

# **An urgent call for educator voice in AI and EdTech from 9 unions**

We are nine unions representing millions of educators across the UK – teachers, specialists, support staff, school leaders, and workers throughout the education system. Every day we support, teach and lead in schools, colleges, and universities across all jurisdictions of the UK.

As AI is being rolled out rapidly in education, there is an urgent need to ensure this is shaped by the expertise and professional judgement of these educators. We recognise that AI and education technology (EdTech) can complement human-centred education. But we know that AI cannot solve the education system's deeper problems: underfunding, teacher shortages, overwhelming workloads, or the social and economic pressures educators face every day. And without clear guardrails, these technologies risk making existing problems worse and undermining both quality of education and students' best interests.

To realise the potential that AI in education can offer, educators and their unions must be central to every stage of AI adoption, from policy formation and design, through procurement and deployment, to evaluation. All actors and institutions must ensure that AI and EdTech strengthens, not replaces or undermines, the vital relationships between all education workers and students.

We set out here the ways in which educator voice must be empowered from end to end, from the highest levels of regulation to decisions at local levels.

## **At the national policy making level**

Educators and their representatives must be directly involved in policy formation, bringing pedagogical expertise to define what problems need solving and whether and how technology is the appropriate solution. We call for political commitments to early and ongoing consultation, direct input into legislative and regulatory frameworks, and genuine representation and decision-making power.

## **In the design and development of systems by EdTech providers**

Early involvement of educators and their representative unions in developing the technology itself is key to ensuring that EdTech has a positive impact on teaching and

learning. It will create better systems that support, rather than undermine, the irreplaceable human elements of education. Commitments by EdTech providers to work collaboratively and to meaningfully incorporate educator and union voice at this stage will help ensure EdTech is rooted in sound pedagogy and professional autonomy.

### **At the local institution procurement and decision-making stage**

At the local institution level, educators and their unions must be partners in the co-creation of policies and practices, including through collective bargaining and procurement. They need the time, support, and authority to make informed decisions and select tools or reject proposals.

Comprehensive safeguarding frameworks must be collectively developed with educators and their unions. These must explicitly define and commit to responsible approaches to AI and reflect the need to ensure inclusion of all pupils and staff.

### **At the local deployment and evaluation stages**

Rushed deployment of AI and other EdTech tools increases risks. Instead, implementation must be educator-led, with appropriate professional learning, planning time, and ongoing support from government and Edtech providers. Educators must retain control over pedagogical decisions so they can decide what works best for their students.

Ongoing evaluation must involve educators and use criteria that reflects educational values, including meaningful assessment of impacts on learning relationships, equity, inclusion, workload, and student well-being and development.

Educators must have clear channels to raise concerns about technology they believe to be harmful; pause or end the use of technologies when there are strong concerns; and to champion innovations that genuinely enhance teaching and learning.

### **Educators must shape the tools of education**

Technology is not a panacea. It is a tool. The potential to enhance education for students, educators and society at large depends on the way these tools are designed, deployed, and evaluated. Meaningful educator involvement is needed throughout to ensure that the rapid roll out of AI in education is shaped by professionalism and sound pedagogy.

We call on government, employers, and technology providers to commit to involving educators and their unions at every stage of AI and EdTech adoption, to ensure that they advance education, equity, and the profession.

14 January 2026

**Signed (in alphabetical order):**

- AEP
- EIS
- GMB
- NAHT
- NASUWT
- NEU
- UCU
- UNISON
- Unite

**With support from the TUC**