JEET Seekho. Jeeto.

JEET KI AOR
जीत की ओर

Roadblocks for Digital Education in India

Mobile connectivity in India has expanded dramatically across both urban and rural regions. Yet, a significant portion of users still rely on basic or feature phones. According to data from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), while India has over 1.1 billion telecom subscribers, smartphone penetration-though rising-remains uneven, particularly in rural areas where affordability and digital literacy continue to be barriers. Another critical challenge lies in access among children. Surveys such as those by National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) and ASER Centre indicate that children below the age of 14–16 rarely own personal devices. This is consistent across both economically disadvantaged and many middle-income households, where shared devices limit consistent learning access. At the same time, a stark divide exists. Students from more privileged backgrounds have access to laptops, tablets, and subscription-based digital learning platforms such as Aakash Institute, Unacademy, and Physics Wallah. This divergence in access to both devices and high-quality content is shaping unequal learning outcomes.

For rural India, therefore, the central roadblock to digital education is not just connectivity-but meaningful access. Addressing this gap requires community-driven solutions. Project JEET, an initiative of Ramakrishna Sarada Samiti, is working to bridge this divide by offering free, lifetime digital educational content. Equally important is empowering teachers. By enabling government school educators to use smartphones equipped with curated, offline-accessible content, we can bring digital learning directly into classrooms. The second barrier-mindset-requires patient engagement. While some educators may initially resist change, those who embrace video-based learning tools often discover renewed confidence and effectiveness in teaching.

In this edition, we celebrate JEET's standout teachers for the academic year 2025–26 educators who have embraced innovation and transformed classroom outcomes. Their journeys offer both inspiration and a pathway forward for rural digital education.

Reading commendation of teacher Vidyasrigauri in front of Secretary Gurukulam schools.

L to R: Secretary (FAC) Gurukulam Schools, APTWREIS, Vidyasrigauri best teacher 1st prize, Raghu Pilaka Director JEET and far right Neelakantheswararao, State Coordinator, JEET.

Inside:

When Time is the Real Constraint: Rethinking Teacher Support

In conversations on improving education, discussions often revolve around content, curriculum, or technology. Yet, a recent interaction with Vidyasrigauri Gollu, a mathematics teacher working in a residential school setting, brings attention to a more fundamental lever: how teachers adapt their time and practice in evolving classrooms. A typical day for her begins early in the morning and stretches late into the night classes, study hours, supervision duties, and exam preparation. Within this schedule, lesson planning becomes a critical part of teaching, often carried out beyond classroom hours. As she described, this process involves searching for relevant videos, aligning them with textbooks, and preparing notes an effort that takes one to two hours daily, adding up to nearly 300+ hours annually.

This is where structured digital support begins to matter, not as an additional layer, but as a way to recognize effort. The availability of ready-made, syllabus-aligned content reduces the need to start from scratch each day. For teachers willing to move beyond routine methods, such tools offer a way to reclaim time and redirect it toward student interaction, doubt-solving, and deeper engagement. Importantly, this transition does not happen in isolation. Vidyasrigauri's journey reflects the role of institutional encouragement with support from her principal and peer group creating space to explore new teaching approaches. This kind of ecosystem makes it easier for teachers to step beyond established patterns and experiment with methods that are more efficient and effective.

At the same time, the conversation highlights persistent structural gaps. Despite having digital infrastructure such as an interactive panel and a computer lab, actual usage is constrained by something more basic internet connectivity. Reliable access is limited to a few rooms, making consistent classroom integration of video-based learning difficult. In such situations, teachers adapt. The platform becomes a tool for preparation at home and for assessments where feasible, rather than a fully embedded classroom resource. Another layer of complexity emerges with student access. Many learners in this context come from tribal backgrounds, often without personal devices, email IDs, or familiarity with online systems. Even basic processes like registration can become barriers. This points to a recurring gap in digital education design solutions often assume a level of readiness that does not exist on the ground.

Yet, within these constraints, there are clear possibilities. The school's computer lab —with around 37 networked systems—offers a pathway for structured testing and shared access. More importantly, the willingness of teachers like Vidyasrigauri to support peers suggests that adoption can spread organically, through teacher-led networks rather than top-down mandates. What emerges from this interaction is not a story of constraint, but of transition. Teachers are not resistant to change; they are navigating how best to integrate new tools within existing realities. When supported by the right infrastructure and institutional encouragement, and when tools are designed to save time rather than consume it, adoption becomes both practical and sustainable.

This raises a broader question for education systems attempting to integrate technology: **Are we enabling teachers to move beyond routine methods toward more efficient models of teaching, or are we reinforcing systems that leave little room for change?** Because the success of any intervention may depend not just on what it offers, but on whether it helps teachers do more with less time, and with greater impact.

Ms. Vidyasrigauri G
Best Teacher Award: 1st Prize

Vidyasrigauri G teaches Mathematics to Classes 9 and 10 at Gurukulam Tribal Residential School in Vissannapeta, Andhra Pradesh. JEET's work in these schools is supported through a formal partnership with the Andhra Pradesh Tribal Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society (APTWREIS). The Secretary (FAC), Sri Mani Kumar, has been a strong pillar of support in advancing JEET's digital programs across the Gurukulam network.

> **"Preparing lessons takes a lot of time - we search, compare with textbooks, and make notes.**
> **If structured content is available, it makes our work much easier and lets us focus more on teaching**
>
> MS. VIDYASRIGAURI G

When Technology Strengthens Teaching: Lessons from a Classroom

In conversations around digital education, a familiar concern often emerges: will technology replace the teacher? Yet, in a classroom led by Ms. Soma Das, a mathematics teacher for Classes 6 to 8, a different reality is unfolding - one where technology strengthens teaching in ways that are both measurable and deeply practical.

Her journey did not begin with JEET. Like many teachers, she had occasionally used platforms like YouTube to supplement lessons. But these were scattered efforts, dependent on availability rather than structure. The shift came when digital content was no longer used as an add-on, but as part of a planned, curriculum-aligned approach. Chapters were broken into topics, lessons followed the board sequence, and teaching moved from selective coverage to a more coherent flow.

This change altered not just how lessons were delivered, but how they were planned. Instead of prioritizing exam-relevant chapters first, the teaching process became more systematic, allowing students to build understanding step by step. The platform did not reduce the role of the teacher - it clarified it. Videos introduced concepts, but explanation, questioning, and reinforcement remained firmly within the teacher's domain.

The results were visible. Students using this structured approach showed a clear improvement in performance, **with half-yearly scores rising to ~44% compared to 34% in a control classroom, and annual outcomes reaching ~59% versus 53%.** These gains reflect not just better recall, but improved comprehension - suggesting that when students can see and revisit concepts, learning becomes more stable. Equally telling was the shift in classroom behavior. Students began arriving early, often waiting for lessons to begin. The attraction of video-based learning created an entry point for engagement, something that many classrooms struggle to sustain. Yet, the effectiveness did not lie in the videos alone. As Soma Das observed, learning still required pauses, reflection, and interaction - reminding us that technology cannot replace the rhythm of teaching, only support it.

The challenges she faced were not pedagogical, but practical. Initial hesitation, unfamiliarity with digital tools, and unstable internet connectivity were real barriers. Infrastructure, more than intent, determined how smoothly the transition could happen. And yet, once these were addressed, adoption followed naturally. What began with uncertainty evolved into confidence, to the point where she is now willing to support other teachers in adopting the same approach.

One subtle but important insight emerged from the classroom: parents showed little concern about whether learning was online or offline. What mattered was whether children were engaged and improving. This suggests that the debate around digital education may be less about format and more about outcomes. This experience offers a grounded lesson for education systems. When digital tools are aligned with curriculum, integrated into teaching, and made accessible for teachers, they can meaningfully improve both engagement and performance, without increasing complexity.

The question, then, is not whether such models work. It is whether we can design systems that make them easier to adopt so that more classrooms can benefit from what is already within reach.

Ms. Soma Das
Best Teacher Award: 2nd Prize

Soma Das teaches iMaths at Sister Nivedita Balika Vidyalaya (Hindi Medium) in Maner, a rural area near Patna, Bihar. The school is run by an NGO Nai Dharti under the leadership of its Founder-Chairperson, Mrs. Nandita Banerjee, who has consistently encouraged and supported collaboration with JEET's digital initiatives.

> **"The videos help a lot in explaining concepts, but they don't replace the teacher. We still need to pause, explain, ask questions, and make sure students understand. It actually makes teaching easier and more effective.**
>
> MS. SOMA DAS

Where Education Actually Happens: Beyond the Classroom

Across three volumes of Jeet Ki Aor, one pattern has quietly but consistently emerged: **education in India does not begin in the classroom. And in many cases, it does not succeed there either.**

Almost every organisation we have engaged with whether working in Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Haryana, or urban settlements has, in its own way, stepped outside the formal idea of school. Not because schools are irrelevant, but because they are insufficient. The classroom, as designed, often assumes that learning is a contained activity. The ground reality suggests otherwise.

For many children, especially first-generation learners, the real barriers lie outside school. Irregular attendance is not always a question of motivation; it is shaped by migration, household responsibilities, economic pressure, or simply the absence of an enabling environment. In such contexts, NGOs are not just supplementing education, they are reconstructing the conditions required for learning to exist at all.

This is where the idea of "community" stops being a buzzword and becomes operational. Organisations that have sustained impact are those that engage beyond the child. They work with parents, negotiate with local leaders, activate teachers, and sometimes rebuild trust in schooling itself. Whether it is a volunteer explaining homework in a village courtyard or a field worker convincing a family to send a child back to school, these interventions are not peripheral—they are foundational.

At the same time, this raises an uncomfortable question about how we define success in education. Policy frameworks often measure inputs: enrolment numbers, infrastructure, digital access. But NGOs working on the ground are forced to deal with something more complex - continuity. Keeping a child in the system, ensuring they understand what is taught, and making learning meaningful enough that it sustains itself.

Interestingly, the most effective organisations are not those that try to replace the system, but those that work within and around it. They recognize that schools are necessary, but not sufficient. Their role becomes one of bridging gaps rather than building parallel structures.

This also explains why many of these models are difficult to scale in traditional terms. Community engagement cannot be standardized easily. Trust cannot be replicated through templates. And yet, without these elements, even the most well-designed educational programs struggle to translate into outcomes.

What emerges from these observations is a shift in how we might think about education itself. Perhaps the question is not how to improve schools in isolation, but how to expand the idea of where education happens.

If learning is shaped as much by the environment around the child as by the teacher in front of them, then any serious attempt at reform must move beyond classrooms, and into communities.

The question then is simple, but difficult to answer:
Are we designing education systems for schools, or for the realities in which children actually live?

Over three years, across three volumes and over 70 grassroots conversations while building JEET, we've observed India's education landscape from the ground up. This series distills what works, what sustains, and what continues to challenge meaningful education at scale.

82%

Smartphone Access
Rural children aged 14–16 who can use a smartphone (ASER)

57%

Study Usage
Rural adolescents using phones for educational purposes

34% → 59%

Learning Gain
Score improvement seen with structured video-supported learning