EdTech Hub

Clear evidence, better decisions, more learning.

ASEAN-UK SAGE | Supporting the Advancement of Girls' Education

TOPIC BRIEF

AI in Southeast Asia: Strategic Partnerships

Insights into leveraging partnerships for sustainable use of AI in education

Date January 2026

Authors Delanie Honda

DOI 10.53832/edtechhub.1164

UK International Development
Partnership | Progress | Prosperity

THE WORLD BANK

unicef for every child

About this document

Recommended citation

Honda, D. (2026). *AI in Southeast Asia: Strategic Partnerships. Insights into leveraging partnerships for sustainable use of AI in education* [Topic Brief]. EdTech Hub. https://doi.org/10.53832/edtechhub.1164
Available at https://docs.edtechhub.org/lib/NH9HAIW5.
Available under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International.

Reviewers

Clarissa Jazzlyne Gunawan, Haani Mazari, Sangay Thinley

About EdTech Hub

EdTech Hub is a global research partnership. Our goal is to empower people by giving them the evidence they need to make decisions about technology in education. Our evidence library is a repository of our latest research, findings, and wider literature on EdTech. As a global partnership, we seek to make our evidence available and accessible to those who are looking for EdTech solutions worldwide.

EdTech Hub is supported by UKAid, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, World Bank, and UNICEF. The views in this document do not necessarily reflect the views of these organisations.

To find out more about us, go to edtechhub.org/. Our evidence library can be found at docs.edtechhub.org/lib/.

This publication has been produced by EdTech Hub as part of the ASEAN-UK Supporting the Advancement of Girls' Education (ASEAN-UK SAGE) programme. The ASEAN-UK SAGE programme is delivered by the British Council and SEAMEO Secretariat, in partnership with EdTech Hub and the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), and is an ASEAN cooperation programme funded by the UK. The programme aims to enhance foundational learning opportunities for all by breaking down barriers that hinder the educational achievements of girls and marginalised learners.

This material has been funded by the UK; however, the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK Government's official policies.

EdTech Hub's topic briefs on AI in education in Southeast Asia

Across Southeast Asia, the demand for guidance on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) has grown rapidly. EdTech Hub has engaged with a number of partners across Southeast Asia on the use of AI in education, indicating that policymakers and teachers across the region are seeking clarity on the use of AI to support teaching and learning. This reflects a need for contextualised, reliable, high-quality, and rapid research to help education stakeholders quickly understand and adapt to emerging AI in education trends and topics.

While global evidence on AI in education is expanding quickly, stakeholders across the region have highlighted the need for tools that translate this knowledge into practical, locally relevant insights. The topic briefs respond directly to this need.

The briefs examine the intersection of AI with key elements of the education ecosystem in Southeast Asia. An initial desk review of the regional AI in the education landscape surfaced several priority themes and areas of interest, leading to the development of five topic briefs in this series.

This brief examines strategic partnerships for AI in education and focuses on the question:

How can partnerships be leveraged to sustainably use AI to support and deliver education?

The other briefs in this series include:

AI in Southeast Asia: Marginalised Learners by Iona Wotton (2026). https://doi.org/10.53832/edtechhub.1173. Available at https://docs.edtechhub.org/lib/ZAIZ22IV.

AI in Southeast Asia: Ethical Governance of AI in Education by Neema Jayasinghe. (2026) https://doi.org/10.53832/edtechhub.1179. Available at https://docs.edtechhub.org/lib/2VBH4GZX.

AI in Southeast Asia: Girls' Education and Empowerment by Alesia Petrovets. (2026) https://doi.org/10.53832/edtechhub.1180. Available at https://docs.edtechhub.org/lib/3KT6QT98.

AI in Southeast Asia: The Role of Teachers by Iona Wotton, Delanie Honda, & Nurhasmiza Sazalli, N. (2026). https://doi.org/10.53832/edtechhub.1178. Available at https://docs.edtechhub.org/lib/XWRW9BUJ.

Contents

Tables

Abbreviations and acronyms

AI	Artificial intelligence
API	Application Programming Interface
ASEAN-UK SAGE	ASEAN-UK Supporting the Advancement of Girls' Education
DepEd	Department of Education
DVET	Digital Vocational Education and Training
EEAI	Empowering Educators with AI
E-CAIR	Education Center for AI Research
EEF	Equitable Education Fund
KBTG	KASIKORN Business-Technology Group
KII	Key informant interview
KORIKA	Kolaborasi Riset dan Inovasi Industri Kecerdasan Artifisial (Collaboration of Artificial Intelligence Industry Research and Innovation) (Indonesia)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
RMIT	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
SEAMEO	Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Organization
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training

1. Introduction

Policies and strategies on the general applications of AI at national and regional levels underscore the importance of incorporating multiple perspectives to support the development and integration of AI in society. For example, Indonesia's Strategi Nasional Kecerdasan Artifisial established Kolaborasi Riset dan Inovasi Industri Kecerdasan Artifisial (KORIKA, Collaboration of Artificial Intelligence Industry Research and Innovation), a "quadruple helix collaboration ecosystem" (↑KORIKA, no date) comprising representatives from government, industry, academia, and community to bring these stakeholders together and support the strategy's implementation. Similarly, Singapore's National AI Strategy 2.0 centres industry, government, and research as the enablers of AI activity in the country (↑Smart Nation Singapore & Ministry of Communications and Information, 2023).

These national strategies point to an understanding that successful integration of AI will not be achieved by a single actor — AI requires substantial technical expertise, significant financial resources, and clear policy direction to guide its use. Thoughtful implementation of AI in education is particularly critical, given its potential to transform teaching practices and learning. However, there is limited evidence on how collaborations between government, industry, and other stakeholders operate in practice, and what partnership models support sustainable use.

In this brief on partnerships, we aim to answer this question: **How can partnerships be leveraged to sustainably use AI to support and deliver education?** Through case studies, this brief illustrates how partnerships are leveraged to deliver AI initiatives in education in Southeast Asia. By examining how partnerships are formed, sustained and adapted across contexts, this brief provides insights and recommendations for stakeholders seeking to strengthen multi-sector collaborations and ensure AI is integrated into education in ways that are contextually relevant, equitable, and sustainable.

2. Methodology

This brief is based on primary and secondary research. First, desk research was conducted to identify AI in education partnerships in the region. This initial scan helped identify common partnership models, key actors, and emerging trends in AI in education collaborations.

The primary research was conducted through key informant interviews (KIIs) with stakeholders directly involved in the partnerships. The interviews also informed the case studies presented in this report, and provided deeper insights into how partnerships are formed and sustained, the roles of each actor in the collaboration, and the challenges and lessons learnt through implementation.

2.1. Desk research

The desk research surfaced AI in education partnerships[1] that leveraged partnerships among various actors, including government, the private sector, academia, and civil society organisations. A broad regional search was conducted using web searches using terms including “AI”, “education”, “Southeast Asia”, “ASEAN”, “partnerships”, as well as searches targeting individual countries. The documents included in the review were typically announcements or press releases on institutions’ or companies’ websites, or articles on online news sites.

2.2. Key informant interviews

Two KIIs were conducted with organisations involved in AI in education initiatives. Key informants were intentionally selected for their regional scope and experience in implementing AI in education initiatives.

Key informants interviewed for this topic brief included representatives from Yayasan Plan International Indonesia (Plan Indonesia) and the ASEAN Foundation, who discussed the regional AI TEACH for ASEAN programme, and a representative from Solve Education!, who shared insights about its AI-powered tutoring chatbot, EdBot.ai. The interviews took place in August and September 2025.

[1] In this report, ‘partnerships’ is used to refer to and describe collaborations between multiple stakeholders, and includes both formal agreements and specific programmatic activities. The terms ‘initiative’ and ‘programme’ are used to refer to activities to be undertaken through the collaboration.

2.2.1. AI TEACH for ASEAN

The AI TEACH for ASEAN (AI TEACH) initiative was selected because of its regional scope. As a fully completed programme, it offered valuable insights into best practices and lessons learnt across the entire programme lifecycle. Additionally, AI TEACH exemplified key trends identified in the desk review: partnership with a major tech company and a focus on developing teachers' AI literacy and pedagogical use.

2.2.2. Solve Education!

Solve Education! was selected due to its experience developing and implementing AI tools that support both foundational and life skills learning. With operations across the region and beyond, the organisation brings perspectives from diverse contexts. Previous collaboration also highlighted how Solve Education! works through a range of partnership models and maintains a strong focus on marginalised and underserved communities, making it a relevant example for exploring how partnerships can be structured to ensure AI in education reaches all learners.

3. AI in education partnerships

Fourteen collaborations from across Southeast Asia were reviewed as part of the desk review (see the Appendix). Documents described the formalisation of partnerships through memoranda of understanding (MOUs) and the specific programmatic activities to be undertaken through the collaboration. Table 1 presents a selected list of partnerships to illustrate types of initiatives and partnership structures. The review revealed trends in the partners involved, partnership goals, and intended audience. Partnerships often involve a private-sector partner, typically from large, international technology companies; training and capacity-building activities are integrated within programmes; and initiatives emphasise AI literacy and skills development.

3.1. Types of partnerships

Partnerships reviewed for this brief typically involve the government, academic institutions, or civil society organisations partnering with private-sector actors, particularly technology companies. Seven of the 14 partnerships involved global big tech companies, such as Amazon and Microsoft. These large technology companies provide training materials, hardware and software, and funding to academic institutions and governments to conduct workshops and other activities. These findings align with a report by ↑Vietnam, E. Y. (2025) on the adoption of AI in the education sector across nine Southeast Asian countries.[2] The report highlights a growing trend of tech giants partnering with academic institutions to deliver skills development initiatives at national and regional levels, while also making substantial investments in AI infrastructure and local startups in the region.

3.2. Programme focus and intended audience

Regional examples of partnerships commonly centre on researching AI, co-developing AI-enabled tools, supplying hardware and software, and delivering AI training and workshops.

Training and workshops are the most common activities within these partnerships, with nine out of the 14 collaborations providing upskilling or professional development as a focal or supporting activity. The training and workshops are designed for teachers, students, and the general public, and

[2] The countries included in the ↑Vietnam, E. Y. (2025) report are: Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, Lao PDR, Timor-Leste, and Myanmar.

include topics such as general AI literacy, AI skills development, and hands-on learning experiences for students. Where details are provided, training is delivered through face-to-face workshops and online platforms, and the scale ranges. Three initiatives reported reaching thousands of learners and educators. Notably, all three of these initiatives were collaborations with ministries of education (see Table 1).

Few partnerships in this review demonstrate an explicit focus on providing AI tools or delivering AI training to marginalised learners[3] or teachers who work with these communities. Furthermore, the documents do not describe concrete steps to increase the inclusivity of the programmes or tools, such as the availability of accessibility features or offline modalities. Two notable exceptions have an intentional equity focus: the partnership on Developing and Applying Artificial Intelligence Technology to Reduce Educational Inequality in Thailand, and the Rakyat Digital — Digital Vocational Education and Training (DVET) programme in Malaysia, which targets colleges in the bottom 40% income bracket (see Table 1).

Table 1 below presents four examples of AI in education partnerships in Southeast Asia, drawn from the 14 reviewed in the desk research. These examples are highlighted because they demonstrate the trends described in this section and showcase collaborations from across the region. A full list is provided in the Appendix.

[3] Such as students with disabilities, learners in remote or rural areas, out-of-school children and youth, or marginalised girls.

Table 1. *Selective list of AI in education initiatives and partnerships*[4]

Partnership	Country	Description
Name: Rakyat Digital — Digital Vocational Education and Training (DVET) **Partners:** SOLS Foundation, IBM, Ministry of Digital, MyDIGITAL corporation **Collaboration type:** Initiative	Malaysia	This programme aimed to equip technical and vocational education and training (TVET) lecturers and students with knowledge about AI, machine learning, and responsible AI use. To build capacity, the programme delivered training using IBM's SkillsBuild modules on AI and cybersecurity fundamentals. Rakyat Digital — DVET reached 1,100 educators and 5,600 students through a combination of in-person training across the country and online follow-up sessions (↑Shahrizal, 2025; ↑SOLS Foundation, 2024).
Name: Education Center for AI Research (E-CAIR) **Partners:** Department of Education (DepEd), SEAMEO INNOTECH **Collaboration type:** Centre	Philippines	E-CAIR is a hub within DepEd for AI research in education in the Philippines to develop AI-driven tools to support teaching, learning, and school management for basic education. To achieve this, E-CAIR brings together multiple stakeholders, including SEAMEO INNOTECH, national and local government agencies and industry partners to develop AI solutions. (↑Department of Education, 2025)
Name: Developing and Applying Artificial Intelligence Technology to Reduce Educational Inequality **Partners:** KASIKORN Business-Technology Group	Thailand	This MOU between KBTG, EEF, and the AI Fund focuses on developing AI assistants to support learning and mental health and to provide companionship to children and educators. Central to this partnership is addressing inequality by providing information and resources to underprivileged children. For example, one proposed project under the MOU is to use an AI assistant to

[4] Listed alphabetically by country

Partnership	Country	Description
(KBTG), Equitable Education Fund (EEF), AI Fund **Collaboration type:** MOU		provide counselling and career guidance to secondary school students (↑Sawadee Thailand, 2025).
Name: Empowering educators with AI (EEAI) **Partners:** Ministry of Education and Training, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University, Vietnam (RMIT) **Collaboration type:** Initiative	Vietnam	EEAI builds the capacity of K–12 teachers and education administrators to utilise AI. The planned activities for this project include training sessions and workshops, a national contest on AI applications in education and an education festival on AI innovation (↑RMIT University Vietnam, no date). The training sessions cover fundamental AI concepts, UNESCO's AI competency framework for teachers, and practical applications. The programme has reached a large audience; in its first workshop, it delivered live online training to 150,000 people (↑RMIT University Vietnam, 2025).

4. Case studies

Two initiatives from the desk review were selected as case studies for the topic brief to provide insights into how partnerships for AI in education initiatives are formed and how they operate. These case studies describe the programme or initiative, the roles of the partners involved, how partners addressed implementation challenges, and lessons learnt. Notes in parentheses indicate the key informant interviews (KIIs) from which information was gathered.

4.1. AI TEACH

AI TEACH was a joint multi-country initiative between the ASEAN Foundation and Microsoft, in collaboration with the organisations Plan Indonesia and the Biji-biji initiative, a social enterprise from Malaysia. The initiative provided AI training for educators across the region, with a focus on Indonesia and Malaysia. This case study primarily focuses on the programme's implementation in Indonesia. It highlights the importance of partners with local community ties to provide contextual guidance, as well as the government's role in supporting scale.

4.1.1. Background

AI TEACH was an initiative between the ASEAN Foundation and Microsoft that aimed to empower teachers and students by enhancing their AI fluency and preparing them for an AI-powered future through practical skills. Using a train-the-trainer approach, the programme upskilled teachers, who then used their improved AI knowledge to strengthen their students' capabilities. Another key activity was hosting hackathons in Indonesia and Malaysia to promote hands-on learning and application of AI solutions to real-world problems in the ASEAN region.

The materials for teacher training were sourced from Microsoft's AI Trainer Toolkit, which included modules about creating effective prompts and using generative AI for lesson planning, content creation, feedback, and assessment, as well as responsible AI use for teachers and learners (↑Biji-biji Initiative & Mereka, no date). The programme, which ran from January 2024 until February 2025, reached 7,562 teachers, which in turn impacted over 297,220 students (KII, ASEAN Foundation).

In this initiative, the ASEAN Foundation played a key role in stakeholder engagement, including with high-level ASEAN bodies, to promote AI TEACH and provide strategic guidance. As an international technology

giant, Microsoft provided technical knowledge on AI concepts, along with its AI Trainer Toolkit for training materials. Plan Indonesia and Biji-biji were the selected local organisations which implemented the programme in Indonesia and Malaysia, respectively.

4.1.2. Challenges and lessons learnt

When implementing the AI TEACH programme's teacher training activities in Indonesia, Plan Indonesia encountered challenges stemming from low digital literacy, language barriers, and limited availability of teachers. This section elaborates on those challenges and the lessons that future programmes can take forward to avoid similar complications.

Challenges with content delivery and teachers' time constraints

During the implementation of the teacher training, Plan Indonesia learnt that teachers struggled to engage with the materials hosted on LinkedIn Learning, which were in English and were perceived as highly technical. Teachers, particularly older teachers who had difficulty navigating the registration process, struggled with using an unfamiliar learning platform (KII, Plan Indonesia). Digital literacy was also identified as a challenge in Malaysia (KII, ASEAN Foundation).

Another challenge to teachers' capacity to participate was their heavy workload and multiple responsibilities (KII, ASEAN Foundation; KII, Plan Indonesia). These limited their availability to complete the online training modules.

Lessons for implementation

Plan Indonesia responded to challenges during implementation by contextualising materials and adapting the programme. To address digital literacy and language barriers, materials were segmented into smaller, digestible chunks. Plan Indonesia worked with Microsoft to provide localised materials in Bahasa Indonesia and secured permission to host the content on a local platform already used regularly by teachers. The programme also provided targeted support through short video tutorials to guide teachers' account registration and platform navigation, and hosted workshops for additional hands-on support. These changes resulted in higher completion rates in Indonesia (KII, Plan Indonesia).

To address time constraints, Plan Indonesia introduced more flexible scheduling to complete online modules. The key informant from the

ASEAN Foundation similarly stressed the need for strategies that accommodate teachers' busy schedules.

Lessons for sustainability

Because AI TEACH was a short-term, one-year programme, its impact and continuity were limited. Once the programme was completed, Microsoft shifted its strategy from building AI capacity for teachers to capacity building for government officials. Plan Indonesia has remained engaged in the partnership and delivered capacity-building for teachers by pivoting to align with Microsoft's new focus, which still includes provisions for teacher training (KII, Plan Indonesia).

4.2. Solve Education!

Solve Education is a tech-enabled social enterprise with presence in Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Africa. The organisation developed EdBot.ai, a web-based AI chatbot designed to answer learners' academic queries, offer career support, and offer courses for AI and digital readiness. This case study highlights the value of collaborations with local partners and technical experts, as well as a people-centred approach to sustainability.

4.2.1. Background

Solve Education! developed a web-based learning platform which leverages gamification, an AI coach, incentives, and a network to engage learners and provide an interactive and fun learning environment (KII, Solve Education!). The platform hosts EdBot.ai, a chatbot developed in-house using OpenAI's application programming interface (API) (KII, Solve Education!). The chatbot can respond to learners' queries, including those about lesson content, general academic concepts, or career advice. EdBot.ai includes features such as an English-language skills check and personalised feedback (KII, Solve Education!). Solve Education! also offers AI and digital readiness courses through its life skills programme, which introduces AI literacy and responsible use (↑Solve Education!, no date).

Solve Education! has partnerships with a variety of organisations, including government, the private sector, and other local organisations. Each partner type offers different benefits (KII, Solve Education!). For instance, government partners provide endorsement of Solve Education!'s programmes and help expand their reach, while corporate partners fund workshops or content development on a specific topic or for a specific group of learners. When forming new partnerships, Solve Education!

prioritises mission alignment, believing that the vision and goals of both parties must be aligned for successful collaboration (KII, Solve Education!).

4.2.2. Challenges and lessons learnt

Solve Education!'s experience developing and delivering EdBot.ai in Southeast Asia reveals important lessons about technical capacity, contextual relevance, and sustainable practices. This section examines the challenges faced by Solve Education!, including the limitations of the available AI models and learner readiness for AI, as well as the strategies developed in response, offering insights for organisations navigating similar challenges in diverse contexts.

Challenges with technical capacity

Solve Education! encountered technical challenges in developing an AI product that supports multiple languages and covers a wide range of topics. Specifically, the key informant acknowledged that early versions of EdBot.ai had difficulties processing images, performing numerical calculations, and translating into languages other than English. Solve Education! continues to improve the AI model, such as by developing a mathematics module to better support mathematics tutoring (KII, Solve Education!).

Lessons for content development

Through the development of its AI and digital readiness content, Solve Education! has recognised the importance of tailoring its content to local contexts and needs. While learners in Singapore, Malaysia, and urban Indonesia are actively seeking AI learning content, rural communities in Indonesia and India expressed different needs (KII, Solve Education!). Local partners in rural areas in these countries reported that learners want to strengthen their foundational skills in English and mathematics before engaging with advanced topics such as AI. By working closely with community partners who understand local contexts, Solve Education! has adapted its curriculum to ensure its programmes remain relevant and accessible.

Lessons for sustainability

Partnerships with diverse actors enable Solve Education! to develop and deliver its tools, such as EdBot.ai, to marginalised and remote communities. However, the organisation is also mindful that its model, which is primarily funded through grants, donations, and corporate social responsibility

programmes, is subject to changing funding priorities (KII, Solve Education!). Therefore, when considering sustainability, Solve Education! ensures its programmes deliver not only new technology but also essential support for teachers to use it effectively, and build skills and mindsets that empower beneficiaries to engage with new digital technologies even after programming ends.

5. Key insights

Based on the desk review and experiences shared in the KIIs, this section presents key insights into how partnerships can leverage AI to support and deliver education sustainably. Although these insights are informed by a small pool of organisations and initiatives, the regional scope of the desk review and the multi-country nature of the selected case studies provide perspectives of diverse contexts. The partnership models and implementation challenges the KIIs describe are common across Southeast Asian education systems, offering lessons applicable to partnerships across the region.

5.1. AI initiatives in Southeast Asia involve collaboration with diverse actors to mobilise resources and expertise

The desk review and case studies indicate that AI initiatives in Southeast Asia are bringing together multiple partners, each contributing different resources and expertise. These multi-stakeholder collaborations combine private sector technical expertise and financial resources, local organisations' contextual knowledge and community access, and government capacity for scale.

> "*Sustaining collaborative relationships with diverse stakeholders — including governments, private sector partners, educational institutions, and community organisations — is essential. These partnerships help pool resources and ensure the programme remains relevant and impactful.*" (KII, ASEAN Foundation)

5.1.1. Private sector

In Southeast Asia, international tech giants like Google and Microsoft are prominent funders of AI in education initiatives, with only some partnerships with local technology companies. Partnerships with big tech provide access to substantial financial resources and high-quality training materials informed by their technical expertise. Even when big tech is not a direct partner to an initiative, it can influence AI in education when programmes use its open-source models. However, the case studies reveal a significant limitation: externally developed training content or AI models, often from Western contexts, may not align with local pedagogical practices or languages, underscoring the need for contextual adaptation.

Without strong collaboration with local partners, programmes and content may fail to be relevant or accessible to the intended beneficiaries.

5.1.2. Local organisations

In both case studies, partnerships with local communities and other on-the-ground organisations are essential to understanding the target audience's needs and adapting materials to the local context. This contextualisation and adaptation are essential for Southeast Asia, which has varying digital infrastructure coverage, languages, and learner priorities. For example, language was identified as a significant barrier, highlighting the need for localisation. Although AI provides translation capabilities, Solve Education! found that auto-translation is not always reliable. Beyond translation, local partnerships identified and addressed deeper contextual needs, enabling higher participation and completion rates. The case studies highlight a critical principle: rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, programmes should be flexible and adaptable to meet the diverse needs of teachers and learners in the region.

5.1.3. Governments

Partnerships with governments enable reach and present opportunities for long-term sustainability, but also present challenges. Both key informants in this study aspired to form partnerships with local and national governments because such partnerships offer pathways to scale and provide endorsement of AI in education initiatives. This aligns with findings from a report on the broader EdTech landscape in Southeast Asia (↑Jayasinghe et al., 2025), which emphasises the critical role of governments in enabling scale and programme sustainability. Governments' increasing focus on digital transformation and preparing citizens for an AI-enabled future has also increased interest in developing and delivering initiatives that help students master AI skills (KII, Solve Education!), potentially driving partnership opportunities.

However, government policymaking and bureaucracy can be time-consuming and slow. Regional offices streamlined the teacher recruitment process for Plan Indonesia; however, the absence of a finalised national digital literacy policy impeded further teacher mobilisation (KII, Plan Indonesia). This challenge also emphasises the need for supportive policies that allow initiatives to operate effectively.

5.2. Sustainability is an evolving challenge

AI in education initiatives face multiple hurdles to remain sustainable, including securing long-term funding, shifting political landscapes, and rapid technological advances. Partnerships offer potential solutions to alleviate some of these challenges. For example, ↑Molina et al. (2024) propose joint research and development projects between universities, research labs, and private AI companies; industry-led capacity-building programmes; and prize competitions or social impact incentives to crowdsource innovation (p. 28). These public–private partnership models leverage each partner's expertise and efficiently allocate resources to address the complex and resource-intensive nature of AI in education innovation.

However, sustainability practices for AI in education partnerships in Southeast Asia remain underdeveloped. The desk review indicates that many collaborations are project-based, which could create continuity challenges when the project funding ends. The case studies reveal that organisations have not yet systematically leveraged partnerships to address sustainability challenges. Despite multi-stakeholder partnerships, funding shifts and policy uncertainties continue to affect the two case study programmes, suggesting that the mere presence of diverse partners does not automatically translate into sustainability.

One response to programme sustainability is to emphasise capacity-building and focus on soft skills so that teachers and learners are confident in their ability to find their own solutions and navigate change, regardless of any specific tool or partnership that may persist. This is reflected in Solve Education!'s mission to empower people through education. Furthermore, both programmes position teacher training as having a multiplier effect, because teachers can pass on knowledge and skills for AI use to students throughout their careers, a cycle that can outlast specific programmes or partnerships. While this capacity-focused approach does not address financial or institutional challenges, it offers a path toward sustainable practices.

6. Recommendations

Although policies and strategies emphasise the need for multi-stakeholder collaboration, this research was unable to find guidelines or frameworks to guide them.[5] This section presents recommendations for building strong partnerships and sustaining long-term collaborations for AI in education initiatives. While the recommendations target actions for specific stakeholders, they may also apply more broadly to all stakeholders participating in a partnership.

6.1. Recommendations for forming effective partnerships

Effective partnerships require supportive policies and structures to encourage diverse stakeholder engagement, reduce barriers to collaboration, and ensure accountability. They also require bringing together the right actors and a shared vision.

1. Establish enabling policies and structures

Clear policy frameworks, coordination mechanisms, and partnership guidelines are needed to encourage multi-stakeholder collaborations between governments, industry, academia, and civil society.

Implications for practice

- **Governments should establish clear policies and structures that encourage and support multi-stakeholder partnerships**, such as guidelines for public–private partnership agreements, incentives to collaborate with regional and local organisations, and streamlined processes that reduce bureaucratic barriers to collaboration.
- **Researchers should provide evidence and analysis to inform the design of partnership policies and structures**, documenting what frameworks enable successful collaboration and identify policy gaps.

[5] At the regional level, there is the *ASEAN public private partnership guidelines* from 2014, but these guidelines target infrastructure projects and focus exclusively on private sector collaborations, without mentioning other types of collaborations the government may engage with (↑Zen & Zen, 2014).

2. Align roles and vision

Partnerships benefit from the complementary strengths and resources of different actors. Beyond clearly defined roles, **partners need to have shared goals and a commitment to a common vision**.

Implications for practice

- **All actors in a partnership should convene early in the collaboration to establish roles, identify the assets they bring** to the initiative, and align on its overall goals and mission.

3. Leverage local expertise and contextual knowledge

Understanding local needs is critical in Southeast Asia, where cultures, languages, education systems, and digital infrastructure vary widely. Initiatives require input from stakeholders with on-the-ground knowledge to ensure content and delivery are relevant to beneficiaries from the outset, rather than requiring rapid adaptation after programme or product launch.

Implications for practice

- **EdTech providers and implementing organisations should partner with organisations already supporting marginalised and hard-to-reach communities** to leverage their reach and specialised contextual knowledge. Local representation should be embedded in the initial programme or product design process, rather than being consulted after groundwork has already been completed.
- **Governments should leverage their capacity to scale across diverse and remote regions** to ensure AI in education initiatives reach underserved communities, facilitating access through established networks of schools and local government offices.

4. Prioritise data protection and safety

As partnerships between the public and private sectors grow, there is an increased need to ensure that learners' and teachers' sensitive information is kept secure.

Implications for practice

- **Governments should strengthen data protection and privacy regulations and accountability mechanisms.**

- **All actors in a partnership should establish transparent data-sharing agreements with clear protocols for data collection, storage, and use.**

6.2. Recommendations for sustaining partnerships

Sustaining partnerships beyond initial implementation requires more than just financial investment. Long-term success depends on building widespread capacity that endures beyond individual projects and on embedding mechanisms for continuous learning and improvement.

1. Move from project-based initiatives to longer, sustained engagement

The case study of AI TEACH reveals how short-term, project-based funding creates gaps in continuity and limits long-term impact. Sustained engagement is needed to allow sufficient time for schools and systems to integrate new AI practices and tools, and to learn about their effects on pedagogy and learning outcomes.

Implications for practice

- **Private-sector partners should commit to multi-year engagements that support sustained capacity-building efforts** and sufficient time for monitoring and evaluation efforts to document impact.
- **All partners should develop transition and sustainability plans from the outset**, specifying how capacity, resources, and responsibilities will be maintained when external partnership support concludes.

2. Invest in capacity-building activities

Capacity building is essential for the sustainable use of AI in education, as without administrators', teachers', and students' understanding of how to use and integrate AI effectively, the tools will be underutilised or misused.

Implications for practice

- **Governments and EdTech providers should consider integrating capacity-building activities in their programmes**, so that AI in education initiatives go beyond the provision of technology and support its appropriate and responsible use.

- **Researchers should study and share evidence about practices and models that support technology uptake** and sustained use.

3. Develop mechanisms for rapid evidence generation

Initiatives and partnerships can be sustainable when the impact is clear and can adapt based on learning. It is essential to know 'what works', so that AI will have a positive impact on learning outcomes and leave no student behind.

Implications for practice

- **Implementing partners should integrate mechanisms to rapidly generate evidence about their programmes**, such as EdTech Hub's sandbox method. Sandbox activities are designed to generate real-time evidence, accelerate learning, and make interventions as robust as possible.
- **EdTech providers can model iterative development and support other stakeholders** to leverage methodologies such as 'lean impact' and user-centred design in their evaluations.
- **Researchers should lend their technical expertise to support rigorous research design and data collection.**

4. Build knowledge about partnership sustainability

There is limited understanding about partnership models and practices that last beyond initial funding cycles or pilot phases. There are opportunities to strengthen the evidence base on effective partnership models and sustainability practices.

Implications for practice

- **Researchers should examine the factors that make multi-stakeholder partnerships effective and sustainable**, including governance structures, stakeholders' roles, and financial arrangements.
- **Regional bodies should facilitate knowledge sharing among countries and initiatives**, enabling governments and practitioners to share lessons learnt on partnership formation, implementation challenges, and sustainability strategies.

7. Looking ahead

Partnerships are essential to address the complex challenges of integrating AI technologies into Southeast Asian education systems, which vary in culture, language, and digital readiness. While partnerships offer potential solutions to implementation challenges related to resources and expertise, the partnerships featured in this topic brief reveal significant gaps in strategies to ensure sustainability. They also highlight the need for partnerships to deliver AI in education initiatives for marginalised communities, to support evidence generation, and to foster greater discussion about data privacy agreements between partners. Moving forward, these lessons can guide the development of sustainable partnerships that deliver inclusive, evidence-driven AI for educational programmes and tools.

References

These references are available digitally in our evidence library at https://docs.edtechhub.org/lib/NH9HAIW5.

Biji-biji Initiative & Mereka. (n.d.). *Microsoft AI TEACH*. Microsoft AI TEACH. Retrieved December 6, 2025, from https://www.biji-biji.com/microsoft/microsoft-ai-teach/. (details)

Department of Education. (2025, February 20). *DepEd launches AI center for education*. https://www.deped.gov.ph/2025/02/20/deped-launches-ai-center-for-education/. (details)

Jayasinghe, N., Chrisani, A., Honda, D., & Gunawan, C. J. (2025). *EdTech for Marginalised Learners in Southeast Asia: Perspectives from funders and providers on priorities, design, investment, and scaling considerations* [Landscape Analysis]. EdTech Hub. https://doi.org/10.53832/edtechhub.1117. Available from https://docs.edtechhub.org/lib/SB7G3I83. Available under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International. (details)

KORIKA — Kolaborasi Riset Dan Inovasi Industri Kecerdasan Artifisial. (n.d.). *KORIKA Learning*. Kolaborasi Riset Dan Inovasi Industri Kecerdasan Artifisial. Retrieved November 10, 2025, from https://learning.korika.id/. (details)

Molina, E., Cobo, C., Pineda, J., & Rovner, H. (2024). *AI Revolution in Education: What you need to know* (Brief No. 1; Digital Innovations in Education). The World Bank. https://hdl.handle.net/10986/41806. (details)

RMIT University Vietnam. (n.d.). *Empowering educators with AI*. RMIT University. Retrieved November 10, 2025, from https://www.rmit.edu.vn/about-us/who-we-are/our-commitments/vietnam-country-commitment/strategic-innovation-challenge/empowering-educators-with-ai. (details)

RMIT University Vietnam. (2025, July 8). *AI training program attracts 250,000 educators and education administrators*. RMIT University. https://www.rmit.edu.vn/news/all-news/2025/jul/ai-training-program-attracts-250000-educators-and-education-administrators. (details)SOLS Foundation. (2024).

SOLS Foundation and IBM SkillsBuild Launch Groundbreaking Rakyat Digital. https://cdn.solssmart.org/static/press/articles/20241108-press-release-sols-foundation-and-ibm-skillsbuild-launch-groundbreaking-rakyat-digital.pdf. (details)

Sawadee Thailand. (2025, June 9). Ministry of Education, MHESI, and Microsoft join forces to transform Thai education with AI. *Source Asia*. https://news.microsoft.com/source/asia/2025/06/09/ministry-of-education-mhesi-and-microsoft-join-forces-to-transform-thai-education-with-ai/. (details)

Shahrizal. (2025, June 5). Over 6,700 upskilled in Malaysia's first large-scale AI and cybersecurity TVET programme. *BuisnessToday*. https://www.businesstoday.com.my/2025/06/05/over-6700-upskilled-in-malaysias-first-large-scale-ai-and-cybersecurity-tvet-programme/. (details)

Smart Nation Singapore, & Ministry of Communications and Information. (2023). *Singapore National AI Strategy 2.0*. Government of Singapore. https://www.smartnation.gov.sg/initiatives/national-ai-strategy/. (details)

Solve Education! (n.d.). *Life Skills*. Solve Education! Retrieved December 6, 2025, from https://solveeducation.org/life-skills/. (details)

Vietnam, E. Y. (2025, April). *AI for Sustainable Development in ASEAN (AISDA): Strengthening evidence toward promoting responsible, safe and inclusive AI to support sustainable development in Southeast Asia*. https://doi.org/10.53832/evidence-fund.0007. (details)

Zen, F., & Zen, M. (Eds.). (2014). *ASEAN Public Private Partnership Guidelines*. Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia. https://asean.org/book/asean-public-private-partnership-guidelines/. (details)

Appendix

Partnerships reviewed

Table 2. *List of partnerships reviewed during desk research (status given is at the time of writing).*

Partnership	Country	Status	Description
Name: BINUS University and Microsoft for AI integration **Partners:** BINUS University, Microsoft **Collaboration type:** MOU	Indonesia	Ongoing	This university has been working with Microsoft since 2021 to integrate AI into its operations. These include using AI for admission planning and for creating diploma supplement documents that detail academic achievements, learning outcomes, and qualifications gained.
Name: Rakyat Digital – Digital Vocational Education and Training (DVET) **Partners:** SOLS Foundation, IBM, Ministry of Digital, MyDIGITAL corporation **Collaboration type:** Initiative	Malaysia	Completed	This programme aimed to equip technical and vocational education and training (TVET) lecturers and students with knowledge about AI, machine learning, and responsible AI use. To build capacity, the programme delivered training using IBM's SkillsBuild modules on AI and cybersecurity fundamentals.
Name: Universiti Teknologi Petronas (UTP) and FPT for AI integration and workforce readiness **Partners:** UTP, FPT **Collaboration type:** MOU	Malaysia	Ongoing	FPT, a global technology corporation, will provide UTP with software and access to FPT's AI-driven data management platform. The partnership will also include knowledge exchange, internships and collaborative research projects.

Partnership	Country	Status	Description
Name: Multimedia University (MMU) and Intel for workforce readiness **Partners:** MMU, Intel **Collaboration type:** MOU	Malaysia	Ongoing	The partnership will enhance AI education at the university through the development of a curriculum, programmes for skill development, and collaborative AI research projects, with the goal of enhancing workforce readiness in AI.
Name: Telekom Malaysia (TM) One and the Ministry of Education for TVET **Partners:** TM One, Ministry of Education **Collaboration type:** MOU	Malaysia	Ongoing	This partnership with the TVET division of the Ministry of Education includes providing training for students and educators, co-creating learning content, and industry placements for educators to develop digital expertise.
Name: Education Center for AI Research (E-CAIR) **Partners:** Department of Education (DepEd), SEAMEO INNOTECH **Collaboration type:** Centre	Philippines	Ongoing	E-CAIR is a hub within DepEd for AI research in education in the Philippines to develop AI-driven tools to support teaching, learning, and school management for basic education.
Name: Samsung partnerships for advancing AI and EdTech for education **Partners:** Samsung Electronics Singapore, Challenge Technologies, Geniebook, and TeachingTutor.ai **Collaboration type:** MOUs	Singapore	Ongoing	Samsung's partnerships with these companies aim to improve digital learning through AI-powered solutions and support these companies through the provision of Samsung devices and its security platform.

Partnership	Country	Status	Description
Name: Technology for Education Centre **Partners:** National Institute of Education (NIE), Amazon Web Services (AWS) **Collaboration type:** MOU	Singapore	Ongoing	This partnership will establish a Technology for Education Centre on the NIE campus, where students, researchers, and staff can develop technological solutions for education with AWS and other industry partners. The partnership also includes learning workshops, hands-on learning opportunities, and joint research initiatives.
Name: Developing and Applying Artificial Intelligence Technology to Reduce Educational Inequality **Partners:** KASIKORN Business-Technology Group (KBTG), Equitable Education Fund (EEF), AI Fund **Collaboration type:** MOU	Thailand	Ongoing	This MOU between KBTG, EEF and the AI Fund focuses on developing AI assistants to support learning, mental health, and provide companionship to children and educators, with a particular focus on providing information and resources to underprivileged children.
Name: THAI Academy — AI in Education **Partners:** Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, Microsoft Thailand **Collaboration type:** Initiative	Thailand		The THAI Academy will support the Ministry of Education's initiatives to equip students with essential technological skills for the future. In its initial stages, this programme will target 600,000 secondary students by delivering AI courses via an online learning platform. At the higher education level, Microsoft is supporting free AI learning opportunities.

Partnership	Country	Status	Description
Name: Empowering educators with AI (EEAI) **Partners:** Ministry of Education and Training, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University, Vietnam (RMIT) **Collaboration type:** Initiative	Vietnam	Ongoing	EEAI aims to build K–12 teachers' and education administrators' capacity to utilise AI through the provision of training sessions, a hackathon and an education festival on AI innovation.
Name: VinAI and Posts and Telecommunications Institute of Technology for workforce readiness **Partners:** VinAI, Posts, and Telecommunications Institute of Technology (PTIT) **Collaboration type:** MOU	Vietnam	Ongoing	VinAI is a research and development lab. Through this MOU, the company will support curricular development and provide students with workshops, seminars, and internship opportunities.
Name: AI TEACH **Partners:** ASEAN Foundation, Biji-biji Initiative and Mereka, Microsoft, Yayasan Plan International Indonesia **Collaboration type:** Initiative	Regional	Completed	AI TEACH was an AI literacy and skills development initiative using Microsoft's AI Trainer Toolkit that sought to upskill teachers across Southeast Asia. In addition to the training workshops, the programme included a hackathon for teachers in Indonesia and Malaysia.
Name: EdBot.ai **Partners:** Solve Education! **Collaboration type:** Project	Regional	Ongoing	Solve Education! developed EdBot.ai, an AI-powered chatbot which can answer learners' questions, support English language learning, and provide personalised feedback. Solve Education! also provides AI literacy and skills development courses through its learning platform.

Key informant interview protocol

Introduction

- Please introduce yourself, your role, and your organisation
    a. What is the mission of your organisation and what communities do you aim to serve?
    b. Is reaching underserved communities a key focus of your organisation?

Background of your organisation and approach to partnerships

I'd first like to start with some general questions about your organisation's approach to partnerships.

- Please describe your organisation's approach to partnerships for AI initiatives / programmes. What factors about potential partners do you consider when exploring opportunities for partnerships (examples — technical expertise, network considerations — reach to different communities, funding)?
        i. How important is a partner's ability to help you reach underserved communities?
- From your perspective, which actors (governments, organisations, funders, etc.) or what needs are driving the formation of partnerships in AI in education initiatives in Southeast Asia?
    a. What role, if any, do regional guidance (ASEAN Declaration on AI) or national government policies play in partnership formation?
    b. How much of a role do the needs of marginalised communities play in driving partnership formation?
- What are the key challenges in deploying AI for education? In your experience, how have partnerships helped your organisation navigate these challenges?
    a. Can you give me a specific example of how a partnership helped you address a challenge?
- What factors support or limit the sustainability of AI tools / programmes in your context (policies, local technical expertise, infrastructure)?

Now, I'd like to speak more about [specific AI in education initiative].

- Please describe your programme / initiative and its key stakeholders.
    a. What are its main goals or outcomes?

   b. Who are the intended beneficiaries of this programme (teachers, students, government officials)?

- Who are the main partners in this programme? How and when did this partnership begin? What was the motivation for forming this partnership (expanding reach, technical expertise, etc)? Consider rephrasing based on answers in the previous section: Earlier in our conversation, you mentioned that [type of organisation / need] typically leads to exploring and forming partnerships. Was this also the case for this initiative?
   a. Was increasing reach to marginalised communities a factor in forming a partnership? In what way did your partnership with [partnering organisation] facilitate that connection?
   b. Have you been able to collaborate with a local organisation or community for [project / initiative]? Please describe that collaboration.
- What role, if any, has the government played in supporting this partnership (policy guidance, funding, implementation, technical support)?
   a. What ministry agencies or bodies have been involved?
   b. Why did this ministry agency become involved?
- What are the main funding sources for this programme (private, public, philanthropic, donor-supported, investors)?
   a. What role, if any, does the funder play beyond financial support (strategic, operational, evaluative)?
- What is the long-term vision for this programme? What strategies are in place to sustain this programme after the initial funding period ends?
   a. Have you considered long-term ownership, such as handing ownership over to a local organisation or government agency?
   b. What factors beyond funding are needed to ensure this programme can be sustainable (capacity building, infrastructure)?

Closing

- Is there anything else you would like to share about your product or programme that we have not covered in the interview?