

The big EdTech story: It's still Google, YouTube, not AI

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While about half of EdTech-using children and a majority (over 80%) of EdTech-using teachers report being aware of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), many still misunderstand the technology, with a significant share mistaking GenAI for a search engine. | Photo: iStock/ Getty Images

Across ten States, 63% of children from surveyed households and 87% of teachers are current users of EdTech, according to the Bharat Survey for EdTech (BaSE) 2025, released this February by the non-profit organisation Central Square Foundation (CSF). However, only 6% of children and 45% of teachers use specialised EdTech applications, with the majority relying on general-online platforms such as YouTube, WhatsApp and Google.

While about half of EdTech-using children and a majority (over 80%) of EdTech-using teachers report being aware of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), many still misunderstand the technology, with a significant share mistaking GenAI for a search engine.

The survey collected data from 12,500 children and 2,500 teachers between July 2025 and January 2026 across Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh.

Not structured EdTech adoption

EdTech largely functions as a supplement to formal schooling. The top use cases for children from Classes 1 to 12 in both government and private schools include practice and doubt solving, followed by test preparation and self-learning of new languages or skills. Subject-wise, children most commonly use EdTech for Mathematics, followed by English and Science/Environmental Studies. While YouTube, WhatsApp and Google dominate the digital learning space for children, only 6% of EdTech-using children report using specialised applications such as ePathshala, G-Shala, DIKSHA or Duolingo.

Speaking on the gap in adoption of specialised EdTech applications, Gouri Gupta, Senior Project Director, EdTech at CSF, referred to the earlier BaSE 2023 report and noted that specialised EdTech applications accounted for just 1% of users at the time. In the latest survey, that figure has risen to 6%. “Over the last two years, there has been growth, but it is not yet as significant,” she said. Ms. Gupta added that “there has to be a structured programme and a governance layer to ensure that EdTech tools are downloaded, that users engage with them, and that there is retention. At present, this is happening only at a small scale in India. As EdTech becomes more integrated and institutionalised within government systems, we expect to see a shift.”

Meanwhile, 87% of teachers use EdTech. While specialised EdTech usage among teachers is relatively higher, with 45% reporting use of at least one application DIKSHA, followed by NISHTHA and E-pathshala, online platforms such as YouTube, Google and WhatsApp continue to dominate overall EdTech usage. Among teachers, EdTech is primarily used for communication with students, parents and colleagues, followed by lesson preparation and delivery, self-learning and upskilling, administrative tasks, and creating and conducting assessments. However, Ms. Gupta added that adoption of specialised EdTech applications among teachers as a positive sign.

AI literacy is shallow

Among children, awareness of GenAI remains limited. About half of EdTech-using children have only heard of GenAI. While a majority of those who are aware claim to understand how it works, over two-thirds mistakenly identify GenAI as simply an internet search tool.

Among teachers, over 80% of EdTech-using teachers have heard of artificial intelligence, and a majority know it can be used for teaching. However, understanding of the technology remains limited. Only 46% of those familiar with GenAI say they understand how it works. About half equate GenAI with a search engine, and over a third believe it simply copies information from the internet and repeats it. Applications such as Meta AI, ChatGPT, and Gemini dominate GenAI usage for educational purposes.

Ms. Gupta, speaking on why a majority of students and teachers either remain unaware of GenAI or equate it with a search engine, said this is largely because most of them have been introduced to the technology through peers and friends. “This points to organic usage rather than structured exposure,” she said. “The issue is less about lack of awareness and more about limited AI literacy. Because AI literacy is still developing, many do not fully understand what the technology actually is. In some ways, adoption is preceding understanding, and that is something we need to correct.”

(The author is an independent journalist based in Hyderabad covering politics, human rights, and environmental issues, primarily from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. He is now expanding his work to include education across all States.)

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