

In Light of Current Research: The Integration of Artificial Intelligence and STEM in Science Education

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Abstract

The technological changes and transformations of the 21st century have brought to the forefront the need to utilize digital literacy skills in science education, making the use of innovative approaches in the teaching and learning process necessary. In this context, prominent pedagogical approaches have emerged in science education; a review of the current literature reveals that the STEM approach and artificial intelligence integration have become a significant research focus. This section examines the trends and findings of studies conducted on the integration of STEM and artificial intelligence in science education in 2020 and beyond, in light of the existing literature. The literature shows that AI-supported STEM applications positively contribute to students' conceptual understanding, academic achievement, problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills, motivation, self-efficacy, class participation, creativity, and 21st-century skills. At the same time, the use of generative artificial intelligence tools in STEM applications enables the personalisation of learning environments and is recognised in the literature as an important element supporting problem-solving and design processes. Furthermore, technical infrastructure deficiencies and access problems arise when using AI tools in STEM education; Ethical dimensions such as data privacy and algorithm bias stand out as elements that need to be considered in the integration process. Another important factor in this process is the ability of practitioners to use artificial intelligence effectively from a pedagogical perspective, and for this, the development of practical in-service training programs is necessary. In conclusion, it can be stated that AI-supported STEM integration is a process that must be planned and evaluated within the framework of pedagogical foundations and ethical responsibilities, beyond being merely a technological innovation.

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1. Introduction

In the 21st century, the increase in societal needs, changes in economic resources, and technological advancements are rapidly leading the world we live in towards digitalization. This digital transformation process is affecting many areas, including how we access information, how we communicate, the production process, and daily life activities (Chiu, 2021). Faced with the inevitable necessity of digitalization, a process of change and transformation has begun in education systems; restructuring has started, ranging from teaching environments and tools to pedagogical approaches. This situation has accelerated, especially with the Covid-19 pandemic, and the use of digital tools by both students and parents to participate in educational activities and ensure the healthy functioning of the process has increased the scope of digitalization (Livari et al., 2020). With the inclusion of technology in the education process, one of the prominent pedagogical approaches in science education has been STEM education.

One of the main reasons why STEM education has become more visible in this transformation process is its problem-solving-centered and interdisciplinary structure. STEM integrates science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines, aiming to develop individuals' 21st-century skills while enabling them to adapt to the digitalized world. The STEM approach provides a more systematic foundation for students to acquire scientific process skills, enabling them to concretize abstract concepts in science education and generate solutions to real-life problems. However, the density of concepts in the teaching process, coupled with limited time, creates challenges in science education. At this point, STEM education both supports and enriches the learning process with technological tools and allows for more effective use of time (Timur & Özdemir, 2018).

Innovative technologies such as augmented reality, virtual reality, robotics applications, and data-driven learning systems enhance student interaction, supporting experiential learning and providing rich learning environments where students can utilize the learning process more efficiently. The meaningful and sustainable use of these technological diversities from a pedagogical perspective is only possible through systematically implemented integration models. Indeed, the aim of technology integration in education systems is not merely to provide a technical innovation with digital tools in lessons, but to guide instruction in a way that is consistent with the goals, content, and pedagogical strategies of teaching (Trif-Boia, 2023). Within this technology integration, artificial intelligence applications, which are becoming widespread in different disciplines such as health, engineering, art, and economics, also

carry a strong potential for transformation in the field of education (Vatansever, 2024).

The fundamental element that distinguishes artificial intelligence from other technological tools is that it is not just a technological tool, but also an intelligent system that analyzes data and provides feedback during the learning process. The ability to provide students with individualized learning experiences based on their individual goals, learning speeds, and readiness levels highlights the unique aspect of artificial intelligence in education (Alanoğlu, 2021). In this context, AI-supported applications in STEM educational environments contribute to the development of both students' interdisciplinary thinking skills and digital competencies, while supporting the problem-solving-oriented structure of problem-solving in addressing everyday life problems.

In conclusion, the integration of artificial intelligence and STEM in the digitalization process of education creates a holistic transformation area in terms of improving the quality of science education, making abstract concepts concrete, and preparing students for the professions of the future. For a sustainable and effective digital transformation in education, it is important to integrate these three structures on a pedagogical basis and through conscious planning.

2. Artificial Intelligence

In the 21st century, artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as an innovative technology with high potential to transform teaching and learning processes in the field of education. Data-driven decision-making in education, along with the individualization of instructional designs, contributes to supporting cognitive processes in learning (Jaiswal & Arun, 2021). In science education, AI-supported applications are considered important tools because the aim is to develop students' critical thinking, problem-solving, and 21st-century skills, along with their cognitive processes.

In recent years, with the widespread adoption of generative artificial intelligence tools, large language models such as ChatGPT have come to the forefront in the remarkable transformation of learning environments and have begun to be frequently used in education. In particular, the ability to develop instructional materials with these models, receive immediate feedback, and generate solutions to problems through these interactions has added flexibility to learning processes. Through the creation of individualized learning paths, the design of instructional materials, and the development of data-driven assessments using these models, student and teacher roles are being redefined (Genç & Koçak, 2024). In science education, the ability to adapt to students'

readiness levels and learning speeds is considered one of the strongest aspects of artificial intelligence applications (Vieriu & Petrea, 2025).

A systematic review conducted by Garzón (2025), encompassing 155 studies focusing on AI integration between 2015 and 2025, reveals a significant increase in educational research, particularly with the proliferation of generative AI tools starting in 2023. The majority of the studies examined are concentrated in Asian countries, especially China and Taiwan, with Turkey also being among the notable countries. The research focuses primarily on language learning, information and communication technologies, and science education; AI applications are reported to yield positive results such as improved learning outcomes, support for personalized instruction, increased student motivation, and enhanced learner autonomy. However, ethical concerns, the risk of over-reliance on AI, digital literacy deficiencies, and motivational issues are among the key limitations highlighted in the literature.

Recent research in science education shows that AI-assisted learning strategies significantly improve students' academic performance (Lin & Ye, 2023). In addition, positive effects have been reported on intrinsic motivation (Chen & Chang, 2024; Fayzullina et al., 2025), interest and attitude towards science (Lee et al., 2023; Yıldırımçakar, 2024), class participation (Fayzullina et al., 2025), and self-regulation skills (Ng et al., 2024). These findings demonstrate that AI is effective not only on cognitive outcomes but also on affective and metacognitive dimensions.

In conclusion, artificial intelligence is considered an innovative support mechanism in science education that both enhances the quality of learning processes and takes into account the individual differences of students. However, structuring these technologies in a way that is based on pedagogical principles, adheres to ethical guidelines, and supports digital competencies is critical for sustainable and effective integration.

3. STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics)

STEM is one of the approaches frequently used in the 21st century, often referred to as the digital age, to develop students' creativity and problem-solving skills and to increase their digital literacy. Many countries have rapidly incorporated the STEM approach into their education programs to ensure economic development and international competitiveness. STEM is an approach that addresses science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines holistically, offering students not only the transfer of knowledge but also the opportunity to apply their knowledge to solve real-life problems (Bybee, 2010). In this context, the STEM approach expects individuals not

to simply accept information but to synthesize it, generate creative ideas, and transform these ideas into products (Nugraha et al., 2024).

In today's education systems, skills such as creative and analytical thinking, innovation, problem-solving, entrepreneurship, effective communication, teamwork, taking responsibility, and scientific and technological literacy have become priority issues (Aranda et al., 2020). To enable individuals to acquire these skills, it is not enough to simply change the learning outcomes in the curriculum; the pedagogical approaches and learning environments used also need to be restructured. Therefore, the process of incorporating the STEM approach into the education system must be addressed in a planned, sustainable, and multi-dimensional manner.

In the STEM approach, design-based learning plays a significant role. Students are given real-life problems involving design tasks, and they are expected to develop solutions to these problems, test these solutions, and improve them (Roehrig et al., 2021). Thus, in the STEM approach, engineering design process and scientific process skills are integrated, and students become not only consumers of information but also producers of knowledge.

As technology is incorporated into the STEM education process, the accelerating technological advancements further strengthen this pedagogical structure. The STEM approach offers rich interaction opportunities by incorporating computer simulations, virtual environments, and digital games into the process, providing individuals with experiences that are difficult to access in daily life (Wang et al., 2022). Furthermore, the inclusion of web-based modeling tools in research processes supports reasoning (Rachmatullah & Wiebe, 2022); and online collaborative systems improve students' problem-solving and teamwork skills (Lin et al., 2020). These findings demonstrate that technology creates a learning ecosystem that supports the interdisciplinary nature of the STEM education process.

While technology is a transformative element for STEM educational environments, artificial intelligence tools are having a remarkable impact within the technology discipline. AI-powered virtual learning environments facilitate access to information for students, reduce communication barriers, especially for students with special needs, and enrich learning experiences by offering real-time support (Rice & Dunn, 2023). Furthermore, AI-powered systems improve individuals' conceptual understanding and data and digital literacy by providing instant feedback and personalizing the process. They also support teachers' assessment and instructional design processes (Akhmetova et al., 2025).

In current literature, the STEM approach in science education is considered not only as an interdisciplinary teaching model but also as a holistic learning framework that develops scientific process skills, higher-order thinking skills, and technology-based problem-solving capacities. However, the integration of artificial intelligence into this structure brings with it important areas of debate such as ethics, data privacy, algorithmic bias, and digital inequality (Akhmetova et al., 2025). Therefore, the use of artificial intelligence in STEM-based science education should be considered not only as a technical innovation but also as a strategic transformation area that needs to be planned taking into account pedagogical, ethical, and social responsibility dimensions.

4. Current Studies on the Integration of Artificial Intelligence & STEM in Science Education

Digitalization is having a transformative effect on education systems, as it does on contemporary societies. In recent years, the integration of AI-based applications into educational environments has created a remarkable momentum in research in the field of science education. Indeed, a study by Beyaz Erkut and Gürsoy (2025), which examined 60 studies on artificial intelligence in science education conducted between 2018 and 2024, found that the highest number of publications was reached in 2024. This finding indicates a significant increase in AI-focused studies in the literature in recent years.

When current research conducted within the context of science education is examined, it is observed that studies aimed at integrating artificial intelligence applications with the STEM approach are similarly increasing. In a systematic literature analysis covering the years 2014–2023 by Almasri (2024), it was reported that the United States ranked first in the distribution of publications on the integration of STEM and artificial intelligence in science education by country; Germany ranked second, followed by Turkey and Australia. These findings reveal that the integration of STEM and artificial intelligence in science education has become a strategic research area at both national and international levels and has gained momentum, especially in recent years. In this context, the current literature has been reviewed, and studies on the integration of STEM and artificial intelligence in science education and the results obtained from these studies are presented below.

Doğan & Kahraman (2025) implemented three STEM activities with gifted 4th-grade students using the ChatGPT artificial intelligence robot: “Engineering Inspired by Nature”, “Sustainable Home Design”, and “Machine Design and Construction”. Examining the content of these activities, it is evident

that they aimed to improve engineering skills by fostering an understanding of sustainability and biomimicry concepts. Their study concluded that the AI-supported STEM activities enhanced students' scientific creativity skills. Student opinions highlighted that, in addition to developing their creativity, they acquired various skills and that the design process made them feel like engineers.

In her study, Uyar (2025) examined educators' views on integrating artificial intelligence tools into the STEM education process. When selecting the 15 educators included in her study, she focused on those who actively used artificial intelligence in the teaching process. As a result of the interviews, the researcher determined that educators believe the use of artificial intelligence tools in STEM education offers both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages include saving time and providing personalization in content, creating a positive perception in terms of increased motivation, and supporting both cognitive and emotional development when used consciously. The disadvantages were identified as: lack or absence of technical infrastructure, access problems, misleading feedback, limited pedagogical suitability, and the potential for negative impacts on the development of problem-solving and critical thinking skills when artificial intelligence is used excessively or without a critical approach.

Vasconcelos & dos Santos (2023) used simulated STEM education to explore the potential of AI tools like ChatGPT and Bing Chat in their study. GenAIbot interaction logs and reflective journals for STEM activities were used to collect data. The simulated STEM activities aimed to correctly structure students' understanding of concepts such as mass, volume, gravity, and weight. Research findings indicate that AI-powered chatbots like ChatGPT and Bing Chat can contribute to the development of students' reflective and critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving skills, and conceptual understanding. These tools are considered to serve as innovative digital learning laboratories, allowing students to experience diverse and complex scenarios in a structured way during the learning process. The use of AI tools within an appropriate pedagogical framework can create more interactive and personalized learning environments. This, in turn, can support a deeper understanding of complex concepts and contribute to the development of critical thinking across different disciplines.

El Fathi et al. (2025) used ChatGPT for the integration of artificial intelligence into STEM education to improve the conceptual understanding of thermodynamic principles among Moroccan first-year engineering students. Using a quasi-experimental design, students were divided into control (N=60)

and experimental (N=60) groups. The control group received traditional instruction, while the experimental group received ChatGPT-supported STEM instruction. The study found that the experimental group showed significant improvements in conceptual understanding compared to the control group, although some misconceptions persisted. The integration of STEM and artificial intelligence was found to positively influence student participation and learning experiences.

In a study conducted by Bircan, Şeref & Nacaroğlu (2025), artificial intelligence was used to support STEM-based story writing applications. This study, conducted on prospective teachers, examined whether these applications had an impact on digital literacy and 21st-century skills. Using a quasi-experimental design, the study found that while the experimental group showed significant improvement in 21st-century skills as a result of the AI-supported production process, there was no significant difference in digital literacy skills compared to the control group. This finding suggests that AI-based STEM applications can support higher-order cognitive skills and creativity skills, but short-term improvement in digital literacy skills is not observed.

In a large-scale study conducted by Al Daraysch & Mersin (2025), the effects of AI applications on STEM teachers' perceptions of their integration into the classroom environment were examined. The findings indicate that teachers generally have a positive attitude towards the use of artificial intelligence. However, the fact that male teachers have higher self-efficacy perceptions than female teachers and feel more comfortable using AI applications indicates that gender-based differences should be considered in the integration process. This shows that AI integration should be addressed not only in terms of pedagogical aspects but also in terms of professional competence and trust in technology.

5. Conclusion

When the findings obtained from the literature review are evaluated, it is seen that the integration of STEM and artificial intelligence in the science education process has significant potential in terms of increasing students' conceptual understanding and motivation, personalizing learning processes, supporting critical thinking, problem-solving, and 21st-century skills (Uyar, 2025; Vasconcelos & dos Santos, 2023; El Fathi et al., 2025; Bircan et al., 2025). In addition, deficiencies in technical infrastructure, access problems, the risk of incorrect and misleading feedback, and inadequacies in terms of pedagogical adaptation are issues that should be considered in terms of limiting the effectiveness of the integration process (Uyar, 2025). For this integration

process to be effective and sustainable, it is necessary to address pedagogical grounding, teacher competence, ethical principles, and equal opportunity dimensions together. Therefore, the integration of STEM and artificial intelligence should be considered as a planned and holistic transformation process in education systems (Almasri, 2024; Beyaz Erkut & Gürsoy, 2025). Studies on the integration of STEM and artificial intelligence are concentrated primarily in the United States, as well as in Germany, Turkey, and Australia (Almasri, 2024). This indicates that this integration has become a strategic research area on an international scale.

The results of a study examining the views of STEM teachers show that they have positive perspectives on artificial intelligence integration and acknowledge its potential to improve teaching and learning processes (Al Darayseh & Mersin, 2025). Accordingly, it is suggested that practical in-service training programs be developed to enable teachers to effectively utilize STEM and artificial intelligence integrations from a pedagogical perspective; and that clear policies be developed regarding issues such as data privacy and ethical violations in the use of artificial intelligence.

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