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TRANSFORMING TEACHER LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING WITH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR UAE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

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ABSTRACT

Reforms in education that have been brought by digitization are increasing the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education systems across the globe. Nevertheless, the theoretical insights of AI transforming teacher leadership and facilitating student-centered learning are scanty, especially in the context of policy-oriented and multicultural markets like the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The current conceptual paper builds on a unified theoretical framework to demonstrate how the AI-mediated pedagogical change is mediated by teacher leadership. Based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), Technology Readiness Index (TRI), and self-efficacy theory by Bandura, the framework introduces teacher leadership as the process that can connect AI acceptance with the psychological readiness and institutional conditions to student-centered instruction practices. The model focuses on leadership practices instead of AI as a determinist force as the key to ethical, pedagogically based AI integration. The study is part of the UAE vision 2031 reform agenda, which has allowed the extension of the technology acceptance theories into leadership and pedagogy and provides the basis of future empirical research, teacher development, and evidence-based education policymaking.

KEYWORDS: Artificial Intelligence and education; Teacher leadership; Student-centered learning; Technology acceptance; Self-efficacy; Educational innovation; UAE education system; Conceptual framework.

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of globalization has inherently transformed the education system across the world and has redefined not only teaching methods but also the essence of professional jobs and the leadership of the institutions as well as the expectation of the learners in more complex and interconnected societies [1]. Education systems are currently supposed to produce learners who can operate at times of uncertainty and take advantage of digital technologies, as well as interact critically with knowledge economies which are rapidly changing. In this change, technological innovation has played the role of not only a factor of change, but also new pedagogical and ethical issues have arisen. Accordingly, this study adopts a conceptual and theory-building approach to examine the role of Artificial Intelligence in education through the lens of teacher leadership. Artificial Intelligence (AI), including machine learning, adaptive learning systems, intelligent tutoring, and learning analytics, are some of the latest digital innovations that have emerged as potentially transformative ones in the education sector [2], [6]. Compared with the previous educational technologies, AI systems can automatically provide feedback, customize the learning process, and make predictive information using the patterns of large-scale data. These abilities are rather consistent with worldwide policy discourses that support individualization, effectiveness, and evidence-based decision-making in education [3], [4]. Nonetheless, the education potential of AI does not lie within the technology but in the pedagogical interpretation, ethical control, and strategic implementation of the technology by educators. The case of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) can be regarded as one of the most relevant and least theorized contexts to consider the application of AI in education. The UAE Vision 2031, a national development plan, clearly outlines education as a key source of innovation, diversification of the economy, and international competitiveness [19]. Based on these priorities, AI has been integrated into policy programs and curriculum change efforts, which is an indicator of system level investment in technology-enhanced learning environments [20]. These reforms on the top are putting schools at the center of AI-based change, where new demands are imposed on teachers to not only use advanced technologies but also maintain high-quality and culturally responsive pedagogy. Although the countries have devoted considerable resources to digital infrastructure and policy

provision, there is evidence that AI pedagogical integration is not even across UAE schools [8]. Despite increased accessibility, AI resources are frequently confined to administrative efficiency or surface-level instructional support, rather than producing sustained pedagogical transformation. This is indicative of a larger issue in the world: an ongoing mismatch between the technological presence and the significance of its application in the classroom [7]. Although the previous literature has thoroughly investigated AI usage and technological affordances in education, the small theoretical literature has investigated the leadership-mediated process through which AI implementation can be converted into student-centered pedagogical usage, especially in policy-based systems of education. The main problems that teachers have mentioned are often the inability to figure out how AI can be complemented with student-centered principles of learning, how AI-driven information can be used to make instructional decisions, and how issues related to ethical concerns, including data privacy, bias, and agency of learners, should be resolved in practice [31]. Teacher leadership, as the aspect of AI integration, is crucial and undertheorized in this case. The concept of teacher leadership goes beyond positional authority and includes the ability of teachers to impact the practice in teaching, guide other teachers, and shape the innovation cultures within schools [9]. Teacher leaders in AI-enhanced educational settings play a central role by negotiating between the technologies and pedagogy: they receive AI-generated analytics, lead colleagues in making pedagogical decisions, and recommend the ways of teaching that would not displace human judgment, professional autonomy, and ethical accountability [23]. Nevertheless, the current literature in the field of AI-in-education has paid significant attention to technology adoption on an individual level and has mostly neglected the processes that collectively and through the leadership involve AI integration into school practice. Furthermore, student-centered learning becomes an especially difficult case to implement AI integration as the pedagogical model that considers agency, personalization, and engagement in a learner. Although it is technically possible to use AI systems to facilitate personalization, they also introduce the possibility of supporting algorithm-mediated directions of instruction at the expense of student voice and teacher professional judgment. To comprehend how teacher leaders can negotiate this tension, where AI is used to facilitate and not limit student-centered learning, a strong theoretical framework is needed,

which incorporates technology acceptance, psychological preparedness, and leadership views. This conceptual paper correlates the gaps and the following guiding question: What is the theoretical explanation of the possibility of using AI integration as one of the sources of teacher leadership and student-centered learning in the UAE schools? To provide the answer to this question, the paper constructs an integrated conceptual framework that combines Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), Technology Readiness Index (TRI), and self-efficacy theory formulated by Bandura. This paper is novel because it explicitly frames teacher leadership as an intervening factor between the process of adopting AI and student-centered learning outcomes, especially in an educational system that is policy intensive and culturally diverse like the UAE. In this way, the paper will provide a theoretically informed insight into explaining AI not only as a technological advancement, but as a pedagogical change that relies on leadership.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Artificial Intelligence and Educational Transformation

The concept of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been more and more discussed as a disruptive technology that can transform the educational system, pedagogical approaches, and learning spaces [2], [6]. Contrary to the previous generation of educational technology, AI-based systems have adaptive and predictive capabilities that enable them to adjust dynamically in response to the needs of learners with real-time data processing capability, automated feedback capabilities, and tailored content delivery [28]. These functionalities are closely related to paradigms of student-centered learning that focus on individualized pacing, student agency and formative assessment [35]. The available literature reveals that AI plays a role in the transformation of education in several areas. The adaptive learning platforms and intelligent tutoring systems have also been reported to promote the differentiated instruction by adjusting the learning materials to the performance profiles of the students [28], [37]. Educator Learning analytics dashboards can also be used to detect learner engagement and achievement patterns, which helps instructors in making decisions based on data [33]. Theoretically speaking, these affordances imply that AI can be used as a pedagogical amplifier, boosting the ability of teachers to address the diversity of learners. Nevertheless, researchers always warn of technological doom in the use of AI [29], [31]. The

availability of AI tools does not necessarily result in better learning outcomes and pedagogical innovation. Unless an instructional design and pedagogical alignment is carried out with a conscious intent, AI is likely to be applied to administrative efficiency or content automation, thus continuing to support conventional teacher-centered models instead of facilitating meaningful learner interaction [36]. This issue is especially relevant in the systems in which AI is presented as top-down policy requirements because teachers could use them instrumentally without including them as a part of the larger pedagogies. Therefore, the recent academic focus is on the mediatory role of AI in educational value as it is tied to the professional judgment and leadership ability of teachers [37], [39]. Educators need to make sense of AI-generated texts, contextualize insights in the data and convert system recommendations into pedagogically viable actions. In this interpretation, teachers are not seen as passive consumers of AI but as the active participants whose beliefs, skills and leadership habits will or will not make AI contribute to the real educational change.

2.2 Teacher Leadership in AI-Enhanced Educational Contexts

The role of teacher leadership has received growing academic interest due to the movement towards distributed and collaborative forms of education leadership systems [9], [42]. Instead of involving them in formal administrative roles, teacher leadership is defined as complex practices in terms of which teachers can impact the improvement of instruction, mentor other educators, and influence school cultures [23]. Teacher leadership is especially salient when it comes to technology-enhanced environments, in which teachers must negotiate a fast-moving technological change without compromising pedagogical and ethical integrity. In classrooms that are enhanced by AI, teacher leaders tend to play a hybrid role of integrating teaching knowledge with technological mediation [9], [23]. They assist the colleagues with choosing the right AI tools, decoding the learning analytics, and connecting the use of AI to the curriculum objectives and student-centered learning values [32]. The concept of peer mentoring and professional learning community has been diagnosed as an essential tool according to which the knowledge related to AI is spread throughout schools, eliminating personal ambiguity and developing a collective capacity building [32], [43]. The issues of multicultural and multilingual classrooms in a UAE context also influence teacher leadership [21]. Cultural

assumptions, linguistic biases, or educational standards might be integrated in AI systems that have been trained on Western-centric datasets, and these might not necessarily correspond to the values and identities of local people [22]. Teacher leaders thus serve a significant purpose in being critically evaluation of the AI content, transforming the teaching strategies, and adhering to cultural and ethical responsiveness. This is not just a matter of technical competence but also of ethical care, especially when it comes to the privacy of data and the transparency of algorithms, as well as having equal learning opportunities [24], [44]. Although the roles are increasingly becoming perceived, a conceptual gap has been identified in the literature. Marginal segments of the research that has been completed regarding AI in education concentrate on teacher adoption individually, technological affordances, or policy implementation at the system level, including [2], [31], whereas the mediation of leadership regarding the ways in which AI is embedded in pedagogical processes has not been theorized yet [39], [42]. Such a mismatch is particularly acute in policy-rich settings, including the UAE where high rates of rapid innovation present teachers with increased change expectations that they may not be adequately supported by professional or institutional resources.

Table 1: Key Literature on AI, Teacher Leadership, and Student-Centered Learning.

Theme	Key Focus	Representative Studies
AI and Educational Transformation	Personalization, adaptive learning, learning analytics	Baroudi [2]; Bazán-Ramírez et al. [6]; Shwedeḥ et al. [28]; Schumacher & Ikenhauer [33]
Pedagogical Risks of AI	Technological determinism, automation of teaching	Ramakrishnan & Bishnoi [29]; Nazaretsky et al. [31]; Han et al. [36]
Teacher Leadership	Distributed leadership, instructional influence	Hadjiah [9]; Bellibas et al. [42]; Alneyadi et al. [23]
AI-Enhanced Teacher Leadership	Mentoring, data interpretation, peer learning	Preusse-Burr et al. [32]; Tammets & Ley [39]
Cultural & Ethical Considerations	Multicultural contexts, data privacy, ethics	Baroudi [21]; Hojeij et al. [22]; Almarzooqi et al. [24]; Khreisat et al. [44]
Student-Centered Learning in AI Contexts	Learner autonomy, engagement, personalization	Grøndahl Glavind et al. [35]; Han et al. [36]

3. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in teaching and learning can only be seen through the prism of multidimensional theory to understand the impacts it has on teacher leadership and student-

centered learning. As it has been shown in the previous studies, single-theory models of adoption are frequently not able to reflect the complexity of school setting, where personal beliefs, psychological preparedness and institutional circumstances, professional identity, are dynamically interrelated [25], [39]. In order to overcome this weakness, this theoretical concept paper combines four supplementary theoretical frameworks, namely the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), the Technology Readiness Index (TRI), and the self-efficacy theory by Bandura. All these frameworks combined present a solid base of the explanation of teacher involvement with AI and its leadership implications in the UAE educational setting.

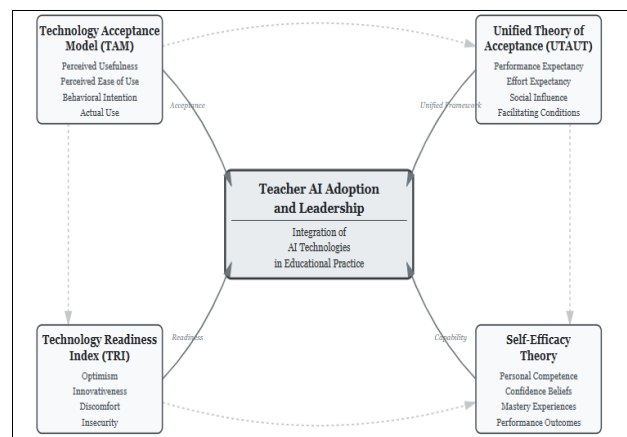


Figure 1: Integrated Theoretical Foundations of AI Adoption.

3.1 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

One of the most popular models of explaining the personal adoption of information technologies is the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Davis [11] theorized technology acceptance as one that is mainly influenced by two constructs of beliefs which are perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness is defined as the degree to which the people believe that the technology improves their job performance, whereas perceived ease of use is a perception of how much effort one has to put in order to utilize the technology [12]. TAM has found wide applications in the educational context in the attempt to explain the adoption of digital tools and instructional technologies by teachers [25]. On the case of AI-enabled systems, perceived usefulness is not limited on operational efficiency, but instead, pedagogical gains like better instructional decision-making, feedback personalization, and better student engagement [6], [30]. The ease of use is also seen to be especially relevant in relation to AI technologies,

where the lack of perceived ease of use may negatively impact the willingness of teachers to experiment with or continue using the system due to their lack of understanding of the algorithm [31]. In terms of leadership, TAM can be used to understand the reasons why certain teachers can become early adopters and instructional leaders. When teachers view AI as helpful and easy to handle, they will become more inclined to advocate its use, support colleagues, and demonstrate good practice [9]. Nevertheless, TAM is too preoccupied with individual thinking to explain institutional and policy-driven situations, so it requires other theoretical lenses.

3.2 Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) was created as an attempt to solve this issue related to technology adoption studies by combining various models into one scheme [14]. UTAUT recognizes four main factors that determine the use of technology as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence and facilitating conditions. Performance expectancy in the case of school settings is the belief in the teachers involved in the activities that AI tools can improve the effectiveness or learning outcomes of students [13]. Effort expectancy is in line with usability issues especially in the AI systems that need to interpret data or to configure systems. Notably, UTAUT also adds the concept of social influence because it acknowledges that the choice of teachers when it comes to adopting something is influenced by what their peers are doing, what their leaders expect them to do, and what the policy requires [40]. The given construct is particularly topical in the UAE, where national policies and centralized reforms in education are closely linked into educational reforms [18], [19]. Facilitating conditions like access to infrastructure, professional development and technical support dictate the ability of teachers to translate intent into long-term practice [45]. Teacher leaders are very important in amplifying these enabling conditions by enhancing collaborative learning cultures and assisting colleagues in the implementation of AI [42].

3.3 Technology Readiness Index (TRI)

Whereas TAM and UTAUT put emphasis on beliefs concerning particular technologies, Technology Readiness Index (TRI) puts emphasis on the general predisposition of a person with regard to technology [15]. TRI views technology readiness as

an amalgamation of optimism and innovativeness (enablers), discomfort and insecurity (inhibitors). Technology preparedness is of special importance in AI-enhanced learning settings, where the most popular concerns are related to the lack of algorithmic openness, data security, or loss of professionalism [24], [44]. Highly optimistic and innovative educators have a greater chance to explore AI tools and use them in innovative ways to teach [33]. On the other hand, engagement may be hindered by discomfort and insecurity where there is infrastructure and policy support. Having added TRI, this theoretical framework will recognize that the acceptance of AI is not only a rational choice on the usefulness or user-friendliness grounds, but also a psychological reaction to technological change, which is predetermined by the previous experiences and attitudes towards change [34].

3.4 Self-Efficacy Theory

The self-efficacy theory developed by Bandura focuses on the beliefs of individuals to arrange and carry out actions necessary to produce desired results [16]. Instructional innovation, resilience, and leadership involvement have invariably been linked to teacher self-efficacy [17], [34]. Self-efficacy in AI-supported teaching represents the level of confidence among teachers when it comes to utilizing AI tools, interpreting the AI-generated data and incorporating the insights into their pedagogical choices [41]. Having high self-efficacy helps teachers overcome uncertainty and ethical issues and continue on the student-centered practice even in the complexity of technology. In addition, leadership practices required self-efficacy: more likely to mentor colleagues, promote innovation and influence school-wide practices, teachers who believe in their abilities tend to have self-efficacy [42]. The development of self-efficacy is based on mastery experiences, social modeling, and institutional support, which explains why professional development and the potential of learning communities are essential in integration AI programs [32], [43].

3.5 Critical Comparison of the Integrated Theories

Even though Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) Technology Readiness Index (TRI), and self-efficacy theory all focus on technology-related behavior, each of them focuses on different but complementary aspects of AI integration in education. TAM aims at the perception

of usefulness and ease of use with a parsimonious explanation of the initial adoption of AI tools by teachers. The weakness is however its individualistic and instrumental orientation that does not take into consideration organizational dynamics and leadership processes that are fundamental in pedagogical change. UTAUT elaborates TAM with social influence and facilitating conditions and is therefore more applicable to institutional settings, including schools. However, UTAUT is more of an explanation of technology use intention, and not the way in which technology adoption is transformed into pedagogical or leadership results, especially in student-centered learning settings. TRI has a psychological preparedness view, which takes into account optimism, innovativeness, discomfort, and insecurity of teachers regarding AI. Although TRI can be used to describe variability in readiness where TAM and UTAUT cannot, the association with instructional decision-making or leadership practicing is missing. The self-efficacy theory developed by Bandura is a complement to these models because it explains the confidence that teachers have in the implementation of AI in terms of pedagogical uses. Nevertheless, self-efficacy is not sufficient to explain structural or technological limitations on the use of AI. These theories, taken singly, explain AI integration in parts. Their combination covers theoretical gaps, as it connects acceptance (TAM/UTAUT), readiness (TRI), and capability beliefs (self-efficacy) with teacher leadership and, as such, is a more comprehensive framework to learn AI-enabled and student-centered learning.

3.6 Theoretical Framework Integrative Value

TAM, UTAUT, TRI, and self-efficacy theory test results in a partial explanation of technology adoption. Combined, they present a unified approach that includes cognitive beliefs (TAM), social and organizational factors (UTAUT), psychological preparedness (TRI), and personal agency (self-efficacy). Integration is the opportunity to comprehend the way AI adoption turns to teacher leadership and facilitates student-centered learning in a nuanced manner. Such a theoretical synthesis is especially applicable in the UAE case where a policy-driven accelerated innovation is intertwined with various cultural and institutional realities [21], [22]. The framework promotes current models of adoption and predicts the human and leader sides of AI-supported education change by placing teacher leadership as a result of interacting belief systems and readiness factors.

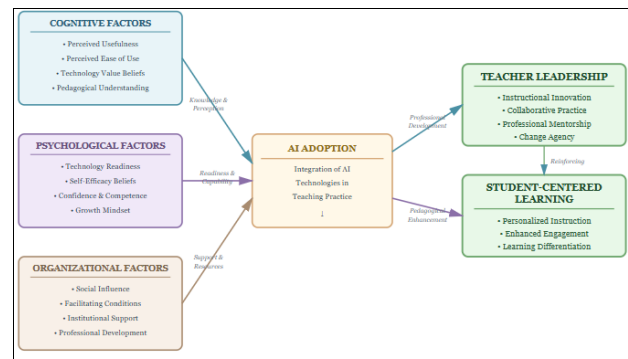


Figure 2: Pathways from AI Adoption to Teacher Leadership.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND PROPOSITIONS

4. Conceptual Framework and Propositions

Based on the literature review and the conceptual framework of the literature synthesis and integrated theoretical background, this section illustrates a conceptual framework of AI integration to account how the mechanism operates as a teacher leadership driver and a student-centered learning in the UAE schools. The framework frames the implementation of AI not as a technical procedure but as a pedagogical change under the leadership mediation influenced by cognitive beliefs, psychological preparedness and organizational circumstances.

4.1 Conceptual Framework Overview

The conceptual framework of the proposed framework models the process of AI integration as a multi-stage process with four related domains interacting with each other: (1) acceptance beliefs of technology among teachers, (2) social and institutional factors, (3) psychological preparedness and self-efficacy, and (4) classroom and school leadership practices implemented. In line with TAM and UTAUT, the first activity of teachers related to AI is dependent on the attitude to usefulness, ease of use, performance expectancy, and facilitating conditions [11], [14], [25]. Nevertheless, the framework goes beyond adoption to focus on teacher leadership as an intervening variable that transforms AI use into the student-centered pedagogical practices. This mediation represents a notion that AI tools do not directly change learning instead, it is transformed by the actions of teachers as interpreters, ethical and instructional leaders [23], [39]. In the UAE setting, the specified mediation-based leadership route is especially applicable, given the centralized reform agendas, quick digitalization, and diverse classrooms [19], [21] in terms of culture. Teacher

leaders become highly important in framing the AI tools, having colleagues and providing relevance to the local pedagogical and cultural values [22], [42].

4.2 AI Integration and Teacher Leadership

The integration of AI presents novel types of instructional data, adaptive feedback, and algorithmic suggestions, which demand expert judgment and pedagogical interpretation [31], [37]. Educators with high levels of acceptance beliefs and technology preparedness have more chances to transition to a deeper level of usage and make use of AI-generated knowledge [33]. When these teachers build confidence and expertise, they tend to take up informal leadership roles, which help others and influence the overall practices [9]. In self-efficacy terms, the desire to use AI tools increases the willingness of teachers to experiment, reflect, and undertake innovative undertakings [16], [41]. Teacher leadership therefore comes as a result of constant interaction with AI and not a condition, which supports the dynamic and growth-oriented character of leadership in technology-saturated settings [42].

Proposition 1 (P1): The perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of AI technologies positively affect the level of AI usage in the lesson practice of teachers [11], [25].

Proposition 2 (P2): Facilitating conditions, social influence, and performance expectancy are found to positively predict sustained use of AI tools by teachers in schools [14], [40], [45].

Proposition 3 (P3): The technology readiness (optimism and innovativeness) and self-efficacy related to AI (self-efficacy) have a positive impact on teacher leadership behavior development in AI-enhanced learning situations [15], [16], [33], [42].

4.3 Teacher Leadership as a Mediating Mechanism

One of the key contributions of this framework is the fact that teacher leadership is a mediating variable between AI integration and student-centered learning. Teacher leaders are instructional sense-makers that convert AI outputs to pedagogically significant acts, including differentiated instruction, formative feedback, and learner autonomy support [23], [32]. The AI tools without a mediating leader stand a chance of strengthening the teacher-centered practices based on automated delivery of content or surveillance-based assessment [36]. Mentoring, collaborative inquiry, along with ethical oversight are the leadership practices that will help to ensure that AI

usage is informed by constructivist and student-centered values [35], [39]. Cultural and ethical judgment is also used in mediation in a multicultural setting like the UAE. Teacher leaders assess the algorithmic bias, linguistic correctness, and data ethics to make sure that learning environments are inclusive [22], [24], [44].

Proposition 4 (P4):

The mediating variable between student-centered learning practice and AI integration in schools is teacher leadership [23], [39], [42].

4.4 Student-Centered Learning Outcomes

Student centered learning focuses on learner agency, personalized trajectories and participation in the learning process [35]. The technical potential of AI technologies in terms of adaptive learning systems and real-time analytics makes them able to fulfill these results, but their practical implementation requires instructional design based on leadership insights [28], [36]. AI insights are used by teacher leaders to create responsive learning experiences, facilitate formative assessment, and encourage student reflection and self-directed learning [37]. Such a leadership-based alignment increases the chances that AI is used to facilitate deeper learning and not superficial efficiency rises.

Proposition 5 (P5):

The teacher leadership facilitates positive effects on matchmaking AI use and student-centered learning principles, such as personalization, learner autonomy, and formative feedback [35], [37].

Proposition 6 (P6):

The indirect impact of AI implementation on learning that is student-centered seems to be more potent with high teacher leadership and institutional support levels mediated [39], [42], [45].

4.5 Contextual Relevance to the UAE

This conceptual framework has a productive setting in the UAE due to its national focus on innovation and AI implementation in the educational process [19], [20]. Nonetheless, swift initiation of policies generates gaps in the readiness and leadership abilities of teachers [21]. The framework addresses this demand by foregrounding teacher leadership as a mediating construct [22], [31]. This theoreticalization is innovative in that it refocuses the analytical interests of the current literature into the question of how leadership practices influence the pedagogical role of AI, especially within the educational systems that are very policy-oriented and multicultural.

4.6 Theoretical Contributions and Novelty

The research presents a new theoretical perspective on the topic of teacher leadership as a mediator between the adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and student-centered learning. By so doing, it can be seen to expand the dominant technology adoption models beyond individual-level usage to describe the leadership-enabled pedagogical change in the schools. The article is also unique in the sense that it integrates TAM, UTAUT, TRI, and self-efficacy theory into a single conceptual framework, bringing together the interaction between technological beliefs, psychological readiness and leadership practices an approach that has hardly been used in previous AI-in-education studies. Lastly, as the framework is based on the policy-intensive and culturally diverse setting in the UAE, the research offers a context-dependent model, which can be theoretically generalized and applied in future empirical research.

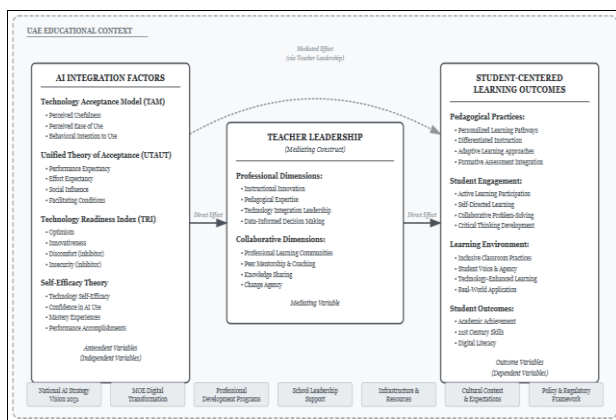


Figure 3: Conceptual Framework Linking AI Integration, Teacher Leadership, and Student-Centered Learning.

5. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This hypothetical paper aimed to provide a theoretical description of how the implementation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be used as a teacher leadership and student-focused learning engine in the educational environment of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Basing the analysis on a comprehensive framework of the integration of Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), Technology Readiness Index (TRI), and self-efficacy theory proposed by Bandura, the work develops a perspective on the adoption of AI in schools through leadership. Instead of perceiving AI

as an influence that can predeterminedly improve the learning outcomes, the paper proposes that it is the teacher leadership that serves as the key on which the pedagogical potential of AI can be achieved. Teachers do not simply apply AI tools but perceive, place them in the context and ethically regulate their use. By doing this, they would influence whether AI will promote student autonomy, personalization, and meaningful interaction or will be a replica of efficiency-based, teacher-centric practices. This stance is a direct answer to emerging academic anxieties researching educational AI as being potentially dangerous in the event that human leadership is sidelined. The situation in the UAE also makes the significance of this point of view even more prominent. The fast national digitalization of the country, centralized policy campaigns, and heterogeneous classrooms of the culture place the factors in such a way that the technological preparedness of the educators is widely spread. In these settings, the teacher leaders operate as boundary-spanners—they connect the policy requirements, technological capacity and classroom realities. Indeed, considering leadership as an emergent and distributed practice, instead of a formal role, the paper connects the integration of AI with the current concept of instructional leadership and professional agency. The paper has three major contributions to the theory. First, it builds on the long-standing technology acceptance models and integrates it into a leadership and pedagogical transformation prism. Second, it places teacher leadership as an intermediary variable, which provides a more detailed account of the impact of the AI integration on student centered learning. Third, it brings a context-sensitive framework to policy-driven education system in the Global South and the Gulf region, which is a significant gap in the AI-in-education literature.

5.2 Future Research Directions

This paper has several avenues as a conceptual contribution to both empirical and theoretical studies. First, the research in the future ought to empirically validate the proposed conceptual framework with the help of structural equation modeling or mixed methods designs. Particularly, longitudinal studies would be helpful when exploring the way in which AI-related self-efficacy and leadership practices among teachers would change over time as teachers would experience further exposure to AI tools. These studies have the potential to support the mediating role of the teacher leadership that is postulated in this model. Second,

qualitative research studies are required to examine the ways in which teacher leadership occurs in AI-enhanced learning settings in various school types (public and private) and educational levels. Additional information about the process of negotiation of ethical issues and cultural alignment by teachers along with pedagogical decision-making in the use of AI systems may be obtained through ethnographic studies, case studies, and design-based research. Third, upcoming research ought to look at the models of professional development that directly focus on developing AI-oriented teacher leadership. Comparative studies may evaluate the more effective approach, mentorship-based versus community-of-practice and coaching-driven professional learning interventions, in terms of their effectiveness in enhancing the leadership capacity and pedagogical confidence of teachers in AI integration. Fourth, research centered on student opinions in learning settings based on AI mediation is needed. Although the focus of this paper is teacher leadership, the perception of agency, feedback, and fairness by students in AI-assisted learning will be considered to improve student-centered models and provide ethical consistency. Lastly, the framework may be expanded by conducting cross-national comparative studies with other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries or other education systems with policies

similar to those of the UAE. Through such research, it would be possible to determine which aspects of the AI implementation and teacher leadership are environment-specific and which can be generalized across education systems.

5.3 Final Remarks

Now that AI is changing the face of education in various places around the world, the question of whether or not schools will adopt AI is no longer relevant but rather how, and who will take the initiative of adoption, its interpretation and its pedagogic implementation. In this paper, it will be stated that teacher empowerment is the key to sustainable, ethical, and student-centered integration of AI. The proposed approach provides a more human-centered approach to achieving AI innovation/education alignment by foregrounding educators as leaders, not as passive technology users. The remarkable educational transformation agenda of the UAE offers an opportunity and a challenge - to make sure that AI supplements rather than substitutes the professional judgment, leadership, and relational work that lie at the core of teaching. The theoretical insights provided below are supposed to inform that mission and add to a bigger discussion of the future of AI in education on a global plane.

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