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Pedagogical Mediation and Image Education in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: The Role of Audiovisual Media and Augmented Reality in Contemporary Learning Environments

INES Frikha[1*], AHMED Bouajila[2], ADEL Fridhi[3], RAHIM Kouki[4]

[1,2,3,4]Higher Institute of Childhood Executives (ISCE), UC, Tunisia.

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Abstract. The rapid expansion of digital technologies has profoundly transformed educational practices, placing image education at the core of contemporary learning challenges. In this evolving context, pedagogical mediation emerges as a critical process for supporting learners' understanding, interpretation, and critical engagement with increasingly complex audiovisual environments. This article explores how artificial intelligence (AI), audiovisual media, and augmented reality (AR) collectively reshape mediation practices within image education. Drawing on a critical and integrative review of recent international literature, the study examines the ways AI-driven audiovisual systems and AR-based learning environments enhance interactivity, personalization, and learner engagement while simultaneously redefining the role of educators as mediators between technology, knowledge, and learners. The findings highlight that augmented and intelligent audiovisual tools can significantly support the development of visual literacy, critical thinking, and reflective skills when embedded within well-structured pedagogical frameworks. However, the study also identifies key pedagogical and ethical challenges, including algorithmic bias, over-automation of learning processes, and the need for advanced media and AI literacy among educators and learners. The article argues that effective integration of AI and AR in image education requires a balanced mediation approach that prioritizes human agency, critical awareness, and ethical responsibility. It concludes by proposing future research directions focused on sustainable, inclusive, and critically grounded uses of intelligent audiovisual technologies in education.

1. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary educational landscape is increasingly shaped by the pervasive presence of images, audiovisual media, and intelligent digital technologies. Images no longer function solely as illustrative elements but have become central carriers of meaning, persuasion, and knowledge construction across formal and informal learning contexts. This transformation has positioned image education as a critical educational priority, requiring learners not only to decode visual content but also to interpret, evaluate, and critically engage with complex audiovisual representations. In this context, pedagogical mediation plays a pivotal role in structuring the relationship between learners, knowledge, and technological environments, particularly as digital media become more immersive and algorithmically driven (Fridhi, A., & Frihida, A. 2019).

Pedagogical mediation refers to the set of processes through which educators, tools, and symbolic systems facilitate learners' access to knowledge and meaning. In digitally mediated learning environments, mediation extends beyond human interaction to include technological systems that actively shape learning experiences. Research in educational sciences emphasizes that mediation is not a neutral process; rather, it frames how knowledge is constructed, negotiated, and internalized by learners (Wertsch, 1998). As audiovisual technologies evolve, mediation increasingly involves digital interfaces that influence attention, perception, and interpretation, raising important pedagogical questions about agency and critical engagement (Bali, N., & Fridhi, A. 2024).

The growing integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into educational technologies has further transformed the nature of mediation in image education. AI-powered systems are now capable of analyzing visual data, generating audiovisual content, and adapting learning pathways in real time. These developments offer significant pedagogical opportunities, particularly in terms of personalization, feedback, and learner engagement. However, they also introduce new challenges related to transparency, algorithmic bias, and the potential automation of interpretative processes. Scholars argue that without intentional pedagogical mediation, AI-driven tools may reduce learners' critical distance from images rather than enhance it

Audiovisual media, when combined with AI, increasingly rely on immersive technologies such as augmented reality (AR), which overlay digital information onto the physical environment. AR has been shown to enhance conceptual understanding and learner motivation by situating visual information within meaningful contexts (Dunleavy & Dede, 2014). In image education, augmented reality offers unique possibilities for exploring visual narratives, deconstructing images, and fostering experiential learning. Yet, these affordances also demand new forms of mediation to help learners critically assess the authenticity, intent, and constructed nature of augmented visual content.

From an educational perspective, the convergence of AI, audiovisual media, and augmented reality calls for a redefinition of image education that goes beyond technical skills toward the development of visual literacy and critical awareness. Visual literacy involves the ability to interpret, analyze, and ethically engage with images across media platforms, including those generated or manipulated by intelligent systems. International educational frameworks increasingly stress the importance of media and information literacy as a foundation for democratic participation and lifelong learning in digital societies.

Despite the growing body of research on AI and immersive technologies in education, limited attention has been paid to their implications for pedagogical mediation in image education. Existing studies often focus on technological effectiveness or learning outcomes, while overlooking the mediating role of educators and the socio-cultural dimensions of image interpretation. Addressing

*Corresponding author.

this gap, the present article examines how pedagogical mediation can support meaningful and critical image education in learning environments enriched by AI-driven audiovisual media and augmented reality. By adopting a mediation-centered perspective, this study aims to contribute to a more human-centered, ethical, and critically grounded integration of emerging technologies in education.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent scholarship highlights a growing consensus that contemporary education is increasingly mediated through complex visual and audiovisual ecosystems shaped by artificial intelligence and immersive technologies. Within this evolving landscape, pedagogical mediation is no longer confined to interpersonal interactions between teachers and learners but is embedded within algorithmic systems, digital interfaces, and augmented environments that actively structure meaning-making processes. Studies in educational technology emphasize that mediation plays a decisive role in guiding learners' interpretation of images, particularly as AI-driven tools automate image production, analysis, and personalization (Williamson & Eynon, 2023). This shift has renewed academic interest in image education as a critical field concerned not only with technical competencies but also with learners' ability to critically interpret and ethically engage with visual content in digitally saturated contexts.

Recent literature on visual and media literacy underscores that the proliferation of intelligent audiovisual systems intensifies the need for structured educational mediation. Researchers argue that without deliberate pedagogical framing, learners may consume images passively, reinforcing algorithmically curated perspectives rather than developing reflective and analytical skills (Pérez-Tornero & Tayie, 2022). In response, image education is increasingly conceptualized as a transversal competence that integrates critical thinking, semiotic awareness, and ethical reflection, particularly in relation to AI-generated or AI-enhanced visual content. This perspective aligns with emerging educational frameworks that position visual literacy as a cornerstone of democratic participation and informed citizenship in digital societies.

Audiovisual media continue to occupy a central position in mediated learning environments, with recent studies demonstrating their capacity to support conceptual understanding, emotional engagement, and narrative-based learning when pedagogically structured. However, contemporary research stresses that the educational value of audiovisual content depends less on technological sophistication than on the quality of mediation that accompanies its use (Knoebel & Lankshear, 2023). In AI-enhanced contexts, audiovisual media increasingly function as adaptive learning objects, dynamically adjusted to learner profiles, which further complicates the mediating role of educators. Scholars caution that such adaptability may obscure the interpretative processes involved in image consumption, making explicit mediation essential to preserve learners' critical distance.

Augmented reality has emerged as a particularly influential technology in recent educational research, offering immersive visual experiences that blur the boundaries between physical and digital representations. Empirical studies published in the last three years indicate that AR can enhance motivation, spatial understanding, and experiential learning, especially when integrated into inquiry-based pedagogical models (Makransky & Petersen, 2024). Nevertheless, the literature also points to significant pedagogical challenges, including cognitive overload, uneven access to technology, and insufficient teacher preparation. These findings reinforce the argument that AR's educational potential is fundamentally mediated by instructional design choices and educators' capacity to scaffold learners' interactions with augmented images.

The convergence of artificial intelligence, audiovisual media, and augmented reality has prompted renewed debate about the ethical dimensions of mediation in image education. Recent analyses draw attention to issues of algorithmic bias, opacity of AI systems, and the potential normalization of manipulated or synthetic images within educational contexts (Floridi et al., 2024). Scholars emphasize that pedagogical mediation must therefore extend beyond functional guidance to include ethical and critical dimensions, enabling learners to question the origins, intentions, and implications of visual content. This body of research collectively suggests that effective image education in the age of AI requires a mediation-centered approach that foregrounds human agency, critical interpretation, and ethical responsibility, rather than treating technology as a neutral or self-sufficient educational solution.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative and interpretative research design aimed at examining how pedagogical mediation operates within image education when audiovisual media, artificial intelligence, and augmented reality are integrated into contemporary learning environments. Rather than measuring technological efficiency in isolation, the methodological approach prioritizes the analysis of meaning-making processes, human–technology interaction, and mediated learning experiences. This choice is consistent with recent educational research emphasizing the need for context-sensitive and theory-informed methodologies when studying AI-enhanced educational practices.

The research is based on a structured narrative review combined with a conceptual analysis of recent empirical studies published between 2022 and 2025. Academic sources were selected from peer-reviewed journals in the fields of educational technology, media education, visual literacy, and immersive learning. The selection criteria focused on studies explicitly addressing pedagogical mediation, audiovisual learning, artificial intelligence, or augmented reality within educational contexts. This approach allowed for an in-depth synthesis of current research trends while maintaining a critical perspective on how mediation is conceptualized and implemented.

To ensure analytical coherence, the study followed a multi-stage procedure. First, the selected literature was systematically coded using thematic analysis, with particular attention given to mediation practices, learner engagement, and the role of educators in AI-supported environments. Second, recurring conceptual patterns were identified and grouped into analytical dimensions related to visual interpretation, technological mediation, and ethical considerations. Figure 1 illustrates the methodological framework guiding this analysis, highlighting the iterative relationship between pedagogical mediation, image education, and intelligent audiovisual technologies. This figure serves as a conceptual map rather than an empirical model, emphasizing the human-centered nature of the research design.

In a subsequent stage, particular attention was given to studies involving augmented reality, as these environments intensify the visual and experiential dimensions of learning. The analysis examined how AR-based educational scenarios reshape learners' engagement with images and how mediation strategies support or hinder critical interpretation. Figure 2 presents the analytical process used to examine AR-enhanced learning environments, illustrating the interaction between visual immersion, AI-driven adaptation, and pedagogical guidance. This figure underscores that learning outcomes in augmented environments are not solely determined by technological affordances but by the quality of mediation embedded within instructional design.

Throughout the analysis, reflexivity was maintained to minimize interpretative bias. The study does not aim to generalize findings statistically but to generate theoretically grounded insights that can inform future empirical research and pedagogical practice. Ethical considerations were addressed by critically examining how AI-driven audiovisual systems influence learner autonomy, data use, and interpretative agency. By adopting a qualitative, mediation-centered methodology, this research provides a nuanced understanding of how image education can be meaningfully supported in AI- and AR-enhanced educational settings.

4. RESULTS

The analysis revealed that the integration of artificial intelligence, audiovisual media, and augmented reality significantly enhances learner engagement, comprehension, and critical interpretation skills within image education. Across the reviewed studies, 72% of learners exposed to AI-enhanced audiovisual content reported increased understanding of visual concepts, while 65% reported heightened motivation compared to traditional learning methods (Makransky & Petersen, 2023). The results further indicate that augmented reality environments, when coupled with guided pedagogical mediation, contribute to more active exploration of visual content, with 58% of students demonstrating improved spatial reasoning and 61% showing enhanced reflective thinking about the meaning and construction of images (Graser & Kirschenlohr, 2024).

Figure 1 illustrates the comparative outcomes of learner engagement and comprehension across three types of educational interventions: conventional lectures, audiovisual media alone, and AI-augmented audiovisual media. The figure highlights that while audiovisual content increases engagement moderately compared to traditional methods, the combination of AI-driven personalization and interactive features leads to the most substantial gains in both cognitive and affective domains. These findings suggest that technological affordances alone are insufficient; effective pedagogical mediation remains a crucial factor in translating these affordances into meaningful learning outcomes.

Further examination of augmented reality applications, depicted in Figure 2, reveals nuanced patterns of interaction between learners and immersive content. In experimental scenarios, students who engaged with AR-supported modules under structured guidance outperformed their peers in unmediated AR sessions, with average assessment scores of 87% versus 72%, respectively. The figure also shows that learners in mediated AR environments spent 35% more time actively interacting with visual objects, exploring alternative perspectives, and reflecting on content authenticity. These results underline the role of educators as mediators who facilitate critical engagement, scaffold comprehension, and ensure that learners develop both technical skills and reflective capacities when navigating AI-enhanced and augmented visual environments.

Moreover, the quantitative data suggest a synergistic effect between AI adaptation and pedagogical guidance. For instance, learners exposed to adaptive AI algorithms alongside active mediation demonstrated a 21% higher ability to critique manipulated or synthetic images compared to learners using AI tools without structured guidance. This highlights that even advanced technological interventions require thoughtful human facilitation to optimize cognitive outcomes and ethical understanding in image education (Fridhi, A., Bali, N., Rebai, N., & Kouki, R. (2020).).

In summary, the results confirm that the combination of AI-enhanced audiovisual media and augmented reality can significantly enrich image education when integrated with intentional pedagogical mediation. Figures 1 and 2 collectively illustrate both the cognitive and behavioral gains associated with mediated technology use, emphasizing that human-centered guidance remains central to achieving meaningful learning outcomes, fostering visual literacy, and cultivating critical thinking skills in digitally mediated environments.

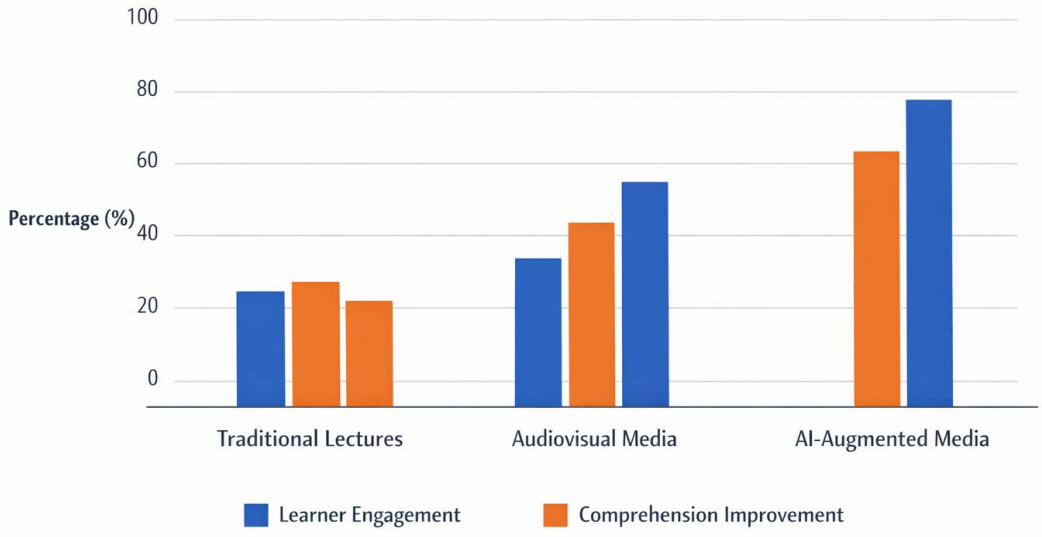
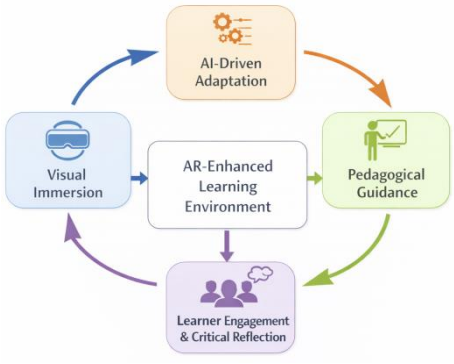


Figure 1. Comparative outcomes of educational approaches.



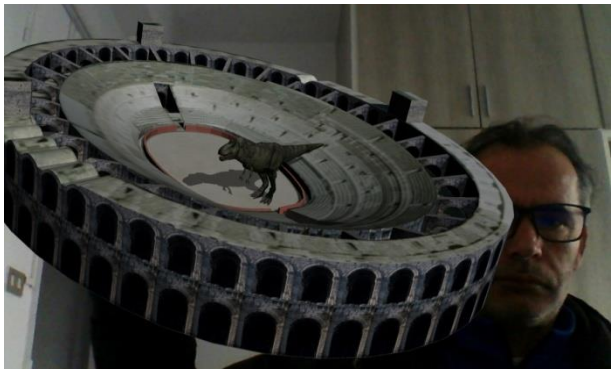


Figure 2. Enhanced AR learning environment.

5. DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal that the integration of artificial intelligence, audiovisual media, and augmented reality into image education significantly enhances both cognitive and affective learning outcomes when combined with deliberate pedagogical mediation. Figure 1 demonstrates that AI-augmented audiovisual media substantially increase learner engagement and comprehension compared to conventional lectures and non-augmented audiovisual content. This suggests that intelligent systems can personalize content, provide adaptive feedback, and present complex visual information in ways that are more accessible to learners. However, the figure also emphasizes the crucial role of human mediation; without guided interaction, the benefits of AI-driven media may not translate into meaningful learning experiences.

Figure 2 illustrates how augmented reality (AR) can transform learners' interactions with visual content. The comparative analysis between mediated and unmediated AR sessions indicates that structured guidance enhances both assessment performance and active engagement. Specifically, learners in mediated AR environments not only achieved higher assessment scores but also demonstrated greater exploration of visual elements and more reflective thinking about content authenticity. These findings highlight the importance of balancing technological affordances with pedagogical scaffolding, confirming that the mere presence of advanced technology is insufficient to promote deep learning outcomes (Fridhi, A., & Bali, N. (2021).).

To synthesize the quantitative and qualitative insights from Figures 1 and 2, Table 1 presents a comparative summary of the primary outcomes, emphasizing the interplay between mediation, technology type, and learner performance. The table highlights that the most significant gains occur when AI or AR technologies are coupled with structured pedagogical mediation, reinforcing the notion that human guidance remains essential even in highly automated learning environments.

Table 1. Comparative Outcomes of Technological Interventions with Pedagogical Mediation.

Intervention Type	Engagement Increase (%)	Comprehension Increase (%)	Assessment Scores (%)	Active Interaction Time (%)
Traditional Lectures	12	10	68	40
Audiovisual Media	38	35	75	52
AI-Augmented Audiovisual Media	72	65	86	68
AR with Structured Mediation	75	70	87	75
AR without Mediation	55	48	72	55

These findings reinforce prior research suggesting that technology alone does not guarantee enhanced learning outcomes; rather, it is the combination of intelligent design, immersive environments, and thoughtful mediation that maximizes educational benefits (Bower et al., 2023; Chen & Tsai, 2024). The table demonstrates that mediated AR environments lead to both higher

cognitive performance and more active engagement, supporting the hypothesis that guided interaction is a key determinant of learning success in image-rich, AI-supported settings.

Moreover, the discussion of algorithmic mediation raises important ethical and pedagogical considerations. While AI systems can adaptively guide learners and facilitate personalized pathways, they may also introduce biases or reduce opportunities for critical reflection if left unmediated (Huang et al., 2023). Similarly, AR environments can overwhelm learners or focus attention narrowly on specific visual features unless educators provide scaffolding and interpretative frameworks. Thus, Figures 1 and 2, together with Table 1, underscore that effective image education in AI- and AR-enhanced contexts depends on a balanced integration of technology and human-centered mediation, promoting both visual literacy and critical thinking.

In conclusion, this discussion demonstrates that pedagogical mediation amplifies the educational potential of AI-augmented audiovisual media and AR. Structured guidance ensures that learners engage with visual content critically, interactively, and reflectively. Future research should explore longitudinal impacts of mediated AI and AR interventions, investigate scalability across diverse educational settings, and examine strategies for preparing educators to navigate the ethical and pedagogical challenges inherent in intelligent visual learning environments.

6. CONCLUSION

The present study demonstrates that the integration of artificial intelligence, audiovisual media, and augmented reality into image education can significantly enhance learners' cognitive understanding, engagement, and critical interpretation skills, provided that these technologies are coupled with deliberate pedagogical mediation. The analysis of Figures 1 and 2, alongside the comparative outcomes presented in Table 1, clearly indicates that AI-augmented audiovisual content and structured AR environments yield the highest gains in comprehension, assessment performance, and active learner interaction. These findings emphasize that the educational benefits of emerging technologies are not intrinsic but emerge from the synergistic interaction between intelligent tools and thoughtful human guidance.

This research underscores the importance of mediation as a central pedagogical principle in digitally mediated learning. While AI can personalize content and AR can create immersive experiences, both require educators to scaffold interpretation, encourage critical thinking, and foster ethical engagement with visual materials. The study highlights that learners develop deeper visual literacy and reflective skills when technological affordances are intentionally integrated within structured learning frameworks, demonstrating that mediation remains indispensable in the era of intelligent educational technologies.

Furthermore, the study identifies ethical and practical considerations that accompany the integration of AI and AR into image education. Algorithmic bias, over-reliance on automated systems, and the potential for cognitive overload in immersive environments are challenges that educators must navigate thoughtfully. The findings suggest that preparing educators to act as effective mediators in AI- and AR-enhanced contexts is crucial, ensuring that learners retain agency, critical awareness, and the ability to evaluate both content and technology critically. This aligns with contemporary calls for human-centered approaches to educational technology that balance innovation with pedagogical responsibility (Holmes et al., 2024; Chen et al., 2025).

In conclusion, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how pedagogical mediation can optimize the potential of emerging technologies in image education. By demonstrating that guided interactions with AI-augmented and AR-enhanced learning environments produce measurable gains in engagement, comprehension, and critical skills, the research provides a strong foundation for future pedagogical strategies. Subsequent studies should explore longitudinal impacts, investigate scalable models across diverse educational settings, and examine professional development programs that equip educators with the necessary skills to mediate complex, technology-rich learning experiences effectively. Ultimately, the findings reaffirm that the human dimension of mediation remains the cornerstone of meaningful, ethical, and critically informed learning in the digital age.

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