

Is Edtech Elitism a thing?

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Summary

Edtech elitism, characterized by unequal access and opportunities to educational technology, is a real concern in education. While edtech has the potential to provide flexibility in learning, it can exacerbate existing inequalities. Students from privileged backgrounds often have more access to technology, creating disparities in educational outcomes. Addressing edtech elitism requires a comprehensive approach involving equitable access, training, and inclusive policies.

Review

Edtech elitism refers to the unequal access and opportunities to educational technology based on socioeconomic status or other forms of privilege. It is a phenomenon that has been widely discussed in the literature, with scholars examining the impact of edtech on educational equity and the digital divide. One of the key advantages of using edtech in education is its potential to provide students with flexibility in learning, allowing them to learn at their own pace and in their own space (Zeyab & Alayyar, 2023). However, this advantage can also contribute to edtech elitism if not properly addressed. Students from privileged backgrounds may have greater access to technology and resources, giving them an advantage in utilizing edtech tools and online courses.

On the other hand, students from disadvantaged backgrounds may lack the necessary resources and support to fully engage with edtech, exacerbating existing inequalities in education (Zeyab & Alayyar, 2023; Reynolds et al., 2022). Research has shown that the digital divide, which refers to the gap in access to and use of digital technologies, is closely linked to educational inequality (Asongu et al., 2019; Ertl et al., 2020; Zhang, 2023). Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to face barriers in accessing and effectively using edtech tools, leading to disparities in educational outcomes. This can perpetuate existing social inequalities and hinder social mobility (Szeles & Simionescu, 2021).

Moreover, institutional policies and strategies surrounding edtech can also contribute to edtech elitism. The literature highlights the need for critical analysis of educational technology policies to ensure that they do not inadvertently reinforce existing inequalities (Czerniewicz & Rother, 2018). For example, the categorization of certain technologies as "vocational" or "academic" can perpetuate hierarchies and inequalities in educational settings (Rafalow & Puckett, 2022). Addressing edtech elitism requires a multi-faceted approach. It involves ensuring equitable access to technology and internet connectivity, providing training and support for educators and students to effectively use edtech tools, and

designing inclusive educational policies that prioritize the needs of marginalized students (Reynolds et al., 2022; Szeles & Simionescu, 2021).

Additionally, efforts should be made to bridge the digital divide and promote digital literacy skills among all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background (Ertl et al., 2020). In conclusion, edtech elitism is a real and significant issue in education. It is characterized by unequal access to and opportunities for educational technology, which can perpetuate existing educational inequalities. Addressing edtech elitism requires a comprehensive approach that focuses on equitable access, training, and inclusive policies to ensure that all students can benefit from the potential of edtech in education.

Equity, equality and inclusivity in Edtech

Equity, equality, and inclusive Edtech are three distinct concepts that are relevant in the field of education. Equity refers to fairness and justice in the provision of education or other benefits, taking into consideration individual circumstances (Kwok et al., 2020). It involves ensuring that all students have access to the necessary resources and support to succeed, regardless of their background or characteristics. In the context of education, equity means providing equal opportunities for all students to achieve their full potential, regardless of their socioeconomic status, race, gender, or other factors (Harper et al., 2007). This may involve addressing systemic barriers and providing additional support to students who are disadvantaged or marginalized (Franz et al., 2022). For example, an equity approach in education may involve providing extra resources and support to schools in disadvantaged neighborhoods to ensure that all students have an equal chance to succeed (Franz et al., 2022).

Equality, on the other hand, refers to treating everyone the same and providing equal measures or treatment to all

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individuals or groups (Franz et al., 2022). It focuses on ensuring that everyone has the same opportunities and resources, regardless of their circumstances. However, equality does not take into account the different needs and circumstances of individuals or groups (Kwok et al., 2020). In education, equality may involve providing the same resources and opportunities to all students, regardless of their individual needs or challenges. While equality is important, it may not always lead to equitable outcomes, as some students may require additional support to overcome barriers and achieve success (Franz et al., 2022).

Inclusive Edtech refers to the use of educational technology in a way that promotes inclusivity and ensures that all students have equal access to educational opportunities (Bozkurt & Zawacki-Richter, 2021). It involves designing and implementing technology-enabled learning experiences that are accessible and responsive to the diverse needs of learners (Bozkurt & Zawacki-Richter, 2021). Inclusive Edtech aims to remove barriers to learning and create an inclusive learning environment where all students can participate and succeed (Macgilchrist, 2018).

This may involve providing assistive technologies, designing user-friendly interfaces, and considering the diverse learning styles and preferences of students (Bozkurt & Zawacki-Richter, 2021). Inclusive Edtech also involves addressing issues of bias and discrimination in the design and implementation of educational technology (Gaskins, 2022). It seeks to ensure that technology is used in a way that promotes equity and supports the learning needs of all students, regardless of their background or abilities (Gaskins, 2022).

How do we Eradicate Edtech Elitism in Africa?

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Strategy	Highlights
Digital Infrastructure: Bridging the Connectivity Gap	The foundation of equitable EdTech access in Africa lies in robust digital infrastructure. Investment in affordable and reliable internet access, especially in remote and underserved areas, is paramount. Without adequate connectivity, many students are left behind, unable to access online learning resources or participate in digital classrooms.
Device Accessibility: Ensuring Technological Inclusion	Affordable and accessible educational devices, such as tablets and smartphones, serve as gateways to online learning and must not be a luxury accessible only to a privileged few. Making these devices available to students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds is vital.
Open Educational Resources (OER): Democratizing Learning Materials	Promoting open educational resources (OER) encourages the creation and sharing of freely available educational content. This reduces the financial burden on students and institutions while ensuring access to quality materials.

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<p>Teacher Training: Empowering Educators for Inclusive EdTech Integration</p>	<p>Equipping educators with the necessary skills to effectively integrate technology into their teaching methods is crucial. Training programs empower teachers to leverage EdTech tools to benefit all students, regardless of their economic status or location.</p>
<p>Local Content Development: Cultural Relevance in Learning</p>	<p>Diversity in cultures and languages across Africa necessitates the development of local content. Educational materials should reflect the local context, culture, and languages, making learning more relevant and engaging for students.</p>
<p>Community Engagement: Including Local Voices</p>	<p>Engaging local communities, parents, and students in decision-making processes related to EdTech implementation is crucial. Their insights can help tailor solutions to meet specific needs and ensure acceptance.</p>
<p>Financial Inclusion: Removing Economic Barriers</p>	<p>Financial inclusion is another dimension of the problem. Promoting access to affordable financial services, including payment options for EdTech tools and services, ensures that students and families can participate in digital learning without financial barriers.</p>
<p>Scalable Solutions: Reaching Diverse Learners</p>	<p>Scalable EdTech solutions that can reach large numbers of students across different regions should be identified and supported. These solutions have the potential to make a significant impact.</p>

Conclusion

In conclusion, edtech elitism is a significant issue affecting educational equity. It results from disparities in access to technology and resources, which can perpetuate existing inequalities. To combat edtech elitism effectively, a multifaceted strategy encompassing digital infrastructure, device accessibility, open educational resources, teacher training, and community engagement is crucial. By adopting these strategies, we can ensure that all students, regardless of their background, benefit from the potential of edtech in education.

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