International Journal of Management and Commerce Innovations ISSN 2348-7585 (Online)
Vol. 13, Issue 2, pp: (663-671), Month: October 2025 - March 2026, Available at: www.researchpublish.com

DIGITALIZATION: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AS A CONTINUOUS LEVERAGING TOOL FOR SCHOOL-WIDE IMPROVEMENT IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18899311

Published Date: 07-March-2026

Abstract: **Digitalization represents a significant paradigm shift in educational administration, driven by rapid technological advancement. This paper reviews the imperative of integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a fundamental and continuous leveraging tool for enhancing school administration and driving school-wide improvement in public secondary schools. Guided by two central research questions: what is the role of AI in educational administration from the perspective of school heads? and what are the proffered solutions to the challenges of implementing AI tools in this context? This study synthesizes findings from a review of quantitative and qualitative literature. The review explores the necessity of AI-driven digital technologies in school administration and discusses their key applications in management practices. The findings underscore a critical need for key stakeholders to prioritize comprehensive training initiatives. These include the continuous professional development of school administrators in AI digitalization, targeted training for teachers, and the establishment of specified roles for AI assistants or officers. The review reveals that core administrative activities, including timetable scheduling, committee management, database presentations, data-informed decision-making, and the management of online teaching platforms, can be effectively enhanced by AI. Furthermore, this paper contributes to the existing body of knowledge by identifying potential solutions to the prevalent challenges associated with AI adoption in educational administration, offering a pathway for its effective implementation in Nigerian public secondary schools.**

Keywords: **Digitalization, Artificial Intelligence, Educational Administration, School-wide Improvement.**

1. INTRODUCTION

The integration of technology into education is not a novel concept. However, the continuous process of adapting to new technological innovations, known as digitalization, constantly redefines what is considered "new" in the field. In Nigerian public secondary schools, particularly those in rural regions, this process of digitalization is still ongoing. This study, therefore, employs the term *digitalization* to focus on the current discourse surrounding the adoption of a specific, transformative technology: Artificial Intelligence (AI), in secondary school administration.

Digitalization, powered by Artificial Intelligence, is rapidly becoming an indispensable tool in educational administration, prompting a significant paradigm shift. Educational administration, which encompasses the organization of processes from planning to evaluation to ensuring the effective achievement of educational objectives (Thamrin et al., 2024), now increasingly relies on AI to execute its core functions. AI refers to the branch of computer science dedicated to creating intelligent machines capable of performing tasks that typically require human cognition, such as learning, problem-solving,

and decision-making (Kassa & Worku, 2025). The tools, software, and infrastructure of AI are now integral artifacts within a school's culture, facilitating effective school climate, efficient and effective administration and learning to drive school improvement, including higher student performance (Gaius-Okoko & Peretomode, 2026).

With the advent of AI digital technologies, the strategies for enhancing educational administration have expanded considerably. AI can act as a dynamic assessor and articulator of information, moving beyond traditional hard-copy methods. Administrators are now encouraged to use various AI tools to create presentations, manage projects, and streamline other administrative activities (Haleem et al., 2022). UNESCO (2026) acknowledges that AI holds the potential to address major challenges in education, innovate teaching and learning, and accelerate progress toward SDG 4. However, realizing this potential to achieve "AI for all" in education necessitates that school administrators are themselves proficient in using AI as a fundamental administrative tool. Their understanding of AI's value is a catalyst for harnessing it to achieve school-wide goals, including continuous improvement.

The rationale for integrating AI into school administration is supported by its recognized benefits. Kassa and Worku (2025) note that AI automates routine tasks while enhancing human capabilities through advanced analysis, forecasting, and resource management. This leads to improved operational efficiency, better decision-making, increased job satisfaction, and enhanced performance among both teachers and principals. Despite these advantages, the path to digitalization is not without obstacles. Key challenges identified by UNESCO and scholars like Stebbins (2025) and Stryker & Kavlakoglu (2025) include administrator readiness, risks associated with data accuracy and privacy, and concerns over a machine-centred approach that may overshadow human agency.

While several AI technologies exist, including Machine Learning and Deep Learning, Generative AI (Gen AI) is the most relevant to contemporary educational administration. Gen AI is a technology capable of creating novel content, such as text, images, and video, by learning patterns from vast datasets (Stebbins, 2025; Stryker & Kavlakoglu, 2025). It operates through Large Language Models (LLMs) like ChatGPT, Google's Gemini, and Microsoft's Bing Chat. These powerful models are often accessed via user-friendly applications known as AI tools or wrappers (e.g., Curipod for lesson planning), which serve as an intermediary layer, making the technology accessible for specific administrative and pedagogical tasks (Stebbins, 2025).

As administrators become equipped with the knowledge and tools to leverage Generative AI, they can perform their roles more effectively. This proficiency, in turn, positions them to champion the use of AI to improve teaching and learning, thereby fostering comprehensive school improvement through digital and technological means.

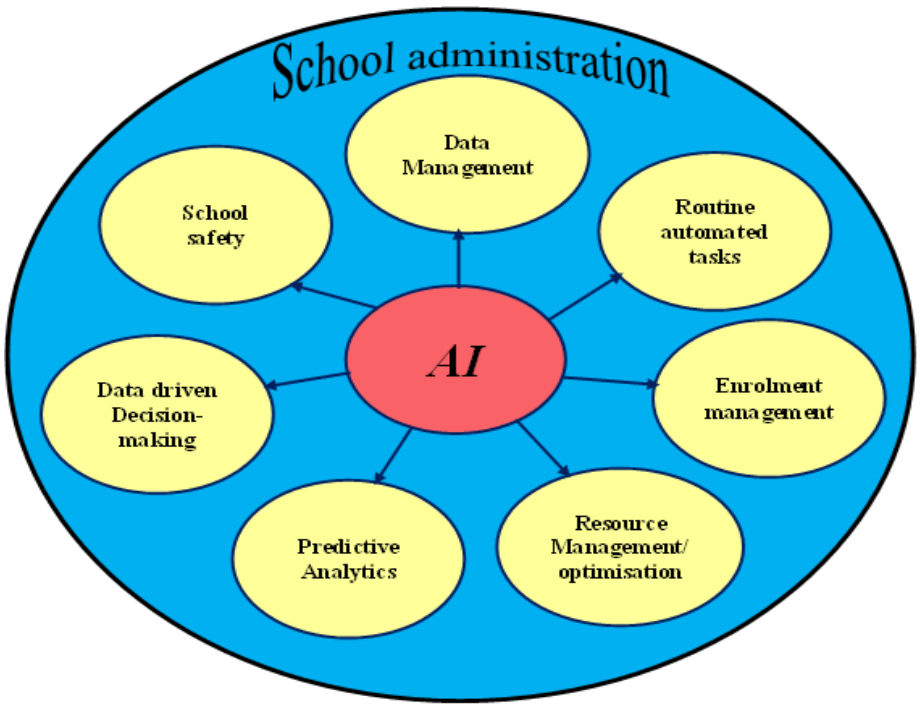

Figure 1: AI and Educational Administration

RQ1: What is AI in Educational Administration for School Heads?

Educational administration is the systematic organization and prudent utilization of all available resources (human and non-human) to implement educational policies and achieve institutional goals. For heads of schools, this involves a wide range of tasks, including managing staff and students, overseeing curriculum and instruction, handling finances, and fostering community relationships (Peretomode, 2019). The effective discharge of these responsibilities is increasingly dependent on the integration of technology and the collaboration of teachers as partners in school improvement (Gaius-Okoko & Peretomode, 2026). This is where the digitalization of school administration, the transformation from manual to digital processes, becomes crucial. It requires the collaboration of the entire school community to make learning implementation more effective (Sanoto et al., 2025).

What is Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

The concept of AI was formally defined in 1955 by Prof. John McCarthy at the Dartmouth Conference, where he described the scientific process of making machines learn (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2023; Stryker & Kavlakoglu, 2025). Since then, its definition has evolved to encompass several key ideas:

Fitria (2021) views AI as a Human-like Simulation when he defined it as the process of imitating human logic to create machines that can perform cognitive tasks, learning automatically from data. It enables computers to simulate human learning, problem-solving, decision-making, and creativity (Stryker & Kavlakoglu, 2025).

AI, more concretely, is the tangible capability, the real-world capability of non-human entities to perform tasks, solve problems, and interact logically much like humans do (Gil de Zúñiga , Goyanesd, and Durotoye, 2023). AI systems can simulate human cognitive processes such as data analysis and decision-making (Zogopoulos & Karatzas, 2024).

In essence, AI is the application of computer systems to perform tasks that would normally require human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, and perception.

Defining AI in Educational Administration

In the specific context of school administration, AI is used to manage large volumes of data, improve evaluation processes, and support leaders in making effective decisions (Zogopoulos & Karatzas, 2024). It streamlines operations by automating routine tasks like grading, attendance tracking, and scheduling. This leads to enhanced communication, reduced workloads, improved resource allocation, and data-driven decision-making. Ultimately, it allows school leaders to focus more on strategic initiatives, predictive analysis of student performance, and personalized learning support (Kim, 2025).

Synthesizing these ideas, AI in educational administration is defined as the integration of digital artificial intelligence technologies to execute core administrative responsibilities. It involves using AI to systematically organize and utilize school resources (both human and non-human) and implement educational policies to achieve institutional goals, vision, and mission.

In simpler terms, it is the practice of school administrators achieving their educational objectives through the strategic use of AI tools. By automating routine tasks, managing data, and optimizing workflows, AI promotes efficiency, transparency, and enhanced decision-making. Technologies such as chatbots and machine learning models help reduce administrative burdens and stress, improve service delivery, and enable sophisticated, data-driven analysis to support the entire school community.

The Role of AI in Modern Educational Administration

In an increasingly digital world, the digitalization of school administration is no longer optional but essential. By leveraging information technology, schools can significantly enhance operational efficiency, information accessibility, and communication (Sanoto et al., 2025). However, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) marks a paradigm shift, moving beyond simple digital processes to create intelligent, responsive, and highly efficient administrative ecosystems (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2023; Miao et al., 2021; Stryker & Kavlakoglu, 2025).

The importance of AI in educational administration can be understood through its impact on five key areas: Operational Efficiency, Data-Driven Decision Making, Communication and Engagement, Resource and Risk Management, and Strategic Support.

1. *Streamlining Operations and Boosting Efficiency*

i) AI excels at automating routine, repetitive tasks, freeing up staff to focus on more strategic and human-centric activities. This automation reduces time spent on administrative work, increases job satisfaction, and minimizes human error.

ii) Automating Core Administrative Tasks: AI can manage admissions, create timetables, track attendance, monitor homework, and process invoices with speed and accuracy. It balances teacher availability with subject requirements to minimize scheduling conflicts.

iii) Ensuring 24/7 Availability: Chatbots and virtual assistants provide round-the-clock support for students and parents, instantly answering Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and replacing static suggestion boxes with dynamic, always-on help.

iv) Digitizing and Enhancing Archives: AI revolutionizes how school archives are managed, improving the recording, storage, retrieval, and searching of historical data.

2. *Enhancing Decision-Making with Data Analytics*

AI empowers school leaders to move from intuition-based to evidence-based decisions. By analyzing vast amounts of data, AI provides actionable insights for both immediate interventions and long-term strategic planning.

i) Identifying At-Risk Students: By analyzing trends in absenteeism, performance, and engagement, AI can flag students who may need additional support, allowing for timely intervention.

ii) Informing Strategy and Policy: Through "learning analytics," AI mines data from Learning Management Systems (LMS) to guide administrators in supporting student success. It also helps in policy-making by creating interactive data visualizations that offer real-time insights into the education system.

iii) Improving Curriculum and Pedagogy: Data analysis can reveal which pedagogical approaches and curriculum designs are most effective, allowing for continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

3. Improving Communication and Safety

AI tools can enhance the quality, reach, and safety of school communications, both internally and with the wider community.

i) Drafting and Enhancing Communications: AI assists administrators in drafting clear and effective newsletters, staff emails, and policy documents, improving overall professional writing.

ii) Combating Misinformation: AI can be deployed to monitor online platforms and social media for hate speech and mis/disinformation, helping to maintain a safe and respectful school community.

4. Optimizing Resource Allocation and Risk Management

AI provides the tools to manage a school's physical and financial resources more effectively, predicting problems before they occur.

i) Predicting Maintenance Needs: By analyzing data from IoT sensors and operational technology, machine learning models can forecast when school facilities (e.g., HVAC systems, plumbing) are likely to fail, enabling proactive and cost-effective maintenance.

ii) Detecting Fraud: AI algorithms can analyze financial transactions and payment patterns to detect anomalies and flag potential fraud, safeguarding school funds.

iii) Optimizing Resources: AI helps visualize trends in resource utilization (e.g., classroom usage, energy consumption), allowing administrators to allocate resources more efficiently.

5. Supporting Strategic Goals and Human Development

Beyond operational tasks, AI acts as a strategic partner, supporting the human elements of teaching, learning, and leadership.

i) Empowering School Leaders: By automating tedious tasks, AI allows principals and administrators to focus their energy on what matters most: supporting students, staff, and families.

ii) Transforming Human Resources: AI can streamline recruitment by screening applications and identifying the best candidates. It can also support teacher training and professional development by personalizing learning pathways.

iii) Supporting Classroom Innovation: School administrators must stay current on the best uses of AI in the classroom, both its opportunities and its ethical concerns, to effectively support teachers and guide school-wide AI policy.

iv) Conducting Research: AI can rapidly analyze research topics relevant to administrative challenges, providing a solid foundation for decision-making and innovation.

In conclusion, AI is not just a tool for automation in educational administration; it is a transformative force that enhances every facet of school management. From predictive analytics that safeguard student success to intelligent systems that streamline operations, AI empowers educational leaders to build more effective, responsive, and supportive learning environments.

AI & Software Tools for Educational Administrators

There are a number of AI and software tools useful to school administrators. They are those for the following activities:

1. *Communication & Engagement*

i) AI Chatbots: Provide instant responses to common parent and student inquiries.

ii) MagicSchool AI: Automates the creation of announcements and personalized parent communications.

iii) Collaboration Tools (e.g., Google Workspace, Microsoft 365): Facilitate team communication, scheduling, and document sharing.

2. Data Management & Decision Making

i) Student Information Systems (SIS): Centralize student data including enrollment, grades, and attendance.

ii) SchoolAI: Analyzes institutional data to support data-driven decision-making.

iii) Document Management Systems (DMS): Store, organize, and secure digital documents (policies, reports, legal files).

3. Academic & Curriculum Oversight

i) Learning Management Systems (LMS): Manage, deliver, and track curriculum content, assignments, and assessments.

ii) Gradescope: Aids in grading efficiency and helps monitor student assessment performance.

iii) ChatGPT: Assists administrators by drafting memos, policies, and mentoring communications.

4. Operations & Administration

i) Human Resource Management Systems (HRMS): Track staff details, payroll, attendance, and professional development.

ii) Financial Management Software: Manage institutional budgeting, process payments, and maintain accounting records.

RQ2: What are the challenges of using AI tools in educational administration and the proposed solutions to Overcomng these challenges?

As educational institutions face growing complexity and administrative demands with increasing student enrollment, AI technologies offer significant potential to streamline bureaucratic processes and enhance evidence-based decision-making. The concept of *smart education* is gaining traction, positioning AI not merely as a technological upgrade but as a vital administrative tool (Barsekh-Onji, Hernandez, and Espinosa, 2025). AI-powered technologies and learning analytics are increasingly supporting administrators in their duties and improving student learning outcomes (OECD, 2021). This digital transformation promises improved accessibility, faster service, and more effective program evaluation, marking a fundamental shift from manual processes to technology-driven systems (Sanoto, Kusuma, Paseleng, and Triwijayanti, 2025).

However, the integration of AI into educational administration is not without significant friction and concerns. The key challenges identified in the literature (UNESCO, 2026; Stryker & Kavlakoglu, 2025; Stebbins, 2025; Ghimire & Edwards, 2024; Zogopoulos & Karatzas, 2024; Kassa & Worku, 2025) can be grouped into the following core areas:

1. *Administrator Capacity and Skills*: A primary barrier is the lack of readiness among administrators. Many lack the necessary skills, knowledge, or organizational capacity to effectively integrate AI into school management processes. This is compounded by a general shortage of technical personnel and, in some cases, skepticism or mistrust of technological innovations among staff, which can slow adoption.

2. *Data Privacy, Security, and Exploitation*: AI systems require access to sensitive student data (e.g., academic records, biometrics), creating substantial risks. These include data poisoning, bias, cyber attacks, and data breaches. Furthermore, there is a risk of *function creep*, where data collected for education is repurposed for non-educational uses (e.g., marketing) without proper consent. The continuous monitoring inherent in some systems can also foster a sense of surveillance, potentially undermining trust and free expression.

3. Ethical, Legal, and Governance Gaps: The use of AI raises critical ethical questions around fairness, transparency, and accountability. If not carefully managed, biased training data can perpetuate stereotypes and lead to unfair outcomes. While frameworks for responsible AI have been proposed, a significant gap remains between these high-level principles and their comprehensive implementation in policy and practice.

4. Technical and Operational Vulnerabilities: AI systems introduce specific technical risks. Models themselves can be targets for cyber theft or manipulation (e.g., altering their parameters). Operationally, they are susceptible to issues like model drift and bias, which, if unmanaged, can lead to system failures and cyber security vulnerabilities. The reliability of AI-driven insights is also entirely dependent on the accuracy of the underlying data.

5. Infrastructure and Financial Costs: The implementation, installation, and ongoing maintenance of AI systems require substantial financial investment, as well as a robust and high-quality technical infrastructure, which can be a significant burden for many institutions.

Integrating AI in Education: A Strategic Framework for School Administrators

This document synthesizes recommendations from recent literature (Stebbins, 2025; UNESCO, 2026; Gaius-Okoko & Peretomode, 2026; Imoh et al., 2025; Zogopoulos & Karatzas, 2024; Kim, 2025) to provide a structured approach for educational administrators navigating the adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Part 1: Foundational Principles for AI Integration

To ensure responsible, effective, and equitable use of AI, administrators must establish a strong foundation based on the following principles:

i) *Prioritize Data Privacy and Security*: Maintain high standards of data protection by conducting regular security audits and ensuring strict compliance with all relevant laws, including FERPA, COPPA, and state-specific regulations. Employ strong encryption and data anonymization techniques to safeguard student identities.

ii) *Commit to Equity and Fairness and Mitigate Bias*: Invest in well-tested, transparent AI systems. Conduct regular audits to identify and correct for gender, racial, or cultural bias. Be aware that poorly designed adaptive learning platforms can marginalize students with diverse learning styles or cultural backgrounds, creating systemic disadvantages.

iii) *Ensure Inclusivity*: All AI use must be regularly reviewed by key stakeholders to ensure it promotes, rather than undermines, gender quality and equity for all students.

iv) *Phase out Ineffective Tools*: Remove or replace unreliable AI detection systems that may produce inaccurate or unfair outcomes.

v) *Foster a Collaborative Culture*: A positive, collaborative, and democratic relationship between principals and teachers is foundational. This trust is essential for the successful adoption of new technologies like AI.

vi) *Invest in People and Infrastructure*: Provide ongoing, comprehensive professional training for both administrators and teachers, including funding , to build essential AI skills and literacy.

vii) Physical Infrastructure: Proactively request and secure the necessary AI infrastructure (hardware, software, reliable internet) from the appropriate authorities or through budget allocation.

Part 2: A Step-by-Step Guide to Implementing AI in Schools

Adapting to AI, like any transformative technology, can be disruptive. Following a structured, phased implementation process will simplify adoption and maximize benefits.

1. *Assess and Identify Needs*: Begin by mapping out current administrative processes. Pinpoint specific areas that are tedious, repetitive, error-prone, or critical to operations, such as scheduling, data analysis, or reporting. These are the prime candidates for AI integration.

2. *Research and Select Appropriate Tools*: Based on the needs identified in step one, explore and select AI tools and solutions designed to address those specific challenges. Ensure the chosen technology can be effectively integrated with your existing school management platforms.

3. Secure Resources and Build Capacity: Develop a comprehensive financial plan that covers not just the initial purchase and installation, but also ongoing maintenance, future upgrades, and the establishment of clear ethical guidelines. Crucially, allocate funds for the training of all staff, including the hiring or development of technical support personnel.

4. Educate and Communicate for Buy-In: Engage all stakeholders - administrators, teachers, staff, and students - in professional development and informational sessions. Clearly communicate the benefits and importance of AI for improving education and school operations, while also being transparent about data privacy concerns and safeguards.

5. Launch with a Pilot Project: Begin the integration process by introducing one AI project at a time. Select a project from your initial assessment (Step 1) to pilot. This phased approach allows for easier adaptation and minimizes disruption.

6. *Gather Feedback and Refine*: Collect feedback from the staff members using the new AI tools. Assess the impact of the solution on their workflows and use their insights to refine processes and address any unforeseen challenges.

7. Monitor, Evaluate, and Iterate: Establish a regular cycle for monitoring and evaluating the performance of all AI systems. Use feedback mechanisms, data analysis, and performance metrics to assess effectiveness. Be prepared to adjust configurations, retrain staff, or even replace tools as needed. Stay informed about advances, updates, and upgrades in AI to continually improve your school's administrative practices.

In essence, successful AI integration is an ongoing cycle: Plan, strategize, secure financing, execute, observe, gather feedback, and re-strategize as necessary.

Finally, effective administrators understand that successful implementation is a collaborative endeavor. No one has all the answers. Therefore, actively involve and collaborate with all relevant stakeholders - teachers, IT staff, parents, and students - throughout the entire process to ensure AI serves the entire school community effectively.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

To facilitate the effective and equitable integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in educational administration, the following structured recommendations are proposed for key stakeholders.

1. For Educational Administrators (School Leaders):

i) *Adopt a Phased and Decentralized Implementation Strategy*: Begin the AI integration process by introducing it to key personnel and technologically advanced departments or schools. These early adopters can serve as models and sources of practical insight. Subsequently, expand implementation outwards in a decentralized manner, using the lessons learned to inform broader rollout.

ii) *Prioritize Capacity Building and Infrastructure*: Focus on upgrading the technological and security infrastructure of all schools - both existing urban and rural - before introducing AI in new institutions. A robust, equitable technological foundation is a prerequisite for the smooth adoption of AI.

iii) *Establish Continuous Feedback Loops*: Actively provide feedback to AI trainers and developers based on your school's specific administrative realities. This ensures that AI solutions are effectively tailored to your context. Furthermore, systematically gather feedback from staff that have adopted AI tools, assess their impact on daily activities, and use these findings, in collaboration with your AI tech trainer, to refine processes and improve implementation.

2. For Educational Managers (Policy Makers):

Develop an Equitable and Culturally Responsive Framework: Create a standardized policy framework for the ethical and effective use of AI in all schools. This framework must mandate the selection and implementation of AI applications that respect and reflect the diverse cultural backgrounds, learning styles, and needs of all students, thereby fostering equity and inclusion in every classroom.

3. CONCLUSION

This review of literature on the use of AI in educational administration confirms its potential to significantly improve schools. AI is not merely a technological tool but a transformative force that can streamline administrative responsibilities, enhance decision-making, and contribute to holistic school development. As schools advance on their technological journey and integrate AI, they evolve across all dimensions—from tangible artifacts and school plants to espoused values and core underlying assumptions.

While the benefits are clear, a strategic and thoughtful approach to implementation is paramount. School administrators must prioritize training that positions AI as a partner to, rather than a replacement for, sound instructional strategies. This collaborative approach minimizes human error in pedagogical processes and ensures that student learning remains grounded in the appropriate educational and cultural context.

It is crucial to note that leading international bodies, including the OECD and UNESCO, advocate not for AI to replace the education workforce, but for its strategic integration to alleviate the workloads of both administrators and educators, allowing them to focus on higher-value tasks.

When implemented effectively, AI integration acts as a powerful catalyst for school improvement and development. The benefits are multi-faceted:

i) *Administrative Efficiency*: Workload is managed more quickly, from data collection and analysis to report generation.

ii) *Enhanced Management*: The maintenance of school facilities and equipment is easily tracked, and financial management is strengthened through transparent monitoring of fund inflow and outflow.

iii) *Data-Driven Insights*: Student academic performance is more easily understood and can be analyzed to predict future trends, enabling proactive intervention.

iv) *Improved Security and Information Management*: School security is enhanced, and personnel and student records are stored and managed more securely.

v) *Professional Growth*: Barriers of physical distance to professional development opportunities are reduced, increasing staff engagement.

vi) *Strategic Leadership*: With routine tasks streamlined, administrators gain more time to focus on strategic projects, complex issues, and instructional leadership.

By embracing AI as a strategic partner and adhering to the principles of equitable implementation, educational institutions can unlock significant advancements, ultimately creating more effective, responsive, and improved schools for all.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study review has examined AI usage by school administrators in improving schools; solutions proffered to the problems associated with the use of AI by administrators; and AI Tech solution tools identified in the course of this study, has contributed to the bank of knowledge.

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