

The Recontextualization Trajectory of Social Actors in South Korea's AIDT Policy: A Critical Discourse Analysis of AIDT Policy Documents[※]

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Abstract

Sung, S., Jang, I. C., & Lee, B. (2026). The recontextualization trajectory of social actors in South Korea's AIDT policy: A critical discourse analysis of AIDT policy documents. *The Sociolinguistic Journal of Korea*, 34(2), 331-378. This study examines how social actors are discursively recontextualized across South Korea's AI Digital Textbook (AIDT) policy, an educational initiative that has sparked public debate. Drawing on van Leeuwen's concept of recontextualization, this study analyzes six policy documents released between 2020 and 2024, tracing the trajectory of redefining stakeholders' roles throughout three phases of policy development: the Incubating, Introducing, and Developing AIDT. The analysis reveals that each phase repositions four actors—the government, teachers, EdTech companies, and students—to legitimize the policy agenda.

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The government shifts from designer to central authority to supporter, while maintaining structural dominance throughout. Teachers are progressively recast from aides to policy actors to autonomous classroom innovators, a discursive move that transfers institutional responsibility onto individual professionals. EdTech companies are elevated from peripheral service providers to innovators embedded within public education infrastructure. Students, despite being invoked as the policy's primary beneficiaries, remain passive objects across all phases. Central to this recontextualization is an "education ecosystem" discourse, which absorbs tensions between public and private interests and between top-down governance and teacher agency through the language of mutual benefit and professional empowerment. This study argues that this ecosystem discourse functions as ideological naturalization to legitimize EdTech companies as actors in public education.

Keywords: AI in education, AI digital textbook, Critical Discourse Analysis, EdTech, recontextualization, education policy

1. INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) technology, Artificial Intelligence in Education (AIED) has become a central agenda in educational policies and practices (Nemorin et al., 2023; So & Lee, 2025). While a growing number of studies focus on the practical integration of AI technologies in classrooms for effective teaching and learning, critical inquiry into the social implications of these technologies remains limited (Park, 2024; Son, 2013). It is crucial to view AIED as a profound social phenomenon, one that deserves critical, discursive investigation, especially given the involvement of diverse stakeholders with divergent interests. These actors actively mobilize a range of strategies to rationalize their positions within shifting discursive terrains (K. Lee et al., 2025). As Blommaert (2010) points out, when society undergoes critical transformation, the task of critical sociolinguistics or critical discourse analysis is not simply to accept the change as new, but to problematize it. This problematization helps us

understand how the present situation is dialectically constructed through the interaction between existing and emerging social orders and ideologies. This study is a critical sociolinguistic attempt to engage academically with one of the most pressing contemporary social issues—technology in society and AIED in particular.

Drawing on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) methods (Wodak & Meyer, 2016), this study examines how AI is discursively imagined and mobilized in the field of education, an area where the new technology is being most actively applied to address a variety of educational problems. Specifically, this study analyzes the discourses surrounding the AI Digital Textbook (AIDT) policy, a key educational initiative of the Yoon government that generated heated social debates on the role of AIED (Hwang, 2024; B. Kim, 2024; D. Lee, 2024; H. Lee & Kim, 2026). Unlike typical critical technology studies in education (e.g., Selwyn, 2016), this research is characterized by two analytic distinctions. First, rather than merely uncovering the ideologies underlying the AIDT policy, this study aims to analyze how these ideologies are constructed in texts. For this purpose, we draw on van Leeuwen's (2008, 2016) concept of recontextualization to examine how the roles of different stakeholders involved in the AIDT policy are redefined. Van Leeuwen (2008) argues that recontextualization processes can reveal how certain actors and actions are rationalized, and how this rationalization produces a discursive effect that legitimates a particular social practice. Second, the analysis focuses on the trajectory of recontextualization. While a majority of critical discourse analytic studies tend to present a synchronic or bounded arrangement of discursive construction, as Heller (2011) notes, the trajectory of social practice can illuminate not only what occurs in the discourse space but also the “further structuring consequences in terms of how constraints are produced and changed, and hence in terms of the obstacles and opportunities social actors encounter” (p. 10). The trajectory of recontextualization of social actors in the AIDT policy will reveal not only their changing roles in AIDT-related social practices but also the production

of new discourse that works to legitimize the policy. In particular, this study shows that, as the discursive construction of the policy involves contestations among multiple stakeholders, it produces a new discourse to address the discursive tensions and to rationalize the policy's goal—an “education ecosystem” discourse, which has begun to be widely used in recent educational discourses.

The guiding research questions for this critical discourse analytic study are as follows:

- How are social actors recontextualized in the period of AIDT policy development?
- What is the discursive consequence of the recontextualization of social actors in AIDT policy?

2. AIDT Policy in South Korea

The introduction of the AIDT policy was in line with the government's educational reforms aimed at the digital transformation of public education over the last decade. This drive was accelerated by the unprecedented pandemic; in 2020, the Korean Ministry of Education (MOE) responded by establishing digital infrastructure and introducing innovative EdTech for remote learning (Joint Ministry, 2020, 2022). Subsequently, the government announced plans to integrate AI technologies into schools to facilitate personalized learning and enhance the quality of public education (Joint Ministry, 2020). Following the inauguration of a new government in 2022, this digital transformation was further advanced through the development of an AI tutoring system and a centralized digital teaching and learning platform (Joint Ministry, 2022).

In January 2023, the MOE unveiled its initial plan to introduce the AIDT within the existing print textbook framework (MOE, 2023a). With a vision of “personalized education for all,” the MOE sought to integrate AI technology into

the public school system to provide individualized instruction. This policy mandated shifts in the roles of students, teachers, and parents centered around AIDT, including a roadmap for development, distribution, and the selection of “Leading Schools” and “Leading Teachers” for pilot applications (MOE, 2023b).

To provide a structured implementation strategy, the MOE released the AI Digital Textbook Promotion Plan in June 2023. This document noted that existing digital textbooks were often indistinguishable from print versions and suffered from low utilization (MOE, 2023c). It specified that AIDTs should be developed according to the 2022 revised curriculum, incorporate personalized learning systems, and be phased in between 2025 and 2028. As a rationale, the MOE asserted that while public education quality was declining due to widening disparities and instruction aimed at average-level students, AIDTs would enable classroom instruction focused on each student’s unique growth (MOE, 2023d).

In August 2023, the AI Digital Textbook Development Guidelines, subtitled “5 Million Textbooks for 5 Million Students,” were released (MOE & Korea Education and Research Information Service [KERIS], 2023). This document outlined checklists for key functions, mandatory requirements, and ethical principles for AIDT development and operation. The guidelines were addressed to EdTech companies and educational stakeholders, marking a departure from previous policies that restricted digital textbook development to traditional print publishers (Jung, 2023). The MOE prioritized fostering an EdTech industry to support public education and consistently emphasized the importance of training teachers as primary users and building stable digital infrastructure (Joint Ministry, 2023; MOE, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c).

Building on these policy documents, the MOE, KERIS, and the Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE) announced revised guidelines for development and certification review, signaling the formal commencement of full-scale AIDT operations (KICE, 2024). Following the announcement of certification results (MOE, 2024c; MOE & KERIS, 2024), the MOE and the Korean

Textbook Research Foundation made the certified AIDTs accessible via a web exhibition and showcased them for individual schools' review and selection.

While the administration initially planned a mandatory rollout for select grades in early 2025, public opposition led to a shift toward voluntary adoption. In December 2024, AIDT was downgraded from "textbook" status to "educational material." Despite temporarily regaining its status in January 2025, it was downgraded again in August 2025 (Go, 2025). This change in legal status meant that individual schools were no longer obligated to adopt AIDT. AIDT is often viewed as another example of a failed educational initiative, driven by conflicting stakeholder interests, political aspirations, and an overly ambitious implementation timeline (K. Lee et al., 2025).

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

3.1. Previous Studies on AIDT

Since AIDT's policy introduction was officially announced, scholarly discussion has unfolded across multiple dimensions. Most prior studies have concentrated on (1) teacher and pre-service teacher perceptions, (2) subject-specific development directions and technical implementation, and (3) legal and policy issues.

Research on teacher perceptions suggests that attitudes toward AIDT are differentiated by school level, subject, and prior EdTech experience. While a survey of elementary school teachers regarding the adoption of a mathematics AIDT revealed a lack of consensus within the teaching community (S. Kim et al., 2024), other studies focusing on secondary school teachers (H. Kim & Kim, 2024) or those with established EdTech experience (Hong et al., 2024) indicated a predominantly positive view toward AIDT introduction and a willingness to actively utilize the

system. Irrespective of these differences in consensus and readiness, teachers consistently anticipated that AIDT would significantly facilitate personalized learning and robust learner diagnosis (Hong et al., 2024; H. Kim & Kim, 2024; S. Kim et al., 2024; H. Lee, 2025).

Moving beyond issues of perception, scholarly work has scrutinized AIDT through a pedagogical lens. Research has addressed teaching and learning models applicable across diverse subjects (Jeong & Yu, 2024; Joo & Park, 2024) and focused on defining subject-specific functions (Cho & Jung, 2024; K. Lee & Lee, 2024; S. Lee et al., 2025). For example, S. Lee et al. (2025) established design principles and guidelines for AIDT tailored to students with physical disabilities. K. Lee and Lee (2024) conducted a comparative analysis of existing English and Mathematics AIDT prototypes to propose necessary functions within the social studies curriculum to support disciplinary learning such as spatial map analysis and regional blank map use.

Notwithstanding the scale and significance of AIDT as a policy initiative, its implementation commenced without adequate legal and policy review, thereby generating several points of contention (Hwang, 2024; B. Kim, 2024; D. Lee, 2024). Specifically, D. Lee (2024) maintained that the legal basis for instructional materials must be unequivocally established prior to introducing AIDT. Hwang (2024) similarly contended that scrutiny should be applied before immediate policy outputs to comprehensively assess the long-term consequences of educational transformation in the digital age.

However, the requirement for critical scrutiny is not confined merely to legal and policy issues. The preponderance of prior scholarly work has focused on proposing implementation strategies—spanning teacher perceptions, subject-specific development, and technical execution—aimed at facilitating the successful institutionalization of AIDT in schools. This research orientation suggests that existing research has primarily focused on enabling the effective deployment and development of AIDT rather than critically interrogating the

policy itself (Park, 2024; Son, 2013).

In contrast, more recent scholarship has initiated a critical engagement with the normative and evaluative dimensions of AIDT policy. Analyzing Korea's digital education transformation discourse, D. Lee (2025) demonstrated that AIDT is discursively constructed as a panacea rooted in technocentric assumptions, thus marginalizing stakeholder perspectives and structural questions. Elaborating on this critique, J. Lee (2025, 2026) argued that AIDT's dominant policy framework is consequently inadequate for accounting for the relational, practical, and normative dimensions integral to education. Drawing on Habermas's communicative action theory, C. Lee (2025) revealed that the core functional requirements of AIDT appear to have been appropriated from the private education market rather than emerging from academic consensus or stakeholder needs, thereby challenging the policy's democratic procedural legitimacy. Analyzing online discourse surrounding AIDT, Heo et al. (2025) established that pro-policy arguments emphasized personalized learning and digital innovation, while oppositional discourse foregrounded fundamental concerns about educational inequality and data privacy.

Existing studies tend to perceive AIDT as already established rather than discursively constructed. These studies primarily evaluated its instructional potential, designed pedagogical frameworks for its implementation, and contested its legal and institutional foundation. Considering that AIDT operates as a multifaceted and multilayered construct that involves the dynamic interaction among diverse stakeholders, pedagogical frameworks, and sociocultural ideologies (K. Lee et al., 2025), it is imperative to explore how the concept of AIDT is constructed in contested discursive terrains and what effects its specific discursive construction produces in relation to socially engineered policies and practices in AIED.

3.2. (Critical) Discourse on AIED

Discursive approaches to the field of AIED have sought to expose the ideological assumptions underpinning the practical, instrumentalist, and pragmatic efforts to bring these innovative technologies into classrooms. The prevailing discourse of AIED aligns with the wider discussion on technology in society and education. For instance, Roderick (2016) outlines four key societal discourses on technology through multimodal analysis: technology as progress (emphasizing innovation and change), technological determinism (technology as an inevitable force for social change), technological fetishism (overvaluing technical capabilities), and technological (dis)satisfaction (a consumerist view of tools). In the context of education, these technological discourses are particularly pronounced as technological determinism and instrumentalism. Jandrić and Knox (2022) define technological determinism as follows:

a belief that technology somehow determines human societies and their values, structures and so on. In this view, technological development is an intrinsically positive social force that education needs to adapt to. Technological determinism is also linked to a magical belief that using technologies will straightforwardly improve learning, purely by virtue of being present in educational activity. (p. 782)

Related to technological determinism, technological instrumentalism is “a view that technologies are neutral tools which can simply be deployed to realize the intentions of designers or users” (Jandrić & Knox, 2022, p. 782). This perspective reduces the solution to educational challenges to introducing innovative technology into the learning environment.

Discourses of AIED are predominantly governed by technological determinism and instrumentalism. Above all, AIED is framed as an innovation capable of resolving educational crises, such as educational inequalities or the decline of

public education (K. Lee, 2026; Roderick, 2016). This framing provides a powerful justification for imposing new roles and expectations on both teachers and students. However, the utopian vision for AIED often runs parallel to dystopian concerns about privacy, data sovereignty, and digital divides, thereby sparking public debate. In addition, the new technosocial and material dimensions of AI often give rise to distinct discursive constructions. A notable example is the discourse on personalized learning (Blikstein & Blikstein, 2023); AIED is touted as providing automated and individualized feedback based on advanced algorithms. Another common discourse is that of an ecosystem (Nemorin et al., 2023; So & Lee, 2025). As AI-powered educational tools become central to teaching and learning, new stakeholders, particularly EdTech companies, are increasingly involved in public education. The prevailing narrative suggests that successful integration of AIED into classrooms requires cooperation among teachers, learners, schools, and private service providers within the new networked system. While this narrative implies a new form of educational governance, a tension arises regarding the porous boundary between the public and the private in education.

In the Korean context, a small but growing body of critical discourse studies on AIED is emerging. Park (2024) identified technocentrism, neoliberalism, and educational elitism as the main ideological foundations of AI education policy. The study also demonstrated how narratives of crisis and deficit rationalize sociopolitical assumptions about education and technology. H. Lee and Kim (2026) documented the formation, fragmentation, and strategic recalibration of the discourses around AIED policy. Their work showed that the rhetorical generalization of technological determinism helped to obscure structural contradictions and diffuse policy accountability to individual stakeholders. Drawing on Foucauldian discourse analysis, Kang et al. (2025) suggest that AIED policies employed discourses of technological determinism and neoliberalism to generate a neoliberal concept of student agency and developmental statism. Using a text mining technique and a CDA approach, M. W. Lee (2026) uncovered three

primary discourses in AIDT policy: technological determinism, standardization and managerialism, and the marginalization of the educational field. She posits that the digital transformation is primarily presented as an ideological and managerial project consistent with neoliberal and technocratic agendas.

While these studies have illuminated the macro-level discourses underpinning AIDT policy, such as technological determinism, neoliberalism, and managerialism, little attention is paid to the trajectory of the processes in which different social actors are positioned and repositioned within multiple macro-level discourses and in which discourses are newly emerging or reformulated to rationalize and legitimize the policy. While being in line with critical approaches to AIED, this study mobilizes a discursive analytic tactic to trace how specific actors, including the government, teachers, EdTech companies, and students, are repositioned across policy texts, and how these moves accumulate into a trajectory that constructs and legitimizes AIDT as an object of educational policy—van Leeuwen’s (2008, 2016) concept of recontextualization.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Recontextualization as an Analytic Concept

This study draws on CDA methods to examine the dominant discourses and their discursive development embedded in the AIDT policy during its introduction and development. CDA has been a powerful analytic tool for uncovering naturalized social and cultural ideologies, based on the assumption that social structures and ideologies are intrinsically represented in discourses (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). CDA sees discourse as a set of texts dialectically related to social elements such as power, institutions, and cultural practices, where each internalizes the other without being fully reducible to it (Fairclough, 1995, 2013).

Since social structures shape how discourses are constructed textually and semiotically, discourse can contribute to reproducing social orders. The primary goal of CDA is to analyze the textual and semiotic features of discourse and problematize assumptions taken for granted (Fairclough, 2003). CDA posits that critical awareness of the social aspects of textual representation serves as a starting point for transforming the status quo of social structure.

The policy document genre has been an object of CDA not only because it holds discursive salience as an institutionally produced text, but also because policy typically constitutes a site of debate and contestation involving multiple stakeholders in its design and implementation (Barakos & Unger, 2016; Millar, 2012). Despite its potentially dialogic nature, a key characteristic of the policy genre is its discursive tendency to frame the current situation as problematic and present the new policy as the definitive solution. This discursive move is a crucial strategy for policy legitimation (Barakos & Unger, 2016). In this process, the government tends to position itself as the key actor responsible for implementing a proposed policy, particularly when the regime is authoritarian or the government is welfare-based (Fairclough, 2003). However, neoliberal governments often introduce new governance models by incorporating new stakeholders, particularly those from the private sector, or new genres or forms of textual representation originating from other social domains (Fairclough, 2003).

Although sociolinguistic studies have employed CDA as part of critical inquiries into the relationship between language and society, CDA itself has a diverse array of analytic approaches and methodological techniques (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Among them, this study pays specific attention to van Leeuwen's (2008, 2016) concept of recontextualization. Van Leeuwen (2016) defines discourses as "*socially constructed ways of knowing some aspect of reality which can be drawn upon when that aspect of reality has to be represented, or put it another way, context-specific frameworks for making sense of things*" (p. 138, italics in the original). This definition suggests that social practice is always represented in

discourse in ways that serve the interests of social actors. The representations of social practice are always recontextualized within specific genres rather than purely reflecting social reality. Conceptualizing recontextualization as a key discursive practice, van Leeuwen (2008) identifies elements of social practices to be represented in discourse—including actor, action, presentation style, time, and location—that interact with social relations in reality. The specific assemblage of these elements transforms social practice by rationalizing and legitimating it. Van Leeuwen (2008) also argues that because the recontextualization of social practice is recursive, it forms a trajectory of recontextualization—what he terms a recontextualization chain. This concept indicates that the recontextualization of specific elements, such as social actors, can occur across diverse social events, contexts, texts, and genres, thus forming a trajectory of social practices.

In analyzing the AIDT policy discourse, this study operates on the assumption that the policy text represents multiple social actors and their actions. Furthermore, it assumes that their roles are recontextualized differently as the policy evolves. This recontextualizing process not only mobilizes various social discourses from other contexts, which is known as interdiscursivity (Fairclough, 2003; Han & Jang, 2026; Millar, 2012), but also consequently produces a new discourse with distinct social meanings to legitimize the policy's purpose. Accordingly, while using linguistic and semiotic features, such as word choice, sentence construction, and genre structures, as a fundamental toolkit for textual analysis (Fairclough, 2003), this study traces how social actors are recontextualized throughout AIDT policy development.

4.2. Selection of Policy Documents

To trace the discursive formation and development of AIDT, documents related to its policy development that were released between 2020 and 2024 were searched for. Even though the majority of previous studies on AIDT policy considered its

practical plans and underlying discourses from its official release in 2023, this study included the pre-AIDT period because the ideas and policies for AIDT were already being discussed, especially in the context of remote learning during the COVID-19 era. The search yielded 12 key documents, which cover a wide range of concerns, including AI technology, digital infrastructure, and teacher training. The first round of analysis involved repeated readings of these policy documents and reflective memoing to identify a trajectory of AIDT discursive formation and development. Through this analysis, three phases were identified: Incubating, Introducing, and Developing AIDT. In the Incubating AIDT phase, the foundational discourse of AI-based personalized learning was first established, and the groundwork for AIDT was laid. Introducing AIDT phase was the period when AIDT was formally announced and its institutional framework, including the roles of teachers, students, and EdTech companies, was defined. In Developing AIDT phase, multiple stakeholders were more tightly connected for the success of the policy.

For an in-depth analysis of policy documents, six documents were selected for analysis based on two criteria: their importance in each phase of AIDT development and their relevance to stakeholder positioning. The latter criterion was particularly considered to examine how each stakeholder and their actions were recontextualized in the AIDT discourse. The remaining documents were excluded because they focus primarily on technical infrastructure, certification procedures, or implementation details, which do not directly bear on the discursive construction of AIDT. Table 1 lists the details of policy documents selected for analysis. Documents 1 and 2 depict the phase of Incubating AIDT, while Documents 3 and 4 represent the phase of Introducing AIDT. Documents 5 and 6 focus on the phase of Developing AIDT. Specifically, Document 5 focuses on integrating EdTech into public education while Document 6 addresses the repositioning of teachers as key agents of classroom innovation.

The second round of analysis primarily aimed to trace the “recontextualization”

of social actors and their actions across the selected documents. Through multiple readings and notes, statements involving social actors and their actions were identified and analyzed. Even though various linguistic and textual features were considered for analysis, the most significant was the unit of words. This is partly due to the textual construction of policy documents, which favor bullet points over paragraphs with textual cohesion, unlike newspaper articles (Fairclough, 2003). The analysis compared within and across the documents to examine how each actor was linguistically or semiotically represented and recontextualized within the AIDT discourse. It also traced how this recontextualization recurred across the three phases, forming a chain that progressively repositioned each actor. Finally, excerpts were selected to illustrate the trajectory of discursive formation and development. These excerpts were then analyzed in detail to present the process in this paper (Jenks, 2024).

Table 1. Key Policy Documents Selected for Analysis

No.	Key Documents	Release Date	Released by
1	인공지능시대 교육정책방향과 핵심과제 (대한민국의 미래 교육이 나아가야 할 길) Education Policy Direction and Key Issues in the AI Era (The Direction of Future Education in South Korea)	2020. 11.	Joint Ministry
2	디지털 인재양성 종합방안 Comprehensive Plan to Nurture Digital Talent	2022. 8.	Joint Ministry
3	(모두를 위한 맞춤 교육의 실현) 디지털 기반 교육혁신 방안 (The Realization of Personalized Education for All) Digital-Driven Education Reform Plan	2023. 2.	Ministry of Education
4	AI 디지털교과서 추진방안 AI Digital Textbook Promotion Plan	2023. 6.	Ministry of Education
5	(에듀테크, 교육혁신을 이끈다) 에듀테크 진흥방안 (EdTech, Leads Educational Innovation) Strategic Plan for EdTech Advancement	2023. 9.	Joint Ministry

6	(교사가 이끄는 교실혁명을 위한) 디지털 기반 교육혁신 역량 강화 지원방안 (For Classroom Renovation Led by Teachers) Policy Measures to Strengthen Digital Competence for Technology-Driven Educational Innovation	2024. 4.	Ministry of Education
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5. RESULTS

5.1. Phase 1: Incubating AIDT

The initial phase of the educational digital transformation policy, encompassing the 2020 *Education Policy Direction and Key Issues in the AI Era (The Direction of Future Education in South Korea)* (Joint Ministry, 2020) and the 2022 *Comprehensive Plan to Nurture Digital Talent* (Joint Ministry, 2022), established the foundational discursive groundwork for subsequent policy developments. Both documents begin by highlighting the structural inadequacy of the current education system for the AI era. This system is not described neutrally; instead, it is negatively characterized as a mechanism for social selection, standardized schooling, and the production of homogeneous students (Joint Ministry, 2020, p. 1). This crisis framing serves as a key legitimization strategy: it makes the shift toward AIED natural and the continuation of the status quo untenable. The proposed fix is AI-powered “personalized learning,” which is articulated through two central discourses in the policy documents: personalized learning as an innovation and as an ecosystem.

5.1.1. Personalized Learning as an Innovation

The two policy documents construct personalized learning as the central educational goal of the AI era, with AI as the means of realizing it. This vision is

presented as a response to the limitations of the existing education system, legitimating AI as the principal agent of improvement in public education. As shown in Excerpt 1, documents frequently use terms such as “support (지원)” and “use/utilize (활용)” to describe AI’s role, portraying it as an active agent for “improvement (개선).”

Excerpt 1

- 학습자의 특성/수준/상황에 **최적화된** 환경
인공지능(AI)을 **활용한** 개인별 맞춤형 교육 지원:
 - AI는 학습자에게 최적화된 학습방법과 자료를 제공하는 등 개인별 맞춤형 학습지원을 위해 널리 **활용될** 것으로 기대
 - 학령인구 감소 등으로 학생 한명 한명에 대한 개별화 교육 요구 증대 예상 → AI를 **활용한** 공교육 **개선** 기대감 상승
 - An environment **optimized** for each learner’s characteristics, level, and situation
Personalized education **support using AI**:
 - AI is expected to be **widely utilized** for individualized learning **support**, such as providing learners with **optimized** learning methods and materials tailored to each person’s needs.
 - With the decline in the school-age population, it is expected that the demand for individualized education for each student will increase, leading to rising expectations for the **improvement** of public education through **the use of AI**.
- (Joint Ministry, 2020, p. 7)

Notably, the policy presents personalized learning as a technical, quantifiable quality by describing learning environments as “optimized (최적화된)” for each learner through AI. Learning is thus implicitly treated as something that can be precisely measured, adjusted, and improved. Through this description, the focus shifts from personalization as a pedagogical or relational approach to one achieved through the careful calibration of learner profiles and instructional resources.

The 2022 *Comprehensive Plan to Nurture Digital Talent* (Joint Ministry, 2022) goes further, characterizing AIED as a revolution. This perspective frames AI adoption as an inevitable historical trend that educational actors must embrace, dismissing resistance as a failure to keep pace with progress.

Excerpt 2

□ AI, 에듀테크를 활용한 **교육혁명**

AI 기반의 맞춤 학습체제 도입

- AI 기술을 활용한 맞춤형 학습으로 학습격차 해소
- (AI 보조교사) 디지털 교수-학습 통합플랫폼, 학력진단시스템 등에 축적된 학습 빅데이터를 AI 분석을 통해 기초학력 미달자가 없도록 맞춤형 학습 지원에 활용하는 ‘AI 학습 튜터링(AI 보조교사) 시스템’ 개발
- * 단계별 학습, 주제와 교수법에 대한 전문가의 지식을 활용해 개별 학생의 오개념을 바로 잡아주고 학습 성취를 도우며, 교재와 학습 활동들에 대한 **최적학습** 경로 결정.

□ **Educational Revolution** through AI and EdTech

Introduction of an AI-based personalized learning system

- **Resolving learning gaps** through AI-powered personalized learning
- (AI teaching assistant) Development of an “AI learning tutoring (AI teaching assistant) system” that utilizes AI analysis of accumulated learning big data from integrated digital teaching-learning platforms and academic achievement diagnostic systems to provide personalized learning support, with the aim of ensuring that no student falls below basic academic proficiency
- * Utilizing expert knowledge on step-by-step learning, subject matter, and instructional methods, the system corrects individual students’ misconceptions, supports their learning achievement, and determines **optimal learning pathways** across instructional materials and learning activities.

(Joint Ministry, 2022, p. 28)

Within this framing, the “learning gap (학습격차)” is both the moral justification for AIED and the main metric for success. In Excerpt 2, the use of the verb “resolve (해소)” positions AI as the essential tool for achieving educational transformation. This promise appeals to various stakeholders, including officials invested in systemic reform, parents concerned about their children’s academic performance, and students seeking more individualized education. In this way, the innovation discourse neutralizes opposition to AIED by presenting it as the only logical response to a shared educational crisis.

5.1.2. Personalized Learning as an Ecosystem

While the innovation discourse establishes AIED as desirable, the ecosystem discourse ensures it is structurally embedded and irreversible. Personalized learning is framed not just as a pedagogical idea but as a concrete, well-organized arrangement involving multiple actors. In this process, the policy progressively blurs the lines between public education and the commercial EdTech industry.

Excerpt 3

- 공교육에 AI 등 에듀테크 도입 확대는 → 실시간 학습 데이터 축적 → 에듀테크 고도화 → 공교육 질 개선 → 활용 확대로 **선순환: 교육계+산업계 상생협력**
- The expansion of AI and EdTech introduction in public education → accumulation of real-time learning data → advancement of EdTech → improvement of public education quality → expansion of utilization, forming a **virtuous cycle: education sector + industry sector mutual cooperation**

(Joint Ministry, 2020, p. 7)

Excerpt 4

- **공교육 + 에듀테크 생태계 구축**
- **Public education + EdTech ecosystem construction**

(Joint Ministry, 2020, p. 49)

In Excerpts 3 and 4, the recurring association of public education and the EdTech industry, often indicated by the “+” symbol, acts as a form of rearrangement in the recontextualization of social practices (van Leeuwen, 2008). This structure brings two distinct sectors into a shared frame, positioning them as mutually reinforcing and necessary. Especially, the language of “virtuous cycle (선순환)” and “mutual cooperation (상생협력)” in Excerpt 3 morally evaluates and legitimizes this public-private governance as symbiotic. Under this logic, private actors gain privileged access to public education infrastructure and student data, which they then use to refine and commercialize their products.

The policy further seeks to integrate EdTech companies into public education by proposing to construct the EdTech environment.

Excerpt 5

- 디지털 신기술을 활용한 **에듀테크 활성화 환경** 구축
 - (에듀테크 소프트랩) 양질의 에듀테크를 개발/활용하도록 검증/양성 공간 운영 및 지원을 통해 디지털 기반 교수/학습 혁신
 - (에듀테크 R&D) 에듀테크 기업과 대학(연구기관)간 매칭 및 협력을 통해 교육양성대학의 교육력 제고
- Building an **environment to activate EdTech** utilizing new digital technologies
 - (EdTech Soft Lab) Supporting the operation of verification and cultivation spaces to develop and utilize high-quality EdTech, thereby driving innovation in digital-based teaching and learning
 - (EdTech R&D) Enhancing the educational capacity of teacher training universities through matching and collaboration between EdTech companies and universities (research institutions)

(Joint Ministry, 2022, p. 29)

EdTech companies are thus recontextualized from external vendors to essential, structurally required members of the educational environment. The government acts as the system's architect, designing and administering the ecosystem: mediating between industry and schools and establishing the institutional conditions for technology to operate within public education. Public-private governance is presented as a necessary feature of a functional system, thereby leading to a redistribution of stakeholder roles.

Excerpt 6

- 인공지능(AI)을 활용한 지식전달 효율이 높아질수록, 학교와 교사는 고유의 역할을 개발하고 그에 집중할 **필요**
 - 특히, 교사에게는 수업자료를 찾는 일 **보다** 수업기획, 학생과의 유대감 형성, 학생 정서관리 등이 더욱 **요구**
 - 교사는 수업을 기획하고, AI를 수업과정에 최적화된 강의자료 검색/조합/ 구성, 반복적인 평가 대행, 수업 보조교사 등으로 활용
- 아울러, 원격수업, AI 활용 등 학습환경 자유도가 높아질수록, **자기주도학습 능력이 교육격차의 핵심**으로 부상
 - 따라서, 공교육이 **학생의 자기주도성 함양**을 위해 노력하는 것은 **선택이 아닌 필수**이며, 가장 중요한 **책무**
- As the efficiency of knowledge transmission through AI increases, it is schools and teachers that need to develop and focus on their distinctive roles
 - In particular, teachers **are required** to prioritize lesson planning, building rapport with students, and managing student emotions, **rather than** searching for instructional materials.
 - Teachers plan lessons and utilize AI for searching, combining, and organizing optimized instructional materials, handling repetitive assessments, and serving as a teaching assistant in the classroom.
- Furthermore, as the degree of freedom in learning environments

increases through remote learning and AI utilization, **self-directed learning ability emerges as a core factor in educational disparities.**

- Accordingly, it is not an optional but **an imperative and the most fundamental responsibility** for public education to strive toward **cultivating students' self-directed learning.**

(Joint Ministry, 2020, p. 8)

Once the ecosystem discourse legitimizes private companies in the public education sphere, the roles of teachers and students must be redefined to accommodate them. Teachers are tasked with filling the affective and relational needs that AI cannot meet, while AI takes over knowledge transmission and learning diagnosis. By using the phrase “rather than (-보다),” the policy subordinates the curation of instructional materials to lesson planning and emotional rapport, effectively redefining what constitutes core teacher work. Students are positioned not as agents but as bearers of a capacity, self-directedness, that public education is now obliged to cultivate, and the document frames this as “an imperative and the most fundamental responsibility (선택이 아닌 필수이며, 가장 중요한 책무)” of public education (Joint Ministry, 2020). Moreover, in claiming that “self-directed learning ability emerges as a core factor in educational disparities (자기주도학습 능력이 교육격차의 핵심으로 부상),” the policy naturalises this capacity as the decisive variable, locating the source of “educational disparity (교육격차)” in the individual learner rather than in structural provision.

This role redistribution is linguistically enforced through high deontic modality, using terms such as “need (필요),” “requirement (요구),” and “responsibility (책무).” These terms present the reorientation of human work not as a policy mandate but as an unavoidable reaction to technological advancement. The effect is to shift the ultimate metric of success onto individual actors—teachers who must adapt their methods and students who must develop self-directedness.

This discursive construction recontextualizes the roles of actors, as summarized

in Table 2. The government is framed as the designer, the central authority that identifies the crisis, proposes the solution, and architects the ecosystem. EdTech companies become service providers, newly legitimate actors whose commercial function is absorbed into the public mission. Teachers are recontextualized as aides with their professional expertise instrumentalized to serve the AI system, and students are positioned as beneficiaries, passive recipients of a system optimized by others. These roles create a fundamental network where institutional and technological actors hold the steering power. In this regard, the ecosystem is the policy’s most significant accomplishment: by integrating commercial actors as infrastructure and reorganizing teachers and students around them, it converts a domain of public responsibility into a privately co-constructed service arrangement.

Table 2. Recontextualization of Actors in the Incubating Phase

Actor	Action	Recontextualization
Students	• Participate in the personalized learning • Improve self-directed learning	Beneficiary
Teachers	• Work with AI • Help students improve self-directed learning	Aide
Government	• Mediate EdTech with schools • Work with EdTech industry	Designer
EdTech companies	• Provide EdTech services • Enhance EdTech services	Service Provider

5.2. Phase 2: Introducing AIDT

The Introducing phase marks a critical transition from conceiving personalized learning as a policy objective to its tangible institutionalization through AIDT. Within the key policy documents of this period—namely, *(The Realization of Personalized Education for All) Digital-Driven Education Reform Plan* (MOE, 2023b)

and the *AI Digital Textbook Promotion Plan* (MOE, 2023c)—AIDT is discursively constructed along two distinct axes: as a technologically mediated system for personalized learning and as an organizational focal point for an education ecosystem.

5.2.1. Constructing AIDT as a Personalized Learning System

The *Digital-Driven Education Reform Plan* (MOE, 2023b) portrays the existing public education system as structurally incapable of meeting the demands of a digitally transforming society. While the private sector is depicted as rapidly integrating digital technologies, public schooling is characterized as “lagging behind (변화는 더딘)” (MOE, 2023b, p. 1), framing institutional inertia as both an educational and social crisis. This rationale serves as a catalyst for introducing AIDT as the primary instrument for realizing personalized education.

Excerpt 7

- **모든 학생**을 인재로 키우기 위한 **맞춤 교육** 필요
 - **학생 한 명 한 명**을 소중한 인재로 키우기 위해서는 개별 학생의 역량 및 선호·학습 속도에 최적화된 **맞춤 교육 체계** 실현이 중요
 - **단 한 명도 놓치지 않는 개별 맞춤 교육**으로 **모든 학생**이 자신의 삶과 성장을 주도할 수 있는 교육환경 조성 필요
- **Personalized education** is needed to nurture **every student** as a talent
 - To cultivate **each and every student** as a valued talent, realizing a **personalized education system** optimized to individual students’ competencies, preferences, and learning pace is essential.
 - A **personalized education that leaves not a single student behind** is needed to create an educational environment in which **all students** can lead their own lives and growth.

(MOE, 2023b, p. 1)

The rhetorical emphasis on “every student (모든 학생)” and “each and every student (학생 한 명 한 명)” constructs an image of inclusion. However, these documents provide little detail regarding how AIDT will address, for example, the needs of students with limited digital access, those with disabilities, or learners whose requirements deviate from AI-driven analytics. The “all (모든)” in personalized learning remains largely rhetorical, as the mechanics of inclusion are left unelaborated.

MOE (2023b) illustrates this vision through a diagram (Figure 1), which depicts how the classroom will be transformed, following the introduction of AIDT.

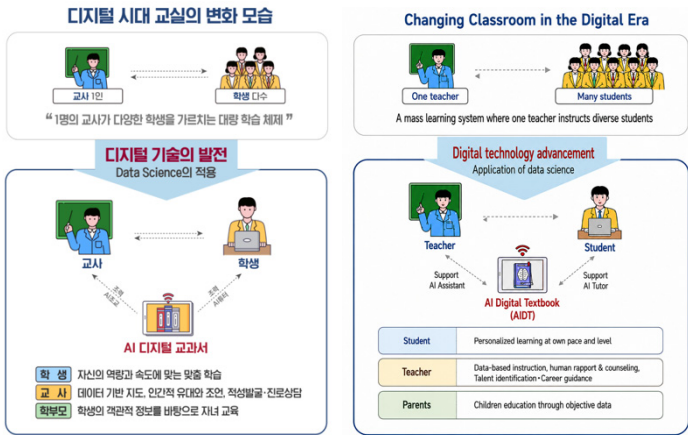


Figure 1. The Changing Classroom Through the Introduction of AIDT (MOE, 2023b, p. 2)

The figure suggests that AIDT acts as a mediator that reshapes the pedagogical relationship between teachers and students. Teachers are repositioned as social actors who, receiving the “support (조력)” of AIDT, deliver data-driven instruction and provide the human connection and guidance that foster students’ social-emotional development. Students are characterized as “self-directed learners (자기주도적 학습자)” responsible for navigating their own learning paths (MOE, 2023b, p. 3). By constructing the idealized figure of an active and

self-directed learner, the policy displaces responsibility for learning outcomes from the institutional system onto individual students.

In addition, as the foundational direction of the AIDT policy, the document presents the “recovery of the essence of education (교육 본질의 회복),” framing the integration of AI as a restoration of education’s core purpose.

Excerpt 8

□ 기본 방향: **교육 본질의 회복**

- **AI가 대체할 수 없는** 인간의 고유한 창의성, 비판적 사고력, 인성, 협업 능력을 키울 수 있도록 개념중심, 문제해결 중심 교육 강화
- 모든 학생이 자신의 학습목표 학습역량 학습속도에 맞는 맞춤형 교육을 받고 교사와 학생이 **인간적으로 연결**되는 체제 구현

□ Basic Direction: **Recovery of the Essence of Education**

- Strengthen concept-centered and problem-solving-centered education to foster uniquely human qualities that **AI cannot replace** — creativity, critical thinking, character, and collaborative ability.
- Realize a system in which all students receive personalized education aligned with their own learning goals, competencies, and pace, and in which teachers and students are **connected on a human level**.

(MOE, 2023b, p. 3)

This “essence (본질)” is defined in humanistic terms, highlighting qualities that AI cannot replace. The logic suggests that technology-driven reform is legitimized through an appeal to the irreducibly human dimensions of learning. This discursive move effectively neutralizes potential critique by incorporating humanistic values into the rationale for AIDT, making resistance to the technology a kind of resistance to the fundamental purpose of education.

5.2.2. Constructing an Education Ecosystem for AIDT

While AIDT is framed as a pedagogical solution, the policy documents also extend its role to the institutional level. The ecosystem, previously introduced as a vague concept, is now given concrete form as a network arising from the shared interests of various actors.

Excerpt 9

- 정부 내와 민간의 다양한 주체들과 **협력적 파트너십** 구축
 - 정부 내에서는 디지털플랫폼정부위원회, 과기부, 산업부, 행안부 등과 **협업체계**를 구축하고, 학계 등 전문가 그룹과 디지털 교육협회 · 에듀테크 산업협회 등 민간과 파트너십 구축
 - 시범사업 및 디지털교과서 개발의 성공적 운영을 위해 시·도교육감 협의회 및 17개 시·도교육청과 적극 **협력**하는 것은 물론 교원 학습 공동체, 연구회 등과 **연계·협력**
- Building **collaborative partnerships** with diverse actors within the government and the private sector
 - Within the government, the establishment of a **collaborative framework** with the Digital Platform Government Committee, the Ministry of Science and ICT, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy, and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety, as well as the formation of **partnerships** with expert groups from academia and private sector organizations including the Digital Education Association and the EdTech Industry Association.
 - Active **collaboration** with the Council of Metropolitan and Provincial Superintendents of Education and individual metropolitan and provincial offices of education for the successful operation of pilot programs and digital textbook development, as well as **linkage** and **cooperation** with teacher learning communities and research groups

(MOE, 2023b, p. 9)

These statements specify entities such as the Council of Metropolitan and Provincial Superintendents of Education, teacher learning communities, and research groups (MOE, 2023b, p. 9). By detailing actors ranging from central administrators to school-level communities, the ecosystem is presented as an existing architecture that spans every tier of the education system. This perception is reinforced by terms such as “collaboration (협력/협업),” “partnership (파트너십),” and “linkage (연계),” which imply a sense of horizontality and voluntarism, naturalizing participation as a choice rather than an institutional mandate.

Although the involvement of various actors is described as voluntary, the government identifies these actors, defines their roles, and structures the ecosystem. Within policy documents, teachers are recontextualized in two ways: as subjects who verify AIDT and as practitioners who utilize AIDT in instruction.

Excerpt 10

□ AI 디지털교과서 개발 과정에 현장 의견 반영

- (테스트 요원 활용) 디지털 선도학교 소속 교사, 에듀테크 소프트웨어의 전문 테스트 요원(교원), 선도교사단, 학생 서포터즈 등을 활용해 AI 디지털 교과서에 피드백 제공
- 특히 교사들은 AI 디지털 교과서가 2022 개정 교육과정의 취지를 충분히 구현했는지, 문제풀이 위주가 아닌 개념 중심의 학습원리를 기반으로 개발되었는지 등 내용에 중점을 두고 점검

□ 2. Reflecting field voices in the AIDT development process

- (Utilization of test personnel) Providing feedback on AIDT by utilizing teachers from digital leading schools, professional test personnel (teachers) from the EdTech Software Lab, leading teacher groups, student supporters, etc.
- In particular, teachers focus on monitoring the content, including whether the AIDT sufficiently embody the intent of the 2022 Revised Curriculum and whether they were developed based on concept-centered learning principles rather than

problem-solving-oriented approaches.

(MOE, 2023b, p. 12)

Excerpt 11

- **교원연수**: AI 디지털교과서 적용과목 교사(영어, 수학, 정보)를 대상으로 ‘25년 도입 전까지 우선적으로 **AI 디지털교과서 이해·활용, 수업 혁신 등 연수 실시**
※ 시도교육청 주관으로 민간과 협업하여 적용 대상교과 **교원 집중연수 추진**
- **Teacher training**: Prior to the introduction in 2025, **teacher training** will be conducted for teachers of AIDT subjects (English, mathematics, and informatics), covering **understanding and utilization of AIDT, instructional innovation**, and related areas.
※ **Intensive teacher training** of applicable subjects will be implemented in collaboration with the private sector, organized by metropolitan and provincial offices of education.

(MOE, 2023c, p. 2)

In MOE (2023b), teachers act as “tester personnel (테스트 요원)” tasked with monitoring whether AIDT aligns with the 2022 Revised Curriculum. While policy rhetoric emphasizes “field voices (현장 의견),” the teachers under this heading are framed as passive agents whose role is to ensure technology conforms to predetermined standards. Similarly, MOE (2023c) portrays teachers as subjects required to undergo “intensive teacher training (교원 집중연수)” to utilize AIDT and transform instructional practices. This recontextualization as verification subjects and subordinate users thus reveals a discursive contraction: it portrays teachers as core participants while obscuring a top-down structure in which their engagement is predetermined.

The AIDT policy in this phase also consolidates EdTech companies as substantive actors. Positioned as equal partners to traditional textbook publishers, they bring expertise to AIDT development. This recontextualization is legally

secured through proposed institutional reforms to amend relevant legislation.

Excerpt 12

- **(협업 지원)** AI 디지털교과서 매칭데이* 개최 등을 통해 교과서 발행사와 에듀테크 기업의 **협력적 동반관계** 형성 지원
*발행사와 에듀테크사가 AI 디지털교과서 개발을 위한 정보를 교류하고, 협력할 수 있는 장으로 발행사 및 에듀테크사 소개, 매칭테이블 등 운영 ('23년 총 3회 개최)
- **(Collaboration support)** Support for the formation of **collaborative partnerships between textbook publishers and EdTech companies** through the hosting of AIDT Matching Days*
*Forums for information exchange and collaboration between publishers and EdTech companies, including company introductions and matching tables (held three times in 2023).
- 제도 개선: 디지털교과서 정의 규정 마련 및 검정체제 개선 등을 위해 「교과용도서에 관한 규정」(대통령령) 등 **관련법령 개정 추진**
- Institutional reform: **Revision of relevant legislation, including the Presidential Decree on Instructional Materials**, to establish a regulatory definition of digital textbooks and improve the certification framework.

(MOE, 2023c, pp. 3-4)

The ecosystem discourse marks a significant shift. By placing textbook publishers, that is, institutions that have long held authoritative roles in public education through the government-authorized textbook system, and EdTech companies within the discursive frame of “collaborative partnership (협력적 동반관계)” (MOE, 2023c), the latter also serve as central actors. EdTech companies are further recognized legally as producers of core educational content. This recontextualization reflects a deliberate governmental effort to institutionalize private actors in the educational ecosystem. However, this discourse highlights another tension: while private actors have long had a presence in public education, mostly through textbooks and digital tools, EdTech companies now play a

constitutive role in operating the infrastructure through which public education is delivered.

The discursive construction of AIDT during the introduction phase results in a significant recontextualization of actor roles, as summarized in Table 3. Teachers are positioned as policy actors, while the government assumes the role of central authority. EdTech companies are recontextualized as AIDT creators, and students become active learners experiencing personalized education. Through this recontextualization, the pedagogical vision of personalized learning has transformed into an institutional policy that redraws the boundaries of the public and the private in the public education system.

Table 3. Recontextualization of Actors in the Introducing Phase

Actor	Action	Recontextualization
Students	• Experience personalized learning using AIDT	Active learner
Teachers	• Provide personalized instruction through AIDT • Test AIDT • Participate in AIDT teacher training	Policy actor
Government	• Provide AIDT teacher training • Establish AIDT guidelines • Provide institutional support	Central authority
EdTech companies	• Develop AIDT aimed at public education	AIDT creator

5.3. Phase 3: Developing AIDT

The Developing phase works to stabilize the ecosystem discourse by addressing the tensions that surfaced in the Introducing phase. Across the two key documents of this period, the *(EdTech, Leads Educational Innovation) Strategic Plan for EdTech Advancement* (Joint Ministry, 2023) and *(For Classroom Renovation Led by Teachers) Policy Measures to Strengthen Digital Competence for Technology-Driven Educational*

Innovation (MOE, 2024a), the friction between EdTech market actors and the institutional authority of public education is absorbed into a narrative of mutual benefit, while the tension between top-down policy directives and teacher agency is neutralized by recasting teachers as autonomous innovators. The analysis that follows traces how each of these discursive moves is accomplished and how different actors are recontextualized in this process.

5.3.1. EdTech for Public Education: An Ecosystem of a Virtuous Cycle

In *(EdTech, Leads Educational Innovation) Strategic Plan for EdTech Advancement* (Joint Ministry, 2023), EdTech is presented as the main driver of education. The document's title clearly positions EdTech as a key player in changing the current education system. Despite this emphasis on EdTech's role, the relationship between public education and the EdTech industry is portrayed as a "virtuous cycle (선순환)".

Excerpt 13

- **공교육과 기술이 상생(win-win)하는 선순환 생태계 조성 필요**
 - 생성형 AI의 시대에 다양하고 혁신적인 교육과 기술의 결합이 공교육 질 개선으로 이어지도록 기술 친화적 교육 체제 필요
 - 특히, 공교육 내 디지털 기술 활성화를 통해 **공교육을 지원하는 에듀테크 산업**이 더욱 성장할 수 있는 선순환 생태계 조성 필요
- **Necessity of establishing an ecosystem of a mutually beneficial (win-win) virtuous cycle between public education and technology**
 - **Technology-friendly education system** enabling diverse and innovative **integration of education and technology** to lead to improvement in the quality of public education in the era of generative AI is needed.
 - In particular, an ecosystem of virtuous circulation supportive of the further growth of the EdTech industry, which **supports**

public education through the activation of digital technologies in public education, is needed.

(Joint Ministry, 2023, p. 1)

While public education and the EdTech industry were seen as collaborative partners in the Introducing phase, this relationship is redefined in the Developing phase as “mutual benefit (상생)” or “win-win,” emphasizing their reciprocal nature. When the EdTech industry is mentioned directly, it is consistently qualified by the phrase “supports public education (공교육을 지원하는),” which carries positive connotations for the industry. This idea of a virtuous circle ecosystem normalizes the central role of EdTech companies as education innovators without casting them as a threat to public education.

As the tension over the private sector entering public education settles, EdTech is increasingly recognized as crucial to the educational system. As Figure 2 illustrates, public education is reorganized around a “CPNDS (Content, Platform, Network, Device, and Service) Ecosystem Centered on AIDT,” where teaching and learning are handled by AIDT and supported by technology, including cloud services, API data standards, courseware, platforms, and devices developed by private companies.



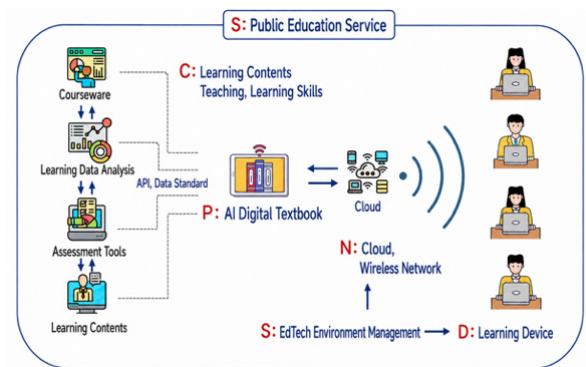


Figure 2. The CPNDS Ecosystem Centered on AIDT (Joint Ministry, 2023, p. 20)

By making AIDT the focus of public education, the roles of teachers and students are redefined within this new ecosystem. Teachers are presented as users whose professional work is defined by how they select and use EdTech tools and AIDT. Students, meanwhile, are not agents of their own learning, but rather beneficiaries of an educational process organized and delivered by technology.

Table 4. Recontextualization of Actors in EdTech Discourse in the Developing Phase

Actor	Action	Recontextualization
Students	- Engage in learning through EdTech tools - Engage in individual learning through EdTech after school	Beneficiary
Teachers	Select and use EdTech	User
Government	- Facilitate the integration of EdTech in classrooms - Foster an EdTech ecosystem - Boost K-EdTech	EdTech governance architect
EdTech companies	- Develop EdTech and AIDT - Export EdTech	Innovator

5.3.2. Teachers as Key Agents of Educational Innovation

In MOE (2024a), the policy shifts its attention from broad governance to the specific reality of the classroom. To ensure the successful integration of AIDT in

classrooms, the document positions teachers as the primary agents of educational change, arguing that public education can only transform through innovation in classroom instruction.

Excerpt 17

- 교사의 **자율적·주도적 수업혁신**을 위한 체계적 지원 필요
 - 수업의 변화를 돕는 핵심 기제로 AI 디지털교과서를 도입('25.3~)하고, **교원 역량의 격차가 학생들의 교육 격차로 이어지지 않도록** 질 높은 역량 함양 기회 제공 필요
 - 특히, 교사들이 **교육혁신의 주체**로서 자긍심을 갖고 **전문성을 키우며** 더 나은 교육을 위해 상호협력할 수 있도록 지원 필요
 - Necessity of systematic support for **autonomous and agentic instructional innovation**
 - Introduction of AIDT (from March 2025) as a key mechanism supporting changes in instruction; need to provide high-quality competency development opportunities to **prevent disparities in teacher competencies from leading to student educational inequality**
 - Necessity of support enabling teachers' **professional development**, pride as **agents of educational innovation**, and collaborative engagement for improved education
- (MOE, 2024a, p. 1)

Teachers' actions are described as "autonomous (자율적)" and "agentic (주도적)." By using these terms, the policy encourages teachers to see the responsibility for changing instruction and developing new AIDT-related skills as a professional duty. This emphasis on teacher autonomy and agency is linked to an explicit demand for professional development. This is justified as necessary to keep "differences in teacher competence (교원 역량의 격차)" regarding AIDT from causing educational inequality among students. Thus, teacher competence is presented as a requirement for achieving educational equality, which was the

original goal set in the Incubating phase to be realized through AIDT.

The document also specifies future classroom practices, in which AIDT is presented as a tool that teachers actively adapt to their own instructional designs.

Excerpt 18

- 수업혁신을 지원하는 도구로 AI·디지털 기술 활용
 - 학생별 맞춤 학습을 통해 학습 참여도와 학습자 주도성을 신장시키는 도구로 AI 디지털교과서를 활용하되, 교사의 수업설계에 따라 **AI 디지털 교과서를 주도적으로 재구성하여 활용**
- Use of AI and digital technologies as tools supporting instructional innovation
 - Teachers utilize AI digital textbooks as a tool for enhancing learning engagement and learner agency through personalized learning for each student; in doing so, **teachers proactively reconstruct and utilize the textbooks** in accordance with their lesson design.

(MOE, 2024a, p. 2)

While the previous document portrayed teachers as users of AIDT and EdTech, MOE (2024a) encourages them to take ownership by asking teachers to “proactively reconstruct and utilize AI digital textbooks (AI 디지털 교과서를 주도적으로 재구성하여 활용).” As AIDT shifts from policy design to classroom use, the success of the reform depends on the willingness and ability of individual teachers.

Furthermore, the document involves teachers in the development process itself. Communication should be facilitated between teachers and developers to ensure AIDT respects teacher agency and the values of public education. This focus on teacher participation mirrors the mechanism found in the Introducing phase, where teachers were utilized as field testers.

Excerpt 19

- 교사들을 지원하는 AI 디지털교과서 및 에듀테크 개발
 - (AI 디지털교과서) 교사의 심리적 부담을 줄이는 AIDT(시제품) 체험 기회를 확대하고, **공교육이 지향하는 가치와 교사 주도성을 존중하는 AI 디지털교과서가 개발되도록 교사-개발사간 소통 기회 확대**(계속)
- Development of AIDT and EdTech supporting teachers
 - (AIDT) Expansion of opportunities to experience AIDT (prototypes) to reduce teachers' psychological burden; **expansion of communication opportunities between teachers and developers** to ensure the development of AIDT that respect the values of public education and teacher agency (ongoing)
(MOE, 2024a, p. 17)

The emphasis on teacher autonomy and agency in this phase smoothly addresses the tension that appeared in the previous phase. Teachers were expected to follow top-down policies by using AIDT for personalized instruction while also providing feedback from the field to developers. The requirement that teachers follow government initiatives is reframed as a professional action stemming from their own pedagogical judgment and commitment to innovation. Teachers are shown as willingly supporting the policy agenda, as if their professional goals and the policy's technological vision naturally align.

As shown in Table 5, actor roles are updated in this document. Teachers are redefined as key agents of classroom innovation, responsible for designing lessons and using AIDT according to their teaching methods and digital competence. The government is recast as a supporter of classroom innovation. EdTech companies are positioned as reactive developers, expected to talk to teachers and create AIDT that protects teacher autonomy. Students remain beneficiaries.

Table 5. Recontextualization of Actors in Teacher Discourse in the Developing Phase

Actor	Action	Recontextualization
Students	• Identify and develop their strengths through teacher support	Beneficiary
Teachers	• Design lesson plans, reconfigure AIDT to fit one's teaching context, and effectively use EdTech tools • Voluntarily enhance digital competence to drive instructional innovation by participating in training programs and certification systems	Key agents of classroom innovation
Government	• Develop and implements a professional development system for teachers	Supporter of classroom innovation
EdTech companies	• Develop AIDT • Communicate with teachers to ensure the development of AIDT that safeguards teacher autonomy	Reactive developer

6. DISCUSSION

Drawing on the analytic concepts of recontextualization, this study has traced how stakeholders' roles are reconstructed over the three phases of AIDT policy: Incubating, Introducing, and Developing AIDT. Table 6 summarizes the trajectories of each actor's roles during the periods.

Table 6. Recontextualization of Actors Across Three Phases of AIDT Policy

Actor	Incubating	Introducing	Developing	
Students	Beneficiary	Beneficiary	Beneficiary	Beneficiary
Teachers	Aide	Policy actor	User	Key agents of classroom innovation
Government	Designer	Central authority	EdTech governance architect	Supporter of classroom innovation
EdTech companies	Service provider	AIDT creator	Innovator	Reactive developer

The role of the government shifts from designer to central authority to supporter. However, this apparent retreat does not diminish its dominance. Policy documents as a genre position the government as the actor responsible for solving the problem it has defined (Barakos & Unger, 2016). Under the pretext of improving the quality of public education, the government constructed the ecosystem from the outset: defining personalized learning as the educational goal to achieve, establishing AIDT as its solution, and assigning roles to all other actors. Within the ecosystem designed by the government, commercial actors are deeply embedded in public education, teachers are positioned as autonomous innovators, and the entire arrangement is framed as a virtuous cycle of mutual benefit. Throughout the processes of recontextualizing stakeholders' roles, the government remains the key player of the ecosystem, whose authority is rarely redistributed.

In AIDT policy discourse, the teachers are recontextualized from aides to innovators. This change in roles might appear as an expansion of professional agency. However, the analysis reveals a different logic. Each recontextualization event coincides with a moment when the policy needs the negotiation of teachers' roles: cooperation, validation, and innovation in the classroom. In other words, teachers are not empowered but discursively mobilized to rationalize the AIDT policy. What is problematic is that in the final analysis, responsibility for policy success shifts from institutions to individual teachers, framing structural conditions as personal choices and systemic failures as individual shortcomings. In the AIDT ecosystem, the logic operates through the language of autonomy and agency. Even though teachers are told they are free to innovate, the tools they can use, the goals they must pursue, and the competencies they are expected to develop are all conditioned by the policy documents. This discursive effect is often marked as neoliberal educational discourse (Kang et al., 2025; M. W. Lee, 2026; Park, 2024).

EdTech companies follow the trajectory expanding from service providers to innovators for education and economy. They enter the educational ecosystem as new and peripheral actors and become powerful and essential ones. What enables

this transformation is not simply EdTech's technical capacity but the institutional structure the government built to entrench them within public education. As C. Lee (2025) argued, the AIDT policy was shaped by the logic of the private education market rather than academic discourse or stakeholder needs, suggesting that commercial interests play a significant role in shaping the ecosystem. EdTech companies develop and maintain the AIDT content and platform through which all teaching and learning is mediated. Consequently, public education becomes dependent on the infrastructure of EdTech companies, while they use public education as the market that sustains their growth. Even though the ecosystem calls itself mutual benefit or a virtuous circle, it introduces the private sector into public education and forms a new educational governance (Nemorin et al., 2023; So & Lee, 2025). Students, meanwhile, remain beneficiaries across every phase. The justification for the policy is personalized and self-directed learning of students. Yet in the policy texts, they are an object of AIDT policy, and their voices are rarely presented. Even though they are interpellated as "active" learners in some cases as seen in the Introducing phase, such a position remains largely rhetorical.

In the processes of recontextualization of key actors in the AIDT policy, multiple discourses of technology are mobilized and connected to legitimate changing roles and rationalize required actions. At the core of this justification are the dual discourses of innovation and personalized learning. This interdiscursivity is grounded in technological determinism and instrumentalism (Jandrić & Knox, 2022) as AIDT is positioned as a technology to solve educational problems and bring out desirable outcomes in educational quality and equality. What is most noticeable in discursive constructions of AIDT policy is the concept of ecosystem. The ecosystem discourse emerged as key to forming a network of stakeholders not only because traditional actors are required to play new roles in the digital transformation of education, but also because emerging actors are willing to engage in the policy development process (Kang et al., 2025; K. Lee et al., 2025).

However, one significant effect of the ecosystem discourse is that it makes it difficult to uncover and even challenge the power arrangements it produces, not least because it handles tensions in ways that make resistance unreasonable. The Introducing phase surfaces two tensions that the Developing phase subsequently addresses. The tension between the government and EdTech over who controls the infrastructure of public education is reframed as a virtuous cycle of mutual benefit, transforming what is in effect a power struggle into a story of partnership. The tension between the government and teachers over agency and compliance is dissolved by recasting institutional obligation as professional autonomy. By negotiating such tensions in the language of mutual benefit and professional empowerment, the ecosystem discourse effectively works to rationalize AIDT policy (H. Lee & Kim, 2026).

These findings suggest that the ecosystem discourse, which has begun to be used in AI-related policies, functions as a site of ideological naturalization (Fairclough, 1995, 2013): a space in which a distribution of power is made to appear natural and unavoidable. By organizing roles and relationships among actors through the language of innovation, mutual benefit, and autonomy, the discourse obscures the structural asymmetries it produces and sustains. What the AIDT policy presents as a collaborative ecosystem is, in effect, a discursive mechanism that stabilizes and legitimizes a specific vision of the policy documents in which all actors appear to coexist without tension.

7. CONCLUSION

Drawing on the concept of recontextualization in CDA (van Leeuwen, 2008, 2016), this study traced how multiple social actors are represented in the AIDT policy documents. The analysis shows that the recontextualization of stakeholders involved in the policy serves to establish EdTech companies as legitimate actors

in public education, which AIED is currently pursuing for digital transformation. While mobilizing technological determinism, technological instrumentalism, and personalized learning as background discourses (Jandrić & Knox, 2022), the AIDT policy produces a discourse of the education ecosystem to manage the inherent tensions between the private and public sectors and between top-down and bottom-up policy governance. This study suggests that the technologization of society centered upon AI involves not only the transformation of institutions but also intensive discursive work. Further sociolinguistic studies need to engage with ideologies of technologies in society more actively—not to be entrenched within the dominant discourses of technological utopia, but to foster balanced perspectives for critical engagement (Jandrić & Knox, 2022; Roderick, 2016; Selwyn, 2016).

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