AI in Education in MENA

Snapshot of the landscape and emerging opportunities

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AUC	American University in Cairo
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ASR	At Scale Research
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
LMIC	Low- and middle-income country
MOOCs	Massive Open Online Courses
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
OER	Open Educational Resources
PPP	Public–Private Partnership
QSTH	Qatar Science & Technology Holdings
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UM6P	Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (Morocco)
UN ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
WISE	World Innovation Summit for Education (Qatar Foundation)

1. Introduction

This brief presents key findings from a rapid scan of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, conducted by EdTech Hub's AI Observatory & Action Lab in response to a request from FCDO MENA Regional Advisors. It is intended to inform FCDO education staff and country partners as they consider ongoing and future engagement on AI in education. The scan primarily draws on secondary sources and is designed to provide a rapid overview rather than a comprehensive review.

AI is reshaping education globally, with the potential to enable adaptive, personalised learning; improve administrative efficiency; and strengthen data-driven decision-making. In the MENA region, adoption of AI in education varies widely (↑AlKhater et al., 2025). High-income countries such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Qatar have developed advanced national strategies and launched large-scale AI initiatives in education. Middle-income countries, including Egypt, Morocco, and Jordan, are gradually building capacity, often through public–private partnerships (↑Traidi, 2024). In contrast, lower-income or crisis-affected contexts such as Yemen, Mauritania, Syria, and Lebanon face persistent barriers related to infrastructure, political stability, and resources, limiting AI adoption (↑UN ESCWA, 2020).

Despite these disparities, education has emerged as a central focus for AI deployment in the region (↑Saini et al., 2025). Governments and private actors alike view AI as a strategic tool to support human capital development and to help bridge inequities in access and quality. The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated this momentum by underscoring both the promise of AI-enabled solutions and the urgency of addressing digital divides (↑Orgeron et al., 2025).

2. Most common AI use cases

AI use in education in MENA is concentrated in four main areas.

Personalised adaptive learning. The most common use of AI in the region is personalised adaptive learning platforms[1] (↑Ismaili, 2024). Classera[2] (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Syria) and Abwaab[3] (Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq) are platforms designed to deliver tailored learning experiences and exam preparation (↑Alhujayri, 2024). Obrizum,[4] a UK-registered adaptive learning company, has engaged with the Qatar EdTech ecosystem—as a former WISE Accelerator alumnus and with investment support from Qatar Science & Technology Holdings—signalling a presence and interest in the MENA region (↑WISE Qatar Foundation, 2022). In Egypt, platforms such as Zedny[5] use gamification and machine learning to support Arabic-language learning and development, while PraxiLabs[6] provides interactive 3D virtual science labs to expand access to practical learning in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) (↑Ali, 2023).

Curriculum and content development. AI is being used to generate and tailor learning materials, such as lesson plans, assignments, and quizzes, and to produce course content and images. This can reduce teacher preparation time and improve fit to local curricula. Examples include generative AI for course building in Saudi higher education (↑Alammari, 2024), teacher training in the UAE to use AI for lesson plans (↑Fteiha et al., 2025; ↑Rizvi, 2024), and platforms such as Alef Education[7] and Classera[8] that

[1] Personalised adaptive learning platforms are AI-powered software that personalise educational content and pace based on a user's real-time needs and performance, offering tailored learning paths, immediate feedback, and enhanced engagement.

[2] See https://me.classera.com/. Retrieved 15 January 2026.

[3] See https://abwaab.com/en. Retrieved 15 January 2026.

[4] See https://obrizum.com/. Retrieved 15 January 2026.

[5] See https://zedny.com/. Retrieved 15 January 2026.

[6] See https://praxilabs.com/. Retrieved 15 January 2026.

[7] See https://www.alefeducation.com/. Retrieved 15 January 2026.

[8] See https://classera.com/en/. Retrieved 15 January 2026.

use AI for interactive content and assessments. Abwaab[9] also uses AI for content curation and quiz generation in Arabic. Similarly, platforms like Edraak[10] offer Arabic language MOOCs[11] to the Pan Arab region on various subjects, whereas Dawrat[12] (Kuwait and Saudi Arabia) offers localised digital learning content in Arabic with AI features such as personalised course recommendations and automated content tagging to expand access to curriculum materials (↑Adham & Lundqvist, 2015).

Student support and engagement. The region is also exploring the use of AI to strengthen student engagement and support. Noon Academy[13] (Saudi Arabia) offers gamified and interactive peer-to-peer learning opportunities (↑Noon Academy, 2025). At the American University in Cairo (AUC), Egypt, AI-powered chatbots help students navigate administrative processes, inquiries, and access to university services (↑Micabalo et al., 2024). Evidence from Moroccan universities further suggests that students are already using generative AI tools such as ChatGPT for academic support functions, including grammar correction, paraphrasing, and concept clarification, particularly where institutional support and guidance are limited (↑Al-Zubaidi et al., 2024).

Institutional management and administration. Finally, AI is playing a role in improving educational administration and resource management. At Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P) in Morocco, ChatGPT.edu[14] serves as a virtual university assistant, streamlining academic and administrative tasks by providing real-time support for scheduling, student queries, and resource allocation (↑Mwangi, 2024; ↑Zouiten, 2024). In Saudi Arabia, Naseej[15] leverages AI to enhance backend educational technologies, including learning management systems, digital content engines, and institution-wide service platforms. These AI-enabled functions strengthen institutional operational efficiency by automating

[9] See https://abwaab.com/. Retrieved 15 January 2026.

[10] See https://www.edraak.org/en/. Retrieved 15 January 2026.

[11] A MOOC (M participation and open access via the internet.

[12] See https://www.dawrat.com/home. Retrieved 15 January 2026.

[13] See https://www.noonacademy.com/. Retrieved 15 January 2026.

[14] See https://deo.um6p.ma/platforms/chatgpt-edu. Retrieved 15 January 2026.

[15] See https://naseej.com/. Retrieved 15 January 2026.

routine processes and enabling more responsive, data-informed educational service delivery (↑Naseej for Technology, 2025).

3. Key actors

A wide range of actors are shaping how AI enters education in the region, each with distinct roles and influence:

Governments and ministries of education are central, with countries such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar driving national strategies and major investments, while others are testing smaller pilots.

Higher education institutions such as AUC in Egypt and UM6P in Morocco are not only early adopters but also innovators, experimenting with chatbots, AI assistants, and new student support models.

EdTech companies and startups (e.g., Classera, Abwaab, Noon Academy) offer adaptive platforms, gamified learning, and Arabic-language content. Most are MENA-based, reflecting a growing local ecosystem, although they often rely on international partnerships and funding.

Public–private partnerships are especially significant in middle-income countries such as Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco, enabling AI tools to scale beyond what governments or companies could achieve alone.

Donors and partners are also actively engaged. The UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) are particularly active in the broader EdTech space, especially in fragile contexts, alongside multilateral agencies and regional foundations such as the Sawiris Foundation, Qatar Foundation, and the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Knowledge Foundation.

4. Challenges and gaps

Despite growing interest and use of AI in education across the MENA region, adoption remains uneven, with significant disparities in access, capacity, and infrastructure shaping who benefits from these technologies.

First, **current use of AI in education is concentrated among urban elites, private schools, and well-resourced universities** (↑Hassan, 2024; ↑Traidi, 2024). Evidence from Saudi Arabia, for example, shows that platforms such as Classera are widely used in private and international schools with established ICT systems, whereas public-sector schools are less likely to adopt such platforms due to infrastructure gaps, higher student–teacher ratios, and limited ministry-led integration(↑Alhujayri, 2024). These patterns create a risk that wealthier students become disproportionately positioned to benefit from personalised, adaptive, or data-driven learning tools.

Students in rural areas and fragile or conflict-affected contexts face even greater exclusion. In Syria, for example, years of civil war and ongoing humanitarian crises have severely disrupted the education system, leaving learners without reliable schooling, digital connectivity, or the foundational infrastructure necessary to participate in technology-enabled learning (↑ILO Regional Office for the Arab States, 2025). Such conditions make meaningful access to AI-based educational tools nearly impossible, reinforcing the educational deprivation already experienced by crisis-affected children.

At the tertiary level, initiatives such as UM6P's use of ChatGPT.Edu and AUC chatbots are concentrated in these elite universities, while public universities and technical colleges, which serve the majority of the population, lack comparable AI-enabled services (↑Ragheb et al., 2022). Arabic-language MOOCs such as Edraak and Dawrat offer an opportunity to expand access, but low internet penetration in countries like Yemen and rural Morocco limits their reach (↑Sallam, 2017).

Teacher readiness is another gap. Ministries in countries such as Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt have not yet embedded AI-focused training into national professional development, leaving teachers under-prepared to use platforms such as Abwaab and Noon Academy effectively (↑Almahasees et al., 2024).

Policy and coordination challenges also persist. Countries such as Lebanon, Yemen, and Libya lack comprehensive digital education strategies, resulting in fragmented, pilot-driven adoption of AI (↑Traidi,

2024). Additionally, AI-driven administrative platforms such as Naseej in Saudi Arabia and UM6P ChatGPT.Edu in Morocco collect sensitive student data. Yet, many countries in MENA lack robust data protection laws, increasing the risk of misuse or data breaches in environments where digital governance is weak (↑Fatafta & Samaro, 2021).

Finally, **sustainability** is a pressing concern. Many platforms, including PraxiLabs and Obrizum, depend heavily on Western-developed AI engines, exposing countries to risks if licensing costs rise or foreign providers shift priorities (↑Trigui et al., 2024).

5. Opportunities for action

Based on the current landscape, opportunities where targeted investment and support from the FCDO are most urgently needed are listed below.

Convene and align actors. Leverage the FCDO's convening power to bring together governments, the private sector, multilaterals, and civil society around a coherent AI in education agenda. This can reduce duplication, link to broader education reforms, and promote responsible standards.

Scale effective, localised tools. Expand evidence-backed platforms (e.g., Abwaab, Dawrat, and Edraak) to reach more marginalised learners. Pair scaling with investment in connectivity, rural outreach, and strong data governance to ensure safe, inclusive use.

Strengthen teacher capacity. Invest in digital skills-focused professional development and coaching to prepare teachers for AI integration. At the same time, explore AI tools that support teachers directly—such as automated assessment or AI-powered analytics—driven by teachers' needs and input.

Catalyse local innovation ecosystems. Support partnerships between ministries, universities, and startups to foster regionally relevant AI solutions. MENA's shared linguistic and cultural context offers scope for regional hubs that scale personalised adaptive learning platforms, MOOCs, and teacher training tools across borders, creating economies of scale and shared best practices.

Leverage public–private partnerships (PPPs). Build on successful models in countries like Egypt and Morocco to scale AI affordably. Ensure partnerships include clear monitoring and evaluation of learning outcomes to guide investment and accountability.

Adopt a phased approach in fragile contexts. In crisis-affected settings (e.g., Syria, Yemen, the Occupied Palestinian Territory), prioritise lower-risk, high-value use cases such as AI tools to improve administrative efficiency, and explore lightweight, mobile-first tools (e.g., WhatsApp chatbots, Edraak micro-modules) that work in low-connectivity environments. This approach also aligns with lessons on effective implementation of EdTech in crisis-affected and emergency contexts more broadly. See related rapid evidence reviews published by EdTech Hub: *EdTech for Education in Emergencies: A Rapid Evidence Review* (↑Barnes et al., 2025) and *EdTech for Contexts of Forced Displacement: A Rapid Evidence Review* (↑Barnes & Katrin, 2025).

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