Reorienting EdTech: Reclaiming the Civic Purpose of Educational Computing
By Dr Jordan Allison

Drawing on my background in outreach and widening participation, and now working as a senior lecturer in computer science, I have observed a range of persistent issues within educational computing technologies. These include algorithmic bias, the digital divide, and the perpetuation of colonial narratives; all of which can undermine the development of justice-centred educational opportunities.

As Editor in Chief of the *Journal of Educational Computing Research* (JECR), I've recently had the opportunity to steer a conversation that I believe is long overdue: one that places ethical, social, and global questions at the very heart of educational computing. In my latest editorial, I argued that the field must do more than innovate. It must critically examine the wider consequences of its innovations. That means foregrounding the lived realities of students and educators who engage with these technologies every day, and recognising that the impacts of educational computing are never just technical, they are also deeply cultural, political, and moral.

This conviction has led me to expand the journal's aims and scope. As I wrote in the editorial (Allison, 2025), "*the ethical, social, and global consequences of educational computing technologies cannot be treated as peripheral concerns. They are central to the way we understand, develop, and apply digital tools in education*." This is not simply a matter of adding more boxes to tick in technology evaluations. It is about rethinking what we value and who we listen to in conversations about technology in education.

Too often, educational technology is celebrated for its novelty or scalability, while the contexts in which it operates, particularly those marked by inequality, are sidelined. For instance, work by Kohnke and Foung (2024) on data colonialism reveals how educational technology can reinforce exploitative practices by harvesting user data under the pretext of enhancing learning outcomes. Others, like Jiang (2025), highlight how GenAI tools can subtly reproduce cultural stereotypes, making it essential for educators and students to critically interrogate the epistemic assumptions embedded in these systems.

What this tells us is that technological "advancement" in education is not value-neutral. Whether we are dealing with generative AI, learning analytics, or digital platforms, we must ask: *Whose knowledge is represented? Who benefits? Who is left behind?* These are civic questions as much as they are technical ones.

The expanded scope of the journal now invites scholarship that addresses these concerns head-on. We're encouraging contributions that explore how educational computing technologies either perpetuate or dismantle global inequities. As I noted in the editorial, this includes examining "*their broader implications for justice, representation, and access.*"

I believe this kind of scholarship can be transformative. It's already emerging in our pages: from tools designed to support children with autism in rural Bangladesh (Hasan et al., 2022), to puzzle-based games to enhance knowledge of cultural heritage (Ye et al., 2023). Yet, as I also acknowledged in the editorial, these efforts are still "*sporadic*", the challenge now is to make them more central.

The Civics of Technology project brings together a community that shares a deep commitment to questioning not just how technologies work, but what kind of world they help build. I hope that by sharing the JECR editorial through this platform, we can invite more voices into this conversation. As we move forward, I encourage educators, students, researchers, and developers alike to not only imagine more just and inclusive uses of technology, but to help build them. The stakes are too high for us to treat ethics as an afterthought. Instead, we must place them at the core of what it means to do educational computing today.

References:

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