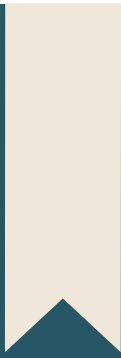


Opportunities, Risks, and Challenges of EdTech and AI in Education from the Youth Perspective

Research Report | October 2025

Principal Research Lead- Sachi Satapathy, Director, AFDC Global



Global Campaign for Education(GCE) - The Global Campaign for Education (GCE), headquartered in Johannesburg, South Africa, is a civil society movement established in 1999 to unify and coordinate voices on the global education agenda, providing leadership in advocacy to end exclusion in education. GCE mobilizes over 100 national and regional coalitions, along with international organizations representing diverse groups such as teachers, parents, youth, and child rights advocates, to strengthen civil society's capacity and hold governments accountable for delivering free, quality, public education to all. GCE also leads efforts to address contemporary global challenges in education through transformative advocacy, with a special focus on equity, inclusion, and marginalized communities across all actions.

This research report was prepared under a consultancy agreement and conducted independently by Global Campaign for Education (GCE), Johannesburg, South Africa. The research report was implemented by Sachi Satapathy serving as the Lead Researcher (Consultant) for GCE/GIZ, Germany.

This research report was commissioned by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and is part of GCE's efforts to advance the right to free, quality, public education for all, under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, its pledge to leave no one behind, and in alignment with SDG4 on quality education.

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First and foremost, we thank the 124 youths who participated in the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Youth voices—drawn from diverse backgrounds in countries such as Malawi, Nigeria, Somalia, South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and beyond—provided invaluable perspectives on the promises and perils of AI. Your pragmatism, critiques, and calls for authentic co-creation have shaped this work and inspired its recommendations. We are equally grateful to the representatives from 34 GCE alliance youth organizations, 11 Civil society Organisations, who engaged in Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). Your organizational expertise, drawn from regions including Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East, highlighted systemic barriers and ethical concerns, enriching our understanding of AI's broader implications.

Special appreciation goes to the 46 teachers who completed our surveys, offering frontline insights from rural and urban classrooms in countries like Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Ghana, Bolivia, Bangladesh, Palestine, Vietnam, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, El Salvador and beyond. Your reflections on pedagogical impacts, infrastructure challenges, and the need for professional development align powerfully with youth demands, reinforcing a unified call for equitable, human-centered AI integration.

We also acknowledge the essential contributions from GCE National Education Coalitions (NECs) and GCE leadership (Grant Kasowanjete, Cecilia Soriano, Giovanna Mode, Wolfgang Leumer) whose consultations provided strategic context and alignment with GCE's mandate. Your guidance ensured this research remains relevant to ongoing advocacy for publicly financed, inclusive education. We also thank Salma Deedat, GCE and Alexandra Huddart (AF Development Care, Intern) for providing logistic support to organize FGDs.

This study spanned 31 countries across all regions, capturing a rich tapestry of experiences from the Global South. We are indebted to the participants from nations including Burundi, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gambia, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Mozambique, Malawi, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Chad, Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and others. Your collective input highlights the global yet context-specific nature of AI's opportunities and risks.

Your contributions not only informed this report but also pave the way for a more equitable AI future in education. Thank you for your time, trust, and commitment to advancing the right to quality education for all.

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2. List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	
AI	Artificial Intelligence
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EdTech	Educational Technology
EiE	Education in Emergencies
EOL	Education Out Loud
ERIC	Education Resources Information Centre
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GCE	Global Campaign for Education
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
KII	Key Informant Interview
KIX	Knowledge and Innovation Exchange
NEC	National Education Coalition
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDG4	Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education)
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNSR	United Nations Special Rapporteur
YAG	Youth Action Group

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Executive Summary

This report examines the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into education across the Global South, drawing centrally on the perspectives of youth, complemented by the views of teachers and civil society leaders to inform a strategic roadmap for the Global Campaign for Education (GCE). The research reveals a consensus among key stakeholders: while AI presents a significant opportunity to enhance learning, its current trajectory threatens to deepen existing inequalities and undermine the core principles of education unless guided by equitable, rights-based public policy.

This study's primary objective is to explore how AI contributes to—or poses risks for—the realization of the right to education from a youth-centric perspective. Employing an exploratory mixed-methods approach, the research gathered in-depth qualitative data through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIs), complemented by quantitative surveys with teachers. As an exploratory study, its findings offer rich, indicative insights into specific contexts rather than being statistically generalisable.

This research is to explore and understand, from a youth perspective and in the context of GCE's mandate, how artificial intelligence contributes to—or poses risks for—the realisation of the right to education, in order to inform GCE's future advocacy, policy positions, and programmatic considerations. Specifically, the research aims to: Bridge the knowledge gap by capturing current youth perceptions, understanding, and use of AI tools, which are presently undocumented within GCE. Centre the voices of youth and teachers, ensuring their experiences and insights are central to GCE's understanding of AI's pedagogical, social, and ethical impacts. Scrutinise the role of the private sector, providing clarity and recommendations for regulation and accountability in a manner that aligns with GCE's commitment to public education and Inform evidence-based advocacy by generating youth-centred policy recommendations to harness the opportunities offered by AI while mitigating its profound risks for equity, quality, and inclusion.

Youth Perspectives on AI and Education

Youth in the Global South perceive AI as a "double-edged sword". They actively use tools like ChatGPT and Canva as powerful "thinking partners" that accelerate learning and improve efficiency. However, this optimism is overshadowed by a dominant fear that over-reliance on AI will lead to the erosion of critical thinking skills, a concern deemed "urgent" by over 91% of youth organizations.

The most significant barrier to equitable AI access is the profound digital divide. A lack of internet access (cited as a severe barrier by 85%) and digital literacy (82%) creates a "two-tiered world" where AI primarily benefits privileged, urban students. This is compounded by systemic issues, including the "westernized and colonized" bias of AI tools that fail to represent local languages and cultures, and a "pay-to-win" economic model that locks the most powerful features behind expensive subscriptions. As a practical response, youth proposed the development of an "offline-first AI strategy" with downloadable modules and zero-rated data for educational platforms to ensure access in low-connectivity regions. Crucially, youth feel excluded from the governance of this technology. A striking 50% describe their involvement in policy discussions as "tokenistic," leading to a powerful and unified demand for authentic co-creation, summarized by the mantra: "Don't decide for us, decide with us".

Teacher Perspectives on AI and Education

Educators in the Global South mirror the nuanced views of their students, expressing cautious optimism despite facing immense infrastructural challenges. A majority of teachers (60.9%) work in rural areas where technology is scarce, and over 73% report their students have limited or no internet access at home. Despite these barriers, teachers are proactive, with over 71% already using AI tools to create educational content and plan lessons. They see the risk of AI shifting their role from a content provider to "more of a facilitator". Their primary concerns align perfectly with those of the youth, identifying the erosion of critical thinking as the top pedagogical risk and the digital divide as the greatest obstacle to integration.

A critical gap in algorithmic literacy was also identified; while a majority of teachers (63.1%) believe AI is "neutral," a similar majority (58.7%) are concerned it will exacerbate inequalities. Teachers feel largely excluded from policy decisions, with 43.5% reporting they have not been consulted on AI policies. This has led to a clear call for robust professional development and a leading role in co-developing the guidelines and regulations that will shape the future of AI in their classrooms. There is a significant unmet demand for training, with 50% of teachers reporting they have either received no training and want it, or have been forced to learn on their own.

Civil Society Perspectives

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) echo the dual vision of AI as a potential equalizer and a driver of division. Their primary concerns are that AI will exacerbate the digital divide, accelerate the commercialization of education, and create risks for data privacy and surveillance. CSOs are shaping an advocacy agenda centered on the primacy of public regulation over corporate interests, and they see their evolving role as watchdogs for accountability, conveners for capacity building, and amplifiers for marginalized voices to ensure AI is governed in the public interest.

A Strategic Roadmap for GCE- The findings suggest a strategy focused on four key pillars:

- **Champion Digital Infrastructure as a Fundamental Right:** Address the digital divide as a prerequisite for equitable education in the 21st century. This includes advocating for concrete solutions like "Offline-First" development and "Zero-Rating" policies for educational platforms.
- **Promote Critical AI Literacy:** Given the issue of "westernized and colonialized" bias of AI tools, there is a need to ensure relevance of AI and content that serves the contexts (e.g. language, etc) and needs of learners. Both knowledge production and pedagogy must be ensured in the use of AI.
- **Demand Human-Rights-Based Regulation:** Push for strong, government-led oversight of the EdTech sector to counter corporate overreach, protect student data, and ensure accountability, ensuring that technology serves as a public good.
- **Embed Authentic Co-Creation in Governance:** Establish formal structures that move beyond tokenism and give youth and teachers a genuine role in shaping AI policies.

This report concludes with actionable recommendations for GCE, including the launch of a "Critical AI Literacy" campaign and the establishment of a GCE Youth and Teacher AI Governance Council. Long-term goals focus on advocating for public investment in infrastructure and locally developed AI ecosystems, ensuring that technology empowers all learners, rather than being a privilege for a select few



Chapter-1

Introduction, Desk Review & Methodology



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This chapter establishes the foundational context for a study on Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education, conducted within the framework of the Global Campaign for Education's (GCE) mission. It begins by outlining the global landscape, where the rapid integration of AI presents both profound opportunities for personalized learning and significant risks related to equity, privacy, and commercialization. A comprehensive desk review of GCE's internal documents and external academic literature is presented, systematically identifying critical knowledge gaps. The review reveals an urgent need to understand the perspectives of youth and teachers, define a policy on private sector involvement, and assess the real-world impacts of AI on inclusion, pedagogy, and gender equality. In response to these gaps, the chapter details the study's rationale and objectives, culminating in the presentation of an exploratory mixed-methods research methodology. This methodological framework, encompassing focus groups, interviews, and surveys across 31 countries, is designed to gather the empirical evidence necessary for GCE to develop an informed, rights-based advocacy position on AI in education.



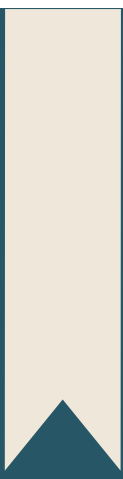
Chapter-2

Youth Perspectives on AI & Education



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This chapter delves into the nuanced perspectives of youth from the Global South on the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education. Based on extensive Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews, it explores the dual perception of AI as a "double-edged sword": a powerful "thinking partner" that enhances learning and efficiency, yet a significant threat that risks eroding critical thinking skills. The analysis highlights the digital divide—characterized by a lack of internet, electricity, and devices—as the most formidable barrier to equitable access, creating a "two-tiered world" benefiting privileged urban students. The chapter examines systemic issues, including the "westernized and colonialized" bias of AI tools and the inequitable "pay-to-win" economic models of private corporations. A central finding is the unified youth demand to move beyond "tokenistic" involvement in policymaking toward genuine co-creation, encapsulated by the mantra: "Don't decide for us, decide with us." The chapter further provides a comparative analysis of regional perspectives, detailing how unique socio-economic contexts shape specific priorities and fears across Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and Europe/North America. Ultimately, it synthesizes these findings into a strategic roadmap, advocating for policies grounded in digital infrastructure as a human right, critical AI literacy, and robust, youth-led governance to ensure AI serves as a public good.



Chapter-3

Teachers, AI, & Education: Global South Perspectives



(AI Generated Image)

This chapter investigates the perspectives of teachers from the Global South on the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education, drawing on a survey of 46 educators, primarily from rural and humanities backgrounds in the African region. The findings reveal a teaching workforce that is cautiously optimistic about AI's potential to enhance pedagogy and professional efficiency; however, this optimism is severely constrained by the profound and pervasive digital divide. The lack of reliable internet, electricity, and personal devices is identified as the foremost barrier to AI adoption, a reality that paralyzes effective implementation for both teachers and their students. Despite these challenges, a majority of teachers are actively experimenting with AI tools, primarily for content creation and lesson planning. Their primary pedagogical concern—perfectly mirroring the perspectives of youth—is the potential for AI to erode students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The chapter highlights a remarkable alignment between teacher and youth viewpoints, creating a unified call for a human-centered approach to AI. Educators feel excluded from policy discussions and strongly advocate for a leading role in co-creating regulations, alongside an urgent demand for comprehensive professional development in AI integration, ethics, and pedagogical strategies. In conclusion, the chapter argues that for AI to be an equitable and effective tool in the Global South, its integration requires prioritizing infrastructural investment, ensuring teachers are central to policy-making, and empowering them to navigate both the promise and peril of AI in their classrooms



Chapter-4

Civil Society Perspectives From Global South



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This chapter synthesizes insights from in-depth interviews with 11 Civil Society Organisation (CSO) leaders from the Global South, positioning them as crucial, independent guardians of equitable AI in education. A key aspect of this analysis is that these CSOs are external to the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) alliance, providing impartial validation of the concerns raised by GCE’s internal constituencies. The findings reveal that CSOs hold a dual vision of AI, recognizing its potential to bridge educational gaps and personalize learning while simultaneously fearing its capacity to exacerbate the digital divide, accelerate the commercialization of education, and compromise student data privacy. Reflecting a profound mistrust of corporate motives, the CSOs’ advocacy agenda is centered on establishing strong, rights-based public regulation to govern AI, rather than allowing private interests to lead. They assert that closing the digital divide through public investment and providing comprehensive teacher training are non-negotiable prerequisites for any equitable AI implementation. The chapter highlights the evolving role of CSOs as they become essential watchdogs for accountability, conveners for multi-stakeholder collaboration, and amplifiers for the marginalized voices of youth and teachers. Ultimately, CSOs are presented as a unified front advocating for a human-centered shift that treats AI as a public good, ensuring its development is grounded in equity, human rights, and democratic oversight.



Chapter-5

**Twenty Stories of AI's Impact on Youth
and Education**



(AI Generated Image)

This chapter presents twenty stories and examples, documented during interview with Youth, Teachers, Civil Society Organisations for this research work, that illuminate the multifaceted role of artificial intelligence in education worldwide.

From empowering students in conflict zones to addressing the digital divide and ethical dilemmas, these narratives highlight both the transformative potential and the complex challenges of integrating AI into learning environments. Spanning diverse contexts—from Gaza's resilience to Ghana's offline innovations and Nigeria's teacher empowerment—these accounts underscore the need for equitable, culturally sensitive, and ethically grounded approaches to AI in education.



Chapter-6

Strategic Roadmap for Action

Commissioned by
**GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR
EDUCATION**
September 2025



(AI Generated Image)

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of the opportunities, risks, and challenges of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education from the perspective of the Global South. Grounded in an exploratory mixed-methods approach, the research draws on data from 124 youths, 46 teachers, and 34 Youth Organisations and 11 civil society organisations across 31 countries.

The findings reveal a strong consensus among stakeholders, who view AI as a "double-edged sword". While recognized as a powerful "thinking partner" that can enhance learning and efficiency, its integration is overshadowed by significant risks. The most urgent concern, shared by both youth and teachers, is the potential for over-reliance on AI to erode critical thinking skills.

The primary barrier to equitable integration is the profound digital divide, with a lack of internet access, electricity, and devices creating a "two-tiered world" that benefits privileged, urban students. This is compounded by systemic issues such as the "westernized and colonized" bias of AI tools that lack cultural relevance, and "pay-to-win" economic models that accelerate the commercialization of education. Reflecting a deep mistrust of corporate motives, there is a unified call for strong, government-led, human-rights-based regulation. A powerful demand to move beyond "tokenistic" engagement toward authentic co-creation is encapsulated in the youth mantra: "Don't decide for us, decide with us".

The report concludes with a strategic roadmap for the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), advocating for a human-centered approach. Key recommendations include championing digital infrastructure as a fundamental right, promoting critical AI literacy, demanding robust public regulation of the EdTech sector, and embedding youth and teacher co-creation into governance to ensure AI serves as an equitable public good rather than a tool for deepening inequality.



References & Annextures

AI, Education and Youth in Global South

Global Campaign for Education



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