

FROM ACCESS TO IMPACT:

GOVERNMENT DECISIONMAKING AND SCALING OF EDTECH IN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

BY MOLLY CURTISS WYSS AND BRAD OLSEN



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INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, especially since COVID-19, interest in education technology (EdTech) has surged to expand learning, boost access, and improve education.

Despite rising investment, little evidence exists on how governments choose and scale digital innovations, the forces influencing decisions, and how scalability, political economy, and sustainability are considered. Filling this gap is vital for equitable, lasting learning improvements.

This brief addresses this gap by bringing together existing research on scaling the impact of promising or proven innovations (Brock 2026; Cooley and Linn 2024; Fullan and Pomfret 1977) with analysis on government decisionmaking around education reform in low- and middle-income countries (Carney and Klerides 2020; Kucirkova et al. 2026; Mundy 2007; Olsen 2023). Drawing on this work and interviews conducted with key stakeholders, the brief examines the forces informing decisions about EdTech in South and Southeast Asia and the constraints and enabling factors that shape the scaling process.

This brief is written for decisionmakers in central and subnational government, local officials, funding representatives, private-sector EdTech providers, and researchers. It offers analysis organized around three dimensions—motivation, feasibility, and sustainability—and proposes recommendations for making clearer, better-informed decisions around scaling EdTech.

After reviewing key literature specific to the focal regions, conducting a dozen interviews with key stakeholders, and triangulating findings against a decade of our own research on scaling, the central takeaway is that decisionmaking about EdTech in these contexts often prioritizes motivation for and feasibility of scaling over sustainability and evidence. This runs a high risk of worsening existing inequities, contributing to policy and implementation fragmentation, and hindering the impact of scaling. But with greater intentionality around evidence and sustainability, scaling efforts can be designed so that the benefits of EdTech outweigh the risks.

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Recommendations for decisionmakers

1. **Start with a focus on the hardest-to-reach locations and users.** Design, select, and test innovations with low-resource, low-connectivity settings in mind from the beginning. Scale and equity are not tradeoffs; they complement each other.
2. **Focus on the purpose, not the product.** Before adopting an EdTech innovation, clearly identify the intended change, how it will occur, and how the impact will be measured. Do not be afraid to decline innovations that do not fit this vision—especially popular ones.
3. **Strengthen institutional capacity as a core scaling strategy.** Prioritize effective, ongoing professional development for teachers and local/middle-tier education officials. Foster in-house expertise across all levels of the system.
4. **Invest in contextualization of innovations.** Collaborate with teachers, students, and parent organizations in the piloting, adaptation, and scaling of EdTech solutions. Encourage the development of innovations tailored specifically to the local context.
5. **Prioritize interoperability and system coherence at all levels.** Ensure up-to-date national guidance exists on safe, effective, and inclusive EdTech adoption in schools, and that policies are regularly updated in response to new evidence and emerging technologies. Create clear structures for coordination across teams and departments.
6. **Fund, support, and demand data on the impact of EdTech,** including its effectiveness, relevance, inclusion, and sustainability. Recognize when it is time to move on from an innovation that is not showing impact.

BOX 1

What is EdTech?

Education Technology or “EdTech” refers to the use of technology for teaching, learning, and other educational practices. This includes:

- Hardware, such as computers, mobile phones, virtual whiteboards, televisions, and radios
- Software, platforms, and educational systems, such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), video conferencing platforms, SMS, and assessment tools
- Digital content, such as e-textbooks, videos, audio recordings, and interactive multimedia
- Assistive technologies, such as screen readers and speech-to-text

EdTech spans a wide range of tools and contexts: “It may be a deliberately designed piece of educational software, such as an educational video platform, or a piece of technology designed for more general use but incorporated into the teaching and learning process, such as database software” (Burns 2021). It can be used at home, in school, or in other formal or nonformal learning contexts. This paper focuses primarily on digital technology used inside public schools and classrooms by students and teachers, including for teacher professional development. Artificial intelligence is largely excluded (see discussion in Box 4), though much of this analysis also applies to AI.

SETTING THE CONTEXT

What is scaling impact in education?

Reaching large numbers of people and parts of the education ecosystem is a critical component of scaling but is insufficient by itself: it is the impact of the innovation that must be scaled. This study treats scaling not as the expansion of a single innovation, but rather as a complex system-level process shaped by political, institutional, financial, and social dynamics (Linn and Kohl 2021). Scaling is understood as a range of approaches—from deliberate replication to organic diffusion to integration into national systems—that expand and deepen impact, leading to lasting improvements in people’s lives (Curtiss Wyss et al. 2021). Importantly, this conception is distinct from commercial scaling, where a product or business is expanded to increase market penetration (McLean and Gargani 2019). Scaling in the social sector, therefore, requires more than rolling out an innovation to new contexts or beneficiaries. The innovation must be relevant for the context, taken up productively by people in that context, integrated into (or able to constructively disrupt) the existing system, and valuable to all intended beneficiaries (Chang 2019; McLean and Gargani 2019; Simmons et al. 2010). It also depends on matching a scalable innovation with the most promising scaling strategy for the context, and on a durable but flexible coalition of stakeholders, requisite funding, and broad support (Basuel et al. 2024; Linn and Kohl 2021; MSI 2016; Worsham et al. 2018). Finally, bigger is not always better when it comes to scaling; it is important to identify the “optimal” scale for a particular innovation, balancing different dimensions such as equity and sustainability alongside reach and ensuring the benefits outweigh the risks for the target beneficiaries (McLean and Gargani 2019).

Who typically makes decisions about EdTech in these geographies?

Decisionmaking authority shapes both what decisions are made about EdTech and how the scaling unfolds. While the specifics varied by country, some broader trends became clear. “Big-picture” policy is typically made at the central level, and implementation happens at the midlevel and locally. This was true both in decentralized education systems (e.g., Sri Lanka) and centralized systems (e.g., Viet Nam). In Viet Nam, for example, the central Ministry of Education and Training’s technology department sets protocols, and provinces make choices “within that guidance. It is unlikely for provinces to misalign with central policy. Implementation is delegated to the provinces. [...] This creates a centralized policy structure with decentralized implementation.” Engagement with large multinational companies and development organizations also typically occurs at the central level, led by senior officials. In decentralized systems, local leadership remains critical. Even when central Ministries set policy priorities and partner with external organizations, the local government often has the authority to determine which EdTech is prioritized and what the strategy for technology use in schools will be. In these cases, local leadership (whether provincial, regional, municipal, etc.) with a strong, clear vision for EdTech

was found to be a significant driver of EdTech adoption and adaptation. How these decisions are made and what factors inform them is a central question of this brief, taken up in the following section.¹

Methodology

We first reviewed a purposeful sample of 57 available publications from academic journals, as well as reports from various institutions published within the last eight years (mostly in English) on the topics of this brief. The sample focused principally on basic, primary, and secondary education levels and included work in or about the following countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Viet Nam. From this review, we developed analytical questions, interview protocols, and target roles for semi-structured virtual interviews. We conducted twelve 50-minute interviews with education and EdTech stakeholders in a handful of countries in South and Southeast Asia or working across the regions. Interviews were conducted with representatives from government, private sector, research bodies, and multilateral organizations. The study underwent ethical review, and all interview participants provided informed consent. Throughout this brief, we have included quotes from interview respondents. To encourage candidness, we assured respondents that quotes would be unattributed. Interviews were transcribed, coded, and then triangulated against the reviewed literature. Analysis was guided by our own previously developed EdTech decisionmaking framework (Olsen 2023).

¹ Note that the situation is often different for private schools, where school directors and leadership typically have greater decisionmaking autonomy around education technology and in some cases more available resources.

HOW ARE DECISIONS ABOUT EDTECH INNOVATIONS MADE?

Interview respondents' professional roles shaped their perspectives on the promises and challenges of EdTech, although individual perspectives within each group were far from uniform. Broadly speaking, government officials tended to be optimistic and speak technically; researchers highlighted challenges of weak evidence and unsystematic governance; and tech industry leaders were confident about EdTech's potential. Some respondents laid out a clear, linear process for selecting EdTech to test and adopt: identify a pressing problem or priority, scope available solutions, and then select the most appropriate innovation or policy for the context. Others described a messier process, with decisions shaped by the individual's perspective and influenced by complex, sometimes contradictory, dynamics including political incentives, donor pressures, and desires to keep pace with other countries.

Taken together, these perspectives form an overall picture of decisionmakers who genuinely wish to improve education and believe EdTech will help but who have insufficient time, information, or expertise to consistently make system-aligned, forward-looking decisions about which EdTech innovations to select and how to scale their impact equitably. Faced with limited coordination across government departments, strained resources, and political pressure to create visible change quickly, they must make fast decisions—often at the expense of long-term sustainability.

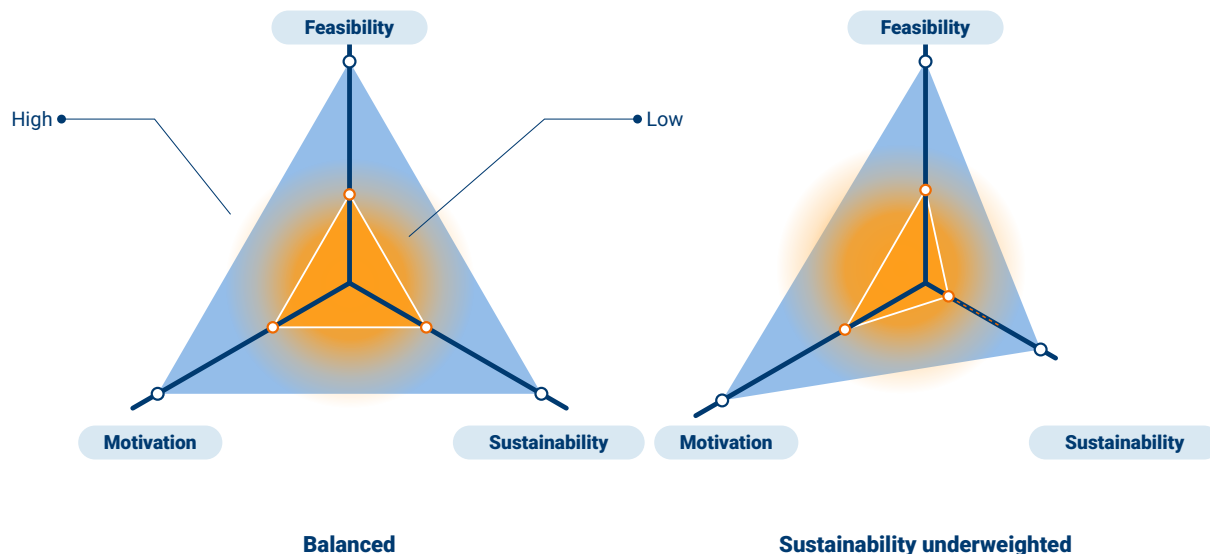
This section examines those choices through three dimensions, with each one its own continuum: decisionmakers' motivation to adopt EdTech, the feasibility of implementing or scaling an EdTech innovation in the context, and the potential sustainability of the innovation's impact over time (Carter-Rau and Olsen 2023; see Figure 1). Equity considerations are woven throughout all three dimensions. Our analysis found that, while decisionmakers draw on all three, they do not always do so explicitly or systematically—and they consistently underweight sustainability. As a result, EdTech ecosystems in these locations are typically fragmented and insufficiently aligned with the country's learning goals and system capacity, ultimately constraining the potential to scale impact equitably.

Motivation

A key force behind investing in EdTech and selecting which innovations to prioritize, either at central or subnational levels, should be alignment with policy priorities and development agendas, which would typically include analysis of gaps, needs, strengths, and opportunities in education systems. A Minister of Education, governor, or mayor with a robust vision for digitalization and clear priorities for EdTech can play a significant role in driving motivation to identify,

FIGURE 1

Rather than an equal balance, motivation and feasibility typically outweigh sustainability.



SOURCE: Carter-Rau and Olsen 2023.

adapt, and adopt EdTech solutions and determining what kind of innovations are prioritized. As one interviewee noted, “If at the highest level, a minister of education is very keen, then things will move.” However, we found that such policy prioritization of EdTech derives less from data and evidence on the effectiveness of a particular solution and more from some combination of beliefs about the potential for EdTech to transform systems, a desire to signal a country’s modernity, political incentives, and external pressure from development partners and EdTech providers. This is not to say that EdTech-focused policies lack the overarching intention of improving student learning outcomes, but rather that evidence is not the primary driver of prioritization or selection.

A BELIEF IN EDTECH’S POTENTIAL TO IMPROVE LEARNING OUTCOMES AT SCALE, REDUCE INEQUITIES, AND FORGE A 21ST-CENTURY SOCIETY DRIVES ITS PRIORITIZATION.

Decisionmakers are acutely aware of the significant challenges facing their education systems. They know resources are limited and each year lost is a year wasted. Many witnessed the education disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlighted deep digital divides within and across countries, laid bare systems’ readiness to support distance-learning during emergencies, and raised questions about teacher preparedness (Morris and Farrell 2020; UNESCO and UNICEF 2021; Vithanage et al. 2023). Many believe EdTech is well-positioned to address these challenges, enabling easier expansion of innovations and adaptation to new contexts, including hard-to-reach geographies (Jayasinghe et al. 2025). One policymaker explained, “Technology is actually the multiplier of human capital, of the resources that we have, of the wisdom that we have on the ground. This is where EdTech can be democratizing; democratizing the opportunities to learn, opportunities to collaborate, opportunities to recognize each other.”

Such optimism may lead decisionmakers to overestimate the effectiveness of EdTech solutions, their scalability, and their ability to close longstanding equity gaps (and not create new ones). For example, a survey of senior government officials in Ministries of Education and Ministries of Finance in Indonesia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, the Philippines, and Viet Nam found 88 percent of respondents agreeing with the statement that education technology was effective at supporting student learning during COVID-19 school closures (contrary to available evidence) and 56 percent believed EdTech helps all children to learn equally (Yarrow et al. 2024). It is important to note, however, that these beliefs in the promise and power of EdTech are not ubiquitous. There are indeed decisionmakers skeptical of the promises of EdTech (or certain types of EdTech), particularly after witnessing its limitations and failures during the COVID-19 pandemic, or those who believe investments in other areas of education will reap greater dividends.

Motivation to invest in EdTech is also driven by economic priorities and the assumption that technology is essential to a thriving 21st-century world (Lê et al. 2023; Lim et al. 2020; UNESCO 2023a). In Bangladesh, for example, the Master Plan for ICT in Education “envisaged that leveraging ICT in Education will play an important role in creating equal opportunities for all citizens and enabling them to face the challenges of the 21st century” (Mulla et al. 2023, 10). There is also the conviction that technology and digital literacy are essential for individuals to develop 21st-century skills—including critical thinking, collaboration, and communication—and for careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. UNESCO (2023a, 10) reported that 9 out of 11 Southeast Asian countries promoted both STEM and digital literacy in their policies and plans.

SIGNALING AND RETAIL POLITICS GENERATE PRESSURE FOR ADOPTING EDTECH INNOVATIONS.

Another driver for prioritizing EdTech is the perception that countries with robust technological ecosystems are innovative and modern. Whether informed by concerns about being left behind (especially in rural locations), a desire to keep pace with neighboring countries, or the excitement that futurism brings, embracing digital technology has become a way for a country to signal its modernity. In Sri Lanka, an interviewee discussed the country’s tendency to compare results with Singapore, a regional EdTech leader. The perception that Sri Lanka used to be a regional leader but now needed to catch up was seen to create pressure to invest in EdTech. As the 2023 Global Education Monitoring report offered, in some cases EdTech investment is aligned with policy priorities, but in others “it appears more as a modern accessory, something that is added to the education system, possibly to imitate other education systems or in a belief that technology is a good in itself” (UNESCO 2023b, 38).

There are also political reasons to invest in technology. Incoming political leaders often seek to distinguish themselves from past administrations by identifying new priorities or embracing exciting new innovations (UNESCO 2023a). Visibly demonstrating investment in new technologies can win political support even if it does not necessarily translate into sustainable implementation. One interviewee noted the disconnect between central-level commitments and district execution: “The ministry might be excited to have the photo op, to shake hands with an EdTech partner—but then at the district level or at the city level this now [becomes] another challenge to adopt and get done.” Short tenures and frequent turnover of elected leaders or senior

bureaucrats in Ministries of Education intensify this dynamic, as reform agendas launch quickly but are then reversed or abandoned when leadership turns over. Seeking to embrace something new as a presumed improvement over the old is common in education policy reform, but the symbolic power of signaling progress via the newest digital technology appears to be intensified with EdTech.

MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS, EDETECH COMPANIES, AND IN-COUNTRY CONSTITUENCIES ALSO PROPEL PRIORITIZATION OF SPECIFIC INNOVATIONS AND OF EDETECH IN GENERAL.

Multilateral organizations and donors often bring their favored EdTech projects and offer accompanying funding and technical support, which is hard to turn down (Olsen 2023; key informant interviews 2026). EdTech developers and investors are savvy in marketing their products as educational solutions and advocating to governments and school leaders for adoption (Amiel 2025; UNESCO 2023b). Additionally, when families learn about EdTech offerings in other cities, regions, or countries, they sometimes lobby their schools or government for similar opportunities for their children (Hoysala and Morris 2025). One interviewee from Bangladesh commented, “I think [the local interest in this specific innovation] was based on the parents’ FOMO [fear of missing out].” As a result, governments have tended toward “tech-first” approaches, selecting or accepting EdTech innovations without always determining if they fit into existing education priorities or system plans (Simpson et al. 2021). However, there do exist decisionmaking frameworks, some created by multilaterals such as UNICEF’s EdTech for Good, which can be useful to support more evidence-based EdTech selection.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT PLAYS A WEAK ROLE IN THE PRIORITIZATION OF EDETECH OR THE SELECTION OF WHICH EDETECH INNOVATIONS TO ADOPT.

Scant evidence on digital EdTech effectiveness exists globally and even less that is specific to the focal regions of this study (ADB 2023; Morris and Farrell 2020; Mulla et al. 2023; UNESCO 2023a). Data are especially limited on EdTech’s effectiveness for marginalized students, in particular displaced learners, those with disabilities, and those from linguistic minorities (Jayasinghe et al. 2025). Careful research cannot keep pace with digital innovation: UNESCO (2023b) estimated that EdTech products change on average every year and a half. Further, generalizable research is expensive and time-consuming. Evaluations commissioned or undertaken by EdTech developers are often perceived as lacking rigor or impartiality, and EdTech providers report little incentive to invest in these types of evaluations because of low demand for it from decisionmakers (Lindroos Cermakova et al. 2024).

The evidence that does exist about digital EdTech is often impractical for decisionmakers: out of date, difficult to access, irrelevant to the local context, or not seen as impartial (Olsen and Qargha 2022). Much of the data collected focuses on numerical outputs—such as students reached, devices accessed, or time spent in applications—rather than learning outcomes or pedagogical changes (Morris et al. 2021; Rajasekaran et al. 2024). For instance, an interviewee from an EdTech company described evaluating the success of an EdTech innovation by way of teachers’ self-reports and usage numbers (and focusing on the highest performing teachers only). Faced with this lack of data, decisionmakers fall back on recommendations from

trusted sources, advertising, and product testimonials to fill the evidentiary space (Pellini et al. 2021; UNESCO 2023b). With limited time and a multitude of options, they may also gravitate to familiar names. For example, we learned that in Viet Nam, decisionmakers prefer multinational companies for large-scale technology investments: “[They] default to trusting the bigger players for that complex type of transformation.”

Feasibility

If motivation for EdTech is about the demand for adopting innovation, feasibility is how viable it will be to implement and scale the innovation in question—including considerations of digital infrastructure, procurement, institutional capacity, ease of use, stakeholder buy-in, costs, and accessibility. This section explores this element of the decisionmaking equation.

COUNTRIES HAVE PRIORITIZED INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS TO PAVE THE WAY FOR SCALING EDTECH.

Insufficient digital infrastructure is a critical and well-known constraint in both regions (Bhardwaj and Yarrow 2020; Dao et al. 2022; Pachori et al. 2026; SEAMEO 2023). Digital infrastructure includes physical and virtual goods, services, and networks required to deliver and use education technology, including electricity, internet connection, devices, and software. This study focuses on EdTech use inside schools and classrooms, where many students continue to be excluded from EdTech access because of a lack of infrastructure. In South Asia, just 58% of upper secondary students have access to the internet for educational purposes, and around three-quarters of upper secondary schools have access to computers for learning (see Table 1). Access is lower for younger students and especially for students in rural and remote areas. Proportions are slightly higher in Southeast Asia, with 86% of upper secondary students accessing the internet for pedagogical reasons and 78% of upper secondary schools accessing computers for teaching and learning, but far from universal.

Beyond access, the quality and type of internet connection also matter; low bandwidth can prevent rural users from participating in a virtual training session, even if they technically have internet access. Similarly, the type of device available affects EdTech access and use. For example, many EdTech applications require a device with a specific operating system and memory capacity, making them unsuitable on less-expensive smartphones (Morris et al. 2021).

Infrastructure limitations weigh most heavily on marginalized students, who are more likely to lack access to the internet and digital devices at school and at home (Barnes et al. 2024; UNESCO 2023b). Girls typically have less access to digital devices and internet than boys and less free time to use what they have (Swindell and Radford 2025). For lower-income families, having to share devices and pay for mobile data can make EdTech use prohibitive (Better Purpose et al. n.d.; Towne and Afzal 2026). Some education applications further exclude families by requiring email addresses and sufficient technological literacy to locate and download them (Morris et al. 2021). Governments and some providers have responded with tech innovations that do not require steady internet access—such as “offline-first” tools, downloadable content, SMS and messaging platforms, television, and radio—but even these face limitations, as learners must have device access, time, and tech literacy to engage with them. Governments may also

be reluctant to prioritize investments in these “low-tech” options, given that they do not offer the same modern signaling of newer technologies. Many EdTech companies cope with infrastructure limitations by targeting locations with stronger connectivity and customers with more disposable income, a move that exacerbates urban bias and digital divides (Jayasinghe et al. 2025).

SELECTION OF SPECIFIC EDETECH PLATFORMS OR PRODUCTS BY DECISIONMAKERS IS PRIMARILY INFORMED BY EASE OF USE, CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT, INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY, AND PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS.

When discussing how specific EdTech interventions are selected or developed, multiple interviewees underscored that the EdTech adopted must be simple enough to be used by teachers and students without requiring significant training. Another consideration is whether local education institutions have the existing institutional capacity to implement the EdTech solution initially, as well as to assess its delivery and impact, to adapt and improve the innovation over time, and to integrate it into systems and daily operations. One interview respondent shared the key questions he raises when considering an innovation: “Do we have the human resources capable of developing these solutions, administering this [tool], and scaling [it] up?” A stakeholder in Sri Lanka underscored the importance of capacity development: “Technology transfer can come from the non-governmental actors, but our own human resources must be developed to sustain the effect. ... We need to get both the expertise and the technology when working with private or nongovernmental entities.” However, while institutional capacity is typically considered, feasibility is often assessed only in the short term with insufficient attention to whether existing systems can sustain quality implementation at scale beyond a year or two.

Decisionmakers also consider alignment with curriculum and standards, as well as technical compatibility—whether new digital tools will be compatible with existing systems, software, or devices. One interviewee pointed out that the Sri Lankan government uses the Moodle LMS, which means that all new EdTech content must be able to run on that platform. This desire for compatibility can extend to a preference for a particular provider or software that has been used in the system already. For example, one interviewee shared that Microsoft has been the dominant EdTech provider for government back-office technology in their country for decades. As a result, they noted a strong incumbent preference to also apply those solutions for classroom use, even if alternative options might be better suited to classroom needs. However, other respondents reported that interoperability was not considered much in practice in their jurisdictions, resulting in a sprawling array of separate products and platforms that do not necessarily work together or that duplicate functions (a point discussed later in this brief).

COST CONSIDERATIONS OFTEN DICTATE WHICH EDETECH SOLUTIONS ARE SELECTED.

Like with any education decision, cost is often a key consideration when selecting EdTech (Bhattacharya et al. 2024). And digital technology is a comparatively high-cost investment. UNESCO (2023b) estimated that “the cost of moving to basic digital learning in low-income countries and connecting all schools to the internet in lower-middle-income countries would add 50% to their current financing gap for achieving SDG 4 targets.” The combination of high

resource requirements for digital technology and constrained national budgets for education influences which EdTech solutions are selected. Respondents frequently noted a preference for free tools and products. A provincial policymaker in one country explained that “we are always trying to go with free and open access applications.” Others described developing solutions “in-house,” rather than procuring them from third-party providers.

Capitalizing on this reality, many private companies offer free or subsidized services and content directly to governments (Dreyer and Nygaard 2020). One interviewee said: “Many private players provide content for free to government platforms: [the government] built the platform and invited EdTech players to contribute content like videos and quizzes, which users can access for free.” Decisionmakers are naturally incentivized to favor products offered for free, even if they may not be the best fit or may not be evidence-based. For example, an interview respondent detailed how a large technology company offered free systems to the Ministry of Education in her country, which were accepted without evaluating their integration with existing systems or data use standards. For private companies, offering free services can be a strategy for entering the education technology market, forging relationships with government actors, and engendering goodwill, all of which can be leveraged later for securing larger investments. Some interviewees reported that this strategy can be particularly useful for a new EdTech company looking to break into a system dominated by an existing provider or for a company testing a product before selling the solution elsewhere.

Multilateral and bilateral organizations also have a history of implementing EdTech projects in South and Southeast Asian countries. Governments are inclined to accept and endorse these externally developed and funded programs, since they bring resources, expertise, and capacity into the education system without clear links to for-profit enterprises. In the best-case scenario, these investments support and advance the government’s own identified priorities and system contours. However, we were told that it is not so straightforward. One interviewee reminded us that these kinds of funders “have huge power, because no ministry is going to say no.” Another discussed how the “government is running multiple types of EdTech projects funded by different multilaterals... [but are] not necessarily coordinated with each other, and most have overlapping objectives.” The result is that what is “free” to a government in budget terms can carry significant costs in coherence, coordination, and alignment with national priorities.

EQUITY AND INCLUSION ARE IMPORTANT FEASIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS FOR DECISIONMAKERS.

Interviews underscored that decisionmakers understand the risks of EdTech exacerbating inequities, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic. This shapes their choices when developing or selecting EdTech innovations, including considerations of who can access and use EdTech programs and tools—such as girls, students in remote areas, and students who are out of school or displaced by crisis or natural disaster—and how these tools are designed to reach them—including through minority-language content, accessibility features such as closed captioning, and adaptive delivery such as asynchronous courses.

Multiple interviewees noted the importance of usability with limited internet connectivity. One interviewee shared that EdTech developed by the Ministry of Education is created with the assumption that users will be accessing it on older mobile phones with weak internet, and

therefore features to ensure widespread accessibility are prioritized. Similarly, in Sri Lanka, the Ministry of Education launched its free online learning platform E-Thaksalawa during the pandemic and has since revised it to accommodate students with hearing and visual disabilities and to be accessible to students out of school or displaced by natural disasters (Ada Derana 2025). Nongovernment actors interviewed echoed that equity and accessibility are key priorities for decisionmakers. A Southeast Asian academic detailed how proposal submissions for research support from the Ministry of Education typically emphasize equity. Another stakeholder commented that when new ideas for EdTech pilots are brought to the Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka, questions about equity and especially low connectivity are common. These comments underscore that decisionmakers are reluctant to experiment with any innovation that cannot feasibly be rolled out widely.

Nonetheless, access to EdTech remains out of reach for many students. Designing for inclusion does not guarantee that the target population can access the technology or that it will improve learning outcomes. And designing for reach, such as tailoring an innovation for use in low-bandwidth environments, does not necessarily mean it will be accessible or appropriate for students facing other constraints. As reported in Swindell and Radford (2025): “Many EdTech interventions are not designed to meet the diverse, intersecting needs of individuals, especially those with multiple disabilities. Without tailored approaches, students often face difficulties engaging with technology.” Bringing impact to the most vulnerable and underserved students requires that access, inclusion, and improved learning be treated as three distinct but necessary components from the beginning.

Sustainability

Sustainability is the third broad dimension influencing decisionmaking about EdTech innovations, and it often appears to receive significantly less weight than the others. It is not that decisionmakers are intentionally deprioritizing sustainability considerations. Faced with decisionmaking urgency, the need to demonstrate visible change fast, and insufficient information, decisionmakers must navigate complex overlapping tradeoffs in ways that often neglect sustainability considerations.

HIGH OR UNDERESTIMATED COSTS LIMIT EDTECH SUSTAINABILITY

The same cost pressures that shape whether and which EdTech innovations to adopt also influence sustainability. As discussed, countries are often offered EdTech innovations for free or at low cost from corporations or donor organizations or secure their own resources for initial procurement. But those initial decisions have consequences for long-term sustainability. The total costs of ownership for EdTech innovations can be three to seven times higher than upfront costs (Rajasekaran et al. 2024). This includes recurring expenses such as device maintenance and replacement, technical support, subscription fees, and teacher training. Because these costs are often underestimated or insufficiently considered during planning, decisionmakers may select a particular innovation without appreciating or feeling responsible for the full cost implications (OECD 2023). Hardware becomes obsolete quickly, further compounding long-term costs. Future budgets can also be difficult to predict. When financial resources become scarcer than anticipated—as when bilateral donors like USAID withdraw funding or national

budgets are cut—money intended for an EdTech innovation might have to be reallocated to other essential line items.

Prioritizing provision of free or low-cost resources and tools in the short term can also complicate a sustainable, coherent EdTech strategy. As discussed later in this brief, EdTech initiatives in a given context are often disjointed and overlapping, rather than organized as part of a systematic approach (Tiwari et al. 2021). Donor organizations and private companies contribute to this fragmentation by investing in their own sets of disparate EdTech projects. But governments also share responsibility. Accepting myriad unconnected donor projects and free private services, rather than declining offers that do not fit a coherent long-term strategy, inevitably produces a splintered EdTech landscape. Costs understandably inform decisions about which EdTech innovations to adopt and scale, but their weight often leads to prioritizing short-term cost savings over consideration of whether government budgets can sustain the full costs over time and whether the innovations fit together for coherent scaling success.

THE DIVERGENT GOALS OF EDTECH PROVIDERS AND GOVERNMENTS SHAPE WHAT GETS BUILT AND COMPLICATE THE PARTNERSHIPS NEEDED TO SCALE IMPACT.

Governments invest in EdTech as part of their responsibility for the common good, but profitability is the primary aim for EdTech companies and investors. Governments want to improve education systems with demonstrable learning gains for students that last over time. EdTech providers and investors desire innovations that expand quickly, reach new markets, and bring increasing profits with minimal bureaucratic hurdles. These disparate goals and incentives drive what EdTech innovations get designed, how they scale, and who is excluded (Komljenovic et al. 2023). The tension between education as a public good and education as a profit market is particularly consequential for learners at the margins (Shi 2024). Jayasinghe et al. (2025) note that a focus on “user numbers and financial growth suggest that ‘reach’ is often prioritized over ‘equity’. [...] And] while this trade-off is not unique to the Southeast Asian market, it is particularly salient in this context due to the region’s diverse digital and economic landscape.”

This misalignment makes effective public-private partnerships both essential and difficult. Both the literature and our interviews recommend multi-stakeholder collaboration as a key enabler for scaling impact of EdTech, since it combines private sector resources and expertise with government capacity for scale and community knowledge of local contexts (Dao et al. 2022; Diu et al. 2025). Yet successful partnerships delivering sustainable impact at scale are rare (Honda et al. 2024). A shared vision and aligned incentives, strong communication, and shared measurement systems are all central to effective cross-sector collaboration (Curtiss Wyss and Perlman Robinson 2021). Conversely, overly complex partnerships, “weak governance arrangements, unclear accountability, data protection concerns, and short-term, project-based funding can undermine impact and sustainability” (Wotton 2026, 26). Especially when forging collaboration between the public sector and for-profit entities, it is important to ensure profit incentives do not conflict with pro-social goals and that partnerships are built on common goals and complementary capacities, not existing relationships.

BOX 2

EdTech provision in South and Southeast Asia has been strongly shaped by demand for test preparation and coaching tools used by students outside the classroom.

For many of the countries we investigated, high-stakes exams have traditionally been central in education. This testing culture often creates intense pressure for students and families and has fostered high demand for direct-to-consumer tutoring, test preparation, and English-language digital tools. As a result, many EdTech providers—particularly local startups and small and medium enterprises—emphasize these products (Jayasinghe et al. 2025). In Viet Nam, most local providers focus on test preparation, producing a landscape that is “active, entrepreneurial and full of different providers,” many of whom are “hyper localized” actors in urban areas.

This trend has implications for equitable scaling. Products designed for paying customers to use outside the classroom often exclude families with limited internet connectivity and device access and those without the financial means to pay for additional tutoring. Integrating into formal education systems offers greater potential for reach and long-term sustainability, though it carries higher initial costs and barriers for providers (Omidyar 2019b).

Virtual delivery has expanded access to extracurricular tutoring for some families. In Sri Lanka, parents have long invested in supplemental tutoring. This was previously delivered in person but since the pandemic, virtual opportunities have expanded both through EdTech apps and entrepreneurial teachers offering classes and coaching online. This proliferation has extended tutoring opportunities to students in rural or remote areas who previously lacked them. Still, access to these virtual options remains contingent on devices, connectivity, and ability to pay.

PRIMARY CONSTRAINTS AND ENABLING FACTORS TO SCALING EDTECH

There is a popular presumption that digital technology scales more easily than nontech innovations, or that technology can be harnessed to more quickly advance the scaling of an innovation. In reality, scaling EdTech in and through the public sector shares many of the constraints of scaling non-tech education innovations. Additionally, it both intensifies some of those known scaling constraints and introduces its own unique challenges, including governance and security, pace of change, and the role of the market. As a result, an explicit examination of barriers to scaling EdTech is warranted.

Scalability almost always depends on the extent to which the innovation fits the system in which it is implemented (Coburn 2023; Linn and Kohl 2021). Further, scaling impact typically requires durable stakeholder coalitions and the ability to foster capacity, sustained engagement, and local ownership for change (Burns 2014; Cooley and Howard 2019; McLean and Gargani 2019). A report by the Omidyar Network and RTI (2019b) focused on three aspects necessary for equitable EdTech scaling: (a) access to necessary infrastructure, hardware, and software for all who need it; (b) use of the available EdTech; and (c) impact on users who substantively improve their teaching and learning through use of EdTech. Following this framing, and foregrounding equity and inclusion, this section discusses some key constraints to scaling EdTech innovations in South and Southeast Asian countries and analyzes ways in which they both shape and are shaped by the decisionmaking processes discussed previously. Some challenges faced in scaling and sustaining result from pre-existing constraints in the broader education ecosystem; some derive from shocks to the system, such as human conflict and natural disaster; and others result from decisions made about which EdTech innovations to prioritize and how to adopt them.

INSUFFICIENT TECHNICAL SKILLS AND TRAINING AMONG TEACHERS LIMIT THE SCALING OF EVEN SIMPLE EDTECH INNOVATIONS.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) (2023) reported that teachers are the main adopters of EdTech tools, and argued that “they can greatly contribute to, or alternatively, impede its use, and their performance with the tool greatly determines learning outcomes.” EdTech success requires that a teacher possess content knowledge, pedagogical skill, and technical proficiency with EdTech tools and integrate all three into teaching practice (Koehler et al. 2013; Morris and Tan 2021; Shulman 1986). But many teachers in these regions do not know how to effectively employ EdTech in their classrooms, especially in ways that transcend rote learning and transform outdated pedagogies into something more active and learner-centered (Lim et al. 2020). This capacity challenge is exacerbated by insufficient training for teachers on how to

use technology in teaching and how to integrate it with their existing content knowledge (ADB 2017; Honda 2026; Mulla et al. 2023). Even when training is provided, teachers require ongoing support to successfully and sustainably translate their learning into improved classroom practice (Olsen and Elliott 2023). Further, even well-prepared teachers may lack the time to integrate new tools meaningfully alongside the challenges of large class sizes and heavy workloads. This capacity gap does not affect all students equally. Finding teachers with adequate technological skills is harder in disadvantaged locations with existing teacher shortages (Vithanage et al. 2023). Expertise, training, and support are especially limited regarding how to use EdTech with marginalized students or those with learning differences (Abbey et al. 2023). Even teachers who are comfortable with EdTech may not understand the specific challenges different students face when engaging with technology or how to support students to use accessibility features.

Many decisionmakers acknowledge that teacher capacity is a limiting factor and, accordingly, seek innovations that are simple to use. Governments in these regions also typically offer capacity-building opportunities for teachers, sometimes in partnership with other governments or multilaterals. For example, the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Open Learning Center (SEAMOLEC) provides training on integrating technology into pedagogical practice to teachers across the region (SEAMOLEC 2023). Nevertheless, decisionmakers likely underestimate what sustained capacity-building requires: relevant, ongoing training and support tailored to the realities of teacher workloads and teaching environments.

Private-sector actors have also entered this capacity-building space (Mali et al. 2023; Tiwari et al. 2021). For instance, multinational corporations such as Microsoft and Google have offered training for teachers in multiple countries in the regions to use their own platforms and tools (Department of Education Philippines n.d., Dubey 2020, SEAMOLEC 2023). Local internet providers have offered training as well (Mali et al. 2023). There is also a growing trend for large multinationals to fund technology and AI skills training through governments or academic institutions (Honda 2026, Microsoft 2026). These opportunities build teacher capacity but can also further entrench large corporations in education systems, fostering dependence on their tools in ways that may influence future procurement decisions.

CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS DO NOT END WITH TEACHERS.

Limited digital literacy among decisionmakers can hinder their ability to select innovations that fit classroom needs or to ensure the innovations chosen are sustained (Lim et al. 2020; Simpson et al. 2021). EdTech decisions are not always made by people with expertise in both education and technology; leaders in central or subnational offices may not even come from the education sector. Without that expertise, decisionmakers may be more susceptible to industry or donor pressure or be more inclined to select flashy technologies that do not fit classroom needs or align with government priorities. The challenge is especially salient in decentralized systems, where local governments hold significant decisionmaking power but often less capacity and expertise than at the central level. One respondent noted that there are too few “champions inside the government body who will actually understand the problem, the challenges at hand—and take [an EdTech solution] forward.” Another emphasized the need to foster in-house EdTech expertise within Ministries of Education, including by recruiting private-sector stakeholders into government teams. This not only supports policies and tools aligned with

government priorities but also builds the capacity and confidence to decline products unlikely to deliver lasting impact.

LIMITED BUY-IN FROM TEACHERS, FAMILIES, AND OFFICIALS CAN ALSO IMPEDE SCALING, WHETHER DRIVEN BY SKEPTICISM ABOUT TECHNOLOGY, COMPETING INCENTIVES, OR CULTURAL CONCERNS.

Resistance can stem from numerous sources, including a lack of digital literacy; concerns about screen time, privacy, security, and cyberbullying; and differing beliefs about whether and how much technology belongs in education (Bhardwaj and Yarrow 2020; Lindroos Cermakova et al. 2024; Rajasekaran et al. 2025; SEAMEOLEC 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic shifted many families', teachers', and officials' views in favor of technology in education, though support has fluctuated since (Better Purpose et al. n.d.; Vithanage et al. 2023). Several interviewees emphasized starting EdTech implementation with teachers who are already enthusiastic about the technology, on the assumption that they would help bring colleagues along. One respondent shared that the Ministry of Education identifies teachers who can serve as leaders and motivate others: "It's like the law of diffusion of innovation: a lot of people are either in the middle or are laggards, but we believe in this 20 percent [...] of early adopters."

High-stakes student exams common across the regions (see Box 2) can also disincentivize EdTech use in classrooms, as teachers feel compelled to focus on tested content and avoid topics or pedagogies not covered on the exams. One stakeholder in Sri Lanka noted that students and teachers are so focused on exam content in traditional modes that they have little interest in new devices or applications. An interviewee in Viet Nam similarly described education as a "high-stakes system designed for examination success. [...] Anything that disrupts this is approached with great caution. The exams themselves are [taken with paper and pencil], and that has an upstream effect on technology adoption." As a result, exam incentives push teachers away from experimentation, regardless of EdTech availability.

Finally, cultural beliefs and practices shape who has access to EdTech. Swindell and Radford (2025, 19) found that adults in Southeast Asia often assume girls are less interested in or capable with technology; "Outside of school, girls may face skepticism about the value or safety of using technology, and inside classrooms teachers may channel tech opportunities to boys due to unconscious bias." Design choices can mitigate these biases, but addressing them also requires shifts in mindsets, norms, and behaviors that EdTech alone cannot deliver (Benson and Fiarman 2020). Cultural concerns can also operate institutionally: some religious or cultural communities may be reluctant to adopt EdTech, fearing it will disrupt traditional structures and ways of learning. In Indonesia, for example, roughly 3.3 million students attend *pesantren* (Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs 2024), traditional Islamic boarding schools with a strong emphasis on classical religious education and close student-teacher relationships. These schools have generally been slower to adopt digital innovations, both because of concerns that they will disrupt traditional practices and due to institutional and infrastructure constraints. As Mufadhol et al. (2025) note, "Most digitalization models are designed for formal schooling environments and do not address the unique instructional and community-based traditions found in *pesantren*." Reaching these students at scale requires low-cost innovations tailored to their context.

FRAGMENTED EDTECH LANDSCAPES AND LACK OF CLEAR STRATEGIES CONSTRAIN SCALING BUT ALSO RESULT FROM DECISIONS ABOUT WHAT EDTECH TO SCALE.

The multiplicity of departments and ministries responsible for education and technology, and the insufficient coordination among them, produces a fragmented decisionmaking landscape (Pachori et al. 2026). EdTech innovations are typically tested and adopted in isolation rather than in a strategic, interconnected, and coordinated effort. In Bangladesh, separate ministry departments manage different education levels, each making EdTech decisions for their schools—and there is also an ICT body under the Ministry’s ICT division. Sometimes, there are additional technology teams housed in other parts of the government that advise the Ministry of Education, such as the Digital Task Force for Education under the purview of Sri Lanka’s Prime Minister. High rates of leadership turnover in government offices contribute to this fragmentation because new personnel shift agendas and either promote or discard EdTech solutions. And finally, decentralization can contribute to the fragmentation of EdTech approaches, as multiple regions or zones in a country independently develop similar tools or solutions in-house, rather than adapting shared tools, which duplicates efforts and wastes resources.

As a result of the fragmented EdTech landscape, stakeholders often work in parallel or even at cross purposes (ADB 2017; Lim et al. 2020; Mulla et al. 2023). One interviewee said starkly: “When it comes to EdTech decisions, it is complete and utter chaos.” The fragmentation also extends to data use, as the various separate systems each produce data that cannot easily be integrated for effective interoperability (SEAMEO 2023). A Sri Lankan interviewee referenced this concern: “We counted 22-plus systems that have been homegrown and developed when [the government] needed to collect data. This data [lies] completely outside of any kind of interoperability framework. [...] Everything is done [over again] every time they need something new.”

EDTECH INNOVATIONS ARE RARELY SUFFICIENTLY CONTEXTUALIZED, WHICH LIMITS THEIR IMPACT.

The scaling literature consistently emphasizes the importance of adapting an innovation to the institutional, policy, and cultural details of the implementation context (Linn and Kohl 2021), yet insufficient contextualization remains a critical barrier across the regions studied. Contextualization requires significant time, resources, and local knowledge, and costs increase when this includes traveling to remote areas or engaging with communities (Honda 2026). Many EdTech innovations used in the focal regions originated in the Global North and were not developed in local languages, meaning they were not designed or validated for these contexts and may not align with local cultural and linguistic characteristics or student identities (Bhattacharya et al. 2024; Lim et al. 2020; Mulla et al. 2023; UNESCO and UNICEF 2021). We heard several examples of innovations being transferred to a new context, with the only adaptation being a change in the language—almost a “copy and paste” process of scaling. One interviewee in Bangladesh described how an EdTech innovation risked rejection because it did not offer a telephone hotline—an uncommon feature elsewhere, but the expected and trusted format for technical support in that context. Some large multinational corporations partner with local companies to try to bridge this gap. As one interviewee said, “the local partners help big tech players navigate the system; they unlock access and provide local language support.”

Even innovations developed in the country of implementation require further contextualization for diverse learners and nondominant contexts (Abbey et al. 2023; Olsen and Qargha 2022). Central-level decisionmakers do not always understand the needs of all their constituents: a survey of policymakers in Southeast Asia found that “officials severely underestimate learning poverty [in their contexts]” (Yarrow et al. 2024, 2). Decentralizing authority to choose and implement EdTech can support contextualization by bringing decisions closer to the learners, but this must be balanced against the risk of fragmentation. In Sri Lanka, for example, provinces can adapt a national digital learning platform to their own needs and develop their own content platforms for purposes such as exams. Another approach is illustrated by EdTech Tulna in India, a collaboration among researchers, practitioners, teachers, and government officials that seeks to shift the discourse away from Western-imported solutions toward those designed explicitly for the communities they serve (Bhattacharya et al. 2024). The index offers research-based evaluation of EdTech solutions and their suitability for local learners, with criteria including language comprehensibility (such as accents and vocabulary used), representation and cultural appropriateness, and small group learning opportunities (to reflect India’s cultural collectivism).

BOX 3

What about artificial intelligence (AI)?

The last decade, especially the last three years, has experienced an explosion of interest in artificial intelligence, especially generative AI (Sajadieh et al. 2026). Its potential to personalize learning, offer real-time feedback, augment teacher performance, and make learning more engaging is often described as revolutionary (OECD 2026), and proponents argue that AI can better facilitate scaling EdTech to marginalized learners, such as through automated translation into local languages (Fauziddin et al. 2025; Wotton 2026). However, AI currently has the potential to bring as many threats to equity gaps as it does opportunities to address them (Burns et al. 2026), and it faces scaling constraints similar to EdTech more broadly, but with the risk of exponential amplification. Burns et al. (2026, 111) summarize the situation: “Like previous technologies, AI’s benefits and risks are unevenly distributed across socioeconomic, gender, linguistic, cultural, and geographic dimensions. Yet unlike earlier innovations, AI threatens to exacerbate these inequalities at unprecedented scale and in ways that are increasingly difficult to detect and address.”

Generative AI has higher digital infrastructure and tech literacy requirements than other EdTech innovations, making the digital divide and limited teacher capacity more acute (Jayasinghe et al. 2025). AI is also very costly for education systems to deploy, and regulations and guidance for teachers and school leaders about AI privacy, security, ethics, and social inclusion remain insufficient (Burns et al. 2026; Miao and Holmes 2023). Like EdTech more broadly, data on the role of AI in improving learning outcomes remain thin; available metrics tend to focus on reach and uptake and to come primarily from high-income contexts (Weatherall 2026). The large language models behind generative AI also primarily draw from English-speaking, Global North locations and are typically developed by multinational companies rather than local providers (Honda 2026). As a result, these tools can reproduce the biases found in their training data—such as reinforcing gender stereotypes, providing biased feedback, and replicating colonialist histories (Matjie et al. 2026; Petrovets et al. 2026).

BOX 3

What about artificial intelligence (AI)? (Continued)

There are also fears that AI use might worsen learning outcomes rather than improve them. For example, overburdened educators might turn over critical decisionmaking tasks or professional judgment to AI. For learners, there is a risk of “cognitive offloading,” or using AI in ways that prevent students from developing essential skills. Some researchers find this can foster dependence on the tools and even impair cognitive development in young users (Burns et al. 2026, OECD 2026). Wotton (2026, 27) contended that these risks are “heightened in Southeast Asia’s context, where high-stakes examinations, uneven foundational skills, large class sizes, and limited teacher capacity make AI shortcuts both appealing and rational.” Without deliberate and careful attention, AI risks amplifying weaknesses in existing EdTech decisionmaking rather than transforming them (Olsen and Curtiss Wyss 2025).

Even so, countries are exploring how to productively and safely incorporate AI into their education systems. Interviewees noted that Ministries of Education in several countries encourage teachers to use AI; that AI is used more frequently in tertiary education than primary and secondary; and that AI is a growing priority in EdTech research and governance. In Viet Nam, the Ministry of Education and Training is piloting a curriculum about AI use that emphasizes digital skill development, as well as safety, ethics, and responsible use, with local adaptation encouraged (OpenGov Asia 2026). There are also stakeholders advocating for AI sovereignty rather than reliance on foreign companies.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Decisions about which EdTech innovations to adopt and scale in South and Southeast Asian countries are too often shaped more by political, economic, and ideological motivations and short-term feasibility concerns than long-term sustainability considerations. Given the pressures decisionmakers face, this is neither surprising nor irrational, but it falls short of what learners and systems need. Our review of the literature and our interviews suggest that fragmented policy landscapes, lack of coordination among actors, pressures to adopt free or low-cost options, and an incentive landscape that rewards visible outputs over rigorous evaluation have all hindered quality EdTech implementation and scaling. We found the norm is investments in short-term, ad hoc innovations, disconnected from each other and not necessarily developed with sustainable impact in mind.

The goal of scaling impact should not be to expand particular EdTech innovations, but to identify effective system levers that change education practice in ways that better serve all learners. EdTech is a tool in service of that goal, not the goal itself. Decisionmaking must be rebalanced: sustainability built into planning from the start, long-term impact on teaching and learning prioritized over short-term action, and equity goals guide the work rather than follow it.

It is also essential not to overvalue EdTech in ways that push aside proven or promising innovations that do not center digital technology. Many educationalists believe that existing approaches—such as recruiting, training, and supporting teachers or restructuring student assessment—carry significant value and need to be strengthened rather than replaced. Decisionmakers must interrogate not only what can be gained through scaling EdTech, but also what might be lost when a new digital solution displaces other improvement approaches. UNESCO (2023b) asked whether calls for more and greater personalization of learning through technology could also remove the social aspects of education that are so central to its impact. Another concern is whether some types of knowledge—such as questions with clear right answers or Western ways of knowing—may be easier to encode into EdTech than others, quietly subordinating the rest. Even so, we are hopeful that decisionmakers and other stakeholders will find ways to use EdTech in service of deeper and broader education transformation, leading to lasting impact for children and youth.

“The goal of scaling impact should not be to expand particular EdTech innovations, but to identify effective system levers that change education practice in ways that better serve all learners.”

We offer the following recommendations for decisionmakers considering adoption and scaling of education technology:

1. Start with a focus on the hardest-to-reach locations and users.

Design, select, and test innovations with low-resource, low-connectivity settings in mind from the beginning. Scale and equity are not tradeoffs; they complement each other.

2. Focus on the purpose, not the product.

Before adopting an EdTech innovation, clearly identify the intended change, how it will occur, and how the impact will be measured. Do not be afraid to decline innovations that do not fit this vision—especially popular ones.

3. Strengthen institutional capacity as a core scaling strategy.

Prioritize effective, ongoing professional development for teachers and local/middle-tier education officials. Foster in-house expertise across all levels of the system.

4. Invest in contextualization of innovations.

Collaborate with teachers, students, and parent organizations in the piloting, adaptation, and scaling of EdTech solutions. Encourage the development of innovations tailored specifically to the local context.

5. Prioritize interoperability and system coherence at all levels.

Ensure up-to-date national guidance exists on safe, effective, and inclusive EdTech adoption in schools, and that policies are regularly updated in response to new evidence and emerging technologies. Create clear structures for coordination across teams and departments.

6. Fund, support, and demand data on the impact of EdTech, including its effectiveness, relevance, inclusion, and sustainability.

Recognize when it is time to move on from an innovation that is not showing impact.

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