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Artificial Intelligence for Inclusive and Sustainable International Education: A Critical Conceptual Review

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ABSTRACT: *This paper aims to provide a conceptual theoretical review investigating the role of artificial intelligence and education in advancing international sustainable education. Future global research and international development will benefit from an increased understanding of how diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), alongside international sustainable education, will be affected by social and contextual interpretation. The paper provides a critical review of some of the educational methods that can be delivered using AI, which can be adapted to link international development with education. The paper concludes by providing a critical theoretical review of the key issues discussed regarding the future role of AI in delivering sustainable development goals (SDGs) in international education while enhancing DEI.*

Keywords: Artificial intelligence (AI), Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), E-learning, International Students, International Sustainable Education

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CONTEXT

In the context of this paper, artificial intelligence (AI) can be defined as the use of computer systems with which to teach international students (UNRIC (United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe), 2025). AI tools and cyber-technology would handle knowledge-transfer tasks that would otherwise be

performed by a human lecturer or tutor at universities. Generally, international students need to be educated so they are equipped with communication, decision-making, group work, prioritization, and problem-solving skills. AI includes a range of cyber-technology tools, for example, deep learning machines that can learn from data fed into them, discover patterns, and then make informed decisions by processing the data it has received. Machine learning also learns from the data it receives, which it can memorize and use to improve its service delivery without explicit programming. Natural language processors (NLP) are fed unstructured data, typically spoken or written discourse, which it then processes to generate, interpret and understand human language. NLPs often rely on machine-learning computers to analyze and process language for translation, enabling them to teach people, for example, international students, a foreign language. Machine learning AI involves programming a supercomputer with multiple datasets to create algorithms that AI machines use to perform education tasks usually performed by humans (Almasri, 2024, p. 978). This means that an AI machine makes recommendations, identifies common patterns, and predicts expected or likely outcomes.

Deep learning AI tools enable the analysis of multiple layers of data that can be asked to provide information on a specific subject. International students can then learn the specific knowledge and theoretical skills required for their undergraduate courses using deep learning AI (Mienye and Swart, 2024, p. 37). International students can learn collegially in small tutor groups or self-learn individually, off or on campus online using deep learning. AI learning can be extended to be used on a MOOC (massive open online course) basis. NLP enables AI machines to interpret and respond to human language. This feature of AI is particularly important when educating international students for multiple reasons. The main reason is that NLPs or language learning machines (LLMs) are able to help international students learn and communicate in the local language (Sharma et al., 2025, p. 14). This is because NLPs and LLMs enable students to translate talk and text virtually immediately, so they are able to communicate with indigenous students at their host university. This is vital for international students to be able to integrate into their student body and the wider local community. NLPs can also be used by universities to provide emotional support. LLMs can provide international students with an AI friend, whom they can communicate with in their own language (Oppenheimer et al., 2025, p. 3896). This is beneficial to international students until they fully grasp the local language of the foreign country where their host university is located. AI machine assistance with the language barrier has a significant effect on how international students can be taught the basic principles of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).

Generically, DEIs are a set of related social concepts intended to enable equal and fair treatment, participation and representation of all people, especially marginalized individuals and communities (Adelabu et al., 2025; United Nations Global Compact, 2025). Diversity can be defined as any element or personal characteristic, a range of demographic or social markers that people have, which makes them different from other people in a community (Haddon, 2026). Equity can be defined as delivering fair treatment to all people regardless of their personal

characteristics and/or demographic markers, manifested as an equality of access to opportunities, resources and support. Equity involves ensuring that the needs of different people at different times are recognized and fulfilled. There needs to be a focus on historical, situational, social and systemic disparities, so the benefits and resources within a community become accessible for all. Equity can mean allocating resources and support on a targeted basis, with the intention to deliver fairer outcomes for all (Ramos and Wilson-Kennedy, 2024, p. 2). Inclusion can be defined as creating a social environment and/or an organisational culture in which all individuals are respected and valued. Once inclusion is demonstrated, people will choose to buy into the community and become integrated. Inclusion should go beyond the superficial tokenistic gesture of having diverse individuals present. Inclusion means everyone has a voice at the table, so people are made aware of salient issues and empowered to engage in decision-making processes (Melo-Lopez et al., 2025, p. 20).

DEI is important because diverse stakeholder groups often have differing lived experiences and perspectives. This knowledge and social capital can result in the coproduction of innovative solutions, alongside improved decision-making processes. DEI should result in improved stakeholder engagement. Inclusive environments convey a sense of ownership that reinforces stakeholder buy-in and retention of group decisions (King's College London, 2025). DEI can provide a pragmatic underpinning for the learning and teaching of social responsibility. When international students implement DEI initiatives in their development work, they can reflect their organization's commitment to corporate social responsibility, social justice and equality. The work of international students equipped with DEI skills can enhance the reputation of the organization where they are employed (Heard, 2025, p. 15). In addition, DEI good practice will help address issues of staff retention and attract talent to the organization. AI can be used to teach international students how to implement DEI initiatives, as AI systems can assist with community engagement, even if that means just the administrative work required to prepare a mailing list. In policy formulation, AI can be used to deliver role play and simulation pedagogy (Mulyani et al., 2025, p. 4). These are pedagogical choices using AI to teach international students DEI practice. Here, international students learn how to work with stakeholders in the coproduction of organizational policies for engagement and consultation practices.

International sustainable education can be defined as a range of initiatives, conferences, and workshops designed to engender the inclusion of sustainable living in education systems globally. UNESCO's (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) initiative (in Bosen, 2024) helps equip international students with the knowledge and skills required so that communities can live sustainably. There is a focus on UNESCO's approach of using digital technology to endorse responsible, smart living for a sustainable future. UNESCO (Bosen, 2024) promotes the use of satellite imagery and digital water meters to raise awareness of how communities' current lifestyles affect the environment. The International Conference on Sustainability Education (ICSE) was held in New Delhi, India, in

September 2025. The conference aligned with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The main remit of this UN agenda is the global adoption of a comprehensive educational approach that addresses the economic, environmental and social aspects of delivery of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). International students need to be able to implement the DEI aspects of the UN's vision of global sustainable development (Filho et al., 2024, p. 726). International sustainable education should be instrumentalised for the global implementation of this key UN policy goal. International sustainability education would engage with the International Education Sustainability Group (IESG). International students with DEI skills would be able to work on the IESG Climate Action Barometer project initiative, helping to formulate global climate change policies. International sustainability education also includes partnership work with the International Society for Sustainable Educational Research (ISSER). International students equipped with the rudiments of DEI would be able to focus on integrating sustainable living practices into academic research, institutional policies, and teaching initiatives (Vysali and Krishnan, 2026, p. 551). The ISSER can implement and oversee an AI teaching digital platform, where international students and DEI practitioners can collaborate on role play and simulation learning projects. As the paper unfolds, it will become clear that using AI to teach international students DEI will be a key part of the global proliferation of international sustainable education.

INTRODUCTION

The contextual background of this discussion paper is the need to identify the main themes that realistically must be considered: regarding the proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI), alongside the effects AI could have on the delivery of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in international sustainable education (Varsik and Vosberg, 2024, p. 11). Qualitative insight is used to signpost the salient issues to be explored, for example, how education is crucial to making informed decisions. Technological advances mean that most if not all higher education international student stakeholders must be able to use or understand AI and cyber-technology (Marshall et al., 2024, p. 530). This is due to the future likelihood that more student tuition and higher education services will be delivered by this medium. The problem for teachers of international students is that there is little generic analysis identifying educational approaches to using AI and cyber-technology to teach DEI alongside associated global issues (Kang et al., 2024, 29-31 minutes).[1] There is a similar research gap in identifying AI's future role in teaching international students how to implement global sustainable development initiatives. As the paper unfolds, the following research questions are discussed and answered: What are some of the educational methods using AI and/or cyber-technology that can be adapted to promote engagement with international student education (Qian, 2025, p. 11); What are the pedagogical aspects of international student education that have arisen or will arise when

[1] This literary source is both a teacher practitioner opinion piece and a recorded interview podcast.

critically evaluating different approaches that have been used or could be considered (Diaz & Nussbaum, 2024, p. 15). The significance of the paper is manifested by its provision of qualitative insight into the most likely effect of AI on DEI when educating international sustainable students (Melisa et al., 2025, p. 4). The paper concludes by providing a brief critical theoretical review of the key issues regarding the likely future role of education using AI and/or cyber-technology. The paper informs us of the future role AI will have in equipping international students with the skills to advance global sustainable living. This will enhance delivery of some of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Bosen (UNESCO IESALC), 2024, p. 3).[2]

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper has been written by conducting a conceptual theoretical review of numerous empirical studies, extant literature, gray literature and secondary sources. The next step was to apply qualitative insight to the main themes that emerged from the conceptual theoretical review. Qualitative insight can be used to develop an understanding of human behavior from nonnumerical data, social observation and experiences (Smythe and Jenkins, 2025). Qualitative insight enables a more accurate interpretation, a critical understanding of human behavior in complex social situations, where the context and meaning of people's social interactions need to be understood. Qualitative insight would include delivering critical, literature, scoping, systematic or theoretical reviews of empirical studies, which have been compiled using a variety of qualitative research methods (Holtrop et al., 2025, p. 19; see also Smythe and Jenkins, 2025).

For example, qualitative insights would include analysis of one-to-one or focus-group interviews with people with lived experience, discussing the subject matter. In our case, this would be the effect of using AI and/or cyber-technology to teach international students the rudiments of DEI implementation. Alongside also equipping international students with the ability to deliver DEI good practices when working on international sustainable education projects in development settings. Qualitative insight would also analyze critical reports of coproduction sessions with stakeholders, website blogs and content of people with lived experience; observation and active participant observations; contextual sensitivity that has been derived from a consideration of the cultural, environmental, and social contexts of the human behavior observed; and interpretive analysis that would then provide a deeper theoretical understanding of the wider issues surrounding teaching international students DEI good practice using AI and cyber-technology. Qualitative insight would implement iterative design, enabling the inclusion of new insights as they emerge from the constant analysis of critical reports and reviews (Holtrop et al., 2025, p. 61).

[2] This literary source is a concept note that provides an overview of a special event, organized by UNESCO (United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and IESALC (International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean).

Data were collected from numerous scholarly studies that include accounts of coproduction with international students who have lived experience with distance learning using digital technology. Sampling and participant information is provided in the reference list, manifested in the details of the literary sources that were used to produce this conceptual theoretical review. There is duality, and the educational background to be considered during the review has two broad strands, which are detailed as follows. How can AI and cyber-technology be harnessed to teach international students? What are the advantages, the barriers, and how may they be addressed? The second broad strand of the paper considers the following: What do universities need to be pedagogically aware of when teaching international students how to incorporate DEI good practices while implementing international sustainable development? There are a broad range of issues that are likely to emerge on the effect of using AI and cyber-technology to educate the international student landscape. This makes utilizing qualitative insight a particularly effective data analysis technique for this type of study. There are no ethical considerations regarding the research design used to deliver this study. All the empirical studies lived experience interviews and website content discourses used in this study were freely available on the internet prior to qualitative insight analysis.

Conceptual overview

There are multiple definitions of international students. The Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) (2026) and the Office for Students (2024) use OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) and UN-based typology in their definitions of international students. They both harmonize on the generic aspect: international students are people who are enrolled at a university in a foreign country, traveling there to receive education (UKCISA (UK Council for International Student Affairs), 2026). There is a cultural perspective, i.e., the requirement for the international student to integrate, mainly by being able to speak the host country's language (Gutema et al., 2024, p. 853). The physical and social mobility perspective is manifested by the necessity for international students to travel to another country, alongside mobility gained in the student's home culture by having studied abroad (Carlson et al., 2025, p. 836 and p. 846). This means that during the international student phase, the phrase international student signifies the temporary nature of this person's identity, while they were studying in a different country from their birth country. This definition of being an international student ceases when the student finishes their studies, typically returning to their home country or a different country after hopefully graduation (Bista, 2016, p. 1). The focus on geographical location has saliency in discussions regarding how international students can be defined. International students are mobile, ethnically diverse, and a transnational body within themselves; by definition, home students hardly have to travel, and are members of the indigenous population and nontransnational at the local level (Bennet et al., 2023, p. 12). The mobility facet of international students helps sharpen the focus on them as the primary subject of analysis. The COVID-19 pandemic has

fundamentally changed the international student landscape. Many students were able to study overseas from their home using the latest online meeting information technology. International students have been able to adapt or adopt 'plural identities' that include their cultural identity at home and online, their self-identity at university, and a student identity they may consciously or subconsciously want to project. Student mobility has acted to change the meaning of 'home', host university, and location and adds to the multiple definitions of international students. "Plural identities and a sense of belonging can be held, acquired and developed within and beyond our host countries, often changing the location(s) and meaning(s) of 'home' (Wu and Wilkes, 2017, cited in Bennett et al., 2023, p. 13). These plural identities that international students may adopt, by conscious choice or at the psychosocial level, do not apply to home students. Lane et al. (2024) align with Bennett et al. (2023) in emphasizing the importance of mobility for students and institutions alike. Lane et al. (2024) argue that many conceptualizations of international students do not account for students participating in transnational education. Globally, according to Lane et al. (2024), of the five million students who study abroad each year, 300,000 of these students are in transnational education. These students are studying at 300 international branch campuses globally. For such international students who are fluid and mobile, notions of 'home', 'host country, and 'location' become meaningless; in essence, they have become what the HGSE (2026) describes as 'Global Nomads'.

Across the social sciences, the concept of AI, DEI and educating international sustainability students maintains a pressing level of importance (AlSagri and Sohail, 2025, p. 13). Policy makers, when dealing with questions of governance, accountability, and scrutiny, all essential components of AI, DEI and educating international students, must consider multiple issues. For example, pragmatically, how many academic tutors are able to use AI and/or cyber/digital technology at an institution to teach international students? Has the institution acquired the right type of AI hardware and software? What processes did universities go through prior to purchasing, to give them confidence they were making the right decisions (Harvard Business Publishing Editors, 2024)? Pedagogically, how should the effect of AI on DEI regarding educating international sustainability students be considered, what types of active and interactive pedagogy can be used (Asia Pacific Insights, 2025;[3] Varsick and Vosberg, 2024, p. 29)? Curriculum design - should the emphasis be on, for example, corporate governance, the avoidance of fake news, ensuring the replacement of natural resources, or enabling indigenous populations to become self-reliant? What should international sustainability development students be taught, how is that decided (Wang et al., 2025, p. 11). International student mobility – what effect will the advent of AI, coupled with a requirement to embed and embrace DEI, have on student mobility? This question becomes particularly poignant due to the increasing trend of international students attending their home country's university online. Many international students are studying their university degree while physically staying at home in their birth country (Idemudia and Karing, 2026, p. 29; Read, 2025). This raises questions

[3] Asia Pacific Insights are a series of subject specific blogs posts produced by Sage Publishing.

about the job readiness of non-traveling international students compared to those who have traveled abroad. (Collett, 2025, p. 11). The definition, nature and level of international (and home) studentship have become blurred by the effect of AI on higher education. At this juncture, we can see that the phrase 'international sustainable education' is fluid. There are numerous correct definitions of this term that become apparent as the paper unfolds. One size does not fit all. Globally, different institutions will have to decide what their DEI priorities are nationally and locally in the countries and communities they serve.

The early questions and considerations discussed in the previous paragraphs provide a precursor to a wider, social, political, economic, cultural and DEI perspective that justifies the rationale: AI has a key role in disseminating international sustainable development education (Rosa, 2025, p. 12). Musubika and Mittner's (2026, p. 8) study underpins an important aspect of the conceptual framework for delivering DEI learning using AI tools. There needs to be a structural change within the university that recognizes that international students need to teach DEI using the latest AI technology. Musubika and Mittner (2026, p. 10) are very clear, and DEI must be prioritized in academic practice. Whether investigating, for example, the feasibility of implementing electrification, period poverty, sustainable mineral extraction, or water purification initiatives, the ability to teach using AI will be essential in knowledge transfer (van der Linde et al., 2025, p. 2). Being able to demonstrate how and why decisions were reached facilitates prioritization practices, so international sustainability projects deliver the intended DEI requirements of benefit to all. People need to understand why a food aid project was prioritized over an educational or medical aid project. AI and cyber-technology could be used to illustrate pictorially to indigenous populations key points that cannot be communicated by written words due to language and literacy difficulties (Klug and Pietsch, 2024, p. 2). Tierney et al. (2025, p. 13) found that students identified that using AI technology increased accessibility for learners whose native language is not English. Tierney et al.'s (2025, p. 13) study also found that students perceived that there would be increased inequality if some form of paid-to-access AI services scheme were to be introduced. Shoval (2025, p. 15) echoes similar concerns, providing a critical warning that careful consideration needs to be given to teaching using AI to avoid exacerbating existing inequalities. Although not directly mentioned, the role of AI in language acquisition and DEI development is essential to the ethos of culturally appropriate learning present in Tierney et al.'s (2025) study. AI and digital technology will be able to address language translation issues, helping communities where more than one local language is spoken to communicate. This will help in delivering an equal representation of people from all local cultures to participate, helping to ensure that there is diversity, equity and inclusion among the people appointed or elected on to local community development panels (Shannon, 2025). These are the types of scenarios that will materialize as the use of AI, cyber and digital technology becomes more common in international sustainable development education. International sustainability students will be required to be educated, so they in turn can teach the indigenous people they serve to eventually be able to critically evaluate policies, procedures and protocols. Furthermore, indigenous people must

be educated so they understand the sociopolitico-economic-cultural factors, requiring the need for DEI on decision-making panels. Being able to use AI will be key in delivering these education outcomes to international students. Shoval (2025, p. 21) suggests that AI tools can be adapted to accommodate international students' differentiated learning styles, pedagogical choices and socioeconomic backgrounds. Grab's (2025) Teaching for Equity study discusses how AI has a role in culturally responsive teaching. There is a focus on the person-centered learning utility of AI tools, which can be personalized to some degree to teach international students with differing abilities and interests. Most indigenous students in the study recognized that they benefitted from AI, especially as they were able to repeat learning module content enough times to learn a new skill. Students also informed educators of their perception that although AI tools are helpful in certain aspects of learning, AI assistants, avatars and memes did not recognize the differing cultural backgrounds of individual students. Grab's (2025) study informs us that teaching the international student body with AI tools is beneficial on a generic basis. However, it is becoming increasingly apparent that curriculum content and pedagogy delivered using AI tools will need to be tailored to meet individual international student needs. This limitation of some AI tools is specific to international students either on or off campus; home students or indigenous people would not be affected by this limitation to the same degree. Grab (2025) also found that AI tools often do not consider the social-cultural background of students. Ma et al.'s (2025) study articulates how generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) can be used for the sociocultural adaptation of international students. "Sociocultural adaptation is fundamentally a dynamic process where individuals integrate cognitive and emotional resources to cope with their environment and regulate their psychology in foreign cultural contexts" (Ma et al., 2025, p. 2). This definition of sociocultural adaptation signifies the importance of daily life coordination and interpersonal cultural communication. International students will need sociocultural adaptation for themselves and the communities they will work with during international development and sustainable education initiatives. Ma et al.'s (2025) case study alongside Grab's (2025) thematic analysis have important roles to play in teaching international students DEI good practice, alongside student wellbeing.

Educational approaches using AI and cyber-technology to increase understanding of DEI alongside international sustainable education

AI can be used to deliver role play and simulation exercises based upon the United Nations (UN) plenary and subgroup system of decision-making (Mollick and Mollick, 2024). In the course of role play discussions, real-life procedures and policy proposals drafted by UN members can be discussed to develop critical evaluation skills in international sustainable development students. Simulation exercises will teach participants that listening and cooperation between members is vital. AI-enhanced role play can be used to teach issues of competing agendas and power relationships between stakeholders in partnerships (Walter, 2024, p. 25). AI teaching tools can be equipped to play the role of mediator, with the ability to be programmed with a variety of preset criteria that reflect different simulated

scenarios (Kazmaci et al., 2025, p. 3; University of Oxford, 2025). The various aspects of the preset criteria must be addressed before agreement of a policy proposal can be reached. This is one process by which AI can be used to teach international sustainable development students, the importance of DEI in transnational, for example, the World Health Organization (WHO) or the UN fora (Macron, 2025). Some students may engage more with an AI virtual reality meme, assistant or robot with a clearly artificial digital voice (Al Balushi et al., 2024, p. 763) than a boring human lecturer repeating the same mantra about equality. To reach a lasting consensus, the group must reflect the diverse stakeholders who together make up the UN. An AI meme on a teaching app will be able to aid university educators in performing these tasks. Using AI, different cultural practices can be taught without the need to engage with external role play providers (Chen et al., 2024, p. 40), for example, a small island theatre troupe. Participants have to be motivated, typically international students wanting to engage with international sustainable development education, need to be able to grasp the nuances of delivering DEI in policy implementation efficiently. That said, as an educational tool, AI is clearly going to be beneficial in contributing toward teaching international sustainability students, critical evaluation, prioritization and problem-solving skills (Khalil et al., 2025, p. 993). Human-controlled AI will make a concordant contribution to democratic participation and implementing DEI involvement education as well. AI can be used to ensure that a proportion of university teaching is delivered in a language other than the global lingua franca English.

Globally, there are numerous simulation exercises where AI can be utilized to play a role (Mollick et al., 2024, p. 5). For example, EuroSim is an annual event mainly for international political science students studying in European and United States universities. University tutors using digital technology play the roles of political advisors, interpreters, lobbyists, think tank analysts and journalists. The EuroSim model can be adapted by having just one academic tutor use AI and cyber-technology to simultaneously discuss, for example, the just transition concept from the position of different stakeholders (University of Antwerp, 2025). Global southern countries may feel that they should not be prevented from extracting and then selling their mineral resources by global northern countries, which benefited earlier from that practice. Whereas small island representatives may say COP29 (Conference of the Parties) compliance is paramount at all costs, or their islands will become submerged. Policy makers may say that ensuring energy supplies to national populations is a key outcome of a just transition. Climate activists may say reducing greenhouse gas emissions should take priority in their interpretation of just transition. Using AI alongside a succession of memes, one university lecturer can facilitate small groups of students in breakout rooms. This enables the academic tutor to teach a core subject and a student-chosen learning model simultaneously. Similarly, specialist subjects within international sustainable development education can be taught using human-controlled AI-facilitated multiple-lecture-theatre and breakout-room tutorials (Strielkowski et al., 2025, p. 1926; AlSagri and Sohail, 2025, p. 21).

AI-enhanced education would also foster deep learning, with international students reflecting on the issues they encountered in their role-play or simulation roles (Bauer et al., 2025, p. 16). Here, simulation and role play exercises using AI have had the unintended consequence of encouraging reflective practice. During these reflective periods, international sustainable development students recognize the importance of DEI to deliver local buy-in of sustainability schemes. AI memes would be able to address the language barrier that often exists for international students, especially in their first year studying in a different country from their country of upbringing. Role play and simulation would demonstrate, firsthand, the difficulties caused by language barriers, alongside how AI memes enable most people to communicate virtually at the same time, as AI technology instantly translates virtually every language spoken globally (Corcoran et al., 2025, p. 37). This is the model that most supra and transnational organisations, for example, the European Union (EU), the UN, and the WTO, use. Now that the language barrier will be reduced by AI and cyber-technology, university lecturers can focus on teaching DEI involvement. Teaching various cultural practices of the populations of least developed, lower-income countries will be much easier using AI role play and simulation (Khan et al., 2024, p. 6). Lectures and tutorials can be recorded and made available to international students enrolled in global climate, environmental and sustainability courses. These lectures can be retrieved and studied in the student's own time for use in preparing and completing their degree course assignments.

For AI role play and simulation exercises to be effective, they should be linked to real-life situations that have relevance to the learner (Kubie, 2024; Mollick and Mollick, 2024). Ideally, the international student group would choose the subject matter to be taught. This would facilitate the selection of the simulated body, which itself is influenced by the sociopolitical-economic-cultural setting. For international sustainable development students, this may be, for example, draining a large area to create agricultural land while ensuring that the indigenous population has an alternative source of work and can obtain a similar amount of food of their choice as before flooding (Han et al., 2025, p. 108). There needs to be consultation with local small holdings and rural village populations, who will be environmentally affected by the flooding proposal. The ethos of DEI, where everyone, regardless of their access to economic resources, cultural background, disability, gender, marital status, race, religious faith, and sexuality (this list is not exhaustive), is equally welcomed, can be introduced at this stage (UN Global Compact, 2025). International students need to be taught that they are required to identify all the diverse identities that exist in their work area. Then, they need to engage with all the interests to ensure that they understand the project work. This is crucial for people living in vulnerable communities to be able to give their informed consent for the development initiative to proceed. The latter point regarding informed consent is crucial, as it may involve educating rural communities and small farmers, so they are equipped to make decisions independently.

E-Learning enhanced by AI

Electronic or e-learning is the use of cyber-technology, electronic media and information and communication technology (ICT) in education (Bouchrika, 2025; Chatterjee et al., 2023, p. 285). The process is enhanced when AI is used to deliver, for example, two-subject learning or flipped chart learning. E-learning encompasses all forms of educational technology in learning and teaching. An extremely long list includes virtual learning environment (VLE), technology-enhanced learning (TEL), internet-based training (IBT), computer-assisted or computer-aided instruction (CAI) and online education. There are literally dozens more, all share at least one common feature of being either electronic, digital, using a silicon chip, or being accessible via the internet. E-learning can be received inside or outside a classroom or at home. E-learning can be self-directed learning (Qi et al., 2025, p. 3), asynchronous learning, or academic-led, synchronous learning. E-learning can be performed in tandem with classroom tuition, blended learning, or on a distance or flexible learning basis. The latter is very useful, as asynchronous learning allows people to teach themselves without being dependent upon other people's involvement in the learning process. International sustainable development students would be able to choose an AI meme to provide them with tuition in the language, accent, and tone of voice, which they can understand (Filho et al., 2024, p. 729; OHCHR (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights), 2024). Asynchronous learning is especially beneficial for people who may have childcare responsibilities or health care problems. Such people can learn at their own pace at times that suit them. They may not be able to attend a synchronous learning session, where they have to interact with other participants at a set time. In asynchronous AI-delivered courses, people can replay teaching and information again, stored on their digital device (Mekik, 2025). Synchronous e-learning environments can include online real-life contact time with an instructor and feedback on earlier learning. Synchronous e-learning enables collaborative online distance learning using virtual operating or classrooms, chat rooms or Skype webcam conversations. Here, small or large groups of people are learning, problem solving an issue working as a team, with everyone online simultaneously. There are several strands of strategies that can be employed to implement the pedagogical aspects of e-learning enhanced by AI (Symeou et al., 2025, p. 290). This paper discusses just one of those strands, that of e-learning as a technological medium, which assists in the communication and transfer of knowledge.

Classroom 2.0 and e-learning 2.0 using AI and cyber-technology are effective ways to teach the theory and practice of DEI involvement and ethical considerations to international sustainable development students (Almasri, 2024, p. 981; Zaim et al., 2024, p. 2). Classroom 2.0 can be adapted to connect two or more locations, potentially across multiple countries. Social and cultural integration learning opportunities are enhanced as two or more joint sets of learners, discuss via classroom 2.0, implementation aspects of DEI decision making (Eden et al., 2024, p. 385). E-learning 2.0 differs from classroom 2.0 in that knowledge is itself socially constructed. Here, learning takes place through

conversations with other people, interacting to discuss problems and possible solutions. Essentially, a form of peer learning, social learning takes place. Social learning rests on the premise that one mechanism for acquiring knowledge or a skill is to teach others. Under e-learning 2.0, one manner in which social learning could manifest is through the development of a spokesperson who is confident they have understood the DEI facet of an international sustainable development project, as discussed (Zhuo and Tang, 2024, p. 7). This spokesperson would become elected by a process agreed upon by the e-learning participants and then proceed to teach others and themselves the inner workings of the DEI facet they had been discussing. E-learning 2.0 allows people living in different cities, if not countries, to problem solve together by the use of a generative virtual world, internet blogs, podcasts and videos. In that sense, e-learning 2.0 and classroom 2.0 are quite similar. However, these e-learning mechanisms are pedagogically quite different. In essence, classroom 2.0 teaches by instructivist knowledge transfer. Whereas e-learning 2.0 teaches by a constructivist, experiential learning basis, learning by doing, crossed with peer type, social learning knowledge transfer. Both of these e-learning technological approaches enhanced with AI can be used to educate and motivate people regarding embedding DEI involvement in international sustainable development practice (Tan et al., 2025a, p. 12).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One of the seventeen United Nation (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is that all people should have access to high-quality, inclusive education (SDG4). The focus on inclusive education demonstrates how the fourth SDG provides the rationale to consider the role of AI in delivering DEI practice (Shafik, 2025, p. 163; Ozili, 2025). Inclusive education helps provide international students with the mindset to fight prejudice in all its forms, including accidental, tacit and unconscious bias. One of the basic tenets of inclusive education is to maximize student engagement by considering the specific needs of each individual international student (Yang, 2025, p. 194). At this stage of the education cycle, international students can be taught that differing strategies may be required to engage with people from very diverse backgrounds. Similarly, international students can apply their university learning at a practical level by establishing what people at the worksite want from their engagement in partnership development work (Li and Shen, 2025, p. 4). Different stakeholders with diverse backgrounds, for example, regarding disability, gender and race, may have competing agendas regarding the provision of green spaces. Flooding agricultural land, or reclaiming flooded land for agricultural use, may present different challenges for blind people, women or racially marginalized people.

DEI initiatives have a substantial influence on civil society organization (CSO), nongovernmental organization (NGO), private sector and public sector performance. Regarding talent acquisition and staff retention, DEI plays a critical role (Acharya et al., 2025, p. 793). Studies have found that 76% of job seekers check out the diversity of a company's workforce before deciding to apply. Similarly, organisations that have above-average DEI performance have a 19%

increase in innovation revenue, alongside a 35% increased chance of superior financial performance to less diverse competitors (Korda et al., 2025, p. 1). AI will have some form of direct contact with most aspects of our business, employment and personal lives in the 2020s and 2030s. The organisational importance of DEI alerts us to the higher education requirement; we need to understand how AI will influence the grasp of DEI by international students. AI large language models (LLMs) are a specialized type of AI that has been programmed to interpret, understand and generate human language. AI LLMs have been loaded with vast amounts of visual images and spoken and written text data. This enables AI LLMs to perform a large number of text-related tasks, for example, language translation, summarization and text generation at lightning speed (Harsha et al., 2024, p293). Social biases can be accidentally introduced if the text uploaded by humans into their AI LLMs is predominantly English based, which would exclude minority languages.

Similarly, AI LLMs might have an overrepresentation of text discussing the Christian religious faith without being uploaded with an equal representation of Buddhism, Daoism or Islamism. There can be similar unintentional social bias regarding LGBTQIA+ texts, either by their low or nonappearance in the information given to the AI LLM machine (Viet, 2025, p. 1445; Kannan, 2024). Alternatively, social damage could be much worse if AI LLMs have been programmed to view uploaded LGBTQIA+ images and texts in a negative manner, which can result in AI-boosted homophobia. To control for bias and to enhance DEI in higher education practices, we included sources of self-reflection discourse. These would be examples of reflective practices from people with a diverse range of marginalized backgrounds (Herridge et al., 2023, p. 99). Universities must ensure that their international students are aware that AI algorithms can introduce cultural and racial biases when implemented in their development work. (Guven et al., 2025, p3). University AI guidelines need to be implemented to prevent algorithms from reproducing social inequalities or, worse, amplifying them (Catchat-Rosset and Klarsfeld, 2023, p. 718). Globally, universities need to ensure their teaching using AI and cyber-technology tools and do not accidentally institutionally discriminate against international students compared to home students.

International students need to be taught that accountability and transparency are key constituents of DEI good practice (OECD, 2024, p. 24; Transparency International, 2025). This also applies to any other discipline the international student may be studying. If an AI-sourced decision has resulted in an over- or underrepresentation of a particular marginalized group or has damaged members of a certain group, who is accountable for what has happened. Transparency simultaneously arrives in tandem manifest in numerous ways, for example, using AI facial recognition software, which excludes or includes people of a certain cultural background or skin color (Matulionyte, 2024, p. 67). Similarly, utilizing AI vocal recognition systems that are inherently flawed, as they do not recognize so discriminate against or exclude certain accents. While using AI to improve DEI in the education of international students, the issue of privacy needs to be taught and maintained (Arslan et al., 2025, p. 6). When international student graduates

are recruiting people from marginalized communities to sit on decision-making panels in their work projects, the people they recruit must be equipped to only capture and store the information required to fill the post. International students must also be educated that is good practice to ascertain local customs regarding privacy in the communities they serve. (Once again, grasp of a local community language is key to be able to deliver the confidentiality and privacy required) (Sterling et al., 2025, p. 14). This is to help ensure that international students from any discipline can integrate into any foreign country to work after graduation. To achieve these aims, the increased use of culturally responsive pedagogy is one policy option to consider in the higher education of international students (Bi, 2025, p. 21).

FINDINGS

This critical review using qualitative insight found several key themes that apply to home students and international students. The paper found that utilizing AI in education to teach international students DEI presents numerous opportunities and challenges.

Academic integrity

While AI can be adapted to suit individual student needs, the use of AI raises concerns regarding academic integrity (McDermott and Eaton, 2025, p. 101). GenAI use permitted in a significant number of universities globally, for example, in the United Kingdom (UK), enables some international students to display language skills far beyond their actual level of proficiency and understanding. The reality that GenAI, typically in the form of ChatGPT, is permissible in some universities but not others is problematic. This problem is exacerbated in universities where AI use is discouraged. Off-campus international students are able to utilize AI tools at universities that prohibit their use with a lower likelihood of detection than on-campus home students, who are subject to considerably more supervision and surveillance. The problem of academic integrity is manifested in another way. When educators use AI tools to assess a student's work, the algorithms can penalize racially marginalized people. Similarly, international students who are more likely to have nontraditional writing styles may also be disadvantaged by AI essay writing assessment (Arslan et al., 2025, p. 17; see also Mylde and Brown, 2025). This means that university educators of international students need to be aware of AI's ability to replicate existing inequalities within education. There needs to be human oversight by teachers to review the AI results to ensure that the assessment is fair and equitable.

Human Oversight

Even though AI in university student education is developing at pace, teachers are fundamentally irreplaceable (UNESCO, 2025a). There needs to be human insight and oversight of curriculum content, what students are taught, pedagogical choices, and how students are taught. Such crucial educational choices can't just be left to students themselves, alongside the AI and cyber-technology tools around them. There are concerns that the increased use of AI to deliver university education could result in student overreliance on AI tools. Subsequently, this would result in students graduating having not developed the critical thinking skills desired (Funa and Gabay, 2025, p. 6; Naz, 2025). Only university tutors can give the human oversight required to ensure that international students are not put at some form of disadvantage by AI.

AI Enhances Language Literacy

At the admission stage, globally international students have usually been required to demonstrate a basic level of proficiency in the language of the host university country. Babaci-Wilhite et al.'s (2025) 'Reimagined AI Pedagogy' study makes a simple observation, which acts to encapsulate the importance of language to be able to teach DEI to international students. *"Improving language teaching in higher education is one of the most important tools for achieving inclusion, equity, innovation and collaboration among students"* (Babaci-Wilhite et al., 2025, p. 2). Practitioners of AI in education found that using natural language processing (NLP) improved language learning by focusing on the context of what was being discussed. AI can also be used to visualize and provide audio commentary so that international students can see and hear the context of a subject (Wang and Watson, 2025, p. 353). This approach using AI provides students with a series of pictures to help them learn a language. This teaching strategy is much more pragmatic in comparison with students just being given isolated vocabulary with no context (Babaci-Wilhite et al., 2025, p. 1). Where there is little context, the brain is less able to formulate meaning or make connections with prior knowledge to help international students understand what is being discussed. These processes are crucial when international students are to be taught the basics of DEI implementation.

AI integration in the curriculum

UNESCO (2025b) describes the complexities of integrating AI into teaching practices by articulating numerous subissues that harmonize with other critical observers. For example, UNESCO (2025b) is clear, "*AI is only a tool, never the heart of the education system", and* UNESCO (2025b) focuses on promoting learner-centered practices and teacher autonomy. This ethos is mirrored by McDermott and Eaton (2025) and Babaci-Wilhite et al. (2025, p3), alongside Funa and Gabay's (2025, p. 4) observation of the need for human oversight. AI in education challenges include maintaining academic integrity; AI training for

teachers and students; and teaching diversity, equity and inclusivity (DEI) to international students. AI integration in the curriculum found that universities should develop a learning culture of multidisciplinary dialog from different departments. This is to prevent university teachers from becoming isolated when teaching DEI. Other university disciplines are also using AI to teach their subjects. The advent of teacherless AI-delivered classrooms provides food for thought. DEI involves working with people to develop ideas to improve the lives of people in their community. It is likely that the DEI university curriculum will have a significantly higher number of person-centered learning exercises within them (Vysali and Krishnan, 2026, p. 551). This is compared with administrative-type undergraduate courses, for example, actuary, bookkeeping, or classical art-type degree courses. The differential that clearly exists between humanistic, hands-on courses, for example, DEI good practice, and less person-centered courses, such as computer coding, needs to be addressed. Course content curriculum designers need to give sufficient consideration to how appropriate it will be to teach these subjects using AI tools.

AI training for teachers and students

This critical review finds that both educators and students recognize that they need to learn about AI, alongside how teaching using AI can change the student learning journey. An emphasis upon people first and learner focused, harmonizes with UNESCO (2025a; 2025b) (Kundu and Bej, 2025, p. 2282; Cambridge International Education, 2025). Many students are already using LLM and NLPs to assist with preparing their assignments. Research conducted by some universities found that students who took handwritten notes, combined with LLM virtual assistants and/or chatbot notes, performed better at recalling and understanding their lecture notes than if they just used AI tools (Kreijkes et al., 2026, p. 3; see also Steele, 2025). Teachers needed to be equipped to use AI-enhanced classrooms, including immersive walls and virtual reality headsets. Teachers need foundational knowledge of AI, a basic understanding of how AI works, and awareness that the design of AI algorithms can result in biases against marginalized people. Teachers also need to be equipped with strategies to meaningfully integrate AI into teaching practice, as well as the curriculum (Kohnke et al., 2025, p. 7; see also Mylde and Brown, 2025).

Numerous literary sources wanted to concentrate on the pragmatics of using AI tools to teach international students DEI. The issue of a person-centered approach to teaching using AI was manifested in the finding that educators should be equipped to be able to build, endorse and shape AI teaching tools (Tan et al., 2025b, p. 13; Rubin, 2025). Students and educators perceived adoption of AI as the creation of a personalized tutor with whom you could devise a personalized learning plan. This means that AI tools can be used to deliver differentiated tutorship to match individual learning styles often observed within a student group (Brown et al., 2025, p. 7; Rubin, 2025). AI virtual reality headsets would be able to generate multiple representations of a skill or competency to be learned in a manner that accommodates different learning styles. Pragmatically, when

teaching international students how to implement DEI, AI can be used to teach some students a new foreign language (Wang et al., 2023, p. 6). Other students would be enabled to focus on the operational mechanics of including meaningful DEIs in a project. Other international students would be given tuition using AI tools on how to build relationships with local people in a foreign country (Nazir, 2025, p. 3). As an example, the three broad tasks discussed here are probably going to resonate somewhere regarding obtaining rural village buy-in of a proposed hydroelectric dam project. DEI and international sustainable education would be a key part of this initiative to consult with the people who would be affected. It is important that indigenous people become empowered to be able to decide what covenants they should ask for (International Institute of Social Studies, 2025; see also Schmitt and Rosa, 2024, p. 13). International students implementing DEI good practices need to ensure that displaced indigenous people are able to build a village elsewhere, so the people have somewhere to live. They also need the means to make a living after rural fishing village displacement, similar to how cultural artifacts and the environment will be protected. AI roleplay and simulations, using flipped learning and virtual plenaries, are an effective way to teach off or on campus international students these skills.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity

A significant proportion of educators found AI to be very flexible when used to teach international students DEI. Student groups could use an immersive wall or simulation to discuss DEIs. International students could also use virtual reality headsets, or a games consol or gamification, manifested as digital game design (Idika and Saihi, 2025, p. 57), on an individual quiet study basis (Samala et al., 2025, p. 2). Educators found they could encourage students to explore societal marginalization due to issues of culture, gender, race, sexuality, alongside other intersecting demographic markers. Educators consistently indicated that grasping these issues at an early stage is vital when teaching international students DEI good practices. When AI tools become more accessible on handheld digital devices, this will be particularly beneficial when teaching off campus international students and distance learners more generally. AI chatbots, avatars, memes, and virtual assistants can be asked for information about the social tolerance of LGBTQIA+ people in a particular country (Sturgill, 2025). International students living in a home country where alternative sexual lifestyles are banned can obtain the information they need to be able to advocate for LGBT marginalized people. An unintended consequence of group or individual learning using AI tools is the process of identifying social issues, which can also result in student self-discovery and realization. International students could also find that they have been transformed by a process of ‘connoisseurship’ (Broadfoot and Rockey, 2025, p. 291) to become, for example, a DEI specialist. Students and educators found that AI is a very effective medium with which to deliver role play sessions. CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) nurses can use AI to practice role play scenarios to learn how to communicate and obtain desired information from patients. CALD student nurses are often international students.

CALD nurses can be taught with AI some of the basic elements of nursing in a safe environment before being given access to real people (Sturgill, 2025). AI can be used in the coproduction of teaching materials that are more inclusive and more representative of the area that the host university serves. The tutor and a student group can work together to cocreate audiovisual podcast content, spoken in a manner that international students can understand (Chiu and Rospigliosi, 2025, p. 921). Pictorial learning can be incorporated into the podcast by including a series of pictures that visualize key terms. AI tools could be reprogrammed by the coproduction group to include nuances. Idioms and the use of sarcasm to get key points across. AI teaching tools codesigned this way would be especially useful for English as a second language international student, and neurodivergent students would also benefit (Sturgill, 2025). International student learning of DEI would also be delivered as a happy byproduct along the way. This would be because tutor/student coproduction work projects develop deductively over time. In this sense, AI tools are able to give international students agency, a voice in how they are taught and learn, as articulated by Mena and Waitoller (2025, p. 333).

CONCLUSION

The global outlook on international higher education is in a state of flux, with internationally mobile students expected to number eight million in 2025. The increase in the international student body, people prepared to leave their country of birth to study in a different country, represents both an opportunity and a challenge. International students have cultural and emotional needs, as well as language barriers, which often result in HEI administrative problems (Wang et al., 2023, p. 1). The definition of an international student is changing. With the advent of AI, many international students can study for a degree in a foreign country without ever leaving their parental home. The issue of a growing proportion of international students having very little face-to-face contact with their university tutors is a difficult challenge, only partially met by AI. On the one hand, AI tools enable distance learning and self-learning. On the other hand, there are HEI administrative concerns exacerbated by AI tools regarding student data privacy alongside academic integrity. Global HEIs need to recognize that there are significant educational differences between off-campus and on-campus international students. Once universities take this step, they will be able to devise strategies to address the needs of both types of international students. This is because AI technology can be used by students to write their essay and any other assignments that they may be given. Alternatively, AI technology can introduce biases in how information is interpreted or create a hierarchy, which arbitrarily decides which information should be considered before another source. “In conclusion, experts agree that effective use of AI in education requires keeping people at the center, questioning biases, and cultivating critical thinking while promoting creativity and judgment skills in students and teachers” (UNESCO, 2025b).

This discussion paper has considered the role of AI and cyber-technology in implementing DEI practices in international sustainable development education. International sustainability development students must be fully conversant with the ethos of DEI, so the disadvantaged people they work with are fully informed and have a real say in foreign direct investment (FDI) processes. There are constant technological advances being proliferated at an ever-increasing pace, which will affect all our lives in numerous ways (Chaparro-Banegas et al., 2024, p. 7). For DEIs in sustainable living projects to progress, it is of global interest that higher education institutions (HEIs) ensure that their international students are appropriately equipped to use cyber-technology. International sustainable development students must be taught with and how to use AI as part of their curriculum content (Ejjami, 2024, p. 4). Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent due to climate change. During these periods, transport becomes difficult, and people will need to be able to communicate with statutory agencies on key issues, e.g., healthcare and social protection payments. Furthermore, during extreme weather, or for reasons of, for example, disability, poor health or childcare duties, people will need to be able to be educated and/or work from home. This is where people being competent in cyber-technology usage is crucial to equip international students with a DEI skills agenda (Mosley et al., 2025, p. 5). This issue becomes more acute when one considers that a significant proportion of the global population lives in rural areas. Classroom 2.0 learning, e-learning, with or without AI, will be able to educate international students, without the student being required to leave their home (Kilickaya and Kic-Drgas, 2025, p. 6489; Sacks, 2025).

This critical review has mainly focused upon the adaptive learning and personalized aspect of using AI tools to teach international students DEI (Wang et al., 2024, p. 11). Artificial intelligence manifested in the form of deep learning, machine learning and NLPs is integrated into learning management systems (LMS). LMS machines can be used for both student and teacher training. Adaptive learning and personalized tutoring AI applications can deliver person-centered tuition to international students to assess their abilities, interests, knowledge levels and individual learning styles. The design of LMS machines has become increasingly interactive and learner-centered (Wang et al., 2024, p. 10). The finding that AI training for teachers and students is crucial to be able to teach and be taught by AI tools is underscored by the development of LMS machines. "One of the main challenges is a lack of training for teachers and administrators in the use of AI tools. Many teachers do not have the necessary skills to integrate them into their classrooms, which limits their adoption. In addition, the lack of clear policies on student data privacy and the ethical use of this technology poses significant barriers" (de Luna et al., 2025). This is a similar situation for Classroom 2.0 and e-learning 2.0, including immersive walls, MOOCs and virtual reality headsets. Teaching faculty will have to be taught how to use AI tools before they can teach international students DEI implementation or international sustainable education.

AI integration in the curriculum will become more important as the 2020s unfold, creating issues that HEI administrators and teaching faculty alike will need to address. International students on campus will need access to all AI tools. This may be difficult for international students who are off-campus. Ethics education to address, for example, academic integrity, confidentiality and student data privacy concerns, will need to be prioritized. Faculty training and university infrastructure must be effective to ensure that the HEI procures the correct AI tools and that teaching faculty receive the necessary training. Administratively, some form of scoping exercise needs to be conducted on a regular basis to identify which university degree courses will be taught using AI tools. Once such an appraisal has been completed, resource allocation work needs to be operationalized. The HEI will be enabled by such scoping exercise appraisals to reallocate funds and redeploy staff as required to deliver the identified AI requirements.

This review has found the role of university teachers to be crucial in several ways. University teachers provide the tutor-student interface required to assess an individual's learning style. Tutors can often see if a student is suffering some form of stress or the development of a mental health condition. Tutors also deliver bad news to international students, for example, when they have failed an assignment. Similarly, student documentation is required to enable them to remain on the course. has not been made available to administrators. This information can be developed by working with international students using an LMS. This will develop personalized action plans that can be adapted as concepts or skills are learned. University teachers should also be present during formal language learning sessions to ensure correct NLP operation. The use of NLPs to teach international students a second language is recognized as being advantageous. The use of NLPs for audio, images, and pictures to put students' language learning into context is also seen as beneficial. Human oversight was found to be key if AI tools had been used to assess an international student's work. The human university tutor is best placed to identify any cultural or racial bias in the AI tool's algorithms, which may unfairly mark an international student's work down.

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Note: In the preparation of this manuscript, I did not use artificial intelligence (AI) tools for content creation.

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