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# Strategies For Reducing Educational Inequality In Primary Schools Using Adaptive Learning Technologies

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#### Abstract

Primary schools still wrestle with systemic inequality that disproportionately affects lower-income students. Al-driven learning tools, often called Adaptive Learning Technologies or ALTs, offer tailored lessons that can improve learning outcomes for students. This article dives into ways these systems can reduce inequalities by improving academic performance, motivation, and access. Research generally shows that ALTs can deliver learning outcomes much like one-on-one tutoring, enhancing both retention and engagement. Yet, challenges such as unequal access, poor teacher training, and ethical concerns such as data privacy and algorithmic bias tend to hold implementation back. Getting these tools off the ground depends largely on strong institutional support, curriculum improvement and active teacher involvement. This article provides the evidence that ALTs have a positive impact on student outcomes while underscoring the need for long-term, sustainable approaches and clear oversight to ensure fairness. Future research should investigate how these methods impact motivation over time and the flexibility of the technology as situations shift.

**Keywords**: Adaptive Learning Technologies, Educational Inequality, Artificial Intelligence, Student Motivation, Equity in Education

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In many countries around the world, students from low-income backgrounds lag behind their counterparts in terms of academic achievement. This educational inequality is sustained by socioeconomic disparities such as unequal access to resources, and differences in the amount of school funding. Haleem et al. (2022) found that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to attend schools with larger class sizes and less qualified teachers. These longstanding systemic issues make it difficult for these students to have the same kind of educational achievements as their colleagues from privileged backgrounds, which limits their future opportunities.

Adaptive Learning Technologies, commonly known as ALTs have emerged as the best solution to address these educational inequalities by providing tailored learning and instruction to learns. These tools which are based on artificial intelligence and machine learning can analyze a student's performance data and then adjust the content, pace and difficulty level of learning materials to match the learning needs of each student (El-Sabagh, 2021; Rasheed et al., 2025). These tools could close the educational gaps by identifying learning deficiencies in real time and providing immediate feedback as well as resources to each student.

Adaptive Learning Technologies not only provide academic support but have also been shown to improve student motivation and engagements. According to Bulathwela et al. (2021), individual feedback and game-like features ensure that students stay engaged and are actively involved in the learning process. However, it is important to note that despite the potential benefits of ALTs, their success largely depends on proper implementation, equitable access to technology and adequate teacher training. This paper will examine the important role that ALTs play in reducing

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educational inequality by looking at their impact of academic performance, motivation and engagement, while also addressing the challenges of ALTs and the ethical issues they raise.

## Background: Potential of Adaptive Learning Technologies

Adaptive Learning Technologies have shown a lot of potential in improving learning outcomes by providing learning that has been tailored to suit the specific needs of the individual student. Experiments have shown that these tools can be very useful especially in complex problem-solving subjects such as mathematic which require tailored support for students. Researches by Channuwong et al. (2022) and Bulathwela et al. (2021) shows that these intelligent learning tools can provide the same benefits to students as one-on-one learning. In addition, adaptive learning methods have been shown to improve the academic achievements of average students by up to two standard deviations, which is a significant improvement in knowledge and memory. Firdausi (2024) also adds that schools and governments need to develop policies that will support the effective implementation of these technologies including teacher training, and integrating these technologies with the curriculum and ensure equal access for all students

Adaptive learning platforms not only help students to improve their academic performance but also improve access to learning materials for underprivileged and marginalized students. The interactive and responsive content in these tools can accommodate different learning styles and are useful in helping students overcome challenges such as language barriers and learning disability (Rasheed et al., 2025). Students with special needs are also accommodated with accessibility options that can provide for translation of written language or even adjusting the reading level. Additionally, teachers can incorporate these technologies into lessons in a way that may improve student's learning experiences and outcomes (Damrongsiri et al., 2022; Sbaih et al., 2024).

#### **Problem Statement**

In practice, however, the implementation of ALTs faces many challenges. One of the primary challenges is inequitable access to technology, especially in underdeveloped regions where access to internet and digital tools is limited (Sancenon et al., 2022). Another major challenge is inadequate teacher training which poses a serious challenge to the effective adoption of adaptive tools in the classroom. Additionally, institutional resistance to change also makes the process of integrating ALTs into traditional education systems difficult.

Despite these challenges, there is evidence that ALTs could significantly boost student motivation when implemented and used appropriately. There is also evidence that gamified learning spaces and immediate feedback systems provide a rich learning environment that improves student engagement and promotes extended participation. Additionally, these technologies provide teachers with real-time performance data that helps to identify students in need and adapt learning materials to support them. ALTs therefore have the potential to be the technology that will eventually eliminate educational inequality if we can overcome these challenges to implementation and make access equitable.

## Research Objective

The objective of this paper is to investigate the potential for ALTs to reduce educational inequalities in schools, impact student performance positively and the strategies of ALTs in reducing educational inequality in primary schools.

# Hypothesis

- H1: The use of ALTs significantly improves the academic performance of students in primary schools compared to traditional methods.
- H2: The use of ALTs improves student motivation in primary schools compared to traditional methods
- H3: The use of ALTs reduces educational inequalities in primary schools compared to traditional methods.

## Conceptual Framework

Independent Variable: Adaptive Learning Technologies (ALTs)

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• Dependent Variables: Academic performance, reduction of inequality, and student motivation

#### Scope and Significance of the study

This research will facilitate better learning methods in the current curriculum and is also useful for educators, researchers and policymakers in creating better learning strategies suitable for young learners through inclusive education. The focus will only be on primary schools and school going children of ages 6-12 years. There will be no new data collected as the study will specifically focus on previously published studies.

This systematic review examines the adaptive learning technology (ALT) contribution to reducing education inequality in primary schools, considering its capacity to increase academic achievement, motivation, and access for underprivileged learners. By synthesizing the existing evidence base, the study illuminates best ALT practice, identifies emerging challenges such as digital divides, teacher training, and algorithmic bias, and advises on practical recommendations for equitable adoption. The review therefore aims to provide teachers, policymakers, and technologists with information on utilizing ALTs for creating more accessible and personalized learning environments.

#### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Understanding Educational Inequality**

Education inequality is largely driven by socioeconomic disparities, disparities in school resources, quality educators, and difference in student learning styles (Haleem et al., 2022). According to this study, students from disadvantaged backgrounds show poorer academic performance due to factors including inadequate learning material and limited access to quality learning. ALTs have been designed to bridge this gap by providing learners with a personalized learning processes that accommodate individual student needs (Alam, 2022; Loble & Hawcroft, 2022; Rasheed et al., 2025; Orogun et al., 2024).

Another factor that increases educational inequality is the growing digital divide. In their research, Loble and Hawcroft (2022) found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, students from disadvantaged backgrounds in Australia were 40 times less likely to not have a computer than their privileged colleagues. This made it harder for them to learn at home. Additionally, they also established that students from low-income backgrounds in Year 3 are already two years behind their classmates, and by Year 9, the gap had grown to more than five years. Similarly, Rasheed et al. (2025) found that ALTs showed potential to reduce educational and learning gaps especially among students with learning disabilities, language barriers, and to help those from low-income backgrounds succeed.

Isaeva et al. (2025) also found that platforms like Coursera, Khan Academy, and edX made learning more accessible and flexible. Their study showed that gamification, real-time feedback, and interactive tools helped to keep students engaged and motivated. Additionally, virtual labs, such as those using the Quanser QNET DC Motor Control Board, show that hands-on STEM training can be done remotely, helping to overcome educational barriers.

## Adaptive Learning Technologies Overview

According to Debeer et al. (2021), ALTs use artificial intelligence to customize learning material, and to provide feedback and support based on each student's individual needs. These technologies, including smart tutoring robots, high-tech classrooms, and real-time performance tracking have helped students stay engaged and learn better. These smart tutoring robots boost student motivation by offering interactive and personalized tutoring (Alam 2022). Loble and Hawcroft (2022) also found that ALTs help teachers by providing real-time data to improve their teaching methods. Orogun et al. (2024) also point out that ALTs help make education fairer by giving students in low-income areas better access to quality learning materials.

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### Impact of ALTs on Educational Outcomes

Vlachopoulos and Makri (2017) found that personalized learning helped students by making them more engaged and performing better academically. Rasheed et al. (2025) also indicated that technology for adaptive learning improves memory and understanding. ALTs have also improved accessibility for students with disability and those in disadvantaged groups (Alam, 2022). Loble and Hawcroft (2022) also found that when implemented effectively, adaptive learning platforms significantly improve learning, especially in poorly resourced schools further enhancing the role of ALTs in educational equity. Orogun et al. (2024) observe that ALTs can be used to help address the long-term educational gaps caused by poverty and social inequality. Another study by Yaseen et al., (2025) aims to demonstrate how interactive AI tools help improve student engagement and that students with higher levels of digital accuracy are more involved with digital tools.

## Comparative Studies on ALT Implementation

Successful implementation of ALT is dependent on training teachers, curriculum integration, and organizational support. Kukul (2023) and Alam (2022) indicate through research that adaptive learning spaces are better utilized when teachers take an active role in conducting Albased classes. Case studies conducted on Al-aided intelligent campuses reveal that teacher intervention plays a central role in maximizing the potential of ALTs (Sancenon et al., 2022). Loble and Hawcroft (2022) cite Australian case studies revealing that effectively governed edtech initiatives improve outcomes for disadvantaged learners by improving the quality and availability of Al-facilitated learning resources.

Rasheed et al. (2025) also provide additional evidence that AI-based personalized learning reduces educational inequality to a significant extent and enhances student motivation. In their quantitative study, they found that AI-based learning personalization had strong correlations with improved student performance. Aside from this, they also observe that AI-based real-time translation software, speech-to-text systems, and intelligent tutoring software are central to providing essential assistance to underprivileged groups and indicators of global trends towards AI-driven accessibility developments (Rasheed et al., 2025).

Isaeva et al. (2025) also concluded that ALT can be implemented only successfully based on institutional readiness, infrastructural preparedness, and continuous teacher professional development. The contribution of teacher education programs that not only focus on the acquisition of technical skills but also focus on teaching methods intended to support proper integration of adaptive learning systems has been identified in their paper. In particular, the independent audits of ALT programs such as the U.S.-based "Evidence for ESSA" initiative were able to scrutinize edtech quality and verify that it aligns with national educational goals (Loble & Hawcroft, 2022). Such regulatory structures provide transparency and accountability to facilitate equitable education reform.

## Challenges and Ethical Considerations

Although AI-powered learning tools (ALTs) have great potential, they also face major challenges. Alam (2022) found two key issues: the digital divide and algorithmic bias. The digital divide made it harder for students in low-income areas to access technology. Algorithmic bias on the other hand occurs when AI tools unintentionally favor certain groups and reinforce inequalities. Rasheed et al. (2025) found ethical issues about student monitoring and data privacy, which have to be properly managed so that ALTs are employed in an appropriate manner in schools. They argue that privacy issues, algorithmic bias, and limited access to technology are the major challenges in applying ALTs in schools. Their study found the digital divide as the biggest challenge, especially in rural and low-income areas where students do not have the technology needed for adaptive learning. These findings support previous research calling for better rules and policies to make sure technology is used fairly and ethically in education.

Isaeva et al. (2025) supports this argument by pointing out that adaptive learning programs require a solid foundation to have balance between technology innovation and ethics. Research undertaken by these authors confirmed that gamification and interactive elements enhance the

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motivation of learners but must be designed carefully in an attempt to prevent mental load and dependence on external rewards. Additionally, the use of AI-based analytics for learning also comes with concerns related to data safety and strict regulations of privacy.

Loble and Hawcroft (2022) argue that better governance systems and independent edtech evaluations are necessary to prevent unregulated ALT deployment. They advocate for national policies that ensure ALT platforms are tested and regulated for efficacy, particularly in the support of disadvantaged learners. Without such frameworks, there is a risk that ALTs will exacerbate these educational inequalities instead of addressing them.

#### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research approach by comparing existing research articles, case studies, and literature reviews to get an understanding of the impact of ALTs on educational inequalities, student performance, as well as motivation and engagement. The study will largely be based on cased studies of institutions using ALTs and then compare their performance with traditional learning environments (Fabus et al., 2023; Rasheed et al., 2025). Secondary data which includes previously published studies will provide information on how ALTs affect student motivation, student engagement, and academic performance.

This research attempt to identify themes and patterns on educational equity, engagement, and learning outcomes from previous research. It aims to provide a better understanding of how adaptive learning tools help reduce education inequality and improve learning by leveraging on existing research.

The current research employs thematic synthesis method of qualitative systematic review to analyze the influence of Adaptive Learning Technologies (ALTs) on educational inequality, student motivation, and academic performance in primary education. Thematic synthesis allows for synthesizing evidence from studies of various research designs and determining patterns and gaps in the literature (Thomas & Harden, 2008).

## **Databases Searched**

The following databases were systematically queried to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant literature:

- Google Scholar
- ERIC (Education Resources Information Center)
- Scopus
- ScienceDirect

#### **Inclusion Criteria**

Studies were selected based on the following criteria:

- Publication Type: Peer-reviewed journal articles or conference proceedings (2017–2024).
- Educational Level: Focus on primary education (ages 5–12).
- Content: Explicit discussion of ALTs in instructional contexts, with outcomes tied to:
- Reduction of educational inequality (e.g., socioeconomic, accessibility).
- Student motivation or engagement.
- Academic performance (e.g., standardized test scores, skill mastery).

#### **Exclusion Criteria**

Studies were excluded if they:

- Addressed secondary/tertiary education exclusively.
- Were published in languages other than English.
- Focused on ALTs for administrative tasks (e.g., attendance tracking) without instructional relevance.

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### **Review Process**

- PRISMA Flow Diagram: A four-stage process (identification, screening, eligibility, inclusion) was used to document study selection (see Appendix A for the flow diagram).
- Data Extraction: Key details from included studies were cataloged, including:
- Author(s) and publication year.
- Type of ALT implemented (e.g., intelligent tutoring systems, gamified platforms).
- Key findings related to inequality, motivation, or performance.

#### **Analysis Method**

Thematic Analysis: Inductive coding was conducted manually to identify recurring themes across studies (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Key steps included:

- Familiarization: Repeated reading of studies to identify patterns.
- Initial Coding: Highlighting and annotating key excerpts related to ALTs' impact (e.g., quotes on motivation, inequality).
- Theme Development: Grouping codes into broader themes (see examples below) using iterative categorization.
- Validation: Cross-checking themes among co-authors to ensure consistency

#### 4. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

## Theme 1: Educational Equity

Preliminary findings show that personalized learning makes education more accessible and improves the performance of learners. Additionally, AI-driven accessibility tools such as speech-to-text and real-time translation software have been a huge success in supporting students with disabilities and linguistic differences. Students who previously struggled in terms of comprehension and engagement improved dramatically in terms of test scores and class engagement when their schools implemented these tools (Rasheed et al., 2025). Another study on CAT (Computerized Adaptive Learning) highlighted its role in supporting educational equity by benefiting students with Special Education Needs (SEN) through tailoring the assessment difficulty of learners and aligning it with their ability unlike traditional tests (Ebenbeck & Gebhardt, 2024).

# Theme 2: Student Motivation and Engagement

Existing research has shown that adaptive learning platforms have the potential to help students stay engaged and perform better than traditional methods of teaching (Sancenon et al., 2022; Rasheed et al., 2025). Data from these studies show that students who use adaptive learning technologies learn better and score higher on tests, especially in subjects like mathematics and language (Bulathwela et al., 2021). Qualitative results from teacher interview data confirm these conclusions. Teachers suggest that ALTs help identify struggling learners early enough, thus enabling targeted interventions that traditional methods fail to recognize. In addition, teachers learned that adaptive learning tools reduced their administrative workload, allowing them to work more on interactions with students and personalized learning (Sancenon et al., 2022).

## Theme 3: Improved Academic Outcomes

Comparison between student groups that included ALTs and those of a traditional setup showed statistically significant levels of enhanced students' performance under ALT platforms. Particularly, students using AI-informed adaptive learning systems that were personalized showed 20-30% improvements in the capacity to solve problems and comprehension skills (Rasheed et al., 2025). Secondly, immediate corrective feedback given from these systems was found to help in quickly correcting misconceptions and reducing learning inequalities among students from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Despite these encouraging results, there are still some challenges. Some schools do not have the necessary technology infrastructure that would enable them to get maximum benefits out of adaptive learning platforms. Additionally, teachers who used ALTs found that they needed further training to effectively use these tools (Loble & Hawcroft, 2022). Privacy concerns related

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to data and algorithmic bias must also be addressed before any ALTs can be rolled out on a mass scale. Overall, these findings show that adaptive learning technologies have the capacity to reduce educational and learning gaps if equitable access is guaranteed, teachers receive proper training, and regulations are enacted for their effective usage. Future studies must analyze the impact of such tools on the motivation of students and if they can work effectively at scale in the long run.

#### 5. DISCUSSION

Research has shown that the implementation of adaptive learning technologies in primary schools has the potential to make learning more efficient, personalize tutoring to specific student needs, and to eventually close educational gaps. These adaptive learning technology tools tailor learning material to suit each student's specific needs, allowing them to learn at their pace and in their own way. This approach accommodates students with different learning styles and promotes fair access to education.

Despite these potential benefits, the process of integrating ALTs into schools faces several significant challenges must that be addressed before they can be successfully implemented. For example, students from underprivileged backgrounds cannot afford hardware needed to utilize these tools. This may widen the already existing educational disparities if not addressed (Kukul, 2023; Rasheed et al., 2025). Another important challenge is the inadequate training provided to teachers. Without appropriate training and support, teachers may not be able to help students to use these technologies effectively in the classroom. Research also raised important ethical concerns, including the protection of private student data and algorithmic bias. Schools need to ensure that they have protocols in place to safeguard student information. These ALTs also have to be reviewed to ensure that they do not unintentionally favor certain groups, which could make existing inequalities worse (Loble & Hawcroft, 2022).

Another important factor to consider is sustainability. According to Orogun et al. (2024) and Wongmajarapinya et al. (2024), adaptive learning technologies should prove useful in the long term, and that schools need solid policies to ensure that these technologies become more effective with increasing use. Policymakers should also come together to make policy frameworks and mechanisms to facilitate these technologies. Overall, ALTs have the potential can make education more effective and equitable. However, this is only possible if schools can overcome challenges such as access, training, ethics, and sustainability for all students to benefit.

#### 6. CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of adaptive learning technologies in primary education has significantly high potential for reducing the educational inequalities by improving academic achievement and student engagement. Through the incorporation of personalized learning as well as real-time responses to data, ALTs offer a student-centered learning environment addressing individual student needs in practice and promoting inclusivity in learning environments. The systematic review of this study had aimed to explore how ALTs contribute to reducing educational inequity in schools, improves student performance and motivation. Drawing from the thematic analysis of several peer-reviewed studies, the findings offer fundamental evidence that confirm the 3 hypotheses proposed are accepted as:

H1: ALTS positively impact student academic performance.

H2: ALTS improve student motivation/engagement.

H3: ALTS help reduce educational inequalities in students

Nevertheless, the proper utilization of ALTs relies on addressing some underlying issues. Equitable access to technology must take precedence to prevent deepening the present learning inequities. Ensuring proper teacher training and adequate school infrastructure to facilitate efficient use of such technology is as important. Challenges with data safeguarding and transparency of algorithms have to be tackled to instill confidence and to protect the disadvantaged learner groups.

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#### 7. Recommendations

To completely tap the potential of ALTs to reduce educational inequalities, this paper recommends:

- Equitable Access Initiatives: Schools and governments must invest in infrastructure to enable students from disadvantaged backgrounds to have access to the necessary technological tools.
- Teacher Training Programs: Teachers must be given adequate professional development to be able to utilize ALTs in their classrooms effectively.
- Independent Evaluation and Governance: There is need to establish best practices that assess the effectiveness and quality of ALT platforms such as the U.S. "Evidence for ESSA" model, a national edtech review structure (Loble & Hawcroft, 2022).
- Data Privacy Regulations: Adaptive learning platforms must comply with already existing data protection laws to protect student data and prevent abuses (Rasheed et al., 2025).
- Bias Reduction Strategies: More diverse datasets should be used to train the AI systems in order to prevent algorithmic bias that can worsen the already existing educational inequalities (Rasheed et al., 2025).
- Comprehensive Institutional Support: The success of ALTs largely depends on adequate infrastructure, proper training of teachers, and an effective implementation strategy that aligns with national education goals (Isaeva et al. 2025).

The implementation of these strategies will make it easier for ALTs to be applied to create a more equitable educational landscape and mitigate existing educational disparities in learning outcomes.

#### Credit authorship contribution statement

Maya Khan & Moslem Zamani: Writing – original draft, Investigation methodology and resources. Wijit Thongnun & Prapas Siripap: Data analysis, writing review and editing. Sukhumpong Channuwong & Tippawan Lertatthakornkit: Formal analysis, data correction, supervision and conceptualization.

#### Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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