transitional challenges experienced by higher education institutions in integrating artificial intelligence into the curriculum within the Philippine context.	1. What transitional challenges do higher education institutions encounter in integrating artificial intelligence into the curriculum? 2. How do higher education educators navigate the changes, uncertainties, and adaptation processes associated with AI integration in the curriculum? 3. How do educators perceive the long-term implications of AI integration in higher education curricula?

2.4. Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to data collection, the researchers formally requested permission from selected higher education institutions and secured approval from appropriate institutional authorities. Upon approval, prospective participants were identified in accordance with the study's inclusion criteria. Invitation letters and informed consent forms were distributed to participants explaining the objectives, procedures, ethical safeguards, and voluntary nature of participation in the research. Informed consent was obtained from all the participants before data collection. Written informed consent was obtained from participants before conducting face-to-face interviews and electronic informed consent was obtained from participants before conducting interviews through online platforms. After securing consent, the researchers conducted individual semi-structured interviews either face-to-face or via online platforms, depending on participants' availability and accessibility. During the interviews, participants were encouraged to openly discuss their experiences, perspectives, and institutional realities concerning AI integration in higher education curricula. Follow-up and probing questions were used to obtain deeper insights and clarifications as needed. With participants' permission, interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accurate documentation of responses, while field notes were taken simultaneously to capture significant observations and contextual details. After the interviews,

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audio recordings were transcribed verbatim for analysis and securely stored to maintain data confidentiality and integrity throughout the research process.

2.5. Data Analysis

The study employed thematic narrative analysis of qualitative data gathered from participant interviews. This method was appropriate because it enabled the researchers to identify recurring patterns, themes, and narratives related to the transitional challenges experienced during AI integration in higher education. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis is a flexible and systematic qualitative analytic method used to identify, organize, and interpret meaningful patterns within textual data. Additionally, Riessman (2008) explained that narrative analysis allows researchers to examine how participants construct and communicate meanings from their lived experiences and institutional realities.

The data analysis process began with the verbatim transcription and repeated reading of interview responses to achieve data familiarization. Initial codes were then generated by identifying significant statements, recurring ideas, and meaningful segments related to AI integration challenges, educator preparedness, curriculum adaptation, institutional readiness, and technological transition. These codes were subsequently categorized into broader themes and subthemes that reflected participants' shared experiences and perspectives. To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, the researchers conducted member checking and peer debriefing throughout the analysis process to verify the accuracy and consistency of the interpretations derived from the collected data.

2.6. Ethical Consideration

The study strictly observed ethical standards in conducting qualitative research involving human participants. Prior to participation, all respondents were informed of the study's objectives, procedures, benefits, and potential risks through informed consent forms.

Participants were assured that their involvement in the research was entirely voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty or consequence. Confidentiality and anonymity were likewise maintained throughout the research process by assigning pseudonyms and removing personally identifiable information from interview transcripts and research records. Audio recordings, transcripts, and gathered data were securely stored and accessible only to the researchers for academic purposes. Furthermore, the researchers ensured that the interview process was conducted respectfully and sensitively to avoid psychological discomfort or coercion among participants. Ethical principles concerning privacy, respect for persons, beneficence, and responsible data management were consistently upheld throughout the study to protect the rights, welfare, and dignity of all participants.

3. RESULTS

Figure 1 presents the emergent themes derived from narratives by higher education educators regarding the transitional challenges encountered in integrating artificial intelligence into the curriculum in the Philippine context. The figure illustrates five interconnected themes: Institutional Unpreparedness and Policy Gaps; Curriculum Transition and Pedagogical Disruption; Technological Limitations and Resource Inequality; Faculty Readiness and Adaptation Struggles; and Ethical and Organizational Tensions in AI Integration.

Objective: To examine the transitional challenges experienced by higher education institutions in integrating artificial intelligence into the curriculum within the Philippine context.

Question 1: What transitional challenges do higher education institutions encounter in integrating artificial intelligence into the curriculum?

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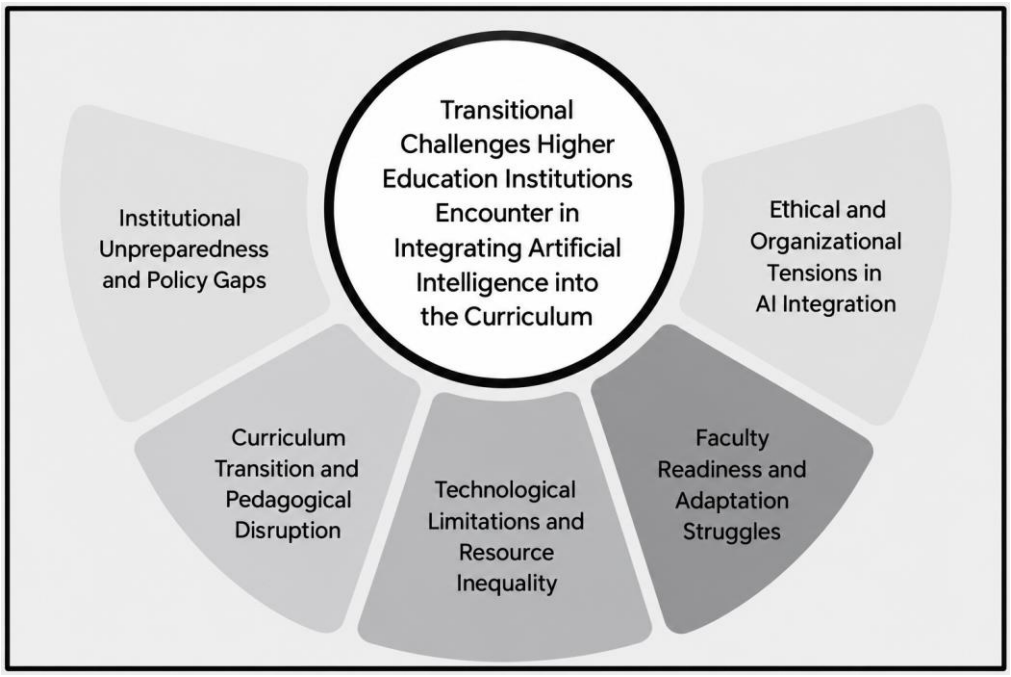


Figure 1. Transitional challenges in integrating artificial intelligence into the curriculum.

3.1. Theme 1. Institutional Unpreparedness and Policy Gaps

Sixteen of the 20 participants expressed concerns about the lack of institutional preparedness to integrate artificial intelligence into the curriculum. Participants commonly described the absence of clear AI policies, inconsistent implementation practices, insufficient faculty training, and limited administrative guidance as major transitional barriers. Several educators explained that institutions encourage technological innovation. However, many universities still lack structured frameworks that clearly define the ethical, instructional, and assessment-related use of AI within higher education settings. These narratives reflect how AI integration is often outpacing institutional readiness and policy development.

"Our institution encourages us to use AI, but honestly, there are still no clear policies about what is allowed or not allowed in teaching and assessment. Sometimes every department has its own interpretation, so it becomes confusing for instructors." (Participant 7)

The narratives suggest that educators are navigating AI integration within environments characterized by uncertainty and uneven implementation. Rather than experiencing a coordinated institutional transition, many participants described situations in which faculty members independently adjusted their teaching practices without sufficient organizational support, resulting in inconsistencies across programs and departments.

3.2. Theme 2. Curriculum Transition and Pedagogical Disruption

Fourteen out of the 20 participants highlighted curriculum transition and pedagogical disruption as major challenges in integrating artificial intelligence into higher education. Educators described difficulties in revising course content, redesigning assessments, and balancing traditional teaching approaches with emerging AI-assisted practices. Several participants explained that existing curricula were not originally designed for AI integration, making it difficult to align learning outcomes, instructional activities, and evaluation methods with rapidly evolving technological demands. Others also noted uncertainty regarding how AI should be incorporated without compromising critical thinking and authentic student learning.

"Sometimes I feel that our curriculum is still designed for old teaching methods, but suddenly we are expected to integrate AI in our lessons and assessments. It becomes difficult because we are still adjusting while trying to maintain the quality of learning." (Participant 12)

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The outcome indicates that AI integration has disrupted long-established instructional practices and challenged educators to rethink how learning should be delivered and assessed. Many participants viewed the transition as an ongoing adjustment process in which faculty members continually modify their teaching strategies to meet evolving educational expectations and technological realities.

3.3. Theme 3. Technological Limitations and Resource Inequality

Thirteen out of the 20 participants identified technological limitations and resource inequality as significant transitional challenges in integrating artificial intelligence into the curriculum. Educators frequently mentioned unstable internet connectivity, limited access to AI-related tools, outdated technological infrastructure, and disparities between institutions as barriers affecting effective AI implementation. Participants from public institutions particularly emphasized that insufficient technological resources make it difficult to maximize AI-assisted learning and instructional innovation in the classroom fully.

"There are times when we want to integrate AI activities, but not all students have stable internet or devices capable of using these platforms. Even some classrooms are not fully equipped, so implementation becomes unequal." (Participant 4)

The accounts reveal that AI integration remains heavily influenced by institutional and socioeconomic disparities. Participants viewed technological inequality as a challenge that affects both instructional delivery and students' access to learning opportunities.

3.4. Theme 4. Faculty Readiness and Adaptation Struggles

Ten of the 20 participants described faculty readiness and adaptation struggles as among the most difficult aspects of AI integration in higher education. Many educators expressed concerns regarding limited AI literacy, lack of technical training, and difficulties adapting to rapidly changing instructional technologies. Some participants admitted feeling overwhelmed by the expectation of integrating AI into teaching, despite having little prior exposure to AI-assisted platforms and digital tools.

"I have been teaching for more than twenty years using traditional methods, so honestly, adjusting to AI is difficult for me. Sometimes my students already know more about these applications than I do, and I worry that I might make mistakes because I am not very confident with technology." (Participant 15)

The narratives demonstrate that AI integration entails substantial professional and emotional adjustments for educators. Participants emphasized that adaptation requires continuous learning, patience, and stronger institutional support for faculty development.

3.5. Theme 5. Ethical and Organizational Tensions in AI Integration

Nine out of the 20 participants expressed concerns regarding the ethical and organizational tensions associated with integrating artificial intelligence into the curriculum. Educators commonly discussed issues involving academic dishonesty, overdependence on AI-generated outputs, unclear ethical boundaries, and the difficulty of determining authentic student work. Several participants also noted that institutions still lack standardized policies on acceptable AI use, creating uncertainty among both instructors and students.

"Sometimes it becomes difficult to know if the work submitted by students is really their own or already generated by AI. As instructors, we are also confused about where to draw the line because there are still no clear ethical guidelines from the institution." (Participant 9)

The experiences indicate that AI integration has introduced new ethical dilemmas and organizational uncertainties within higher education. Participants viewed the absence of clear ethical standards and institutional direction as factors contributing to confusion and tension in academic practices.

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Figure 2 presents the emergent themes describing how higher education educators navigate the changes, uncertainties, and adaptation processes associated with integrating artificial intelligence into the curriculum. The figure highlights four interconnected themes: Continuous Self-Learning and Technological Adjustment; Balancing Traditional Pedagogy and AI Integration; Emotional Uncertainty and Professional Insecurity; and Collaborative Adaptation and Peer Support.

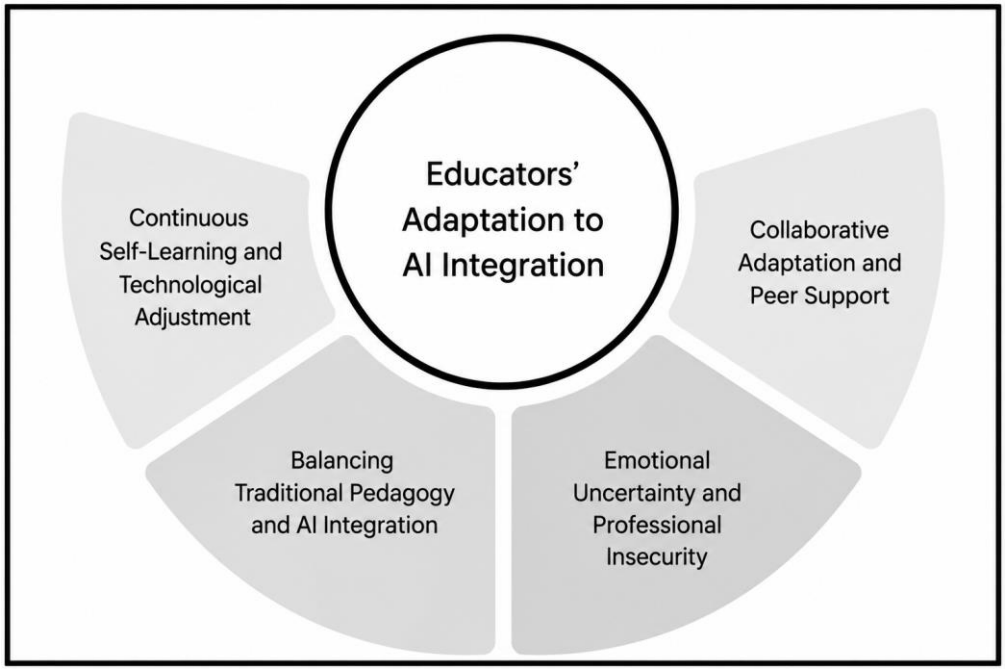


Figure 2. Educators' adaptation to AI integration in the curriculums.

Question 2: How do educators in higher education navigate the changes, uncertainties, and adaptation processes associated with integrating AI into the curriculum?

3.6. Theme 6: Continuous Self-Learning and Technological Adjustment

Sixteen of the 20 participants described continuous self-learning and technological adaptation as their primary means of navigating the transition toward AI integration in the curriculum. Many educators reported relying on independent exploration, online tutorials, peer demonstrations, and personal experimentation to familiarize themselves with AI-assisted platforms and tools. Participants often reported that institutional training remained limited, prompting them to gradually learn AI applications independently while adjusting their teaching strategies and classroom practices.

"Most of the time, I just learn by myself because we cannot wait for formal training anymore. I watch videos, ask younger colleagues, and try different AI tools little by little until I become comfortable using them in class." (Participant 6)

The results suggest that adaptation to AI integration is largely driven by personal initiative and continuous adjustment among educators. Participants viewed self-directed learning as necessary when coping with the rapid technological changes occurring within higher education.

3.7. Theme 7: Balancing Traditional Pedagogy and AI Integration

Fifteen of the 20 participants discussed the challenge of balancing traditional teaching practices with the growing integration of artificial intelligence into the curriculum. Many educators explained that although they recognized the benefits and efficiency of AI tools, they remained cautious about becoming overly dependent on technology in the

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teaching and learning process. Participants emphasized the importance of preserving critical thinking, classroom interaction, and authentic student engagement while gradually incorporating AI-assisted activities into their instructional approaches.

"I still believe that students learn best when there is actual discussion, reflection, and interaction inside the classroom. AI can really help with ideas, research, or even lesson preparation, but I always remind my students that technology should support learning and not replace their own thinking. Sometimes I worry that if we rely too much on AI, students might stop analyzing deeply because answers are already easily available." (Participant 11) \

The perception suggests that educators are attempting to integrate AI carefully without completely abandoning conventional pedagogical values. Participants viewed adaptation as a balancing process where technology must coexist with human-centered teaching practices and meaningful learning experiences.

3.8. Theme 8: Emotional Uncertainty and Professional Insecurity

Thirteen out of the 20 participants revealed experiencing emotional uncertainty and professional insecurity while adjusting to AI integration in higher education. Educators described feelings of anxiety, pressure, and self-doubt as they attempted to keep pace with rapidly evolving technologies and changing instructional expectations. Several participants admitted worrying about becoming outdated or ineffective in teaching if they failed to adapt quickly to AI-assisted educational practices.

"There are moments when I honestly question myself if I can still keep up with these changes. Before, I was very confident in my teaching strategies, but now everything is becoming technology-centered. Sometimes I feel pressured because students are already familiar with AI tools while I am still trying to understand how they really work in education." (Participant 18)

The accounts reflect how AI integration affects not only instructional practices but also educators' confidence and professional identity. Participants viewed adaptation as both a technological and emotional process that requires patience, continuous learning, and reassurance from their institutions.

3.9. Theme 9: Collaborative Adaptation and Peer Support

Twelve out of the 20 participants emphasized the importance of collaboration and peer support in navigating the transition toward AI integration in higher education. Many educators reported frequently relying on colleagues, departmental discussions, and informal mentoring to understand AI tools and teaching strategies better. Participants explained that exchanging experiences and learning from peers helped reduce their uncertainty and enabled them to adapt to technological changes in the academic environment gradually.

"What really helped me adjust was having colleagues who were willing to share what they know about AI. Sometimes after classes, we talk about which applications work, how students respond, or how to manage AI in assessments. Honestly, if I tried to understand everything alone, I think the adjustment would be more stressful." (Participant 3)

The stories suggest that adaptation to AI integration is not solely an individual process but also a collaborative experience shaped by professional support systems. Participants viewed peer interaction as an important source of confidence, guidance, and shared learning during periods of educational transition.

Figure 3 presents the emergent themes describing educators' perceptions of the long-term implications of integrating artificial intelligence into higher education curricula. The figure highlights four interconnected themes, namely: Accepting AI as Part of the Future of Education, Fearing the Decline of Critical Thinking and Authentic Learning, Losing Human and Moral Connection, and Anticipating Unequal Institutional Capacity for AI Integration.

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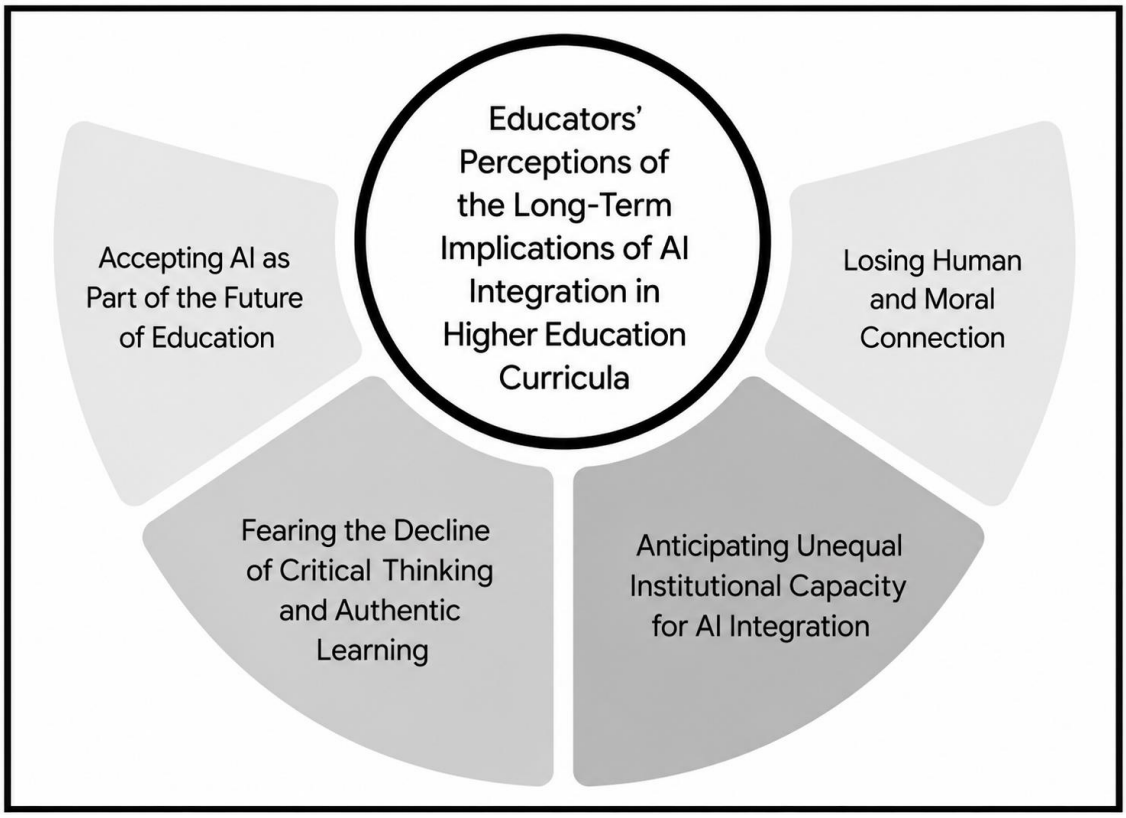


Figure 3. Educators' perceptions of the long-term implications of AI integration in the curricula.

Question 3: How do educators perceive the long-term implications of AI integration in higher education curricula?

3.10. Theme 10: Accepting AI as Part of the Future of Education

Eighteen out of the 20 participants perceived artificial intelligence as an unavoidable part of the future of higher education. Many educators acknowledged that AI integration is increasingly embedded in teaching, assessment, research, and curriculum development, necessitating adaptation for both institutions and faculty members. Participants commonly expressed that, regardless of personal opinions or readiness levels, AI will continue to influence educational systems and reshape how learning is delivered in the coming years.

"…Whether we like it or not, AI is already part of education. Students are using it every day, and even instructors are slowly depending on it for lesson preparation, research, and classroom activities. I think the challenge now is not avoiding AI anymore but learning how to use it properly without losing the real purpose of education." (Participant 14)

The narratives indicate that educators largely view AI integration as an inevitable educational shift rather than a temporary technological trend. Participants recognized that adapting to AI has become necessary to prepare institutions and learners for the evolving demands of future education.

3.11. Theme 11: Fearing the Decline of Critical Thinking and Authentic Learning

Fifteen out of the 20 participants expressed concerns that excessive dependence on artificial intelligence may gradually weaken students' critical thinking, creativity, and authenticity in learning. Many educators have observed that students have become increasingly reliant on AI-generated responses for assignments, research tasks, and written work, raising concerns that learners may prioritize convenience over genuine understanding. Participants

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also emphasized that while AI can support academic tasks, overuse may reduce students' ability to analyze deeply, construct original ideas, and engage meaningfully in the learning process.

"Sometimes when I check student outputs, I can already notice that the ideas sound too artificial or too polished compared to how students normally express themselves. I worry that if students become too dependent on AI, they might stop thinking critically because answers are already easily available. As teachers, we want technology to support learning, not replace the students' own thinking and effort." (Participant 5)

The accounts reflect growing apprehension regarding the long-term effects of AI dependence on student learning behaviors and intellectual development. Participants viewed authentic learning and critical thinking as educational values that must still be preserved despite the increasing presence of AI in academic environments.

3.12. Theme 12: Losing Human and Moral Connection

Nine out of the 20 participants expressed concerns that the increasing integration of artificial intelligence in education may gradually reduce the human and moral aspects of teaching and learning. Many educators emphasized that education is not solely about content delivery and efficiency but also involves empathy, values formation, mentorship, and meaningful human interaction inside the classroom. Participants feared that excessive dependence on AI-driven systems may weaken genuine communication between teachers and students and create learning environments that feel more mechanical than personal.

"Teaching is not only about giving information or generating answers quickly. Sometimes students need guidance, encouragement, and real human interaction inside the classroom. I worry that if education becomes too dependent on AI, we might slowly lose the personal connection that helps students grow not only academically but also morally." (Participant 8).

The experiences suggest that educators continue to value the human-centered nature of education despite the rapid advancement of AI technologies. Participants viewed empathy, moral guidance, and authentic interaction as essential elements that should remain present within future AI-integrated learning environments.

3.13. Theme 13: Anticipating Unequal Institutional Capacity for AI Integration

Five out of the 20 participants believed that the future of AI integration in higher education will remain unequal due to differences in institutional capacity, technological resources, and faculty preparedness. Many educators have observed that some universities are better equipped financially and technologically to implement AI-driven learning systems. In contrast, others continue to struggle with limited infrastructure, insufficient training opportunities, and inadequate access to digital tools. Participants particularly noted that disparities between public and private institutions may further widen the gap in AI readiness within Philippine higher education.

"Some universities can easily adapt because they already have strong internet connections, updated facilities, and regular technology training for teachers. But in other schools, even basic technological resources are still lacking. Honestly, the reality is that not all institutions are equally prepared for AI integration, especially in provinces where resources are limited." (Participant 16)

Educators perceive AI integration as a transition that may progress unevenly across higher education institutions. Participants viewed institutional capacity and access to resources as major factors that could shape the future quality and sustainability of AI implementation in education.

4. DISCUSSION

This section discusses the transitional realities faced by higher education educators and institutions as they integrate artificial intelligence into the curriculum in the Philippine context. Through themes emerging from participants' narratives, the discussion highlights the institutional, pedagogical, technological, emotional, and ethical dimensions of AI-driven educational transition and adaptation in a developing-country educational setting.

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The themes generated under the first research question collectively suggest that the integration of artificial intelligence in Philippine higher education remains characterized by institutional uncertainty, pedagogical disruption, technological inequality, faculty adaptation struggles, and ethical tensions. Participants' experiences regarding unclear implementation policies and inconsistent institutional support reinforce the assertions of Chan (2023) and Vergara (2024) that AI integration requires comprehensive governance frameworks and coordinated curriculum reform to ensure sustainable implementation in higher education. Similarly, the difficulties encountered in redesigning assessments and aligning AI with existing teaching practices support the arguments of Marengo and Pange (2024) and Swiecki et al. (2022) that AI-driven educational transition significantly reshapes pedagogical structures and instructional processes. The accounts of unstable internet connectivity, limited infrastructure, and unequal technological access further parallel the discussions by Krishna (2024) and Al-Sowaidi and Clarke (2025) who emphasize that developing-country educational systems continue to face substantial disparities in technological readiness and institutional capability. These realities demonstrate that AI integration in Philippine higher education is not merely a technological innovation but a multidimensional institutional transition shaped by policy constraints, demands for curriculum restructuring, and resource-related inequalities.

Moreover, the participants' narratives reveal that educators continue to experience significant professional and ethical tensions as they adapt to AI-driven educational changes. The struggles associated with technological confidence, limited AI literacy, and adaptation pressure support the findings of Celik et al. (2022) and Ngongpah and Omolara (2025) who highlighted educator readiness and faculty competence as crucial elements influencing successful AI integration. Ethical concerns regarding academic dishonesty, the authenticity of student outputs, and unclear boundaries in AI use also align with the discussions in Schiff (2022) and Warschauer et al. (2023) who argue that AI integration requires responsible governance and critical ethical reflection within academic environments. These experiences strongly reflect the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) Framework of Tornatzky and Fleischer (1990) which explains that organizational preparedness, technological conditions, and environmental support systems heavily influence technological adoption. The researchers conjecture that AI integration in Philippine higher education may remain uneven and fraught with tension unless institutions strengthen policy frameworks, faculty development initiatives, and ethical implementation strategies to support educators throughout the transition process.

The second research question reveals that educators navigate AI integration through continuous self-learning, pedagogical balancing, emotional adjustment, and collaborative adaptation. Participants' reliance on independent exploration and gradual technological adjustment aligns with the observations of Lacuna (2025) and Duhaylungsod and Chavez (2023) who emphasized that educators in developing-country educational contexts often rely on self-directed learning and mindset shifts to cope with emerging AI-driven instructional demands. Likewise, educators' efforts to preserve human-centered teaching while integrating AI-assisted practices support the discussions by Popenici and Kerr (2017) and Warschauer et al. (2023) who argue that educators continue to negotiate the balance between technological innovation and authentic learning experiences. The emotional uncertainty and professional insecurity experienced by participants also parallel findings from de Guzman et al. (2024) and Celik et al. (2026) which highlighted that AI integration may generate anxiety, technological pressure, and concerns about professional identity among educators adapting to rapidly evolving digital environments. These accounts collectively demonstrate that educators' adaptation processes are not purely technical but also involve emotional, pedagogical, and professional negotiations within AI-integrated learning settings.

Furthermore, the participants' experiences suggest that adaptation to AI integration is strengthened through collaborative learning and peer-supported adjustment processes. The importance of collegial guidance and shared technological learning aligns with the arguments of Bertumen and Ong (2024) and Treceñe et al. (2025) who noted that educators navigating AI transition frequently rely on collaborative support systems to lessen uncertainty and improve instructional confidence. These experiences strongly reflect (Rogers, 2003) Diffusion of Innovations Theory,

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which explains that innovation adoption develops gradually through social interaction, communication, and shared experiences within institutional communities. The researchers infer that educators' willingness to learn, collaborate, and adjust their teaching practices continuously may significantly influence the sustainability of AI integration in higher education. However, the accounts also suggest that adaptation may remain emotionally demanding and uneven if institutions continue to offer limited formal training and insufficient professional support for educators undergoing a technological transition.

The themes generated under the third research question reveal that educators perceive AI integration as an inevitable yet complex transformation that will significantly reshape the future of higher education. Participants' recognition of AI as a permanent component of educational systems aligns with the observations of Bahroun et al. (2023) and Ocaña-Fernández, Valenzuela-Fernández, and Garro-Aburto (2019) who emphasized that AI technologies are continuously redefining teaching, assessment, and curriculum structures within modern educational environments. At the same time, participants' fears about the decline of critical thinking and authentic learning align with the arguments of Michel-Villarreal et al. (2023), which highlight concerns about overreliance on AI-generated outputs and the potential weakening of analytical and problem-solving skills among learners. Educators' apprehensions about losing the human and moral dimensions of education also resonate with discussions by Co (2025), who emphasize that technological integration should not compromise empathy, ethical reflection, and meaningful interpersonal engagement in learning environments. These perspectives collectively indicate that educators view AI not only as a technological innovation but also as a force capable of reshaping the intellectual and human foundations of education.

Furthermore, the participants' anticipation of unequal institutional readiness for future AI integration reflects broader concerns about educational disparities in developing countries and uneven technological capacity. The observations regarding institutional inequality and resource limitations support the discussions of Wall et al. (2021) and Wulandari et al. (2024) who argued that AI adoption in higher education may further widen educational gaps between technologically advanced and resource-constrained institutions. These realities strongly reflect (Rogers, 2003) Diffusion of Innovations Theory, which explains that innovation adoption occurs unevenly across institutions, depending on access to resources, readiness, and social systems that support technological change. The researchers infer that while educators generally acknowledge the inevitability of AI integration, they also remain cautious about its long-term implications for authentic learning, ethical education, and institutional equity. The narratives suggest that the future sustainability of AI integration in Philippine higher education may depend on how institutions balance technological advancement with human-centered learning and equitable educational development.

Overall, the integration of artificial intelligence in Philippine higher education is outpacing the institutional, pedagogical, and technological readiness of many educational institutions and educators. While AI presents significant opportunities for educational transformation, its sustainability may depend on institutions' capacity to develop responsive policies, strengthen faculty preparedness, preserve human-centered learning, and address existing inequalities in access to technology and institutional support.

5. CONCLUSION

The integration of artificial intelligence into higher education curricula within the Philippine context represents more than a technological transition; it reflects a broader institutional, pedagogical, and human transformation occurring within developing-country educational systems. The study revealed that AI integration is deeply shaped by institutional preparedness, technological inequality, faculty adaptation, ethical negotiation, and the evolving expectations placed upon educators and learners in contemporary higher education. Rather than portraying AI adoption as a straightforward process of innovation, participants' narratives illustrate that the educational transition involves continuous negotiation between technological advancement and the preservation of human-centered learning, critical thinking, and ethical academic practices.

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This suggests that the realities of AI integration in Philippine higher education cannot be fully understood through purely technological perspectives alone. Existing structural inequalities, resource disparities, and varying levels of institutional readiness significantly influence how educational institutions experience and sustain AI-driven transformation. The study advances the discourse on AI integration by emphasizing that transitional challenges in developing-country contexts are not solely technical but also organizational, emotional, pedagogical, and ethical. In this regard, the research contributes a more contextualized understanding of AI integration within higher education by highlighting how educators navigate uncertainty, adaptation, and future educational implications amid constrained institutional environments.

Moreover, the study addresses existing gaps in the literature by providing qualitative, narrative-based insights into the lived experiences of educators undergoing AI-related curriculum transitions in the Philippines. While many previous studies predominantly focused on technological opportunities and innovation potential, this research foregrounded the tensions, inequalities, and human realities accompanying educational transformation. The findings imply that sustainable AI integration may require institutions to move beyond rapid technological adoption and instead develop more responsive governance structures, equitable resource allocation, faculty-centered development initiatives, and ethically grounded implementation strategies. Ultimately, the study underscores that the future of AI integration in higher education may depend not only on technological advancement but also on how educational institutions preserve inclusivity, human connection, and meaningful learning in increasingly AI-driven academic environments.

5.1. Study Limitations

This study was limited to the experiences and perceptions of selected higher education educators and academic personnel from institutions in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, which may not fully represent all higher education institutions in the Philippines. Since the study used a qualitative, exploratory narrative design, the findings were based solely on participants' narratives and did not quantitatively assess the effectiveness of AI integration or institutional readiness. Additionally, the rapidly evolving nature of artificial intelligence technologies and educational policies may affect the long-term applicability of the findings.

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Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all the participants before data collection. Written informed consent was obtained from participants before conducting face-to-face interviews and electronic informed consent was obtained from participants before conducting interviews through online platforms. All data were anonymized to protect participant confidentiality.
Transparency: The authors state that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.
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