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Policy Brief
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AI for Education

Closing the Governance Gap



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Executive Summary

KEY MESSAGE

The central policy question is no longer whether education systems will use AI, but whether they can govern its use before risks become embedded at scale.

AI-enabled tutoring, teacher-support, and content-generation tools are moving from pilot to classroom use across education systems worldwide, including in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The strongest evidence is beginning to confirm real gains: a synthesis of randomized trials across China, Ghana, Nigeria, Türkiye, and the United States found that AI-powered tutoring produced measurable learning improvements equivalent to more than half a year of additional schooling (World Bank 2026).

But this evidence remains thin, and adoption is running ahead of the institutional architecture needed to make AI use safe and effective at scale. The governance gap is visible across five areas: **(1) Ownership**, with no clear lead or accountability across national, institutional, and local levels; **(2) Competencies**, with teachers, students, and system leaders lacking shared AI competency standards; **(3) Quality assurance**, with AI-generated instructional and assessment content able to reach classrooms unchecked; **(4) Equity and readiness**, with schools varying in connectivity, infrastructure, and teacher preparedness; and **(5) Evidence**, with promising results still concentrated in a limited number of pilots.

IREX has seen this governance gap firsthand through its national AI for education diagnostic in Jordan, conducted with the Ministry of Education, schools, and higher education institutions. The diagnostic surveyed more than 4,000 teachers and 4,000 parents, included more than 72 interviews, and reviewed the policy and regulatory landscape to assess system readiness and identify practical recommendations for responsible AI adoption.

This brief is intended for ministries of education, universities, and education-system leaders seeking to govern AI adoption safely and effectively. It identifies five practical actions they can take to strengthen accountability, build AI competencies, assure the quality of AI-enabled tools and content, sequence deployment equitably, and generate local evidence before scaling-up.

The Challenge

Three conditions are allowing the governance gap to persist as AI tools reach classrooms faster than the systems meant to govern their use:

- **Teacher training is expanding but has not yet reached system scale.** Rwanda's first round of National Day of AI training reached more than 5,000 teachers across all districts by the end of 2025, a meaningful start but short of full national coverage. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Ministry of Education and Hamdan Bin Mohammed Smart University launched the National AI Upskilling Programme for Teachers in May 2026. The UAE later announced a related national program to train 22,000 teachers and educators to use AI to support teaching, assessment, curriculum analysis, lesson planning, and student innovation.
- **Governance typically follows deployment rather than preceding it.** Across 200 higher education institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean, 87 percent reported using AI in at least one area, but only 26 percent had a formal AI strategy, with even fewer reporting clear governance structures and monitoring frameworks. In many institutions, adoption is being driven by faculty, researchers, and students rather than by institution-wide policy or strategic guidance (UNESCO 2026). IREX's exploratory university AI readiness research points in the same direction, suggesting that individual AI use and institutional ambition are advancing faster than governed pilots, formal policies, and implementation capacity (IREX and Development Gateway 2026).
- **The evidence remains limited.** Even the strongest available results come from a small number of pilot studies; published findings may overstate average effects, and more rigorous evidence is needed, particularly in LMIC contexts (World Bank 2026).

WHY THIS MATTERS

Ministries that build governance alongside adoption, rather than after it, are better positioned to convert AI investment into durable learning gains and reduce the risk that unverified or ungoverned tools reach students unchecked.



Ownership
No clear lead or accountability across national, institutional, and local levels

Competencies
Teachers, students, and system leaders lack shared AI competency standards

Quality assurance
AI-generated instructional and assessment content may reach classrooms unchecked

Equity and readiness
Schools vary in connectivity, infrastructure, and teacher preparedness

Evidence
Promising results remain concentrated in a limited number of pilots

Addressing these five governance gaps requires coordinated action across governance, policies, and implementation. In the near term, the first priority should be to assign clear accountability for AI governance and establish quality assurance processes before AI tools reach classrooms at scale.

Key Policy Recommendations

- **Assign clear accountability before scaling AI tools:** Designate a national governance function for AI in education, with clear authority, reporting lines, decision rights, and mechanisms for institutional and local accountability.
- **Adopt AI competency standards for teachers, students, and system leaders:** Develop differentiated competency frameworks that support safe, ethical, and pedagogically sound AI use across classrooms, schools, and system-level institutions.
- **Establish quality assurance protocols for AI-enabled content and tools:** Introduce structured review of AI-generated instructional and assessment content before deployment, rather than relying on after-the-fact error reporting.
- **Sequence deployment according to readiness and equity:** Pace rollout according to school-level readiness and need, while investing in the connectivity, infrastructure, and teacher preparedness required to ensure lower-readiness schools are not left behind.
- **Build local evidence before national scale-up:** Commission or support rigorous evaluation of AI tools already in use locally, since existing evidence, though promising, remains limited, particularly in LMIC contexts.



ABOUT THIS BRIEF

This brief combines evidence from IREX's work supporting AI readiness and governance in Jordan with a review of emerging global evidence and country approaches. It identifies recurring governance challenges and practical actions education system leaders can take to support safe and effective AI adoption.

Sources: World Bank, World Development Report 2026: The Promise of Artificial Intelligence, 2026; MIT RAISE / Day of AI, In Rwanda, First Round of National Day of AI Training Reaches 5,000 Teachers, 2026; Ministry of Education, Singapore, Artificial Intelligence in Education, 2026; UNESCO IESALC, AI Implementation in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2026; UNESCO, AI Competency Framework for Students, 2024; United Arab Emirates Ministry of Education and Hamdan Bin Mohammed Smart University, National AI Upskilling Programme for Teachers, 2026; Khaleej Times, UAE to roll out AI curriculum across all schools; 22,000 teachers to be trained, 2026; IREX and Development Gateway, From Ambition to Adoption: Insights into University AI Readiness, 2026; IREX, Jordan AI for Education Diagnostic, unpublished.

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