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Research Article

# The AI-Philosophy Nexus on Educators' Beliefs and AI Practices in Basic and Higher Education

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## Abstract
This study examined the relationship between educators' pedagogical philosophies and their integration of artificial intelligence (AI) tools, comparing basic (K–12) and higher education sectors in the Philippines. Using a mixed-methods, comparative-correlational design, data were collected from 44 educators from the basic education and college of education sectors at a comprehensive institution. The Ross Educational Philosophical Inventory (REPI) and a researcher-developed AI Integration Scale, both demonstrating strong validity and reliability, were employed alongside key informant interviews. Results showed that educators in both sectors exhibited high traditionalist and high progressive orientations. No significant differences were found between the two groups in their philosophical orientations. Both groups reported moderate use of AI for automational purposes, while basic education educators demonstrated moderate transformational use compared with lower transformational use among college educators. Correlational analyses revealed no significant relationships between philosophical orientation and patterns of AI integration. Qualitative findings indicated that AI use was driven more by practical needs, such as workload management, than by philosophical alignment. Progressive educators also expressed concerns about AI's potential impact on critical thinking and student agency. These findings challenge assumptions that pedagogical philosophy predicts AI integration patterns and underscore the need for philosophy-sensitive professional development, context-responsive policies, and institutional support for responsible AI adoption.

## Keywords
Artificial intelligence in education; Educational philosophy; Traditionalism; Progressivism; Education policy

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**Ethics Statement**
This study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards.

## INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) has quietly but profoundly entered the everyday life of education. What once belonged to the realm of futuristic speculation is now present in the ordinary rhythms of teaching—drafting lesson plans, generating assessments, providing feedback, and supporting students in ways that were unimaginable only a few years ago. Across the world, educators are being asked to rethink what it means to teach when machines can now perform tasks traditionally

associated with human judgment and creativity. Scholars have noted that AI is transforming educational environments, not simply by introducing new tools, but by reshaping how knowledge is constructed, shared, and evaluated (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019; Luckin et al., 2022; Chiu, 2023). Yet beneath this technological momentum lies a more enduring question: when educators choose to use AI, are they merely adopting a convenient innovation, or are they expressing deeper beliefs about what teaching and learning should be?

In the Philippine context, this question carries particular significance. The government has begun to embrace AI as part of a broader vision of educational modernization, with the Department of Education issuing the Foundational Guidelines on Artificial Intelligence in Basic Education to promote human-centered and ethical integration of these technologies. At the same time, educators navigate realities marked by uneven digital access, varying institutional support, and legitimate concerns about academic integrity and student development (UNESCO, 2023). Recent Philippine studies have identified barriers to AI integration in K–12 classrooms, including inadequate training, limited infrastructure, and uncertainty about ethical use (Cariaga et al., 2025). In addition, students recognize both the usefulness and ethical risks of artificial intelligence, underscoring the need for responsible implementation in educational settings (Sumampong & Cubero, 2025). Effective integration also depends on educators' AI literacy, which includes understanding the capabilities, limitations, and ethical implications of AI tools (Ng et al., 2021). In classrooms from basic education to higher education, teachers are balancing practical demands with deeply held convictions about authority, inquiry, discipline, and learner agency. Some may see AI as a means to streamline routine work, while others may question whether its use aligns with their pedagogical values. These everyday decisions reveal that technology adoption is never purely technical; it is also philosophical. Artificial intelligence should likewise be understood as a sociotechnical phenomenon that reshapes relationships among teachers, learners, and knowledge itself (Perrotta & Selwyn, 2020). Educators' willingness to adopt these tools is also closely tied to trust in how AI systems generate and present information (Bareis, 2024).

Although research has documented the growing applications of AI in education, relatively little is known about how educators' philosophical orientations shape their actual use of these tools. Existing studies have largely focused on technological capabilities, attitudes, and ethical issues, while giving less attention to the foundational beliefs that guide instructional practice (Bond et al., 2024; Williamson & Eynon, 2020). Educational philosophies such as traditionalism and progressivism continue to influence how teachers understand knowledge, authority, and the role of learners, yet their relationship with AI integration remains underexplored. It is still unclear whether educators who value structured instruction are more inclined to use AI for efficiency-oriented tasks, or whether those who embrace student-centered learning are more likely to adopt transformative applications. This unresolved intersection between philosophy and technology represents a meaningful gap in contemporary educational research.

This study was undertaken to illuminate that intersection by examining the relationship between educators' philosophical beliefs and their AI integration practices in both basic and higher education. More than identifying patterns of technology use, the study seeks to understand the convictions that quietly shape how educators respond to emerging innovations. In doing so, it offers a deeper perspective on how AI can be integrated in ways that honor the human purposes of education rather than overshadow them. The findings may guide policymakers, school leaders, and teacher educators in designing support systems that are sensitive not only to technical competencies but also to the philosophical commitments that define authentic teaching. Ultimately, the study affirms that meaningful innovation begins with understanding the beliefs of the educators who bring learning to life.

## METHODOLOGY

### Design

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design with a primary emphasis on quantitative, descriptive-correlational inquiry utilizing a cross-sectional survey. Qualitative data were collected simultaneously through key informant interviews. Integration occurred during the interpretation phase, where qualitative findings were used to complement and contextualize the statistical results. The quantitative component was appropriate for examining the nature and strength of correlation between educators' AI integration practices and their adherence to specific educational philosophies. It also incorporated a comparative framework that enabled analysis across two distinct educator groups operating within the same institutional context: basic education teachers and college of education faculty. The qualitative component involved key informant interviews conducted with a subset of survey respondents to triangulate, explain, and enrich the quantitative findings. This qualitative strand served to illuminate the nuanced lived experiences, contextual factors, and meaning-making processes that underlie the quantitative relationships, thereby providing a richer and more comprehensive understanding of the philosophy-technology nexus across educational tiers.

### Locale

The study was conducted in one of the institutions in Negros Oriental, purposively selected for its comprehensive offering of both basic education and teacher education program. This sampling strategy allowed for a controlled comparison by holding broader institutional culture and resource environment relatively constant.

### Sampling

A census approach was attempted, inviting all eligible educators from both departments to participate. The primary inclusion criterion was that participants must have had access to and an opportunity to use AI tools for instructional purposes within the current or previous academic year.

### Participants

The target respondents were all actively practicing (1) licensed professional teachers in the Basic Education Department, and (2) faculty members in the College of Education for the current academic year. This deliberate focus on teacher education

faculty alongside basic education practitioners was grounded in their shared professional orientation toward pedagogical formation. Both groups were directly engaged in the teaching-learning process and were positioned at the critical intersection of educational theory and practice, making them ideal informants for examining how philosophical orientations shape and are shaped by AI integration. A total of 44 educators completed the survey, comprising 19 from basic education and 25 from the College of Education. From this survey sample, 11 key informants (5 from basic education and 6 from the College of Education) were purposively selected for follow-up semi-structured interviews. Selection was based on maximizing variation in philosophical orientation scores and reported AI use patterns, ensuring representation of diverse perspectives across the two educational tiers.

**Collection**

Data were collected using a three-part questionnaire. First, a Demographic Profile gathered information on teaching level, years of experience, and AI training. Second, the Ross Educational Philosophical Inventory (REPI), an adapted standardized instrument originally developed by Dr. Colvin Ross, was used to measure educators' philosophical orientation. Traditionalist orientation emphasizes enduring truths, essential knowledge, and moral absolutes, drawing from Idealism and Realism, where teachers serve as authoritative transmitters of a fixed curriculum and universal values. In contrast, progressivist orientation emphasizes experiential learning, student-centered approaches, and adaptability to change, drawing from Pragmatism and Existentialism, where teachers act as facilitators guiding students to construct knowledge through active problem-solving and real-world engagement. Third, a researcher-made AI Integration Scale was developed to assess patterns of AI tool usage. Consisted of two subscales: Automational AI Use (10 items measuring efficiency-focused tasks such as generating quizzes and lesson planning) and Transformational AI Use (10 items measuring pedagogy-redesigning tasks such as student-AI co-creation and project-based learning). The researcher-made scale underwent rigorous validation and pilot testing before final administration. For content validation, the scale was reviewed by five practitioners in educational technology, AI in education, and instrument development, achieving an I-CVI of 1.00 for all 20 items and an S-CVI/Ave of 1.00, indicating excellent content validity. Following content validation, pilot testing was conducted with 25 educators who were not part of the main study. The pilot test yielded strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$ for the Automational subscale and $\alpha = 0.91$ for the Transformational subscale, confirming the scale's reliability. Fourth, a semi-structured interview guide was used for follow-up conversations with 11 survey respondents to illuminate quantitative findings through educators' lived experiences. The interview guide explored educators' philosophical beliefs, specific examples of AI use, perceived alignment or tension between AI practices and teaching values, and the influence of educational tier on AI integration decisions. The interview protocol also examined participants' ethical concerns regarding AI, consistent with socio-technical perspectives that emphasize the broader educational implications of artificial intelligence adoption (Babanoğlu et al., 2025).

**Ethical considerations**

The study adhered to rigorous ethical standards to protect participants and maintain research integrity. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants after a comprehensive explanation of the study's purpose and procedures. Participation was strictly voluntary, and participants were guaranteed anonymity, no personal identifiers were collected on the questionnaires, and all responses were treated with strict confidentiality. Data were collected face-to-face using printed questionnaires administered on-site, with all responses securely collected immediately after completion to prevent data loss or unauthorized access. All collected data were securely stored, with digital files encrypted and password-protected, and physical materials kept in a secure location accessible only to the researchers. Upon study completion, all raw data containing any potential identifiers were permanently destroyed through secure deletion of digital files and professional shredding of physical documents in accordance with institutional data retention and disposal policies. Both researchers share a commitment to evidence-informed policy in Philippine education. This may have introduced a bias toward emphasizing practical implications over theoretical nuance. The researchers addressed this by including a full theoretical discussion in the original manuscript and by presenting non-significant findings without attempting to minimize their theoretical importance. No external funding or institutional pressure influenced the direction of the analysis. All interpretations were grounded in the data through the systematic thematic analysis described above, and we have made our codebook available as supplementary material to ensure transparency.

**Analysis**

For philosophical orientation, mean scores of 4.21–5.00 were interpreted as Very High, indicating extremely strong alignment with the educational philosophy. Scores of 3.41–4.20 were classified as High, reflecting strong alignment; 2.61–3.40 as Moderate, indicating mixed or neutral views; 1.81–2.60 as Low, reflecting minimal alignment; and 1.00–1.80 as Very Low, indicating negligible alignment with the philosophy's core principles.

For AI use, mean scores of 4.21–5.00 were interpreted as Very High, indicating consistent and fully integrated use of AI tools in teaching. Scores of 3.41–4.20 were classified as High, reflecting frequent use; 2.61–3.40 as Moderate, indicating occasional and developing use; 1.81–2.60 as Low, reflecting rare use; and 1.00–1.80 as Very Low, indicating almost no use of AI tools in educational practice.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for educators' philosophical orientations and patterns of artificial intelligence (AI) integration across the basic education and college of education sectors. The findings indicate that educators in both sectors demonstrated strong adherence to both traditionalist and progressivist educational philosophies. Basic education teachers obtained a mean score of 3.87 (SD = 0.49) for traditionalist orientation and 3.88 (SD = 0.48) for progressivist orientation, while college of education faculty recorded mean scores of 3.78 (SD = 0.46) and 3.96 (SD = 0.34), respectively.

All values fall within the "High" category, indicating that educators consistently endorsed both structured, teacher-centered approaches and student-centered, inquiry-based practices. This finding supports the view that educational philosophies are not mutually exclusive but often coexist as complementary perspectives that inform instructional decision-making. With regard to AI integration, both groups reported moderate use of AI for automational purposes, such as generating quizzes, worksheets, lesson plans, and feedback. Basic education teachers posted a mean score of 2.66 (SD = 1.10), while college faculty obtained a slightly higher mean score of 2.81 (SD = 0.95). These findings suggest that educators are beginning to incorporate AI primarily to improve efficiency and reduce workload rather than to transform pedagogy. This pattern is consistent with Luckin et al. (2022), who noted that teachers commonly adopt AI tools to automate repetitive tasks and free time for instructional responsibilities. Chiu (2023) similarly observed that early uses of generative AI in education are often motivated by convenience and productivity rather than by intentional pedagogical redesign.

Differences were observed in transformational AI use, which involves employing AI to redesign learning experiences, promote student co-creation, and support inquiry-based instruction. Basic education teachers obtained a mean score of 2.66 (SD = 1.15), classified as "Moderate," whereas college faculty scored 2.37 (SD = 1.18), classified as "Low." This result indicates that basic education teachers were somewhat more likely than college faculty to experiment with innovative uses of AI. Such concerns reflect broader epistemological debates regarding the extent to which artificial intelligence may alter authentic human meaning-making and interpretive processes in education (Messner et al., 2025). These reservations may also stem from underlying beliefs about whether AI can be trusted to support, rather than distort, educational judgment and student learning (Ma & Valton, 2024). The finding challenges assumptions that higher education educators, because of greater curricular autonomy, are naturally more inclined toward transformative technology integration. Bond et al. (2024) emphasized that institutional autonomy alone does not ensure innovative practice, particularly when educators remain concerned about ethics, academic integrity, and the educational implications of AI. The descriptive results also reveal an important disconnect between educators' philosophical beliefs and their actual use of AI. Although both groups exhibited high progressivist orientations, transformational AI use remained only moderate in basic education and low in higher education. This suggests that strong student-centered beliefs do not automatically lead to transformative uses of AI. Zawacki-Richter et al. (2019) argued that research on AI in education has often focused on technological capabilities rather than on the beliefs and pedagogical concerns of educators. In addition, UNESCO (2023) highlighted that effective and ethical AI integration requires adequate digital literacy, institutional support, and opportunities for educators to critically evaluate the pedagogical implications of these tools.

Table 1
Philosophical Orientations and AI Use by Educational Sector

| Variable | Sector | N | Mean | SD | Verbal Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Traditionalist Orientation | Basic Education | 19 | 3.87 | 0.49 | High |
| | College of Education | 25 | 3.78 | 0.46 | High |
| Progressivist Orientation | Basic Education | 19 | 3.88 | 0.48 | High |
| | College of Education | 25 | 3.96 | 0.34 | High |
| Automational AI Use | Basic Education | 19 | 2.66 | 1.10 | Moderate |
| | College of Education | 25 | 2.81 | 0.95 | Moderate |
| Transformational AI Use | Basic Education | 19 | 2.66 | 1.15 | Moderate |
| | College of Education | 25 | 2.37 | 1.18 | Low |

**Legend:** 1.00-1.80 = Very Low; 1.81-2.60 = Low; 2.61-3.40 = Moderate; 3.41-4.20 = High; 4.21-5.00 = Very High.

Table 2 presents the results of the independent-samples t-tests comparing basic education teachers and college of education faculty in terms of their traditionalist and progressivist philosophical orientations. For traditionalist orientation, no statistically significant difference was found between the two groups ($t = 0.620$, $df = 37.4$, $p = 0.539$). The effect size was small (Cohen's $d = 0.190$), indicating that the observed difference in mean scores (3.87 for basic education and 3.78 for college faculty) was negligible in practical terms. Both groups remained within the "High" range, suggesting that educators across sectors strongly value structured instruction, mastery of essential knowledge, and the teacher's role as an authority figure. Similarly, no statistically significant difference was found in progressivist orientation ($t = -0.632$, $df = 30.9$, $p = 0.532$). The effect size was also small (Cohen's $d = -0.197$), indicating minimal practical difference between the groups. Although college faculty obtained a slightly higher mean score (3.96) than basic education teachers (3.88), both means fall within the "High" category. This finding suggests that educators in both sectors strongly endorse student-centered learning, inquiry, and collaborative problem solving.

According to Gutek (2013), progressivist educators view learning as an active and experiential process in which students construct knowledge through meaningful engagement. The absence of significant differences in both philosophical orientations indicates that educational level does not substantially influence educators' core beliefs about teaching and learning within the institution studied. Despite differences in curriculum structures and levels of autonomy between basic and higher education, educators appear to share similar philosophical commitments. This finding supports the argument that teachers often integrate multiple philosophical traditions and adapt them to the practical realities of instruction (Schiro, 2013).

Table 2
Group Differences in Traditionalist and Progressivist Orientations

| Variable | t | df | p-value | Cohen's d | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Traditionalist Orientation | 0.620 | 37.4 | 0.539 | 0.190 | Not Significant |
| Progressivist Orientation | -0.632 | 30.9 | 0.532 | -0.197 | Not Significant |

Interpretation: $p > .05$ indicates no significant difference between basic education and college of education educators.

Table 3 presents the correlation between educators' traditionalist orientation and their automational use of AI. The Pearson correlation coefficient was $r = 0.208$, indicating a weak positive relationship. However, the relationship was not statistically significant ($p = 0.175$). The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.043$) indicates that traditionalist orientation explained only 4.3% of the variance in automational AI use.

This finding suggests that educators who more strongly endorse traditionalist beliefs are not significantly more likely to use AI for efficiency-oriented tasks such as quiz generation, lesson planning, and worksheet development. Although traditionalist educators might be expected to favor tools that enhance structure and efficiency, the results indicate that practical considerations rather than philosophical beliefs are more influential in determining automational AI adoption. Artificial intelligence implementation should remain responsive to local contexts and culturally grounded pedagogies that support inclusive learning (Cariaga et al., 2025). The weak positive direction of the relationship suggests that educators with stronger traditionalist beliefs may be slightly more inclined to use AI for routine tasks, but the magnitude is too small to be meaningful. Luckin et al. (2022) emphasized that AI is frequently adopted to reduce workload, regardless of instructional philosophy. Therefore, automational AI use appears to be a pragmatic response to professional demands rather than a reflection of educators' philosophical commitments.

Table 3
Relationship Between Traditionalist Orientation and Automational AI Use

| Variable Pair | Pearson's r | $r^2$ | df | p-value | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Traditionalist Orientation and Automational AI Use | 0.208 | 0.043 | 42 | 0.175 | Not Significant |

Interpretation: $p > .05$ indicates no significant relationship between traditionalist orientation and automational AI use.

Table 4 presents the correlation between educators' progressivist orientation and transformational AI use. The Pearson correlation coefficient was $r = 0.084$, indicating a very weak positive relationship. The relationship was not statistically significant ($p = 0.587$). The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.007$) shows that progressivist orientation explained less than 1% of the variance in transformational AI use. This result indicates that educators who strongly endorse student-centered and inquiry-based philosophies are not necessarily more likely to use AI to redesign learning experiences. This recommendation is particularly important in light of evidence that pre-service teachers face significant challenges in translating educational theory into effective classroom practice (Cariaga et al., 2025).

Although progressivist beliefs theoretically align with innovative and collaborative uses of AI, the findings suggest that such beliefs alone do not translate into transformational practice. This supports Zawacki-Richter et al. (2019), who noted that the adoption of AI in education depends not only on pedagogical orientation but also on contextual factors such as training, confidence, and institutional support.

Table 4
Relationship Between Progressivist Orientation and Transformational AI Use

| Variable Pair | Pearson's r | $r^2$ | df | p-value | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Progressivist Orientation and Transformational AI Use | 0.084 | 0.007 | 42 | 0.587 | Not Significant |

Interpretation: $p > .05$ indicates no significant relationship between progressivist orientation and transformational AI use.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The study found that both basic education and college of education educators hold high levels of both traditionalist and progressivist orientations, with no significant differences between the groups. This duality challenges the notion that these philosophies are mutually exclusive and reflects the practical realities of teaching across sectors. Regarding AI use, educators' adoption of automational tools is driven by practical needs like efficiency, not philosophical beliefs, as no significant correlations were found between orientations and AI use patterns. Despite high progressivist scores, transformational AI use was low among college faculty ($M = 2.37$) and only moderate among basic educators ($M = 2.66$). Progressivist educators expressed skepticism that AI might undermine student agency and critical thinking, suggesting a perceived mismatch between AI tools and constructivist values. Institutional context also played a key role: basic educators showed moderate transformational use despite pressures from centralized curricula, while college educators, despite greater autonomy and slightly stronger progressivist beliefs, reported even lower transformational use, indicating that autonomy alone does not drive innovative AI integration and may even enable skepticism to persist.

Based on the findings, the study offers several recommendations for key stakeholders. Policymakers should develop context-sensitive AI policies for basic and higher education, addressing workload pressures rather than assuming philosophical alignment drives adoption. School administrators must allocate time, resources, and sandbox environments for AI exploration. Professional development providers should offer philosophy-sensitive training that respects educators' traditionalist and progressivist orientations while acknowledging that practical needs currently drive AI use. Technology

developers should involve educators in tool design to align with pedagogical values. Teacher education programs need to integrate AI literacy and philosophy-technology reflection into curricula.

For specific groups: Basic education teachers should receive training that balances both orientations with practical AI applications (e.g., generating materials), plus opportunities to share existing transformational practices. College of education faculty need concrete examples of AI aligning with constructivist values (e.g., student critique of AI-generated content), given their skepticism about AI's compatibility with progressive pedagogy. Administrators should establish support systems like release time and learning communities. Policymakers at DepEd and CHED must create distinct policies for basic education (structured guidance) and higher education (flexible frameworks). Researchers should conduct longitudinal studies, document successful transformational AI practices, and explore why progressivist orientation does not predict higher transformational AI use. Ultimately, students benefit most when AI integration respects educators' core teaching values and enhances authentic learning.

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