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

Research Report | September 2025

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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.

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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Special appreciation goes to the 46 teachers who completed our surveys, offering frontline insights from rural and urban classrooms in countries like Nigeria, 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.

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, 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.

The Global Campaign for Education Secretariat (GCE)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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

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 (KIIs), 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

> *"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."*

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 colonialized" 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.

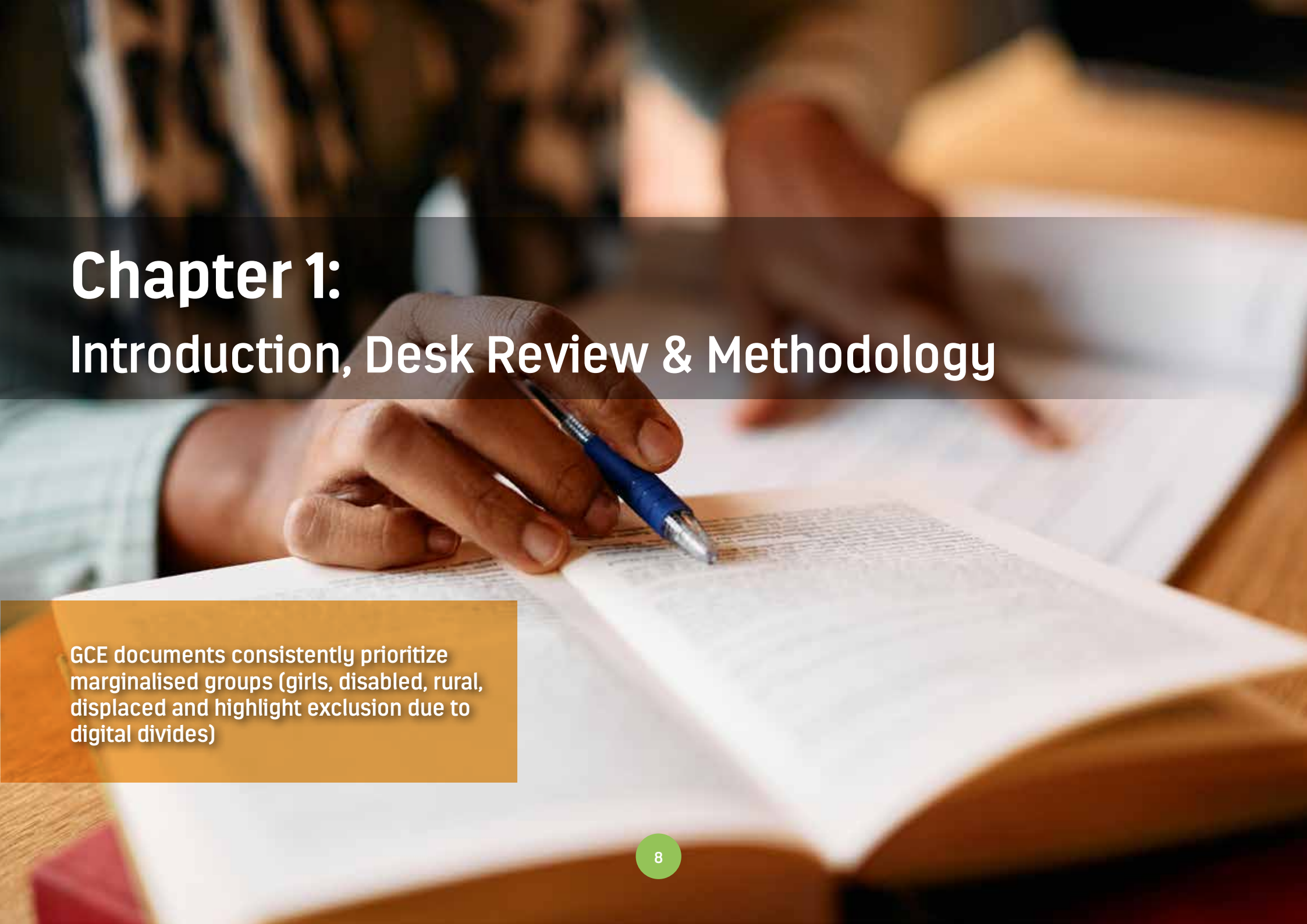
Demand Human-Rights-Based Regulation:

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:

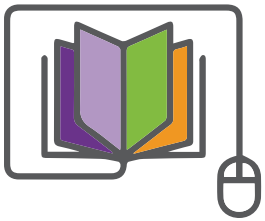
Establish formal structures that move beyond tokenism and give youth and teachers a genuine role in shaping AI policies.

This report concludes with actionable recommendations for GCE, including the launch of a "Critical AI Literacy" campaign, advocating for and implementing strong, government-led, human-rights-based regulation of the EdTech sector to ensure public oversight and accountability. 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

GCE documents consistently prioritize marginalised groups (girls, disabled, rural, displaced and highlight exclusion due to digital divides)



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.

1. Introduction

This chapter sets the context for the research, establishing its urgency and alignment with the Global Campaign for Education's (GCE) core mission. It outlines the global landscape of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education, situates the study within GCE's mandate, and details the methodological framework designed to explore this complex and rapidly evolving domain.

1.1. The Global Context

The world is witnessing a rapid and transformative integration of digital technology into every facet of society, and education is no exception. The recent and sudden visibility of generative AI applications has made the immense power of artificial intelligence palpable to the public, raising fundamental questions about the synergy and substitution between human and machine capabilities. This technological irruption presents a pivotal moment for global education systems. AI is framed as both a profound disruptor and a potential equaliser, offering an unprecedented opportunity to reimagine how education is delivered, accessed, and experienced. From AI-powered adaptive learning tools that promise personalized learning journeys to automated administrative systems that could free educators to focus on pedagogy, the potential benefits are significant. Technologies such as intelligent tutoring systems, virtual reality simulators, and accessibility tools hold the potential to improve the quality and equity of learning for all students, including those with disabilities or in low-resource settings.

However, this technological promise is shadowed by considerable risks. The massive shift to digital learning has exposed and often deepened persistent inequalities in access to technology and connectivity. Concerns abound regarding data privacy, algorithmic bias, the potential atrophy of human skills, the commercialisation of a fundamental public good, and the ethical implications of automated decision-making in student's lives. This dual potential for progress and peril makes the current moment a critical juncture for rights-based advocacy and evidence-informed policy.

1.2. GCE's Mandate and the Emerging AI Challenge

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) has a long and significant history of promoting and defending education as a basic human right and mobilising public pressure for quality, free, public education for all. Through extensive projects and campaigns, GCE has developed a strong foundation in advocating for equitable Educational Technology (EdTech) and digital literacy. AI represents a new and emerging area) area within GCE's programmatic and advocacy work. This research is designed to provide a first set of insights, particularly from youth perspectives.

The integration of AI into education directly challenges GCE's core principles. The movement's critical stance on the privatisation and commercialisation of education is particularly relevant, as the development and deployment of AI tools are overwhelmingly led by the private sector. This trend gives exacerbated power to commercial providers, who may promote products with values not always aligned with human rights and public good principles. Furthermore, GCE's deep commitment to equity is confronted by the reality of the digital divide; in high-income countries, 90% of young learners are digitally connected, a figure that drops to as low as 5% in Sub-Saharan Africa. AI deployment risks amplifying these existing structural inequalities if not governed by a steadfast commitment to inclusion. The emergence of AI is not merely a technological shift; it is a critical test. Financing education for all is the critical test for global commitment to the right to education.

It is decisive AI is being used at varying degrees in different countries. If we use this as a measure of global commitment, it might lead to pushing AI to countries where it is not needed. This is what is happening at the global level - the private sector pushing for more AI tools in education when basic infrastructure, teachers and other requirements are not even being met in low-income countries. Perhaps it is a critical challenge or critical point to the global commitment to education.

1.3. Research Rationale and Objectives

The imperative for this research is rooted in the need to explore the critical and rapidly evolving issue of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education. While some GCE members are making advancements in this area, a comprehensive internal review revealed a lack of documented perspectives from youth and teachers, limited data on the actual use of AI tools within GCE's network contexts, and an absence of a defined policy position on the role of the private sector in the AI-education ecosystem. This study is therefore essential to build an evidence base that is grounded in the lived realities of key GCE's constituencies, particularly youth and teachers.

1.4. Desk Review

1.4.1. Literature Review and Research Gaps

To contextualize this study, a desk review was conducted, integrating the Global Campaign for Education's (GCE) internal documents with pertinent academic literature. This review addresses the overarching research question: How does artificial intelligence contribute to—or pose risks for—the realisation of the right to education?

The objective is to synthesize current understandings of AI's role in education, particularly from a youth perspective; identify key opportunities and risks; and evaluate alignment with GCE's core advocacy for publicly financed education, robust youth participation, and clear regulation of the private sector.

Thematic Analysis

General Youth Perceptions of AI in Education GCE's internal documents focus primarily on Educational Technology (EdTech) in general terms, with initiatives emphasizing digital literacy rather than specific AI tools (Progress Report, 2025). While youth voices in GCE reports prioritize digital skills and highlight access gaps (e.g., Voices, 2022; EiE Workshop, 2023), there is a clear lack of documented perspectives on AI itself. The academic literature confirms that while youth likely

use AI tools like chatbots for homework and skill development, these tools often lack cultural relevance (Holmes et al., 2019). A significant gap is the absence of a youth-generated definition of AI within GCE's context, as documents tend to conflate AI with general EdTech (EiE Workshop, 2023; Progress Report, 2025).

This contrasts with academic literature, which stresses the importance of "AI literacy" for both students and teachers—an understanding that encompasses not just the technology but also its societal dimensions (Pedro et al., 2019; Holmes et al., 2022). Similarly, GCE documents do not specify which AI tools are used by youth (Schoolinka, Progress Report, 2025; Youth and Student-Led Advocacy, 2022), whereas academic reviews identify prevalent applications like intelligent tutoring systems (ITS), adaptive learning platforms, and generative AI (Aljishi et al., 2021; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019; Karsenti, 2024). Synthesis and Gaps: GCE documents confirm a strong commitment to youth digital engagement.

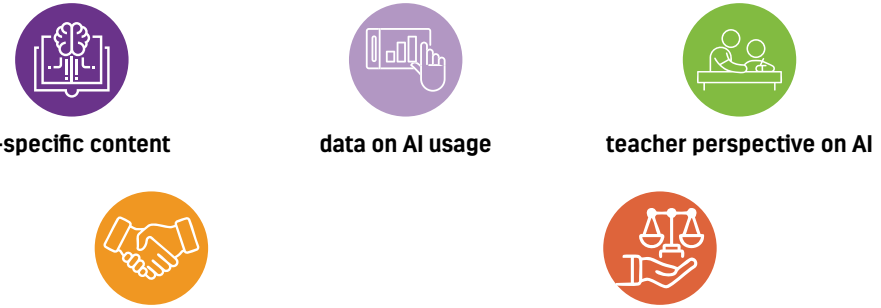
However, a significant knowledge gap exists regarding AI-specific perceptions, understanding, and usage among youth in GCE's network. The perspectives of teachers on AI are also notably absent from internal documentation. This research is therefore essential to gather primary data on these missing viewpoints.

Inclusion and Inequality

GCE's work demonstrates a strong focus on inclusion, detailing educational barriers for students with disabilities and those affected by crises (Halfway to 2030, 2023; EiE Workshop, 2023). The academic literature reflects this concern, highlighting AI's dual potential.

On one hand, Chen et al. (2020) demonstrate AI can enhance accessibility through adaptive learning systems. On the other, it can exacerbate inequalities if tools require high-speed internet or advanced devices, a concern echoed in GCE reports on digital divides (Halfway to 2030, 2023). A major risk identified in academic literature is algorithmic bias, where AI systems perpetuate societal biases related to race, gender, and disability (Pedro et al., 2019; Karsenti, 2024), often due to a lack of diverse training data. Crompton and Burke (2024) identify language barriers in AI tools, which may marginalize non-English-speaking students.

While the GCE Desk Review indicates a strong emphasis on EdTech, youth-led advocacy, and structural barriers to SDG 4, it also reveals a gap in:



This aligns with GCE's advocacy for localized and decolonial approaches, as AI tools developed in one context may not be culturally or linguistically relevant in others (Pedro et al., 2019). Synthesis and Gaps: While GCE has a robust framework for inclusion in EdTech, the specific ways AI can advance or hinder this goal remain unexplored from the perspective of its constituencies. Academic literature provides theoretical warnings, but empirical evidence from youth and teachers in diverse national contexts is needed to ground these concerns in lived reality.

Privatisation and Regulation

GCE's internal documents show a critical stance on the privatization of education (Behind at Halftime, undated; Halfway to 2030, 2023) and advocate for public financing (Feedback, 2023; Concept Note, 2023). However, the role and regulation of private AI providers are not detailed. This is a critical omission, as the broader literature confirms the significant role of private companies in developing and deploying AI tools in education (Pedro et al., 2019; Karsenti, 2024). This raises concerns about data privacy, the commercialization of education,

and pedagogical approaches being shaped by commercial interests rather than public good principles (Karsenti, 2024). The need for strong regulatory frameworks to ensure transparency, accountability, and data protection is a recurring theme in academic research (Pedro et al., 2019; Holmes et al., 2022).

Synthesis and Gaps

GCE has a clear advocacy position against the privatization of education. However, the specific nuances of private sector involvement in AI—and how this challenges GCE›s stance—require deeper exploration. The academic literature confirms the risks associated with private actors in AI, underscoring the need for GCE to develop a clear position and advocate for appropriate regulation. Youth and teacher perspectives on these issues are currently missing and vital.

Pedagogical Use and Learning Outcomes

The desk review highlights EdTech's pedagogical role in teacher training and crisis contexts (Schoolinka, Progress Report, 2025; CSO2 Summary, 2021). However, the specific implications of AI on teaching and learning are largely unexplored in GCE's documents. The research literature presents a mixed picture. AI can offer benefits like personalized learning and immediate feedback (Aljishi et al., 2021; Pedro et al., 2019), but there are also strong cautions that over-reliance may hinder the development of critical thinking and creativity (Chen et al., 2020; Hwang et al., 2020; Pedro et al., 2019). Furthermore, there is a noted lack of robust, independent evidence for the pedagogical effectiveness of many commercial AI tools (Karsenti, 2024; Pedro et al., 2019). A key concern is AI's impact on the role of teachers, who may shift from content deliverers to facilitators, a transition requiring significant professional development (Crompton & Burke, 2024; Pedro et al., 2019; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019).

> *"The ethical risks such as a lack of transparency in AI algorithms, could undermine public accountability in schools."*
>
> *(Aljishi et al.; 2021; Pedro et al., 2019).*

Synthesis and Gaps: While GCE acknowledges EdTech's pedagogical role, AI's specific impact remains uncharted territory. Academic literature offers insights into potential applications and risks, but direct perspectives from youth and teachers on how AI is used and its perceived effects on learning and skill development are essential and currently lacking.

> *"The need for strong regulatory frameword to ensure ethical development, transparency, accountability and data protection is a recurring theme."*
>
> *(Pedro et al., 2019; Holmes et al., 2022).*

Gender Equality and Stereotypes

GCE's work strongly emphasizes gender equality and details gendered barriers to education, especially for girls in crisis contexts (Halfway to 2030, 2023; EiE Workshop, 2023). The academic literature on AI raises significant concerns in this area. Pedro et al. (2019) call for "gender-equitable AI and AI for gender equality," recognizing the risk of AI systems perpetuating or even amplifying existing gender biases. AI tools can reinforce stereotypes through biased datasets, gendered content in educational materials, or career guidance tools that steer students toward traditional paths (Pedro et al., 2019; Karsenti, 2024). Holmes et al. (2019) note that biased language models or image outputs can undermine gender-transformative education. A significant gender gap in the AI development field can also lead to systems that do not adequately address the needs of girls and women. Synthesis and Gaps: GCE has a strong foundation in gender equality advocacy. However, the specific gender dimensions of AI—both risks and transformative potential—are not yet addressed in its internal discourse. The academic literature warns that AI could deepen gender inequalities if not managed carefully. Gathering perspectives on AI and gender from youth (especially girls) and teachers is crucial for developing informed strategies.

Youth Participation and Agency

The desk review reveals robust youth participation structures and advocacy within GCE (Youth and Student-Led Advocacy, 2022; GCE Constitutional Amendment 1). However, their specific involvement in shaping AI in education policy is not clear from the documents. The academic literature increasingly recognizes the importance of involving students and teachers in the development, deployment, and evaluation of AI systems to ensure they are relevant, ethical, and meet user needs (Pedro et al., 2019). Crompton and Burke (2024) emphasize that participatory design enhances tool relevance and fosters agency. For youth to participate meaningfully, they require not just digital skills but also "AI literacy"—an understanding of AI's societal implications and ethical considerations (Pedro et al., 2019; Holmes et al., 2019; Holmes et al., 2022).Synthesis and Gaps: Youth participation is a clear strength for GCE. The opportunity lies in extending this engagement to the complex domain of AI in education. While academic consensus supports participatory approaches, practical models for meaningful youth engagement in AI governance are still developing. This research can identify how GCE's existing youth structures can pioneer this effort.

Risks and Ethical Concerns

The desk review highlights general EdTech risks such as privatization and surveillance (Behind at Halftime, undated; Youth and Student-Led Advocacy, 2022; EiE Workshop, 2023). The academic literature on AI in education raises more profound ethical concerns. These include data privacy and security, algorithmic bias leading to discrimination, lack of transparency in AI decisions ("black box" problem), accountability for AI errors, and the potential for increased surveillance of students and teachers (Pedro et al., 2019; Karsenti, 2024; Holmes et al., 2022; Hwang et al., 2020). The rapid development of AI often outpaces the development of ethical guidelines and regulatory frameworks (Pedro et al., 2019). Zawacki-Richter et al. (2019) noted a general lack of critical reflection on these risks in early AIEd research, a gap that later studies have sought to address. Synthesis and Gaps: GCE documents provide a good analysis of general EdTech risks.

However, AI introduces new layers and types of risks that require specific attention. The academic literature robustly outlines these AI-specific ethical challenges. A critical gap for GCE is understanding how these risks are perceived by, and manifest for, youth and teachers within their specific educational contexts.

Policy Recommendations and Future Directions- The GCE documents show strong advocacy for public financing and youth-led EdTech policies (Behind at Halftime, undated; Halfway to 2023 ,2030; SOTF Side Event Proposal, 2024; CSO2 Position, 2021). From the academic and international policy domain, recommendations are emerging. Pedro et al. (2019) provide comprehensive guidance for policymakers, while others propose principles for AI in education, including equity, transparency, and teacher involvement (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). Key principles often include a human-centered approach, ensuring AI serves the public good, inclusion, transparency, and accountability (Pedro et al., 2019; Karsenti, 2024; Holmes et al., 2022).

The Special Rapporteur on the right to education calls for examining AI through the "4 As" (availability, accessibility, acceptability, adaptability) plus accountability (Karsenti, 2024). Synthesis and Gaps: GCE has strong policy frameworks for public education and youth engagement. The research literature provides emerging principles and policy directions for AI in education. The key gap is the absence of specific AI policy recommendations grounded in the experiences and perspectives of GCE's constituencies, particularly youth and teachers. This research is poised to bridge this gap.

1.5. Key Findings from the Desk Review and Research Implications

The integrated review reveals critical gaps in knowledge that this research is designed to address. The following table summarizes the key findings from the desk review and their direct implications for the empirical work undertaken in this study.

Table 1.1: Key Findings from the Desk Review and Research Implications

Key Finding from Desk Review	Evidence from Desk Review (GCE & Academic)	Implication for This Research
Youth Understanding and Usage of AI is Undocumented	GCE documents focus on general EdTech, lacking AI-specific data. Academic literature details common AI applications (ITS, chatbots), but their use by GCE's youth constituency is unknown (Aljishi et al., 2021; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019; Holmes et al., 2019). A need for "AI literacy" is stressed (Pedro et al., 2019; Holmes et al., 2022).	This research must gather primary data to establish a baseline understanding of how youth in GCE's network perceive, define, and use AI tools, filling a critical knowledge gap.
Impact on Equity and Inclusion is Theoretical	GCE prioritizes inclusion and details exclusion factors. Academic sources warn that algorithmic bias, language barriers, and the digital divide could deepen inequities if not proactively managed (Pedro et al., 2019; Karsenti, 2024; Chen et al., 2020; Crompton & Burke, 2024).	This study will provide empirical evidence from youth and teachers on how AI is actually impacting inclusion in their specific contexts, moving beyond theoretical risks to lived realities.
GCE's Stance on Private Sector AI is Undefined	GCE critiques privatization in education. The academic literature confirms dominant private sector involvement in AI, raising concerns about commercialization and data ethics (Holmes et al., 2019; Pedro et al., 2019; Karsenti, 2024).	This research will gather youth and teacher perspectives on the role of private AI providers, informing the development of a nuanced and evidence-based advocacy position for GCE.
Pedagogical Impact of AI is Unexplored	GCE notes EdTech's role in teaching. Academic literature questions AI's impact on critical thinking and the teacher's role, calling for more robust evidence of effectiveness (Chen et al., 2020; Crompton & Burke, 2024; Pedro et al., 2019; Hwang et al., 2020; Karsenti, 2024).	This project will capture direct perspectives from youth and teachers on AI's perceived effects on learning, creativity, and skill development, providing essential evidence on its pedagogical impact.
Gender-Specific Impacts of AI are Not Addressed	GCE highlights gendered educational barriers. Academic literature warns that AI can embed and amplify gender stereotypes if not designed with a strong gender lens (Holmes et al., 2019; Pedro et al., 2019).	This study will actively seek out gender-specific perspectives, especially from girls, to understand the unique risks and opportunities AI presents, informing gender-transformative policy recommendations.
Mechanisms for Youth Engagement in AI are Nascent	GCE has strong general youth participation structures. Academic literature supports participatory approaches to AI governance, emphasizing the need to empower youth voices (Pedro et al., 2019; Holmes et al., 2022; Crompton & Burke, 2024).	This research will explore how GCE's existing youth structures can be leveraged for AI policy, identifying practical models for moving from consultation to meaningful co-creation.

1.6. Methodology

1.6.1. An Exploratory Mixed-Methods Approach

To address the nascent and complex nature of AI in education within GCE's context, this study employs an exploratory mixed-methods research design. The approach is primarily qualitative, aiming to capture in-depth, contextualised understanding of perceptions and experiences related to AI. This is complemented by targeted quantitative elements to ascertain broader trends in awareness and usage. This design is ideally suited to investigate an area new to GCE, allowing for rich data collection that can shape a future research and advocacy agenda. The primary data collection methods include: Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): To facilitate interactive discussion and capture the collective insights and shared norms of youth and representatives from youth-led organisations. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): To conduct in-depth exploration of institutional experiences and policy-level considerations with teachers, GCE National Education Coalitions (NECs), and other key stakeholders. Online Surveys: Deployed a broader sample of teachers to gather data on their awareness, usage, and perceived training needs regarding AI tools.

1.6.2. Stakeholder and Geographical Scope

The research utilises a purposive sampling strategy to select participants who can provide rich information based on their specific roles and contexts. The primary focus is on the perspectives of youth, a focus reflected in the data collection methods which included Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with 154 youths and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with 34 youth organizations. These insights are complemented by surveys with 46 teachers and consultations with GCE National Education Coalitions (NECs) and staff to create a holistic view. Geographically, the research included participants from 27 countries across all regions to ensure a diverse and representative evidence base. This broad geographical focus is critical for understanding how AI is being adopted and adapted in varied socio-economic and infrastructural contexts.

1.6.3. Data Analysis Framework

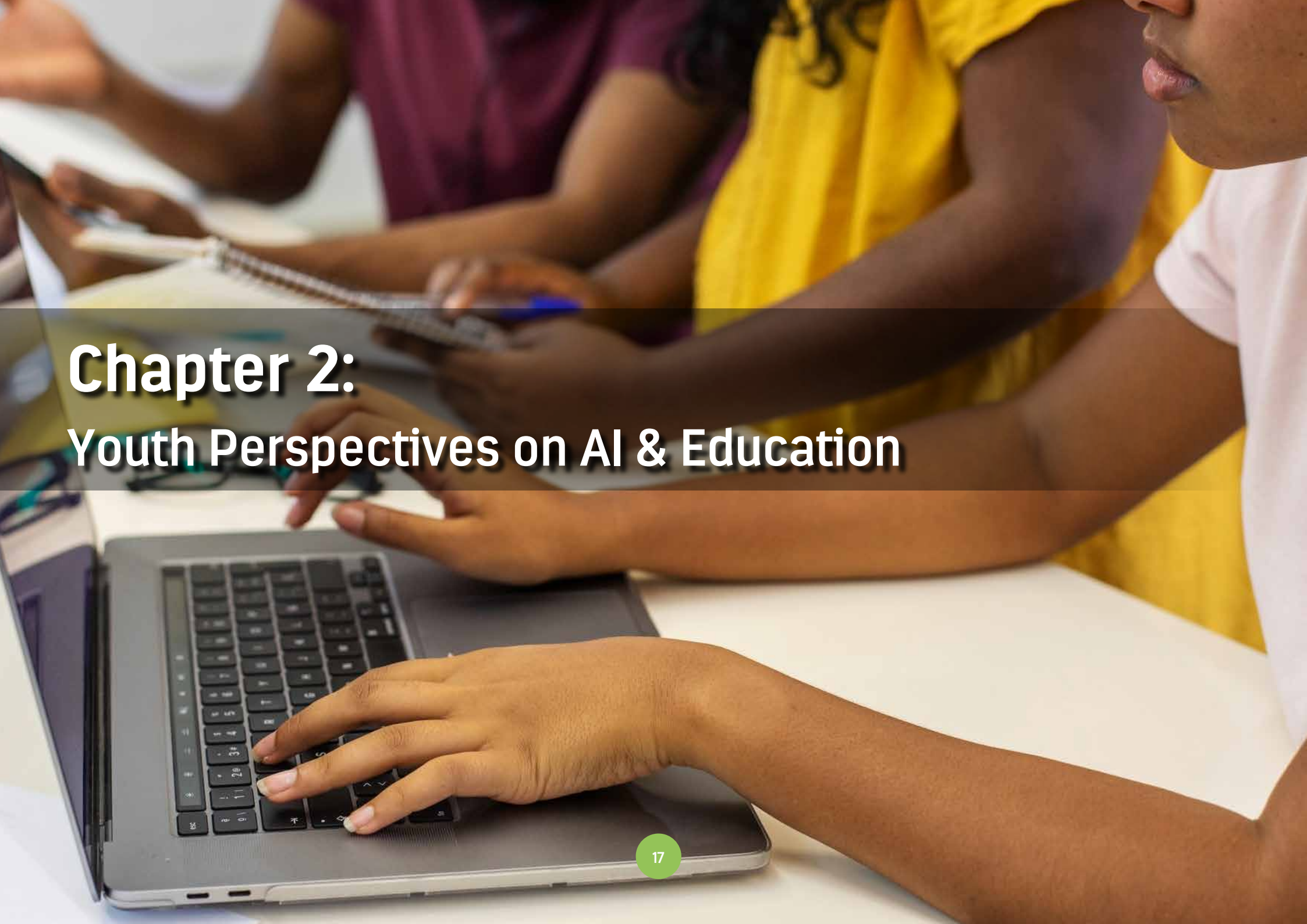
The data analysis is guided by the overarching research question: How does artificial intelligence contribute to—or pose risks for—the realisation of the right to education?. A thematic analysis approach was used to systematically code and interpret the qualitative and quantitative data. This analysis is structured around eight core thematic areas identified in the research design: General youth perceptions of AI in education, Inclusion and inequality, Privatisation and regulation, Pedagogical use and learning outcomes, Gender equality and stereotypes, Youth participation and agency, Risks and ethical concerns and Policy recommendations and future directions. This framework ensures that the findings are directly mapped to the key issues at the heart of GCE's mandate, allowing for the development of targeted and relevant policy recommendations and advocacy messages.

1.6.4. Ethical Considerations and Limitations

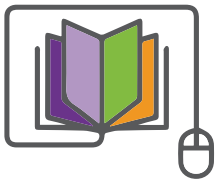
The research adheres to the highest ethical standards to protect all participants. Key protocols included securing informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation with the right to withdraw, guaranteeing confidentiality and anonymity, and upholding the principle of "do no harm" through culturally sensitive and respectful engagement. The study acknowledges several limitations inherent in its design. Finally, while every effort was made to be inclusive, challenges related to access and reach may have limited participation from the most marginalised youth, particularly those in remote or conflict-affected areas not connected to formal networks. These limitations are carefully considered in the interpretation and presentation of the findings.

1.7. Conclusion

This chapter has established the critical groundwork for an empirical investigation into the role of Artificial Intelligence in education from the perspective of the Global Campaign for Education. By situating the rapid emergence of AI within the global context and GCE's core mandate, it highlights a fundamental tension: the potential of AI to innovate and equalize versus its significant risk of deepening existing inequalities and commercializing education. The comprehensive desk review systematically demonstrated that while GCE possesses a strong foundation in EdTech advocacy, there are profound knowledge gaps concerning the specific challenges and opportunities presented by AI. The review concluded that the voices of youth and teachers are largely undocumented, GCE's stance on the dominant private sector in AI is undefined, and the real-world impacts on pedagogy, inclusion, and gender equality are unexplored. These identified gaps directly justify the rationale for this study. The outlined exploratory mixed-methods approach is therefore not merely academic; it is a strategic necessity designed to gather the lived experiences and nuanced perspectives required to bridge these gaps. By grounding the research in a multi-country, stakeholder-focused methodology, this study is positioned to provide the evidence base GCE needs to move beyond theoretical debate and formulate concrete, rights-based policy and advocacy positions for navigating the age of AI.



Chapter 2:
Youth Perspectives on AI & Education



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.

2. Introduction

In an era where Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping the landscape of education, the perspectives of youth in the Global South offer a critical lens into its transformative potential and inherent challenges. This chapter explores, to understand the view point of young people, as captured through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with 91 youths, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with 34 youth organizations, and insights from Global Campaign for Education (GCE) leadership. This chapter synthesizes quantitative and qualitative data to explore AI's dual nature as both a powerful tool for enhancing learning and a source of ethical and equitable concerns. From the stark realities of the digital divide to the risks of cultural bias and corporate overreach, youth articulate a pragmatic yet critical stance, demanding inclusive, rights-based approaches to AI integration. Grounded in GCE's Digital Learning framework, this chapter highlights the urgent need for infrastructure, literacy, and youth-led governance to ensure AI serves as a public good, not a privilege for the few.

2.1. Tool of Promise and Peril

Overall, youth interviewees from the different regions view Artificial Intelligence (AI) not as a distant, futuristic concept, but as a present-day reality that is fundamentally a "double-edged sword". The overarching sentiment gathered from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) is one of nuanced pragmatism. Youth see AI as a powerful "thinking partner", an "enhancer", and an "accelerator" that brings ease, speed, and efficiency to their academic and personal lives. This view aligns with recent analyses which recognize AI's potential to improve the quality and equity of learning and free teachers' time to focus on their core teaching responsibilities(OECD, 2023). They are actively using a wide array of tools like ChatGPT, Grammarly, Quizlet, Canva, and Gemini for everything from generating ideas and summarizing complex texts to checking grammar, creating presentations, and solving math problems (View the list of AI apps that young people report using, displayed on the left side) One participant aptly described AI as "like having a tutor available 24/7".

However, this optimism is tempered by a profound and dominant fear: the erosion of critical thinking (See Annex-A Table 2.1). This concern was the most urgent ethical issue identified by youth organizations, with 91.18% deeming it an “urgent” concern. There is a universal worry that over-reliance on AI fosters intellectual “laziness” , stifles curiosity , and degrades fundamental skills in reading and writing. As one youth participant noted, “it’s tempting to use AI for quick answers instead of trying for yourself” , a sentiment echoed by GCE leadership, who worry that the “transformative nature of education... will be lost” if the spaces for debate and critique are diminished. This duality—AI as both a powerful assistant and a potential crutch—defines the youth experience and presents the central challenge for educators and policymakers.

Quantitative Overview

Data from youth organizations reveals strong optimism about AI›s potential, with 79.4% (n=27/34) strongly agreeing it can transform education by enhancing learning access and efficiency. However, 76.5% (n=26/34) note it disproportionately benefits privileged urban students, highlighting inequity concerns. A striking 94.12% (n=32/34) agree youth engage with AI tools like ChatGPT without understanding risks. Youth describe AI’s duality as both an «enhancer» (e.g., a 24/7 tutor for brainstorming and summarizing) and a «crutch» (e.g., risking critical thinking erosion, with 91.18% of youth organizations marking this as an urgent ethical concern). Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) reflect this tension, praising tools for efficiency while cautioning against over-reliance. GCE leadership views this duality as an opportunity to foster critical awareness, advocating for gap analysis and consensus-building using the 4As framework (availability, accessibility, acceptability, adaptability) to balance benefits (e.g., improved learning quality) with risks (e.g., perpetuating gender biases or privacy violations). African policies reflect this duality: Kenya’s 2025-2030 plan integrates AI into curricula to boost skills, while Ghana and Rwanda prioritize ethical AI, focusing on bias mitigation and privacy. Nigeria’s 2025 studies assess generative AI’s educational impact. However, persistent challenges, such as biases in non-local AI tools, reinforce youth scepticism. The GCE Digital Learning Framework warns against uncritical EdTech adoption, emphasizing teacher autonomy and human-centred AI to safeguard critical thinking and social interaction while addressing power imbalances.

2.2. The Unyielding Barrier of the Digital Divide

Table 2.1: Access to Electricity and Internet Usage by Country (2024)

Country Name	Access to Electricity (% of population)	Individuals Using the Internet (% of population)
Burundi	11.6	11.1
Burkina Faso	21.7	17.0
Central African Republic	17.6	10.6
Congo, Dem. Rep.	22.1	30.5
Gambia, The	66.9	45.9
Liberia	32.5	23.5
Libya	73.2	88.5
Mali	54.5	35.1
Mozambique	36.0	19.8
Malawi	15.6	18.0
Namibia	56.7	64.4
Niger	20.1	23.2
Nigeria	61.2	39.2
Rwanda	63.9	34.2
Sudan	66.0	28.7
Sierra Leone	35.5	20.6
Somalia	50.3	28
South Sudan	5.4	15.7
Chad	12.0	13.2
Tanzania	48.3	29.1
Uganda	51.5	15.3
South Africa	87.7	75.7
Zambia	51.1	33.0
Zimbabwe	62.0	38.4

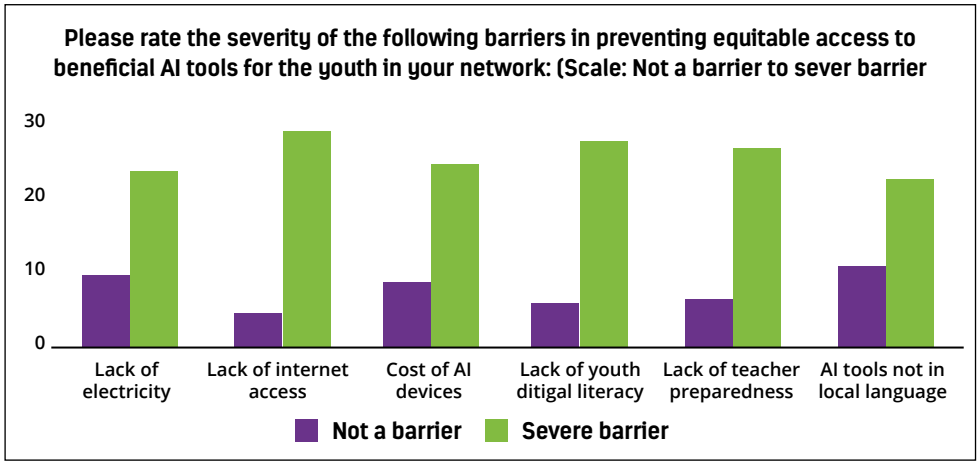
Source- World Bank

While debates in the Global South may centre on the ethics of AI in the classroom, for a vast number of young people, the conversation is far more fundamental. The single greatest obstacle preventing equitable access to AI is the lack of foundational infrastructure. The survey of youth organizations confirms this reality, ranking "Lack of Internet Access" (85.29%) and "Lack of youth digital literacy" (82.35%) as the most severe barriers to equitable access. This is not a hypothetical issue; it is a lived reality. As one participant starkly noted, college students in Malawi often complete their degrees "without ever owning a laptop," making the discussion of AI feel like a "far dream". This infrastructural gap is the primary driver of systemic inequality. The data on access to electricity and internet usage reveals a stark two-tiered world; for instance, in South Sudan, only 5.4% of the population has access to electricity, while in Burundi, only 11.1% use the internet

(See above Table 2.1). GCE leadership underscored this point, stating some countries "don't even have a cell phone network," let alone the reliable connectivity required for AI.

This reality feeds a perception, held by 76.5% of youth organizations, that "AI primarily benefits privileged, urban students". The conversation about AI in education cannot meaningfully advance without addressing this fundamental disparity. In response, a key policy recommendation from the FGDs was the development and deployment of an "offline-first AI strategy" with downloadable modules that do not require constant connectivity—a practical solution for low-connectivity regions. (See Diagram 2.1- severity of Barrier in preventing equitable access)

Diagram 2.1: Sseverity of Barrier in preventing equitable access



Quantitative Overview

Key Informant Interview (KII) data from youth organizations highlight critical barriers to equitable AI access in education, with lack of internet access (%85.29, n=34/29, «Severe Barrier»), youth digital literacy (%79.41, n=34/27), and teacher preparedness (%79.41, n=34/27) identified as the most significant obstacles. Device costs (%76.47, n=34/26) and lack of AI tools in local languages (%67.65, n=34/23) further exacerbate inequities, painting a «two-tiered world» where resource deficits perpetuate exclusion. The below diagram clearly shows how youth organisations in the global south rate the severity of the barrier such as lack of electricity, lack of internet access, cost of AI devices, lack of youth digital literacy, lack of teacher preparedness and finally AI tools not in local language prevent equitable access to AI tools usages.

Youth KIIs emphasize subscription costs and the need for offline solutions, while GCE leadership connects these issues to persistent digital divides from the COVID era, advocating for AI as a "public good" through critical literacy and human rights-based approaches. GCE leaders stress "collective critical literacy" and draw on digital rights movements to prioritize data privacy and equity, warning that unregulated AI could deepen inequalities without holistic solutions addressing educational and resource gaps. African policies show progress in capacity building: Ghana's strategy promotes youth skills through 2025 OER programs, though funding constraints limit scalability; Nigeria's 2024 strategy, with 2025 STEM hubs, faces rural infrastructure challenges; South Africa's 2024 draft (with 2025 guidelines) advances AI in higher education but acknowledges digital divides; Kenya's 2025-2030 plan integrates AI into curricula despite budget limitations; and Rwanda's policy emphasizes AI literacy and teacher training (e.g., 2025 Day of AI), yet struggles with rural access. These policies prioritize skills development over infrastructure, aligning with youth concerns but requiring substantial investment to bridge divides. This resonates with the GCE Digital Learning Framework's call for multi-sectoral investments in infrastructure, teacher training, and gender-sensitive policies to prevent worsening inequalities (e.g., 68% youth digital skills gap), emphasizing EdTech as a public strategy to ensure the 4As (availability, accessibility, acceptability, adaptability) of education.

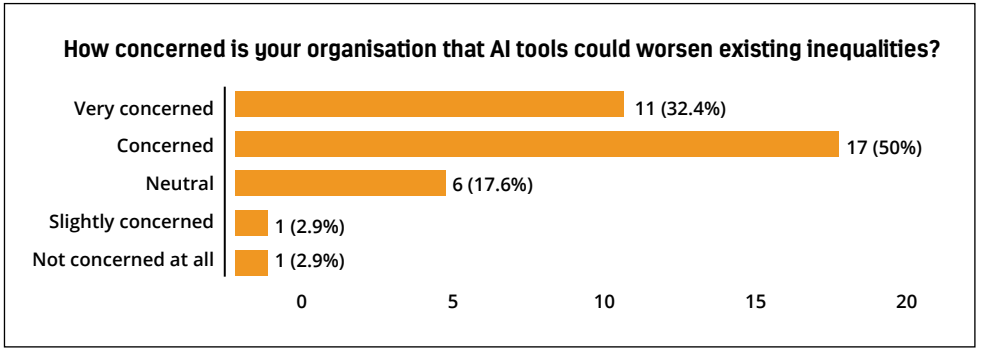
2.3. Systemic Biases and Economic Hurdles

Beyond access, youth are acutely aware of the inherent biases embedded within AI systems. A powerful and recurring theme was the critique of AI as being " westernized and colonialized". Participants noted that AI tools are heavily biased towards English and Western culture, fail to understand different accents, and lack support for indigenous languages and local contexts. This reflects broader concerns that AI models are trained on data reflecting the values and norms of the Global North, creating a real risk of "data colonisation" (Ruttkamp & Bloem, 2024) and that these systems may "amplify unwanted biases" (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). As one youth expressed, this is a system "programmed by outsiders," leading to poor representation of African contexts and cultures. GCE leadership reinforced this, noting that AI is often developed by "outsiders" , resulting in the perpetuation of harmful gender and cultural stereotypes.

Compounding the issue of bias is the emergence of a "pay-to-win" economic model. This dynamic confirms that "most powerful AI tools are not free or cheap, and AI inequities…'stack up' on top of other digital inequities in education" (Markauskaite, 2024). Youth repeatedly pointed out that the most powerful and useful features of AI are often locked behind expensive premium subscriptions, creating an unfair advantage for those who can afford them (For more Key findings from FGD with Youth in Annex A Table No-2.3 and below diagram 2.2- AI tools worsen existing Inequalities). This tiered system exacerbates the digital divide, ensuring that the best tools are reserved for the wealthy, while others are left with less effective, ad-supported versions that compromise their privacy.

This reality sharpens GCE's core fight against the commercialization of education, positioning AI not as a public good, but as a luxury item. The risk, concern and negative perception further prove the GCE leadership's point is that it is still an unexplored area in the global south.

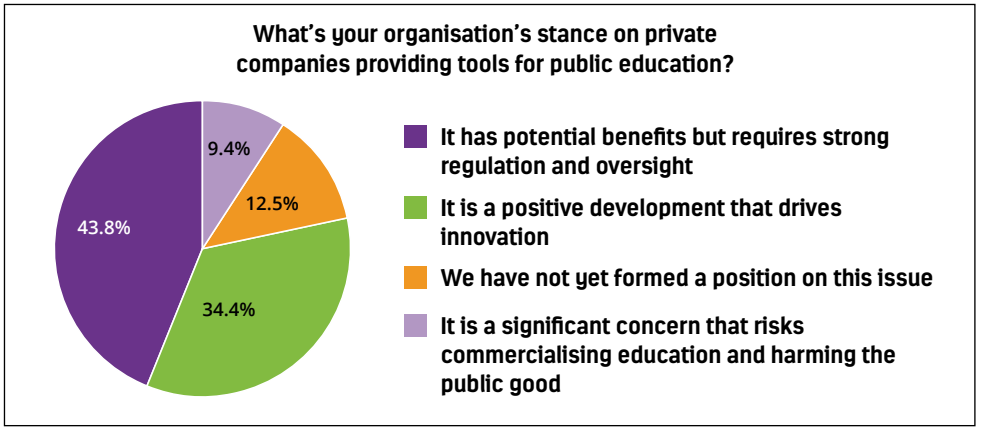
Diagram 2.2: AI tools worsen existing Inequalities



Quantitative Overview

Key Informant Interview (KII) data reveals that 70.59% (n=24/34) of youth organizations are «Concerned» or «Very Concerned» about AI-driven inequalities, particularly due to biases in «westernized» AI systems and «pay-to-win» models that favour wealthier users.

Diagram 2.3: On stance on Private companies providing AI tools for public education



Youth KIIs highlight cultural exclusion and the inaccessibility of premium AI features, reinforcing inequities. GCE leadership warns of commercialization risks, noting that 80% of respondents see private sector benefits only with strong safeguards, as unchecked AI adoption could divert resources from critical areas and harm marginalized learners. They advocate for in-depth analyses to address these gaps. African policies tackle ethical concerns: Rwanda and Ghana emphasize human rights, focusing on data privacy and bias mitigation, while South Africa prioritizes inclusivity. However, rural access gaps and budget constraints continue to widen divides. GCE leadership underscores the need for robust regulation to protect rights, ensuring data privacy and preventing AI from replacing teachers, aligning with the GCE Digital Learning Framework's call for human-centred, equitable AI integration. (See above diagram 2.3 on stance on Private companies providing AI tools for public education).

2.4. A Call for Principled, Youth-Led Regulation

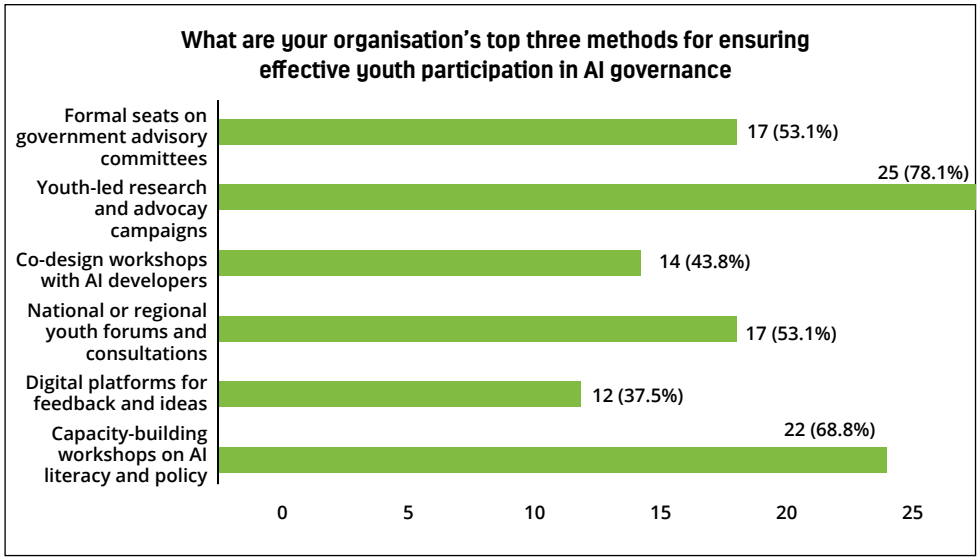
There is a deep and pervasive mistrust of corporate motives among the youth (see below diagram on how youth organisation view private companies providing AI tools for public education). Almost 43% of youth organisations believes that AI has potential benefits but requires strong regulation and oversight. Moreover, the consensus from FGDs is that private companies are driven by "profit, not pedagogy," and that education should be about "learning, not about selling". This has led to a strong global demand for governments, not companies, to take the lead in regulating AI to protect users and ensure fairness. As one GCE leader stated, there is an urgent need for "robust public regulation and oversight" to rein in the private sector.

A key finding is the demand for accountability to be placed on the "creators" and developers of AI for any harm it causes. Youth are not calling for an outright ban. Instead, the core advice for schools is to "embrace, don't ban" by creating clear, official institutional policies on the ethical use of AI. Crucially, young people feel excluded from the decision-making process. A striking 50% of youth organizations described their current involvement in national policy discussions as "tokenistic"—they are present but feel they have "no real influence". This highlights the urgent need to move beyond simple consultation to active co-creation, as "teachers and learners should be encouraged to actively engage in the co-creation of knowledge and education futures in an AI world" (Carvalho, 2024). This erodes trust and leads to disillusionment. The call for "end-to-end" involvement is a powerful summary of the desire for authentic participation. As youth repeatedly stated, the mantra is clear: "Don't decide for us, decide with us".

Quantitative Integration

Data from youth organizations indicates that 50% (n=17/34) view their involvement in AI policy as «tokenistic,» correlating with high risks (94.12%, n=32/34) and concerns about inequalities (70.59%, n=24/34). This highlights significant governance gaps, with youth demanding «end-to-end» roles in policy development. Youth leaders echo this, advocating for youth-led initiatives to ensure meaningful participation. African policies show efforts to involve youth—Ghana through empowerment programs and Kenya via public consultations—but implementation remains inconsistent. GCE leadership emphasizes the need for active teacher and youth involvement in EdTech design to ensure agency and protect rights, aligning with the GCE Digital Learning Framework's focus on inclusive, rights-based AI governance. See Diagram 2.4)

Diagram 2.4: Youth organisations on ensuring effective youth participation in AI governance



2.5. What the Data Indicates

The quantitative and qualitative data reveals a deeply interconnected web of concerns, where infrastructural, economic, pedagogical, and governance failures reinforce one another.

Infrastructure as the Bedrock of Inequality:

The data establishes an undeniable link between foundational access and equity. The youth organization survey shows a 78% correlation between lack of internet and lack of electricity, indicating these are intertwined barriers that require holistic solutions. The organizations with a rural focus report the most severe barriers to internet (59%) and device costs (53%), confirming that the digital divide is most acute for the already marginalized.

Awareness Breeds Critical Concern:

Increased familiarity with AI does not lead to blind optimism but to a more nuanced and critical perspective. The data shows a 55% correlation between AI familiarity and data privacy concerns. Organizations that are "Very Familiar" with AI are more likely to recognize its current limitations, with 76.9% agreeing it primarily benefits privileged students. This suggests that deep engagement with AI fosters a pragmatic view that holds both hope and critique in tension.

Systemic Mistrust in Corporate Actors:

The data quantifies the deep scepticism toward the private sector. Trust in multinational tech companies is exceptionally low (22%), especially when compared to trust in NGOs (52%) and national governments (75%). This mistrust is directly linked to ethical fears; organizations most concerned with issues like data privacy (79.4%) and algorithmic bias (73.5%) also exhibit the lowest trust in big tech.

The Human Element is Paramount:

While infrastructure is a critical barrier, the data reveals a strong consensus that human capacity is equally, if not more, important. "Lack of youth digital literacy" (85.3%) and "Lack of teacher preparedness" (82.4%) are ranked as the most severe barriers by youth organizations. Crucially, organizations that flag infrastructure issues almost unanimously also point to literacy and teacher skills as severe barriers. This indicates a clear mandate: providing technology without investing in human capacity is a failed strategy.

2.6. Regional Perspectives: A Differentiated Global View

While a consistent pattern of opportunities and threats emerges globally, each region's unique context shapes its specific priorities and anxieties. This analysis highlights the major differences in approach and concern voiced by youth from different regions.

Table 2.2: AI in Education - Regional Perspectives

Opportunities	Challenges	Threats	Regional Outlook
Africa			
» **Enhanced Learning & Productivity:** AI as a personal tutor, improving efficiency, work quality, and content creation. Prepares youth for future jobs. » **Teacher Support:** Reduces administrative tasks, enhances teaching quality, and offers personalized coaching. » **Inclusivity & Accessibility:** Supports disabilities, bridges gaps for remote learners, and enables offline AI solutions. Promotes equity through partnerships and solar-powered hubs.	» **Digital Divide:** Limited electricity, internet, and devices, especially in rural areas. Gender barriers restrict access. » **Economic Barriers:** High data costs and premium AI tool paywalls create inequities. » **AI Literacy:** Lack of training for effective and ethical use. Generational gaps hinder adoption. » **Cultural Relevance:** English-centric tools and Western content exclude non-English speakers and local contexts. » **Policy Gaps:** Unclear regulations and weak youth inclusion in policymaking.	» **Cognitive Dependence:** Risks eroding critical thinking, creativity, and cultural identity. » **Academic Integrity:** Widespread plagiarism and cheating, advantaging wealthier students. » **Data Privacy & Bias:** Data exploitation, Western biases in AI, and lack of user control. » **Policy Risks:** Foreign tech dominance and inadequate regulation widen inequalities.	» **Prioritize offline AI solutions,** local content development, and inclusive training to bridge digital and gender divides. Strong policies needed to ensure equitable access and cultural relevance.

Opportunities	Challenges	Threats	Regional Outlook
Asia			
» **Enhanced Learning & Productivity:** AI as a 24/7 tutor, saving time and improving work quality. Supports coding and creative tasks. » **Teacher Support:** Automates grading and progress tracking, reducing workload. » **Inclusivity & Accessibility:** Assists disabled learners and non-native speakers via translation and adaptive tools.	» **Digital Divide:** Rural areas lack reliable internet and devices. Systemic education gaps persist. » **Economic Barriers:** Premium tool subscriptions exclude low-income users. » **AI Literacy:** Limited training for teachers and students. Generational gaps in adoption. » **Cultural Relevance:** Western-centric tools lack local context and struggle with regional accents.	» **Cognitive Dependence:** Risks reducing critical thinking and curiosity. » **Inaccuracy:** AI can produce false or unverifiable information. » **Data Privacy & Bias:** Data exploitation, gender biases, and lack of regulation. » **Commercialization:** Profit-driven AI widens inequities.	» **Focus on region-specific tools**, teacher training, and policies to address digital divides and ensure culturally relevant AI integration.
Europe & North America			
» **Enhanced Learning & Productivity:** Simplifies complex concepts and boosts efficiency in professional tasks. » **Teacher Support:** Streamlines lesson planning and provides formative feedback. » **Inclusivity & Accessibility:** Translation and assistive tools enhance access for diverse learners. » **Creativity:** Fosters innovation by automating mundane tasks.	» **Digital Divide:** Inequitable access for underprivileged communities. » **Governance:** Slow policymaking and private tech dominance. » **Responsible Use:** Over-reliance risks hindering skill development. » **Training Needs:** Teachers lack AI literacy and environmental transparency.	» **Academic Dishonesty:** Undetectable cheating undermines integrity. » **Skill Erosion:** Over-reliance threatens critical thinking and baseline skills. » **Misinformation & Bias:** Unreliable AI outputs and societal biases. » **Environmental Impact:** High resource consumption of AI systems. » **Data Privacy:** Commercial data misuse and opaque practices.	» **Emphasize national governance**, AI literacy, and green AI standards. Engage youth in policy to ensure equitable, sustainable integration.

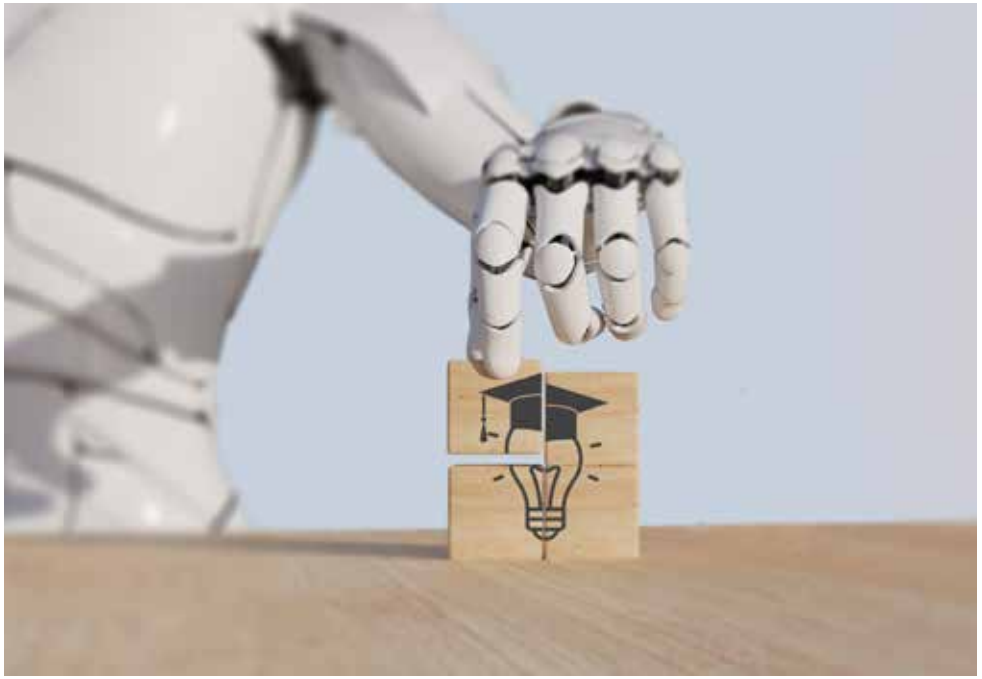
Opportunities	Challenges	Threats	Regional Outlook
Middle East			
» **Personalized Learning:** Clarifies complex topics and supports learning in conflict zones. » **Teacher Empowerment:** Enhances pedagogy and student analysis. » **Inclusivity:** Bridges gaps for remote and diverse learners. » **Skill Development:** Boosts practical and creative skills. » **Regional Customization:** Potential for Arabic-tailored AI.	» **Infrastructural Deficiencies:** War and instability limit electricity and internet access. » **Economic Barriers:** Paid subscriptions exclude low-income users. » **Cultural Bias:** Western-centric tools lack Arabic support and local relevance. » **Teacher Training:** Limited skills to integrate AI effectively.	» **Academic Integrity:** Misuse for cheating undermines education » **Skill Erosion:** Over-reliance hinders critical thinking. » **Inequalities:** Digital divides deepen disparities. » **Data Privacy:** Risks of surveillance and data misuse. » **Cultural Loss:** Western AI risks eroding local identity.	» **Develop Arabic-specific AI** and renewable energy solutions to ensure access in conflict zones. Prioritize teacher training and local content.
Latin America & Caribbean			
» **Versatile Tool:** Aids grading, diagnostics, and personalized learning. » **Inclusivity:** Supports disabled and marginalized learners via accessible tools. » **Youth Empowerment:** Promotes youth-led AI policy and education campaigns.	» **Digital Gaps:** Excludes indigenous, rural, and disabled groups due to infrastructure and cost barriers. » **Regulation Needs:** Slow policymaking and fragmented regulations. » **AI Literacy:** Limited teacher readiness and cultural relevance. » **Social Stigmas:** Taboos hinder AI adoption.	» **Skill Erosion:** Over-reliance risks critical thinking and writing skills. » **Misuse:** AI used for inappropriate personal advice. » **Data Privacy:** Risks of breaches and profiling by companies. » **Bias & Inaccuracy:** Non-objective outputs and inconsistent tool reliability. » **Job Displacement:** Potential unemployment in education sector.	» **Promote inclusive AI policies**, youth engagement, and local datasets to address digital gaps and ensure equitable, culturally relevant adoption.

Analysis of Regional Differences

The core takeaway from the regional analysis is that while the fundamental challenges of AI are universal (e.g., skill erosion, digital divide), their manifestation and the proposed solutions are deeply contextual. AI does not act in a vacuum; it acts as an amplifier of pre-existing local realities.

Africa: The Primacy of Infrastructure and Identity. The African perspective is uniquely defined by the stark reality of the infrastructural deficit. The lack of reliable electricity and internet is not just a challenge but the central barrier that frames the entire conversation. This leads to pragmatic solutions like offline-based AI and solar-powered hubs. Furthermore, there is a pronounced fear of cultural erosion, where Western-centric AI could undermine indigenous languages and traditional knowledge systems like storytelling, posing a threat to local identity.

- **Asia: Anxiety Over Commercialization and Well-being.** The Asian viewpoint reflects a region with rapid technological adoption but deep concerns about its psychological and commercial side effects. A unique fear was raised about AI›s potential to harm brain development in young children by replacing human interaction. There is also a particularly sharp critique of the commercialization of education by profit-driven tech giants, linked to a concern with «digital neocolonialism» where AI fails to recognize local accents and contexts.
- **Europe & North America: A Focus on Second-Order Ethics.** With widespread digital access largely assumed, the focus shifts to the ethical and environmental implications of AI. This is the only region to explicitly identify the environmental impact (high water and energy consumption) of AI as a major threat. Priorities are more policy-oriented, calling for «green ML» standards and data minimization, reflecting a more mature phase of technological integration.
- **Middle East: Education in the Shadow of Conflict.** The perspective here is heavily shaped by regional instability, viewing AI through the lens of survival and continuity. AI is seen as a critical tool for educational continuity when traditional schooling is disrupted by war.
- Consequently, the digital divide is explicitly linked to infrastructure damage from conflict, and the threat of hidden surveillance in fragile states is a potent, region-specific fear.
- **Latin America & Caribbean: A Lens of Social Inclusion.** The viewpoint is strongly characterized by a focus on social equity for specific demographics: indigenous, Afro-descendant, and rural groups. This region also uniquely identifies a psychosocial threat—the misuse of AI as a «best friend» or counsellor for personal advice, pointing to a potential social problem of over-attachment to non-human entities.



2.7. Policy Review: AI in Education in Selected African Countries

Table 2.3: Representation of five African Countries policy focus on AI -

Country	Policy Focus (2025)	Notable Initiatives (2025)	Gaps/ Challenges
Ghana	» Digital skills » Youth empowerment	» AI-powered OER training » Ethical AI policy	» Funding, scalability beyond urban areas
Nigeria	» STEM integration » Digital literacy	» AI Scaling Hub (2025) » GMind AI platform for educators	» Rural gas » Fragmented state implementation
South Africa	» Higher education » Entrepreneurship	» Institutional AI guidelines » AI for Academic Success SLP	» Ditigal divide » High costs
Kenya	» AI literacy » Unemployment bridging	» National AI Strategy 2025-2030	» Budget delays » Urban-rural disparities
Rwanda	» Skills development » Ditigal economy	» Day of AI teacher training » Higher education AI impact suveys	» Rural infrastructure » Skilled professional shortages

Integrating youth data with leadership views, African policies, and Digital Learning principles reveals interconnected challenges: infrastructure/human capacity gaps reinforce inequalities, necessitating rights-based regulation. Leadership's emphasis on critical literacy and private sector oversight complements youth calls for equity, while African policies show progress in skills but lag in access, aligning with Digital Learning's warnings on commercialization. The short-term literacy/regulation (e.g., update GCE's 2023 digital policy document); medium-term offline/local AI (inspired by African hubs); long-term infrastructure as rights (per 4As). The longitudinal studies in Africa; include marginalized voices is required to be undertaken, including taking an equity focus approach, where human-centred AI to empower, not exclude, bridging Global South divides. (View the above Table 2.3- representation of five African Countries policy focus on AI)

2.8. Roadmap for an Equitable AI Future

Based on a synthesis of youth perspectives, organizational data, and leadership insights, a strategic path forward emerges. The following recommendations are directly synthesized from the analysis of the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with youth, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with youth organizations and teachers, and consultations with GCE leadership. While the specific timelines and structured actions represent the author's formulation of a strategic plan, the core content of each recommendation is grounded in the explicit demands and solutions proposed by the research participants. This multi-pronged approach balances foundational needs with forward-looking policy, grounded in the central principle of co-creation with youth. See below Table 2.4 for details)

Table 2.4: Roadmap for an Equitable AI Future

Timeframe	Action	Description
Short-Term	Launch Comprehensive AI Literacy Programs	Invest in mandatory AI literacy for students and teachers, emphasizing critical thinking, bias detection, and responsible engagement beyond technical skills.
	Establish Youth-Led AI Policy Councils	Create formal platforms for genuine youth partnership in co-designing, implementing, and monitoring AI policies, moving beyond tokenism.
	Develop "Embrace, Don't Ban" Institutional Policies	Implement clear, localized policies on ethical AI use, declaration, and referencing to guide educators and students, reducing fear and misuse.
Medium-Term	Prioritize an "Offline-First" and "Zero-Rating" Strategy	Innovate offline AI solutions for low-connectivity regions and collaborate with telecoms to zero-rate data costs for essential educational AI platforms to combat the digital divide.
	Fund and Foster Local AI Ecosystems	Allocate funding to support local innovators in creating culturally relevant, multilingual AI tools aligned with national curricula and local needs. (Malu, 2024).
	Invest in Continuous Teacher Empowerment	Shift from one-off workshops to robust, ongoing training to empower educators to use AI as a supportive tool, not a replacement.
Long-Term	Implement Government-Led, Human Rights-Based Regulation	Ensure governments lead AI regulation grounded in human rights to protect users, ensure data sovereignty, and hold creators accountable for harms.
	Treat Foundational Infrastructure as a Prerequisite	Commit to universal access to electricity, affordable internet, and devices as a fundamental right to achieve digital equity. To achieve this, it is necessary to "engage and listen to the views of children in product development, design and policy" (Livingstone, 2024).
	Embed Youth Co-Creation into Governance DNA	Establish youth as integral co-creators in educational technology governance, adopting the principle, "Don't decide for us, decide with us."

2.9. Conclusion

The voices of youth from the Global South, as detailed in this chapter, offer a clear and compelling directive for the future of AI in education. They paint a vivid picture of AI as both a beacon of opportunity and a potential catalyst for deepening inequalities. Their pragmatic optimism underscores AI's capacity to enhance learning, yet their concerns—ranging from the erosion of critical thinking to the inaccessibility of technology—highlight the urgent need for systemic change.

This youth perspective does not exist in isolation. As shown in Chapter 3, these concerns are powerfully mirrored by teachers, who face the same digital divide and share the same pedagogical fears, creating a unified mandate for action. The demand for authentic co-creation, encapsulated in the call "Don't decide for us, decide with us," is a direct challenge to the top-down policy implementation that often excludes both students and educators. Furthermore, the deep mistrust of corporate motives aligns with the analysis from Civil Society Organisations in Chapter 4, who advocate for strong public regulation to ensure AI is developed as a public good, not a commercial product. The data reveals a clear mandate: equitable AI integration requires addressing foundational infrastructure gaps, fostering critical literacy, and dismantling biases embedded in "westernized" systems. By prioritizing offline-first strategies, local innovation, and human rights-based regulation, stakeholders can transform AI into a tool that empowers all learners. This chapter's findings are therefore not just a summary of youth opinion but a foundational evidence base that informs the strategic recommendations for GCE detailed in Chapter 4, paving the way for an inclusive, equitable, and youth-informed AI-driven educational future.

2.10. Takeaways Messages

The Erosion of Critical Thinking is the Dominant Youth Fear

The single most urgent ethical concern identified by youth is the potential for AI to cause an erosion of critical thinking (a 91.18% "urgent" concern from youth organizations). They fear over-reliance on AI will foster intellectual "laziness" and degrade fundamental skills.

Why it's a crucial takeaway: This directly threatens the core purpose of education. If AI is perceived as a «substitute for thinking» rather than a «thinking partner,» it undermines GCE›s mission to promote quality, transformative education. GCE›s advocacy must pivot to emphasize critical AI literacy —teaching how to think with AI, not just how to use it—to safeguard the pedagogical soul of learning.

The Digital Divide is the Central Barrier to Equity

The conversation about AI is irrelevant for a majority in the Global South if they lack foundational infrastructure. Lack of Internet Access (85.29%) and the cost of devices are ranked as the most severe barriers, creating a "two-tiered world" where AI benefits only the privileged.

Why it's a crucial takeaway: This finding grounds the AI debate in reality. For GCE, it means any AI policy advocacy is hollow without a primary, relentless focus on digital infrastructure as a fundamental right. Arguing for AI tools in education is meaningless if students in places like South Sudan (%5.4 electricity access) cannot even turn on a computer.

Youth Demand Authentic Co-Creation, Not Tokenism

A powerful sense of exclusion permeates youth feedback. A striking 50% of youth organizations feel their involvement in AI policy is mere "tokenism" with no real influence. Their unified demand is clear: "Don't decide for us, decide with us."

Why it's a crucial takeaway: This is a direct challenge to GCE›s operational and advocacy model. To maintain legitimacy and create effective policies, GCE must champion and embed youth co-creation at every stage. Ignoring this call risks creating policies that are disconnected from the lived realities of young people, ultimately leading to failure.

Human Capacity is as Critical as Physical Infrastructure

Beyond internet and devices, the lack of youth digital literacy (82.35%) and teacher preparedness (79.41%) are seen as equally severe barriers. The data shows that providing technology without investing in human skills is a failed strategy.

Why it's a crucial takeaway: This highlights that the solution is not just about hardware. GCE must advocate for a dual investment strategy : one track for infrastructure and another, equally funded track for continuous, robust training for both students and educators. Without skilled users, expensive technology will gather dust or be misused.

"Westernized" AI Perpetuates "Data Colonisation"

Youth are acutely aware that AI tools are culturally and linguistically biased, reflecting the norms of the Global North. This "westernized and colonialized" design excludes indigenous languages and local contexts, risking the amplification of harmful stereotypes.

Why it's a crucial takeaway: This aligns AI bias with GCE›s broader decolonization agenda. GCE must advocate for the funding and development of local AI ecosystems. The goal should be to create culturally relevant, multilingual tools that respect data sovereignty and serve local curricula, countering the homogenizing effect of Big Tech.

The "Pay-to-Win" Model Exacerbates Inequality

Youth identified that the most powerful AI features are locked behind expensive subscriptions. This "pay-to-win" model directly conflicts with the vision of AI as a public good and reinforces existing economic disparities.

Why it's a crucial takeaway: This trend represents the commercialization of education in a new, technologically advanced form—a core issue GCE has always fought. GCE must actively campaign against this tiered model and advocate for open-source, publicly funded AI tools for education to ensure equity is not determined by the ability to pay.

A Mandate for Public Regulation, Not Corporate Self-Governance

There is profound and widespread mistrust of corporate motives ("profit, not pedagogy"). Youth strongly believe governments—not private companies—must lead in regulating AI to protect users and ensure fairness. Trust in multinational tech companies is exceptionally low (22%).

Why it's a crucial takeaway: This gives GCE a clear mandate from its youth constituency to advocate for strong, government-led, human rights-based regulation of EdTech. This is a strategic opportunity to push back against corporate overreach in the education sector and demand accountability from AI developers.

An "Offline-First" Strategy is a Pragmatic Imperative for Equity

As a direct response to the digital divide, youth proposed the development of an "offline-first AI strategy" with downloadable modules that do not require constant connectivity.

Why it's a crucial takeaway: This is a tangible, practical solution that GCE can champion. It shifts the narrative from waiting for universal internet to innovating for the present reality. Advocating for «offline-first» and «zero-rating» educational platforms are concrete policy asks that can make AI accessible in low-connectivity regions now.

The Consensus is for Critical Engagement, Not Prohibition

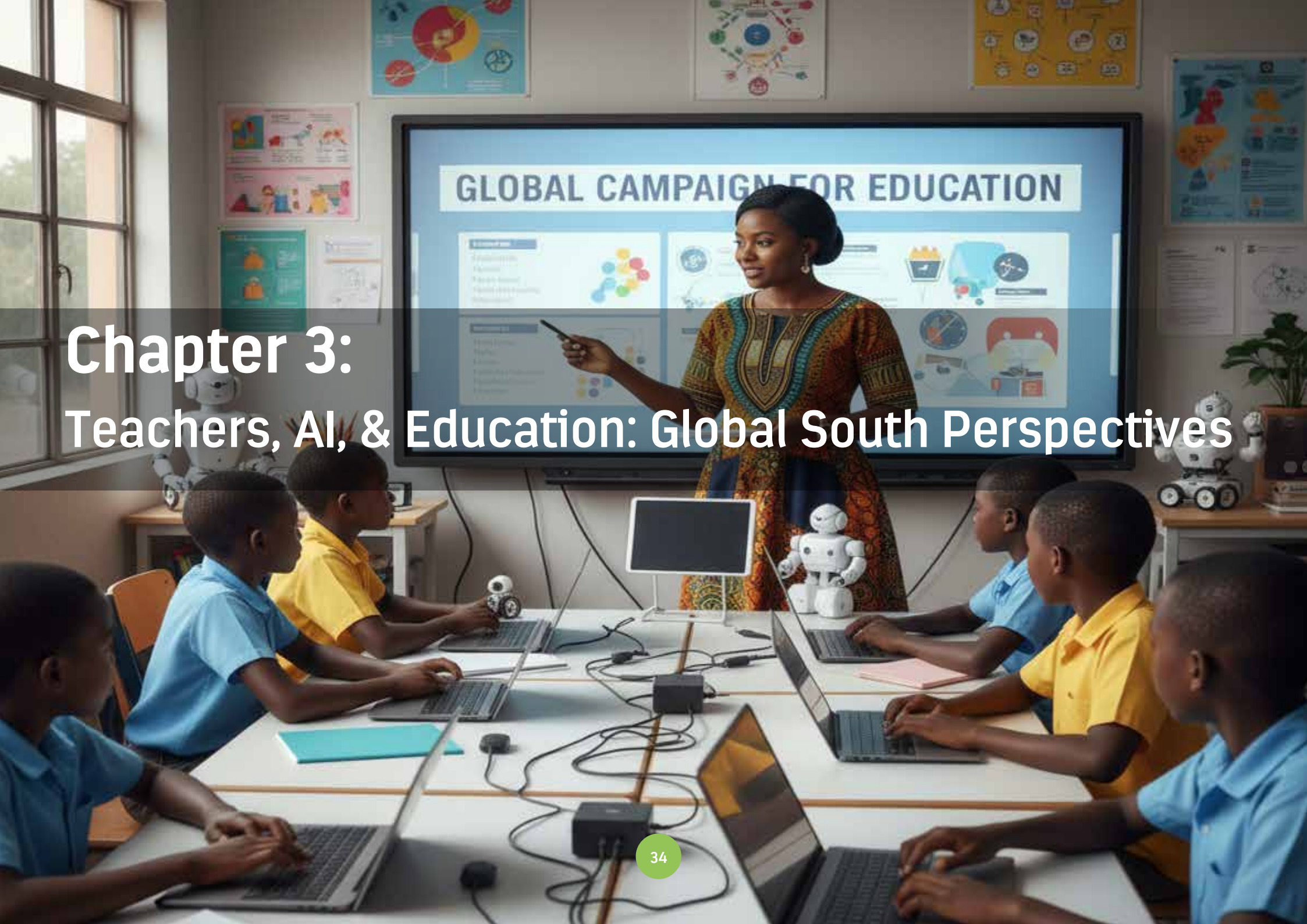
Despite their significant fears, the youth consensus is not for an outright ban on AI. Instead, their call to "embrace, don't ban" should be interpreted as a demand for proactive and critical engagement rather than outright prohibition. This "embrace" is highly conditional; it is contingent upon the creation of clear, official institutional policies that govern ethical use, require transparency in declaration, and establish firm referencing standards. It is a call to manage the technology thoughtfully, emphasizing its critical use only where it is clearly needed, rather than adopting it uncritically.

Why it's a crucial takeaway: This provides GCE with a nuanced policy direction that moves beyond a simple for-or-against stance. The call is not to avoid confrontation with the risks, but to engage constructively with the technology›s potential. GCE can champion the development of model policies that foster a culture of critical and needs-based AI integration. This involves creating frameworks that empower schools and ministries to first assess if and where AI genuinely adds pedagogical value, ensuring its use is ethically governed and aligned with public education goals. This approach helps prepare students to be critical citizens in an AI-driven world, not just passive users.

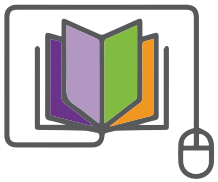
Awareness Breeds Critical Concern, Not Blind Optimism

The data reveals a crucial insight: the more familiar youth organizations are with AI, the more concerned they become about its risks , such as data privacy (55% correlation) and its tendency to benefit the privileged (76.9% agreement).

Why it's a crucial takeaway: This debunks the myth that resistance to AI is simply due to ignorance. It proves that deep engagement fosters critical awareness. For GCE, this means that comprehensive AI literacy programs are not just about teaching skills but are essential for building a generation of critical, informed citizens who can hold power to account.



Chapter 3:
Teachers, AI, & Education: Global South Perspectives



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.

3. Introduction

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into education is a global phenomenon, yet its implementation and reception are profoundly shaped by local contexts, particularly in the Global South. Following the exploration of youth perspectives in Chapter 2, which framed AI as a "double-edged sword", this chapter shifts the focus to educators—the frontline implementers of any pedagogical shift. It delves into the perspectives of 46 teachers from across the Global South, offering a nuanced view of the opportunities and challenges AI presents in their diverse educational landscapes. The findings are drawn from a comprehensive survey of educators primarily from global south countries, mostly from the African region.

This chapter aligns with the research's overarching objective to understand AI's risks and contributions to the right to education by capturing the largely undocumented perspectives of teachers. While Chapter 2 revealed youth concerns about the erosion of critical thinking and the stark reality of the digital divide, this chapter examines how these issues manifest from a pedagogical and professional standpoint. The analysis reveals a teaching workforce that is cautiously optimistic about AI's potential to revolutionize their practice. However, this optimism is tempered by the same significant infrastructural and pedagogical barriers identified by their students, most notably the pervasive digital divide that constrains both teaching and learning.

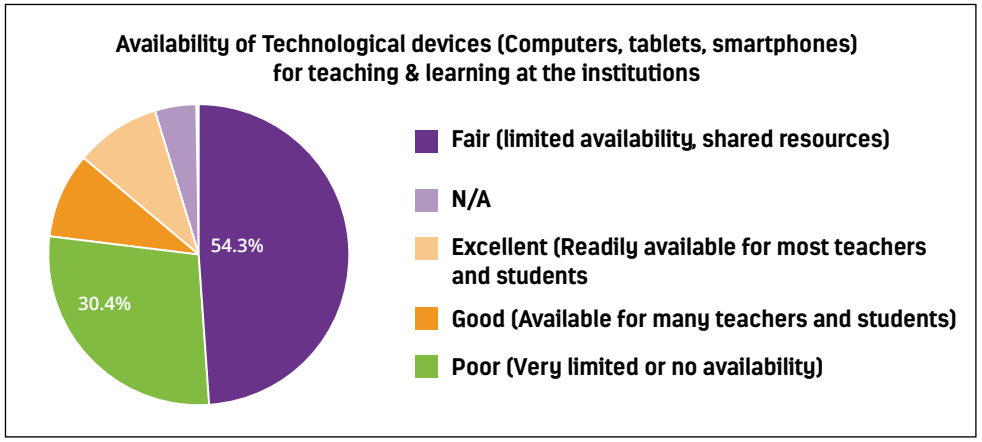
By placing teacher perspectives in direct dialogue with the youth voices from Chapter 2, and aligning them with the strategic priorities outlined by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) leadership and its Digital Learning framework , this chapter provides a holistic analysis. It explores the demographic context of these teachers, their access to technology, their engagement with AI tools, their views on AI's impact on students and the profession, and their critical assessment of the ethical and policy implications of AI in education.

3.1. Demographics and the Digital Divide

The survey captures insights from a diverse group of 46 educators, whose demographic context is crucial to interpreting the findings. The group's regional distribution heavily shapes the narrative: a majority of teachers (60.9%) are based in rural areas, compared to 30.4% in urban settings. This means the data is grounded in the perspective of those who experience the digital divide most acutely, making infrastructural deficits a central, lived reality rather than a peripheral issue. Furthermore, the vast majority taught Humanities subjects (71.7%) compared to STEM (23.9%). This disciplinary focus likely amplifies the report's most urgent pedagogical fear—the erosion of critical thinking, writing, and analytical skills—as these are foundational to the humanities. This context is vital for understanding the profound challenges related to technological access, a sentiment that echoes the youth focus group discussions, where participants from Malawi described higher education without ever owning a laptop as a "lived reality".

The most fundamental challenge underscored by teachers is the digital divide. The availability of technological devices within their institutions is severely limited, with 60.9% describing it as merely "Fair" (limited and shared) and another 19.6% rating it as «Poor".(See below diagram 3.1 on Digital Divide on Teachers for detail)

Diagram 3.1: Digital Divide on Teachers



The situation is even more dire outside the school gates. An overwhelming 73.9% of teachers reported that most of their students have limited or no access to the internet and digital devices at home (see below diagram 3.2 on Access of Students outside the educational Institutions) for more details).

This infrastructural gap is the primary barrier to AI adoption, with 76.1% of teachers citing a lack of reliable internet or electricity, closely followed by a lack of personal digital devices (67.4%) and the high cost of AI tools (54.3%). This finding directly validates the data from youth organizations, which ranked «Lack of Internet Access» (85.29%) as the most severe barrier to equitable access, confirming that the digital divide is a shared crisis for both learners and educators.

Diagram 3.2: Access of Students outside the educational Institutions

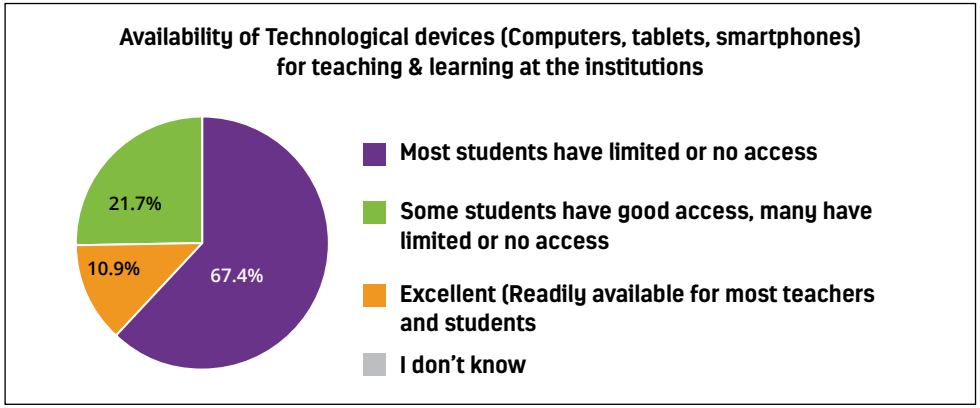
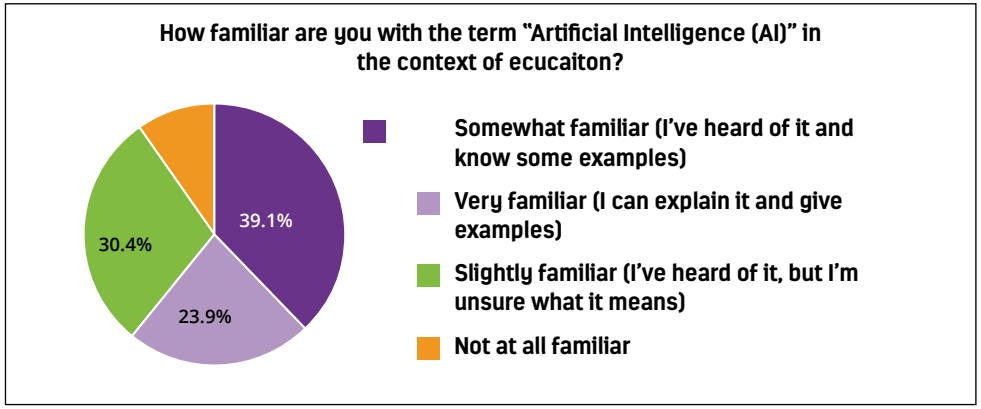


Diagram 3.3: Teachers Familiarity with AI



3.2. Teacher Engagement and Perceptions of AI

Despite immense infrastructural barriers, teachers in the Global South exhibit a striking optimism and a growing engagement with AI, mirroring the "promise and peril" duality expressed by youth.

Familiarity and Optimism

Most teachers possess a foundational awareness of AI, though deep expertise remains uncommon. The largest group (45.7%) described themselves as "somewhat familiar," with only 15.2% feeling "very familiar" (See below diagram 3.3 Teachers Familiarity on AI)). This indicates a clear need for capacity building, a point GCE leadership emphasizes, noting that educators need to be "trusted, trained and supported to make decisions around the use of AI". Despite this familiarity gap, a full 50% of respondents are "Very optimistic" about AI's increasing role in education, with another 10.9% being "Somewhat optimistic, suggesting a strong belief in its potential if the right conditions are met.

AI in Practice: Usage and Purpose

This optimism is translating into action, as a significant majority of teachers (71.7%) report having personally used AI-powered tools for their work. Engagement is also frequent for many, with 15.2% using AI tools daily and another 15.2% using them several times a week.

Tools of Choice

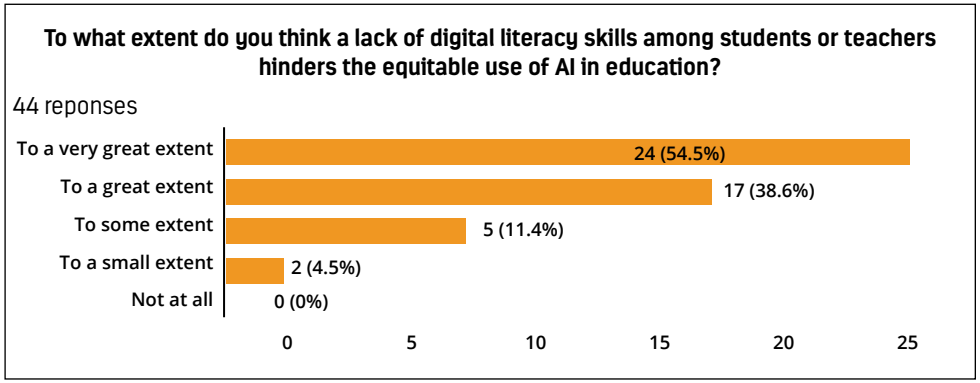
The most widely used applications are Generative AI tools like ChatGPT (%37.0) and AI-powered search engines (%28.3), However, teachers are also using a broader set of tools, including plagiarism detection software (%17.4), AI tools for presentations (%17.4), and AI-powered writing assistants like Grammarly (%13.0).

Primary Purpose:

Teachers primarily leverage AI to enhance their professional practice. The top uses are creating educational content (41.3%), lesson planning (26.1%), Notably, they are also using AI for personalizing learning for students (21.7%) and supporting students with diverse needs (17.4%).and for their own professional development (21.7%). And also around 54.5% teachers surveyed believes that

lack of digital literacy skills among students or teachers hinders the equitable use of AI in education (See below diagram 3.4 Lack of digital literacy hinder equitable use of AI in education)

Diagram 3.4: Lack of digital literacy hinder equitable use of AI in education



This aligns with the youth perspective of AI as an "enhancer" and "accelerator" that brings efficiency to academic tasks. It also reinforces GCE leadership's view that the narrative around AI must be about empowering and supporting teachers, allowing them to focus on more creative pedagogical methods rather than being replaced.

3.3. Impact on Pedagogy and the Profession

Teachers perceive AI as a transformative force, capable of reshaping their roles and impacting student learning in ways that are both positive and concerning. A summary of key indicators and their analysis can be found in Annex-B, Table 3.1, Table 3.3.

The Evolving Role of the Teache

A majority of educators feel AI is already changing their role, with 39.1% stating it is "moderately changing". They see this evolution as a positive shift from being a content provider to becoming "more of a facilitator" (30.4%). This perspective is strongly supported by GCE's digital learning framework, which emphasizes that teachers must have the autonomy to decide "when, what, if and how they use tech in the classrooms" and that technology should support, not dictate, their professional agency.

Impact on Student Learning and Skills

The sentiment regarding AI's effect on student learning is overwhelmingly positive, with 47.8% believing it impacts outcomes "Positively" and 23.9% seeing a "Very positive" impact. Teachers observe that students are "very attentive in lessons involving the use of AI" and appreciate it as a "tutor 24/7", an exact phrase echoed by youth participants.

However, this optimism is tempered by the same dominant fear expressed by youth: the erosion of critical thinking. This was the top risk identified by 39.1% of teachers , perfectly mirroring the finding from youth organizations, where 91.18% deemed it an "urgent" ethical concern. When asked to rate AI's impact on specific skills on a scale of 1 (Strong Negative) to 5 (Strong Positive), teachers gave the lowest scores to Problem Solving (2.65 average rating) and Critical Thinking (2.77 average rating), indicating they see the most negative impact in these areas. Teachers worry AI fosters "laziness" and "kills creativity," reflecting a shared anxiety that the core purpose of education—fostering independent thought—is under threat.

3.4. Comparing Teacher and Youth Perspectives

While teachers and youth view AI from different positions within the educational ecosystem, their perspectives show remarkable alignment on the most critical issues, creating a powerful, unified mandate for advocacy. There are, however, subtle differences in focus that enrich the overall picture. A detailed comparison of their views is presented in Annex-B, Table 3.2, Table 3.3. Both groups unequivocally identify the digital divide as the greatest obstacle to equity and view AI as a "double-edged sword" that offers efficiency but threatens critical thinking. Beyond risks, teachers also identified key benefits, with 26.1% citing the potential for personalized and adaptive learning and 23.9% pointing

to enhanced access to information. They also share a deep mistrust of the profit motives of private tech companies and call for robust, government-led regulation.

The primary distinction lies in their focus. Youth are more vocal about agency and co-creation, demanding a seat at the policy-making table with the mantra, "Don't decide for us, decide with us". They feel their involvement is often "tokenistic". Teachers, while also demanding a leading role in policy development (47.8% want a "leading role"), are more focused on the practicalities of pedagogical integration and the urgent need for professional development to effectively use these new tools. This complementarity is crucial: youth demand a voice in the *'what'* and *'why'* of AI policy, while teachers provide the essential perspective on the *'how'*.

3.5. Call for Training, Policy, and Teacher Involvement

To navigate the complexities of AI, teachers articulated a clear vision centred on robust training, supportive policies, and their own central role in governance.

The Urgent Need for Training

There is a significant unmet demand for professional development. A combined 50% of teachers have either received no training and want it (28.3%) or have had to learn on their own (21.7%). This directly aligns with GCE's framework, which calls for sustained "pre- and in-service teacher training" and "pedagogical coaching" to ensure technology is used effectively. Their top training needs are technical skills (67.4%), pedagogical integration (65.1%), and understanding the ethical implications (44.2%).

From Exclusion to Co-Creation in Policy

Currently, teachers feel excluded from decision-making, with 43.5% reporting they have not been consulted on AI policies. This stands in stark contrast to their desired involvement. The call for a leading role in co-developing policies is a direct challenge to top-down implementation and resonates with GCE's principle that teachers and their unions "should be involved at all levels in the design, piloting, implementations and evaluations of these tools". When asked what governments should prioritize, they echoed the core tenets of GCE's advocacy: invest in teacher training, provide free and accessible tools, ensure equitable access, and align AI with the public curriculum .

3.6. Ethical Considerations: Bias, Privacy, and Gender

Beyond infrastructure and pedagogy, teachers identified significant ethical challenges. The foremost ethical concern cited was data privacy and the misuse of student data, with 60.9% of teachers highlighting this issue. This aligns with the deep mistrust both teachers and youth have for corporate motives. A notable contradiction emerged regarding algorithmic bias. While a strong

majority (63.1%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that AI systems are generally "neutral and unbiased" a similar majority (58.7%) were simultaneously "concerned" or "very concerned" that AI will exacerbate existing inequalities. This suggests a surface-level belief in machine neutrality but an intuitive understanding of discriminatory outcomes, highlighting a critical gap in algorithmic literacy. Furthermore, the issue of gender bias in AI is a significant blind spot. A majority of teachers (54.3%) reported they were "not aware" of gender-related concerns or biases in AI. However, when prompted, there was a strong belief in AI's potential to support gender-transformative education, with 39.1% seeing "high potential". This indicates that while awareness of the problem is low, the aspiration to use technology for gender equity is high, presenting a key opportunity for targeted training and awareness-raising (Table 3.3 in Annex B).

3.7. Conclusion

The perspectives of these 46 teachers from the Global South offer a powerful and pragmatic assessment of AI's role in education. They are not technophobes resisting change; they are optimistic educators actively experimenting with AI to enhance their teaching and engage their students. Their views, however, are firmly grounded in a reality where the promise of AI is perpetually constrained by the foundational barriers of the digital divide. The lack of internet, devices,

and electricity are not minor hurdles but formidable obstacles that threaten to deepen the very inequalities that AI is purported to solve.

The striking alignment between the concerns of teachers and the youth they educate creates an undeniable mandate for action. The fear of diminished critical thinking, the call for offline and localized solutions, the demand for government regulation over corporate interests, and the insistence on meaningful participation in policy-making are not isolated sentiments but a shared vision for a more equitable technological future. The path forward, as articulated by these educators, is clear. It requires a multi-pronged strategy that marries investment in infrastructure with comprehensive, pedagogically-focused teacher training.

It necessitates the development of ethical guidelines that are co-created with, not imposed upon, educators and learners. This must include a strong focus on data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the potential for gender-transformative pedagogy. Above all, it demands that teachers, in partnership with youth, be placed at the centre of policy and decision-making. Their collective expertise is indispensable for ensuring that the integration of AI is not merely a technological exercise, but a human-centred endeavour that is ethical, equitable, and genuinely supportive of the right to quality, public education for all

3.8. Key Takeaway Messages

Optimism in the Face of Scarcity: Despite overwhelming infrastructural barriers, half of the teachers are «very optimistic» about AI›s potential, signalling a strong will to innovate if given the necessary tools and support.

The Digital Divide is a Teacher Crisis: The lack of internet/electricity (%76.1) and devices (%67.4) is the top barrier for teachers, paralyzing their ability to integrate AI and reinforcing that infrastructure is a prerequisite for both teaching and learning.

A Shared Fear of Losing Critical Thinking: The number one risk identified by teachers is over-reliance on AI eroding critical thinking (%39.1) , perfectly mirroring the top ethical concern of youth organizations. This shared anxiety highlights a fundamental threat to the core purpose of education.

Teachers are Already Experimenting: A vast majority of teachers (%71.7) are already using AI tools, primarily Generative AI like ChatGPT (%37.0), for practical tasks like content creation and lesson planning, demonstrating proactive but unsupported adoption.

The Role is Shifting from Lecturer to Facilitator: Teachers see AI changing their role to be «more of a facilitator» (%30.4), a shift requiring new pedagogical skills to guide students in a tech-rich environment rather than just delivering content.

Training is Demanded, Not Delivered: There is a critical gap between the need for and provision of training. A combined %50 of teachers have either received no formal training and want it or have been forced to learn on their own.

Teachers Demand a Leading Role in Policy: Educators feel excluded from decision-making (%43.5 report no consultation) and overwhelmingly demand a central voice, with %47.8 advocating for «a leading role in co-developing policies».

Cultural and Linguistic Relevance is Non-Negotiable: A majority of teachers (%47.8) rate the importance of AI tools being available in local languages and cultural contexts as «Very important» , echoing youth critiques of «westernized» AI.

A Contradiction on Bias: While a majority of teachers (63.1%) believe AI systems are generally «neutral and unbiased,» a similar majority are simultaneously concerned that AI will exacerbate existing inequalities (58.7%), indicating a need for deeper literacy on algorithmic bias.

Human-Centred AI is the Goal: The consistent message is that AI should empower, not replace, teachers. The goal is to use AI as a supportive tool to enhance creative teaching and reduce administrative burdens, reinforcing the irreplaceable value of human interaction in education.

Chapter 4:

Civil Society Perspectives From Global South

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.

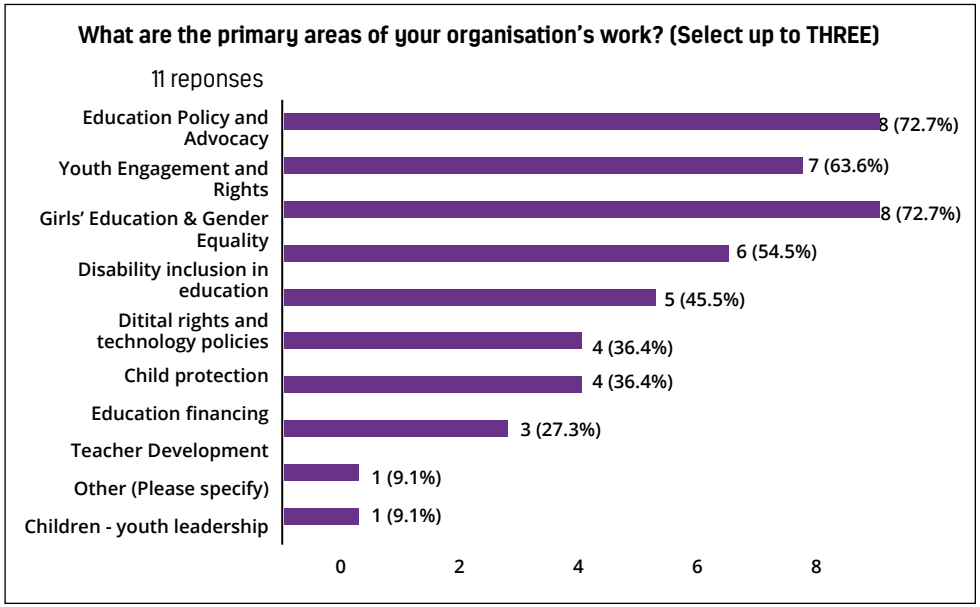
The chapter highlights the evolving role of CSOs as they become essential watchdogs for accountability, conveners for multi-stakeholder collaboration, and amplifiers for the marginalized voices of youth and teachers. Ultimately, CSOs are presented as a unified front advocating for a human-centered shift that treats AI as a public good, ensuring its development is grounded in equity, human rights, and democratic oversight.

4. Introduction

Following the exploration of youth and teacher perspectives in the preceding chapters, this chapter introduces the crucial viewpoint of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). The insights synthesized here are drawn from in-depth interviews with 11 CSO leaders from the Global South. What lends particular significance to their contribution is their position as external, independent experts who are not part of the Global Campaign for Education's (GCE) Alliance. This externality provides a powerful, impartial validation of the core findings emerging from GCE's constituencies. Their analysis serves to confirm that the hopes and fears articulated by youth and teachers are not isolated sentiments but are, in fact, widely shared across the broader civil society landscape, thus strengthening the mandate for the recommendations in this report. Unlike the youth organizations in Chapter 2, whose focus is understandably grounded in the immediate realities of access and usability, these CSO leaders provide a broader, systemic analysis. They act as advocates, watchdogs, and community connectors, bridging the gap between the lived realities of students and educators and the abstract world of policymaking. Their perspective provides a critical third pillar, contextualizing the hopes and fears of youth and teachers within a broader framework of human rights, social justice, and public accountability.

As Diagram 4.1 illustrates, the primary work of these organizations is concentrated in high-level strategic areas. "Education Policy & Advocacy" and "Girls' Education & Gender Equality" are the top focus areas for 72.7% of the CSOs surveyed, followed closely by "Youth Engagement and Rights" (63.6%). This demonstrates that their viewpoint is inherently political and structural, focused on shaping the rules that govern technology rather than just the experience of using it. This chapter synthesizes their insights, examining their vision for AI in education, their primary concerns, their advocacy priorities, and their evolving role in governing this powerful new technology.

Diagram 4.1: Primary Areas of CSO Work



4.1. A Dual Vision: AI as a Tool for Equity and a Driver of Division

Similar to the "double-edged sword" metaphor used by youth in Chapter 2, CSOs in the Global South view AI with a mix of profound hope and significant apprehension. They recognize its potential to be a powerful equaliser while simultaneously fearing its capacity to become a great exacerbator of existing inequalities.

AI as a Source of Hope

The hopes expressed by CSO leaders are firmly rooted in AI's potential to advance the goal of inclusive and equitable quality education for all (SDG 4). Their vision is not one of technology for technology's sake, but of AI as a targeted tool to solve long-standing educational challenges. They envision AI as a tool that can:

- **Bridge Educational Gaps:** A primary hope is that AI can be leveraged to "reduce educational gaps by providing access to quality content in both rural and urban areas". This includes making "high-quality learning resources available in underserved areas" and surmounting linguistic barriers by "providing education in local languages through translation capabilities".
- **Personalize Learning:** CSOs see immense potential in AI's ability to "personalize learning according to each student's pace and needs" , offering tailored support that is difficult to achieve in traditional, overburdened classroom settings.
- **Support and Empower Teachers:** Far from seeing AI as a replacement for educators, CSOs view it as a way to "support teacher training with innovative tools" and assist them with data-driven insights and administrative tasks, thereby freeing them to focus on pedagogy and mentorship.
- **Inform Inclusive Policy:** Leaders hope AI can be used to generate "more accurate data and analysis to inform inclusive educational policies", helping to create more responsive and equitable education systems from the top down.

AI as a Source of Worry

These hopes are overshadowed by deep-seated worries about AI's potential to negatively impact the right to a free, quality public education. These concerns, which align directly with the fears articulated by both youth and teachers, are quantified in survey data and amplified in qualitative responses. Diagram 4.2 reveals that the biggest concerns regarding AI exacerbating inequalities are the **"**Lack of AI tools in local languages" and the "High cost of AI tools limiting access for low-income students", both cited by 81.8% of CSOs. **"**Widening the digital divide" and "Insufficient digital literacy skills," each highlighted by 63.6% of respondents. This data powerfully validates the qualitative critiques from youth about "westernized" AI and the inequitable "pay-to-win" models.

Diagram 4.2: Biggest Concerns Regarding AI Exacerbating Existing Educational Inequalities

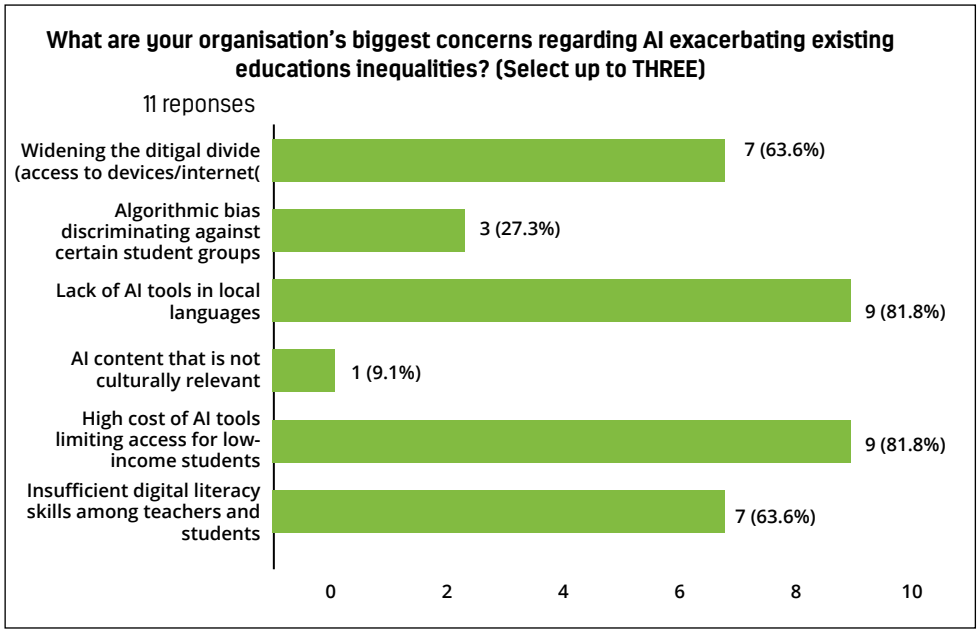
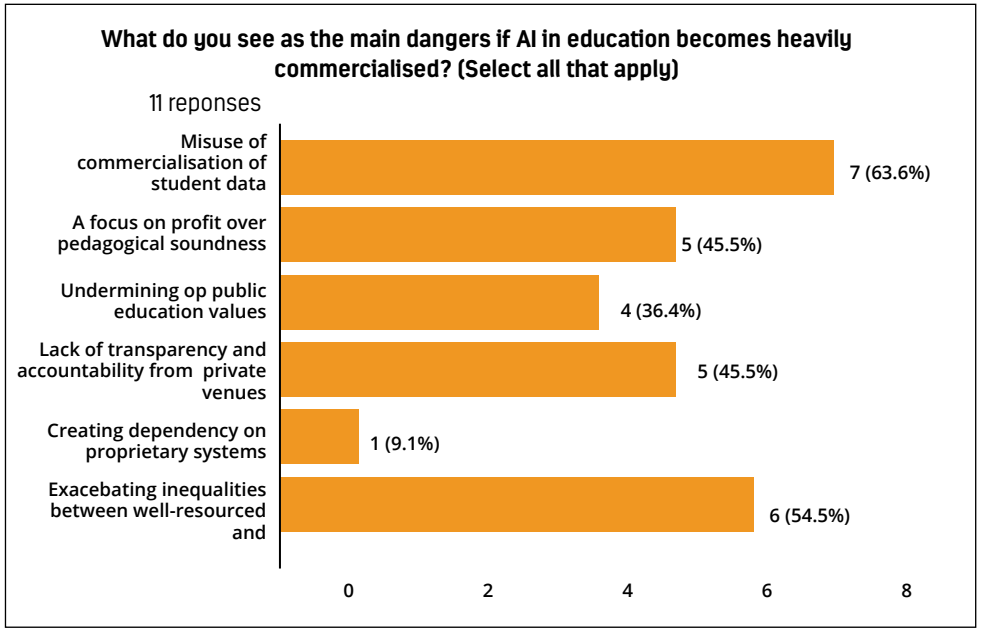


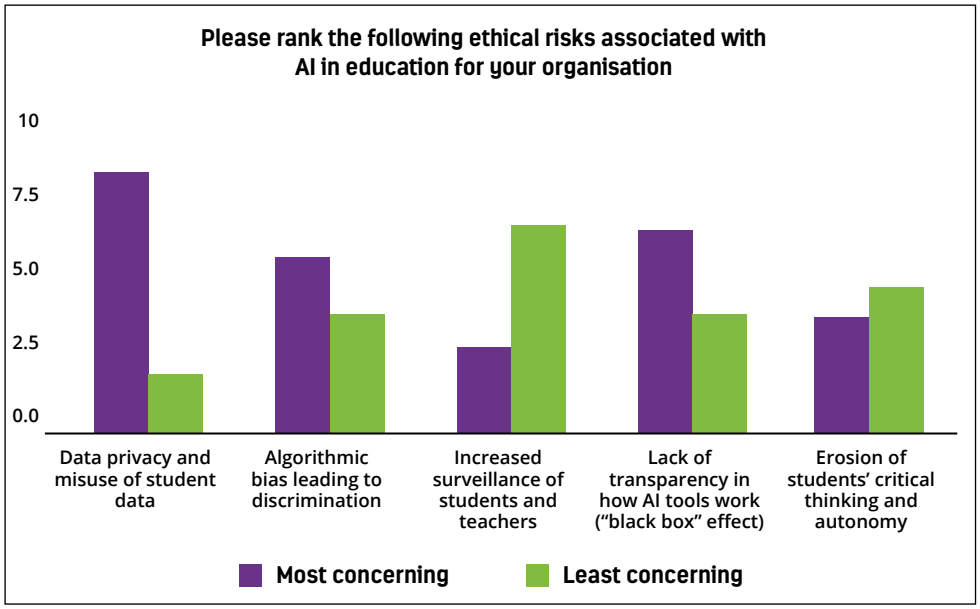
Diagram 4.3: Main Dangers if AI in Education Becomes Heavily Commercialized



The primary worries include exacerbating the Digital Divide: This is the most significant and immediate concern. CSOs warn that AI will "only benefit the rich children" and that its rollout could "exacerbate existing inequalities—for example, by favouring schools and communities with better connectivity and resources while leaving others further behind". This directly validates the "two-tiered world" described by youth in Chapter 2 , where affluent students in well-funded schools benefit from premium AI while marginalized communities are left further behind and Commercialization and Privatization: As shown in Diagram 4.3, there is a strong fear that the proliferation of proprietary AI platforms will accelerate the commercialization of education. The top dangers identified are the "Misuse or commercialization of student data" (63.6%) and "Exacerbating inequalities between well-resourced and underprivileged" (54.5%). CSOs worry that private companies prioritize profit over pedagogy and protection, undermining the principle of free public education.

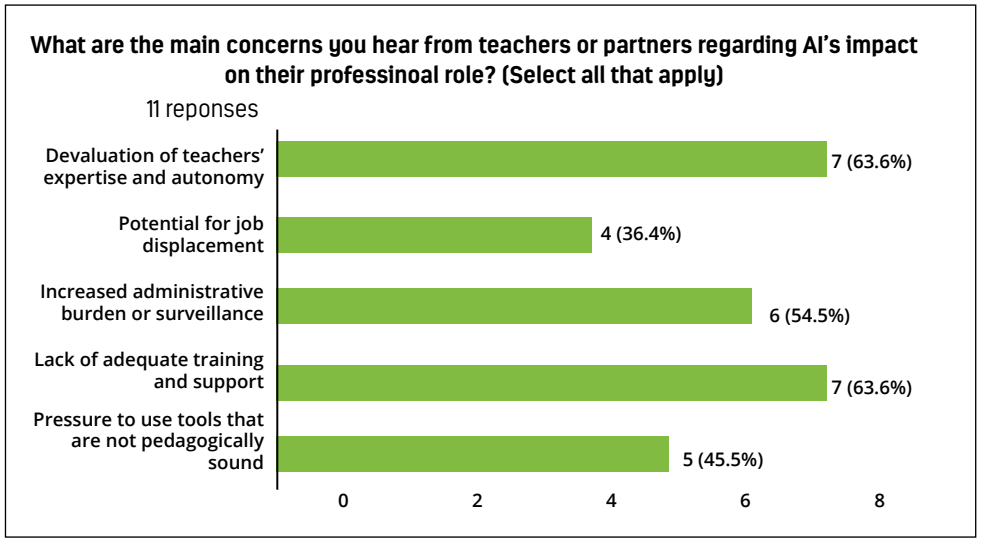
Data Privacy and Surveillance: CSO leaders express grave concerns about the risks of student data being collected, used, or sold without consent. Diagram 4.4 starkly visualizes this fear, with "Data privacy and misuse of student data" ranked as the single "Most Concerning" ethical risk by a significant margin. This concern is particularly acute in fragile states with weak regulatory frameworks.

Diagram 4.4: Ranking of Ethical Risks Associated with AI in Education



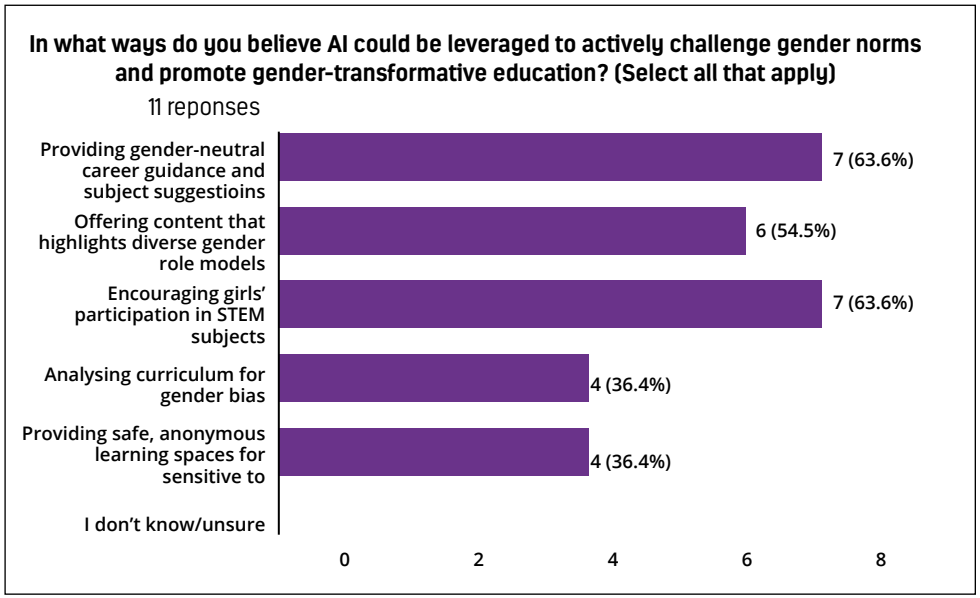
Dehumanization of Education: A recurring worry is that an over-reliance on AI could "replace the essential human connection between teachers and students", leading to a dehumanized learning process that lacks the mentorship and emotional support crucial for development. This is compounded by concerns for teachers, with 63.6% of CSOs citing a "Devaluation of teachers' expertise and autonomy" as a primary fear they hear from educators (Diagram 4.5).

Diagram 4.5: Main Concerns Regarding AI's Impact on Teachers' Professional Role



Despite these risks, CSOs see potential in leveraging AI for positive social change. Diagram 4.6 shows a strong belief that AI can be used to promote gender-transformative education. The top strategies identified are "Providing gender-neutral career guidance" and "Encouraging girls' participation in STEM subjects," both selected by 63.6% of organizations. This indicates a forward-looking perspective that seeks to harness AI's power for equity.

Diagram 4.6: How AI Could be Leveraged for Gender-Transformative Education



4.2. The Advocacy Agenda: A Call for Rights-Based Governance

In response to these challenges, CSOs are formulating a clear and consistent advocacy agenda focused on concrete demands for regulation, investment, and systemic change.

Primacy of Public Regulation Over Corporate Interests

There is a powerful consensus among CSOs that governments, not private companies, must be in the "driver's seat" when it comes to regulating AI in education. CSOs express a deep and pervasive mistrust of corporate motives, a sentiment that mirrors the views of both youth and teachers.

The advocacy calls for strong, transparent, and binding public regulation that includes:

- **Strict Data Privacy Standards:** Mandating how student data is collected, stored, and used, with explicit consent and prohibitions on selling information to third parties.
- **Algorithmic Transparency and Audits:** Requiring companies to disclose how their AI systems work and mandating independent audits to identify and mitigate biases.
- **Public Oversight Mechanisms:** Establishing public oversight boards with community, teacher, and youth representation to hold private companies accountable.

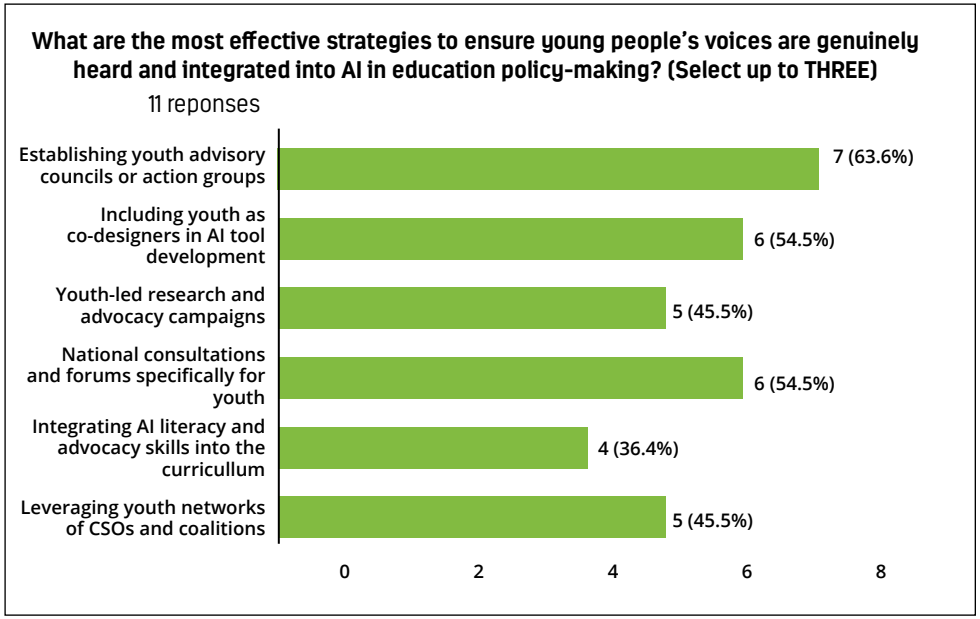
The advocacy agenda prioritizes:

- **Universal Access:** Pushing for public investment to ensure all schools and communities, especially in rural and underserved areas, have access to electricity, affordable internet, and digital devices.
- **Equity-Focused Implementation:** Insisting that AI initiatives must demonstrate how they will reach marginalized groups, including students with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and girls in rural areas who face systemic barriers.
- **Empowering Teachers, Not Replacing Them:** The CSOs leaders believe that AI should be a tool to support educators, not supplant them. This aligns perfectly with the perspectives of teachers in Chapter 3. Key advocacy points include:
- **Investment in Teacher Training:** A call for continuous, comprehensive professional development that goes beyond technical skills to include AI literacy, ethical use, and pedagogical strategies.
- **Teacher Involvement in Policy:** Ensuring educators are centrally involved in the co-design, piloting, and evaluation of AI tools and policies, a direct

response to the 43.5% of teachers who reported being excluded from such consultations.

Finally, Diagram 4.7 shows the strategies CSOs believe are most effective for integrating youth voices into policymaking. The top strategy, supported by 63.6% of CSOs, is "Establishing youth advisory councils or action groups," followed by "Including youth as co-designers" and "National consultations" (both 54.5%). This aligns perfectly with the youth demand to move beyond tokenism toward genuine co-creation.

Diagram 4.7: Most Effective Strategies to Ensure Young People's Voices are Heard



4.3. The Evolving Role of Civil Society in the AI Era

The rapid integration of AI is compelling CSOs to evolve their own roles, moving from observers to active participants in shaping its future. CSO leaders see their role becoming "increasingly critical and strategic", evolving to focus on three key functions:

» **Watchdogs for Accountability:** CSOs are positioning themselves as independent monitors, or "active watchdogs" , to hold both governments and private companies accountable. This involves "monitoring AI's impacts on equity and rights" , conducting independent audits for bias , and "raising public awareness about risks like data exploitation and surveillance".

» **Conveners and Bridge Builders:** CSOs are acting as crucial bridges between stakeholders. Their work involves building "coalitions between policymakers, tech experts, and civil society" and, importantly, building the capacity of local communities to "demand transparency and accountability".

» **Amplifiers of Marginalized Voices:** A core function is to ensure those most affected have a meaningful voice. This means "amplifying community voices" and creating platforms where youth, teachers, and marginalized communities can move beyond the "tokenism" identified in Chapter 2 to active co-design of AI policies and tools. As one CSO leader noted, there is a need to "support young people to lead these conversations since they're most affected".

4.4. Conclusion: A Unified Front for AI as a Public Good

The perspectives of Civil Society Organisations provide a crucial strategic lens, elevating the grassroots concerns of youth and teachers into a coherent advocacy agenda for systemic change. Their unified voice confirms a remarkable consensus across all stakeholder groups. CSOs are not anti-technology; they are pro-equity, pro-rights, and pro-public education. They call for a fundamental

shift away from a market-driven, technology-first approach and towards a human-centered model grounded in public oversight and democratic principles.

The demands for Investing In Infrastructure as a prerequisite, empowering teachers through training, regulating the private sector to protect the public good, and institutionalizing youth and community participation are not isolated priorities. They are deeply interconnected components of a single, overarching goal: to ensure that AI serves as a public good that enhances learning opportunities for all, rather than a commercial product that deepens division. By acting as vigilant guardians of equity, CSOs provide a critical counterbalance to corporate and state power, creating a vital pathway for turning the principles of fairness and inclusion into tangible policy and practice.

4.5. Key Takeaway Messages from Civil Society Perspectives

A Mandate for Public Regulation Over Corporate Interests: CSOs express a profound mistrust of corporate motives and are unified in their demand that governments, not private companies, must lead the regulation of AI in education to protect it as a public good.

The Digital Divide is a Non-Negotiable Prerequisite: Any conversation about equitable AI is meaningless without first addressing foundational infrastructure. CSOs firmly advocate that universal access to electricity, internet, and devices is a prerequisite for justice.

Data Privacy is the Foremost Ethical Red Line: The misuse and commercialization of student data is the single most concerning ethical risk for CSOs, who call for strict, binding regulations on how data is collected, used, and protected.

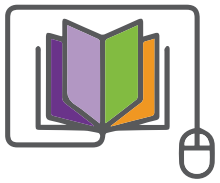
Empower Teachers, Don't Replace Them: Aligning with educators themselves, CSOs insist that AI must be a tool to support teachers' professional autonomy and reduce their burdens, a goal that requires massive investment in continuous, high-quality training.

From Tokenism to Co-Creation: CSOs champion the demand from youth and teachers for genuine participation in governance, advocating for formal structures like advisory councils to ensure the voices of those most affected are central to policy-making.

Countering "Data Colonialism" with Local Solutions: CSOs identify the "westernized" bias of AI tools as a major threat to cultural and linguistic diversity, advocating for investment in local, multilingual, and culturally relevant AI ecosystems.

CSOs as the Watchdogs of Equity: In the AI era, CSOs are evolving to become essential independent monitors, holding both governments and corporations accountable for the impacts of AI on equity, privacy, and human rights.

Chapter 5:
Twenty Stories of AI's Impact on Youth and Education



This chapter presents twenty stories and examples, documented during interviews 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.

5. Twenty stories of AI's impact

The Story or Example	Why It Is Important
1. Education Lifeline in a Conflict Zone A university student in Gaza described using AI tools like Gemini to summarize lecture slides and clarify concepts. This enables learning despite the severe disruptions caused by war, electricity shortages, and poor internet access.	This story is crucial because it frames AI not as a luxury or a mere convenience, but as an essential tool for educational continuity and resilience in crisis and conflict zones. It highlights AI's potential to provide access to learning when traditional systems fail.
2. The Hidden Environmental Cost A youth participant from North America expressed significant concern about AI's large environmental footprint, specifically mentioning the high water consumption required to cool the systems for generative AI like ChatGPT. They felt this environmental impact was not worth the benefit for simple queries.	This is a unique and important perspective that brings a critical, often overlooked, ethical dilemma to the forefront. It broadens the definition of AI's "cost" beyond financial or social impacts to include sustainability and environmental justice, questioning the trade-offs of the technology.
3. The "Offline AI" Solution in Ghana A civil society organization highlighted the work of Chalkboard Education in Ghana, which uses AI to provide offline e-learning platforms. These platforms are specifically designed to function in areas with limited or no internet connectivity, allowing for real-time student progress tracking without constant online access.	This example is highly significant because it provides a concrete, existing solution to the most frequently mentioned barrier in the Global South: the digital divide caused by a lack of internet. It demonstrates that AI can be adapted to under-resourced contexts instead of just widening the gap.

The Story or Example	Why It Is Important
4. Predicting and Preventing Female Student Dropouts A CSO from Bangladesh described how the JAAGO Foundation's Durbar project uses AI to analyse data and predict which girls are at high risk of dropping out of school. This allows for early and targeted interventions to prevent child marriage and support their continued education.	This story showcases a powerful and proactive use of AI for social good. Instead of being a passive learning tool, AI is used as a preventative mechanism to protect a highly vulnerable group, directly addressing deep-seated gender inequalities in education.
5. The Penalty for Ethical AI Use A youth participant from Malawi shared a personal experience where they were asked to declare their AI usage when applying for an opportunity. After honestly stating they used AI only to refine grammar, they were told to re-apply manually without any AI assistance to be considered.	This personal anecdote is a stark illustration of the stigma and misunderstanding surrounding AI. It reveals a critical gap between the ethical use of AI as an assistive tool and the perception of institutions, which may unfairly penalize users and fail to distinguish between assistance and cheating.
6. The Professor's Ethical Dilemma A youth from North America questioned the ethics of professors using AI tools like ChatGPT to prepare their lessons. They argued that students and their families pay for the professor's human expertise and insight, not for a lesson generated by an AI.	This story presents a sophisticated ethical challenge regarding the value of human-led education. It questions the changing role of the teacher and what constitutes "quality teaching" in the age of AI, moving the debate beyond student use to educator responsibility.

The Story or Example	Why It Is Important
7. Culturally and Age-Inappropriate Content A teacher from Nigeria explained that while using AI-powered assessment tools like Quizlet, they found that the generated questions were sometimes not appropriate for the age group or were culturally misaligned with the local Nigerian context, making them less effective.	This practical example clearly demonstrates the problem of "Westernized" AI and the critical need for localization. It shows that without cultural and contextual adaptation, even well-intentioned AI tools can be ineffective or irrelevant, reinforcing the need for locally developed or co-designed solutions.
8. Parental Fears as a Barrier to Access A youth leader from Africa recounted a project during the COVID-19 pandemic where parents in a Kenyan community were afraid to give their daughters phones for virtual learning. They believed it would lead to the girls being exploited or taken advantage of by men, creating a significant barrier to their education.	This story is vital because it reveals that the digital divide is not merely about infrastructure and cost. It is also rooted in deep-seated social and gender norms. Addressing AI inequality requires tackling these cultural barriers, not just providing devices and the internet.
9. The Problem of Identical AI Generated Essays A lecturer from Malawi described receiving assignments from students that were nearly identical. Students would use ChatGPT to generate an essay and simply use the "regenerate" function, which would only slightly alter the wording of the same core content.	This is a classic and powerful example of how AI threatens academic integrity and critical thinking. It highlights the challenge for educators in assessing genuine student understanding and the risk of students using AI as a shortcut to bypass the learning process entirely.

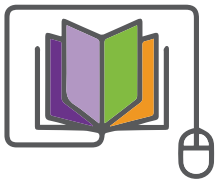
The Story or Example	Why It Is Important
10. AI for Indigenous Language Literacy A CSO described pilot programs in Bolivia and neighbouring countries where AI-powered adaptive apps are used to improve literacy and math skills. These initiatives are particularly successful because they tailor exercises in both Spanish and Indigenous languages, helping children from marginalized communities who have limited access to teachers.	This story provides a strong, positive case study of how AI can be used to promote inclusion and preserve cultural identity. By operating in local and Indigenous languages, such tools directly counter the trend of English-dominated AI and close educational gaps for historically marginalized groups.
11. Finishing College Without a Laptop A participant from Malawi shared their personal experience of getting through most of college without a laptop and knowing other students who completed their degrees without even owning a smartphone.	This powerful, first-hand account makes the abstract concept of the "digital divide" incredibly concrete and personal. It grounds the discussion in the stark reality of resource scarcity, showing that for many, the debate is not about which AI tool to use, but whether they have a device at all.
12. The Flawed AI Detection Tool Multiple students shared experiences where they wrote original essays, only to have AI-detection tools flag their work as being 30-79% AI-generated. This often happened because of standard academic referencing styles.	This story reveals the unreliability and potential unfairness of the primary tools institutions use to police AI misuse. It shows that the "solution" to cheating can create new problems by penalizing students who are following academic rules, highlighting a critical flaw in the current regulatory approach.

The Story or Example	Why It Is Important
13. Using AI to Coach Teachers on Classroom Management An educator from Nigeria described building a specific AI model trained on data from effective teachers. The goal is to use the model to coach other educators on classroom management, which was identified as one of their biggest challenges.	This is a sophisticated and positive use case that moves beyond student-facing tools. It shows AI's potential for professional development and teacher empowerment, demonstrating how technology can be used to scale the expertise of the best educators to support the entire teaching community.
14. The Distraction of Entertainment vs. Educational AI A participant from Sierra Leone lamented that while powerful educational AI tools exist, many school-aged kids are instead distracted by entertainment apps like TikTok and Facebook, which are of "no use to them" academically and negatively affect their education.	This story highlights the crucial challenge of misuse and distraction. It makes it clear that simply providing access to technology is insufficient. There is a parallel need for digital literacy, guidance, and sometimes restrictions to ensure that technology is used productively for learning rather than just entertainment.
15. Solar Power as a Practical Solution in Gaza Faced with severe electricity and internet shortages due to conflict, participants in Gaza identified the local use of renewable energy (solar power) as a way to charge devices and maintain some level of internet connectivity for learning.	This demonstrates remarkable community-led problem-solving and resilience. Instead of waiting for large-scale infrastructure solutions that may never arrive, it points to localized, sustainable strategies to overcome the primary barriers to AI access in under-resourced and crisis-affected regions.

The Story or Example	Why It Is Important
16. When the AI Conversation is "Superficial" A participant from Pakistan argued that with 26 million out-of-school children and a lack of basic computers in many public schools, the global discourse on integrating advanced AI into their education system feels "far ahead and superficial".	This is a crucial reality check. It underscores that countries and communities are at vastly different stages of technological readiness. It argues that before advanced AI solutions can be discussed, foundational issues like basic infrastructure, teacher training, and universal access must be addressed first.
17. Ads Appearing Based on Spoken Conversations A student in Africa described the "creepy" experience of talking about football boots with a friend, only to immediately see ads for them appear on social media platforms like Facebook and TikTok.	This is a universally relatable example of modern concerns over data privacy and surveillance. It makes the abstract threat of data collection tangible and personal, highlighting the unease users feel about the extent to which their information—and even private conversations—are being monitored for commercial purposes.
18. Advocating for "Zero-Rated" AI Platforms A student leader from the All Africa Students Union advocated that key educational AI platforms should be "zero-rated". This means they would not consume users' costly mobile data, similar to successful campaigns for other academic websites.	This story is important because it proposes a specific and practical policy solution to the affordability barrier of the digital divide. It connects the AI access issue to previous digital equity campaigns, offering a tangible advocacy goal for making essential learning tools genuinely free for students.
19. Teacher Training as a "Non-Negotiable" Priority A participant from Malawi and a CSO from Ghana both strongly emphasized that teacher empowerment through training is "non-negotiable". They argued that AI should be a tool to support teachers and reduce their administrative burden, not diminish or replace their essential role as mentors and cultural guides.	This story centres the teacher in the AI debate. It highlights the strong consensus view across different groups that for AI to be integrated ethically and effectively, massive and continuous investment in teacher capacity building is the most critical prerequisite to success.
20. Using AI to Write and Publish Books A participant from Nigeria detailed her process of using ChatGPT to help develop stories and puzzles for English textbooks she is writing. She then uses other tools like Canva to correct images and spellings, acknowledging that AI is a helpful starting point but not a final product that can be used without human oversight.	This provides an excellent example of a blended, practical workflow for using AI. It demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of AI's role as an assistant or "thinking partner" rather than an author, showcasing a model for responsible and productive use that leverages technology without sacrificing human creativity and quality control.

These twenty stories collectively reveal that AI in education is not a one-size-fits-all solution but a dynamic tool that can either bridge gaps or widen inequalities, depending on its implementation. They call for a global commitment to inclusive, context-driven strategies that prioritize access, teacher empowerment, and ethical governance, ensuring AI serves as a catalyst for equitable education rather than a barrier.

Chapter 6:
Strategic Roadmap for Action



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 colonialized" 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

6. Introduction: From Evidence to Action

The preceding chapters have presented a clear and consistent narrative drawn mainly from the perspectives of youth across the Global South, complemented by the views of teachers and insights from GCE's own leadership. Crucially, these findings have been externally validated by independent Civil Society Organisations, confirming that the concerns raised by GCE's constituencies are shared across the broader development sector and strengthening the mandate for the recommendations that follow. The research reveals that Artificial Intelligence in education is not a distant prospect but a present-day reality fraught with both transformative potential and profound peril. The findings paint a picture of a landscape defined by a pervasive digital divide, a shared fear of the erosion of critical thinking, deep-seated mistrust of corporate actors, and a powerful, unified demand for authentic participation in governance. This chapter translates these rich, evidence-based insights into a strategic, actionable roadmap for the Global Campaign for Education (GCE).

The powerful alignment across these groups—particularly the striking consensus between youth and teachers—means the following recommendations are not just suggestions, but reflect a clear mandate from the constituencies this study sought to amplify. The proposed interventions are designed to be practical and contextually relevant, providing a phased approach for GCE to navigate the complexities of AI, fortify its advocacy, and uphold its commitment to free, quality, public education for all as a fundamental human right.

6.1. A Unified Mandate: Consensus Across Stakeholders

A powerful finding of this research is the remarkable consensus on the core issues of AI in education across all stakeholder groups: youth in FGDs, youth organization leaders, teachers, and CSO leaders. While each group brings a unique focus, their analyses converge on the same fundamental problems and solutions, creating a unified mandate for advocacy and action.

Table 6.1: A Unified Mandate: Consensus Across Stakeholders

Key Issue	Youth (FGD) Perspective	Youth Org. Leaders (KII) Perspective	Teacher Perspective	CSO Leader Perspective	Common Intervention Model
Digital Divide	A "far dream" ; defined by lack of electricity, internet, and devices, creating a "two-tiered world".	The "Severe Barrier" (85.29% cite lack of internet).	The top professional obstacle (76.1% cite lack of internet/electricity), paralyzing AI integration.	A non-negotiable prerequisite; failure to address it exacerbates all other inequalities.	Prioritize public investment in digital infrastructure as a fundamental right; champion "Offline-First" and "Zero-Rating" strategies.
Erosion of Critical Thinking	The dominant fear; AI fosters "laziness," stifles curiosity, and degrades core skills.	The most "urgent" ethical concern (91.18%).	The pedagogical risk (39.1%); AI negatively impacts problem-solving and critical thinking skills.	A key worry about the "dehumanization of learning" and the loss of essential human interaction.	Launch comprehensive "Critical AI Literacy" campaigns for students and teachers, focusing on how to think with AI, not just use it.
Corporate Mistrust & Regulation	Deep mistrust of "profit, not pedagogy" ; demand for government-led regulation and accountability on creators.	Low trust in tech companies (22%) ; belief that benefits require "strong regulation and oversight" (43.8%).	Deep mistrust of private sector motives; main ethical concern is the misuse of student data (60.9%).	Consensus that governments must be in the "driver's seat" ; advocate for binding public regulation, data privacy standards, and bias audits.	Advocate for and implement strong, government-led, human-rights-based regulation of the EdTech sector to ensure public oversight and accountability.

Key Issue	Youth (FGD) Perspective	Youth Org. Leaders (KII) Perspective	Teacher Perspective	CSO Leader Perspective	Common Intervention Model
Exclusion from Governance	Feel their involvement is "tokenistic" ; demand genuine co-creation with the mantra, "Don't decide for us, decide with us".	50% view involvement as "tokenistic" ; advocate for formal youth-led mechanisms like advisory councils.	Feel excluded from decision-making (43.5% not consulted) ; demand a "leading role in co-developing policies" (47.8%).	Advocate for platforms that amplify marginalized voices and facilitate "active co-design of AI policies and tools".	Establish formal, funded, and empowered participatory governance structures.
Cultural & Linguistic Bias	AI is "westernized and colonialized" ; fails to recognize local accents and lacks indigenous language support.	"Lack of AI tools in local language" is a "Severe Barrier" (67.65%).	A majority (47.8%) rate the importance of local languages and contexts as "Very important".	"Lack of AI tools in local languages" is a top concern (81.8%); AI risks imposing external models and undermining local knowledge.	Advocate for public funding of local AI ecosystems to create culturally relevant, multilingual, open-source tools aligned with national curricula.

6.2. Strategic Analysis

Before detailing specific actions, it is crucial to synthesize the core strategic insights derived from the research. The following table consolidates the primary challenges and opportunities, forming the evidence base for our recommendations.

Table 6.2: Analysis and Strategic Implications

Key Research Finding	Supporting Data Points	Strategic Implication for GCE
The Digital Divide is the Foundational Barrier	» 85.29% of youth organizations cite "Lack of Internet Access" as the top barrier. » 76.1% of teachers identify "lack of reliable internet/electricity" as their primary obstacle. » Only 5.4% electricity access in South Sudan and 11.1% internet use in Burundi.	GCE's advocacy on AI needs to focus primarily on digital infrastructure as a fundamental right. The campaign must frame access to connectivity and devices as a prerequisite for the right to education in the 21st century.

Key Research Finding	Supporting Data Points	Strategic Implication for GCE
Erosion of Critical Thinking is the Core Pedagogical Fear	» 91.18% of youth organizations deem this an "urgent" concern. » 39.1% of teachers identify it as the top risk, with the lowest scores for AI's impact on critical thinking (2.77/5) and problem-solving (2.65/5). » This fear is amplified by the fact that 71.7% of teacher respondents taught Humanities, where analytical skills are foundational.	GCE must champion Critical AI Literacy over mere technical skills. The goal is not just to use AI but to question, critique, and ethically engage with it. This safeguards the transformative purpose of education.
Profound Mistrust of the Private Sector	» Youth consensus: companies are driven by "profit, not pedagogy". » Trust in multinational tech companies is exceptionally low (22%). » 60.9% of teachers' main ethical concern is the misuse of student data. » Civil society leaders identified data privacy as the single "Most Concerning" ethical risk by a significant margin.	GCE has a clear mandate to advocate for strong, government-led, human Rights-based regulation of EdTech. This includes pushing back against the "pay-to-win" models that commercialize education.
Demand for Authentic Co-Creation Over Tokenism	» 50% of youth organizations feel their involvement is "tokenistic". » The core youth demand is "Don't decide for us, decide with us". » 47.8% of teachers want a "leading role in co-developing policies".	GCE must embed participatory governance into its advocacy and operational models. This means advocating that governments and institutions must establish and fund formal structures where youth and teachers can move from consultation to genuine co-creation of AI policies.

Key Research Finding	Supporting Data Points	Strategic Implication for GCE
Human Capacity is as Critical as Infrastructure	» "Lack of youth digital literacy" (82.35%) and "teacher preparedness" (79.41%) are ranked as top barriers by youth organizations. » 50% of teachers have received no formal training and desire it. » Teachers exhibit a critical gap in algorithmic literacy, with 63.1% believing AI is "neutral" while 58.7% fear it will worsen inequality. » A majority of teachers (54.3%) are "not aware" of gender biases in AI, highlighting a significant blind spot.	GCE must advocate for a dual investment strategy: robust funding for physical infrastructure must be matched by sustained, high-quality investment in teacher training and student literacy programs, with a specific focus on closing gaps in understanding algorithmic and gender bias.
Context-Specific Realities Demand Tailored Solutions	» - African youth perspectives are defined by the infrastructure deficit and fears of cultural erosion. - The Middle East context is shaped by conflict, viewing AI as a tool for educational continuity. - European and North American youth uniquely raised concerns about AI's environmental impact.	GCE's advocacy and programmatic work must be adaptable, not one-size-fits-all. Recommendations for AI policy in one region may not be relevant in another, requiring a flexible, context-sensitive approach.

6.3. Practical Recommendations

Based on the preceding analysis, this section outlines several recommendations emerging from the research findings. These are presented as suggestions to inform GCE's future advocacy and strategic discussions, rather than a formal, time-bound plan. The proposals aim to address the key concerns and opportunities identified by youth and teachers, building toward long-term, systemic change. Possible interventions are as follows-

6.3.1. Launch a Campaign on "Critical AI Literacy"

Reasoning: This responds directly to the primary fear of both youth and teachers that AI will erode critical thinking. The research shows that deeper engagement with AI fosters critical concern, not blind optimism.

What: Develop and disseminate a "Critical AI Literacy Toolkit" for students and teachers. This should focus not on how to use specific apps, but on bias detection, data privacy, ethical use, and understanding how algorithms work. The toolkit must include specific modules addressing the common misconception of AI neutrality to close the algorithmic literacy gap, and targeted content on identifying and countering gender bias to address the awareness gap among educators.

How: Partner with member coalitions and teacher unions to adapt and translate the toolkit into local languages. Host webinars and workshops to launch the materials.

6.3.2. Develop and Advocate for "Embrace, Don't Ban" Institutional Policies

Reasoning: Youth and teachers are not calling for a ban but for clear, ethical guidelines. Schools need practical support to navigate this new terrain.

What: Create a model policy framework for educational institutions on the responsible use of AI. This should include guidelines on academic integrity, data protection, and acceptable use.

How: Co-design the framework with the new AI Governance Council. Disseminate it through National Education Coalitions (NECs) to ministries of education and school networks.

6.3.3. Champion "Digital Infrastructure as a Fundamental Right"

Reasoning: The digital divide is the central barrier to equity. Without addressing this, all other AI initiatives will only benefit the privileged.

What: Integrate advocacy for public investment in electricity, internet connectivity, and affordable devices as a core component of the right to education. This includes promoting practical solutions like "Offline-First" and "Zero-Rating" strategies for educational content.

How: Launch a dedicated global advocacy campaign targeting national governments, international financial institutions (like the World Bank), and telecommunication companies. Use the powerful data from this report (e.g., the disparity in internet access between high-income countries and Sub-Saharan Africa) to make the case.

6.3.4. Advocate for Publicly Funded, Locally Developed AI Ecosystems:

Reasoning: This counters the dominance of "westernized and colonialized" AI and the inequitable "pay-to-win" model.

What: Campaign for national and regional bodies (like the African Union) to invest in open-source, multilingual AI tools that are aligned with public curricula and respect data sovereignty.

How: Forge partnerships with academic institutions and tech hubs in the Global South. Showcase and support existing local innovations to demonstrate feasibility and build momentum, such as the offline e-learning platforms used by Chalkboard Education in Ghana.

6.3.5. Drive Human-Rights-Based Regulation of the EdTech Sector:

Reasoning: There is a clear mandate from youth and teachers for governments, not corporations, to regulate AI.

What: Develop a set of "Red Lines" or non-negotiable principles for AI in education, grounded in human rights. This should include bans on surveillance-based tools, protection of student data, and accountability for algorithmic bias and harm. Regulation must also address environmental sustainability by demanding transparency on the high water and energy consumption of AI models, a key concern raised by youth.

How: Work with GCE's NECs to lobby for these principles to be enshrined in national education and technology policies. Build alliances with digital rights organizations to strengthen this advocacy.

6.4. Advocacy Approach and Capacity Building

6.4.1. Advocacy Strategy

» **Evidence-Based Storytelling**: Use the powerful qualitative data—the direct quotes from youth and teachers—to humanize the statistics. Frame the debate not as a technical issue, but as a human rights imperative.

» **A Unified Front**: Leverage the striking alignment between youth and teacher perspectives as a powerful advocacy tool. Present their shared

demands to policymakers as a unified, cross-constituency mandate that cannot be ignored.

» **Solution-Oriented Approach**: Move beyond critique to offer concrete, practical solutions. Championing concepts like "Critical AI Literacy," "Offline-First" models, and youth co-creation positions GCE as a constructive and forward-thinking leader in the debate. This includes tailoring advocacy messages to different regional contexts, recognizing that the primary concerns in a conflict-affected zone differ from those in a region focused on environmental ethics.

6.4.2. Capacity Building

» Internal AI Literacy Training: GCE members need foundational training on AI. *What:* A series of workshops covering AI fundamentals, key ethical issues (bias, privacy), the global policy landscape, and the key findings of this report. *Why:* To ensure the entire movement can speak with a confident, informed, and unified voice on AI issues.

» Advocacy and Campaigning Workshops: *What:* Training for NECs and youth leaders on how to use this report's findings to build effective national advocacy campaigns. This includes modules on policy analysis, stakeholder mapping, and media engagement. *Why:* To translate this global report into tangible, localized policy change.

» Resource Mobilization and Proposal Development Training: *What:* Practical training for GCE and key partners on how to develop compelling funding proposals based on the recommendations outlined in this chapter. *Why:* To secure the financial resources needed to implement this strategic roadmap.

6.5. Strategic Partnerships- Implementing this ambitious agenda requires strategic collaboration.

» Digital Rights Organizations: Partner with appropriate networks to strengthen advocacy on data privacy, surveillance, and regulation. This should include building a coalition of civil society 'watchdogs' to independently monitor AI's impact on equity and hold both governments and private companies accountable, leveraging the shared watchdog role identified by CSOs.

» UN Agencies: Collaborate with UNESCO and UNICEF to align GCE's advocacy with global policy frameworks and leverage their influence with national governments.

» Academic and Research Institutions: Partner with universities in the Global South to support the development of local AI tools and conduct further research.

» Teacher Unions: Continue to work closely with Education International and its national affiliates to ensure teacher perspectives remain central and to support professional development initiatives.

6.6. Framing the Case for Investment in AI Advocacy

The findings of this report present a compelling and evidence-based case for strategic investment in advocacy for equitable and rights-based AI in education. To attract the necessary support from foundations, bilateral donors, and partners committed to education, digital rights, and youth empowerment, GCE can structure its appeal around the following key intervention areas, each directly addressing the urgent needs identified by youth and teachers.

» Investing in Advocacy for Digital Rights and Critical Literacy: A strong case for investment can be made by highlighting the foundational nature of the digital divide. Funding is essential to launch and sustain advocacy campaigns that frame digital infrastructure as a fundamental human right, a prerequisite for education in the 21st century. Furthermore, resources are needed to develop and disseminate practical tools, such as a "Critical AI Literacy" toolkit, which directly responds to the unified fear of both youth and teachers about the erosion of critical thinking.

- **Supporting Authentic Participation and Governance:** The report provides clear evidence of a demand to move beyond "tokenistic" engagement. This creates a powerful argument for funding initiatives that establish and sustain genuine participatory governance structures, such as a GCE Youth and Teacher AI Governance Council. Presenting this as a model for institutionalizing the voices of those most affected by EdTech will appeal to donors focused on systems change and empowering marginalized communities.
- **Building Capacity for an Evidence-Based Movement:** Effective advocacy requires a knowledgeable and skilled coalition. Investment is needed to build the internal capacity of GCE members, NECs, and youth leaders on the complex issues of AI. Funding for targeted training, policy analysis workshops, and the translation of research into accessible formats ensures that the entire movement can advocate with a confident, informed, and unified voice, maximizing the long-term impact of any campaign.
- **Fostering Local, Ethical AI Ecosystems:** To counter the dominance of "westernized" and commercialized AI tools, a forward-looking investment case can be built around supporting locally developed, public-interest alternatives. This narrative appeals to partners interested in decolonizing technology and promoting data sovereignty. Funding can be sought for initiatives that identify, nurture, and scale culturally relevant, open-source AI solutions that are aligned with public curricula and genuinely serve the needs of learners in the Global South

Chapter 7:
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