

# Critical Studies in Education and Technology 2025 - India

## Meeting location (town/city):

**Bengaluru** (in-person) and **New Delhi** (online), **India**. Both locations ran a single joint hybrid half a day event on the 21st February, 2025. Event details [here](#).

## Meeting coordinator(s)

- Chandra, IT for Change, Bengaluru, India
- Aishwarya Sharma, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, Delhi

## People involved in writing the report

The meeting coordinators contributed to this report. In addition, Gurumurthy Kasinathan, Director, IT for Change contributed content. Content is also sourced from presentations of other meeting attendees. This report is licensed under CC BY SA.

## Meeting attendees

The following participants presented papers at the event:

1. Dr. Shama Parveen Ansari, Independent
2. Yashi Goyal, Department of Education, University of Delhi
3. Bharti Tyagi, Central Institute of Education (CIE), Department of Education, University of Delhi, Delhi-110007
4. Chandrang Pathak, Department of Education, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda
5. Abhishek Srivastava, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University Delhi
6. Sarath Kurmana, IIT Bombay
7. Vaishali Garg, Regional Institute of Education, Ajmer (NCERT)
8. Dr. Madhu Bala, Assistant Professor Sociology (Guest), Dr. B R Ambedkar University Delhi.
9. Ansh Arora, FOSS United
10. Nooria Rehman and Mansi Sharma, Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies
11. Basiluddeen Azad and Liz Ann, Independent
12. Debosmita Mukherjee, National Institute of Education Planning and Administration.

## Panelists:

Dr. Anurag Shukla, Director of Education and Policy at Bṛhat, Visiting faculty at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, and ISDM-CPID fellow.

Prof. Sayantan Mandal, Co-convenor, *Research Interest Group 13* - Education and Technology, Comparative Education Society of India, and Assistant Professor, Dept. of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Jammu.

Gurumurthy Kasinathan, Co-convenor, *Research Interest Group 13* - Education and Technology, Comparative Education Society of India, and Director, IT for Change.

**Summary of main points from your discussions that you would like to make public – we are especially interested in how these questions relate to your local contexts!**

**#1. What are the pressing issues, concerns, tensions and problems that surround EdTech in our locality? What questions do we need to ask, and what approaches will help us research these questions?**

- Tech is not a panacea for whatever ails education in the country. There is a concerted push across states to see EdTech as such - this is by corporations and NGOs that they fund. We see opaque contracts handed out to corporate tech vendors using the public purse.
- The hype around Edtech generated by corporations and amplified by governments, accepting it as a one-shot solution without concrete evidence and research base. Orthodoxy of technology optimism
- Neglect of teacher agency and role in the push for EdTech. Teachers as 'passive receivers' is a big reason for failure of EdTech projects.
- The hype and push around generative AI in education is not at all matched by programs to develop teacher competencies in using these tools; this can lead to a tech takeover of the teaching space
- Diversion of state resources to investments in EdTech overlooking more fundamental needs; for instance, computers and smart boards in schools but unreliable power supply
- A sense of anxiety / fear of missing out on quality education if tech is not involved spreading among the public

**Questions that need to be asked:**

- Edtech on whose terms? Who is defining edtech? Who is shaping the dominant narratives that are influencing people?
- How are we integrating tech in educational spaces and for what purposes?

Approach: Shifting from "state of the art" to "state of the actual" (Selwyn, 2014)

**#2. What social harms are we seeing associated with digital technology and education in our locality?**

- Loss (and potential loss) of critical thinking abilities in the teacher community (particularly following the possibilities of Generative AI in educational settings)
- Inappropriate learning content, with control over content residing with EdTech vendors rather than teachers (grave implications for distorting understanding of serious issues)
- Loss of student privacy
- Parents from marginalized sections spend disproportionate amounts of their incomes on digital tech with no corresponding benefits. They do not have an idea how their children are using the phones/connectivity.
- Using devices from a very young age (often as a means to engage the child while parents are busy with survival tasks or otherwise) can impair the child's development. Digital addiction.

**Questions that need to be asked:**

- Why are smartphones seen as a solution to problems of access to education when the devices are designed neither for education nor for children?

- Why are we buying into Generative AI as an educational tool without systematic evaluation of its fitment in education?

**#3. What does the political economy of EdTech look like** in our region? What do local EdTech markets look like? How are global Big Tech corporations manifest in local education systems? What does EdTech policy look like, and which actors are driving policymaking? What do we find if we ‘follow the money’?

- India: market captured by giants such as BYJUs, Unacademy, Physicswallah, etc.,
- Shadow policy-making by Tech corporations: Large ‘EdTech’ NGOs funded by the Tech corporations have captured spaces in education policy - their highly paid consultants (often not with any background or understanding of education) sit in the SCERTs (State Council for Educational Research and Training) and their views influence the education department’s programs
- Lack of understanding of what EdTech is and complete lack of critical perspectives in such NGOs that promote EdTech
- No government-led Edtech policy in India,
- Edtech players themselves set rules and regulations on their terms.
- Narrative shaped by Big Tech Corps and Edtech enthusiasts: Edtech is understood as more of a positivist project that will transform the education system and is a sure-shot solution to existing problems.
- Why are public institutions violating mandates and disregarding recommendations for the use of Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) in EdTech and tying up with private, proprietary platforms?

**#4. What grounds for hope are there?** Can we point to local instances of digital technology leading to genuine social benefits and empowerment? What local push-back and resistance against egregious forms of EdTech is evident? What alternate imaginaries are being circulated about education and digital futures?

- More awareness about the challenges and problems from uncritical use of EdTech
- As EdTech becomes more mainstream, more educators are keen to engage with the phenomenon (they are now less dismissive of EdTech as they used to be, as they see it getting a lot of attention and energies)
- Greater pressure to use EdTech (from industry/school management/ government) is also creating desire to understand it better (and critically)
- Increasing awareness of FOSS and Open Educational Resources (OER) now
- Increasing ‘tech awareness’ and felicity on the part of teachers, which reduces inhibition to engage.
- A lesson: The case of BYJUs (once a unicorn)- It failed not just because of poor financial management and lack of transparency but also because of customer dissatisfaction regarding its product marketing claims and actual educational efficiency (The Financial Express, 2025).
- “Green shoot” local attempts being made to build pedagogy-centric, teacher-controlled, privacy-first, fully-offline AI educational tools using only FOSS technologies

**#5. Any other points that were raised during the meeting that you want to highlight!**

We leave you with a quote each from our paper presenters that broadly capture our collective thinking and mood!

- "The large-scale adoption and normalization of technological solutions in education will have long-term consequences"
- "Both FOSS and Academia have idealistic goals. Long-lasting outcomes can only be achieved by working together in the open."
- "AI was seen as a judgement-free space where teachers could ask questions without fear of criticism"
- "AI is not going anywhere, the real question is how do we make sure it enhances our learning instead of replacing our thinking"
- "Teachers are not [being] prepared for using modern [educational] technologies"
- "Bridging the gap between edtech and rural communities is most important"
- "The smartphone is not designed for education and it is a huge issue calling a smartphone an educational device"
- "AI literacy, ethics and core competencies should be embedded in programs to prepare future educators"
- "The subject-specific investigation of various (XR/VR) tools need to explore effective content creation"
- "Proprietary products and services limit the capacity of universities to fulfill the broader social objectives of widening educational participation"
- "By implementing structured interventions and responsible technology policies, we can ensure digital education enhances learning without compromising students' well-being"
- "EdTech is not inherently bad, but current implementations favor corporations over students"