Critical EdTech Studies Day: Connecting Research in the Netherlands and Flanders

Practical information

Date: Friday 11 December 2026
Time: 10.00 – 18:00 (Borrel: 17:00 - 18.00)
Location: Utrecht University Hall, Domplein 29, 3512 JE, Utrecht
Including: Lunch, coffee/tea and drinks
Entry: Free
Registration: Interested in attending? Please email Ani Encheva (a.encheva@uu.nl) and Niels Kerssens (n.kerssens@uu.nl)
Participants: Open to researchers in the Netherlands and Flanders, including early career scholars, who critically engage with digital technology and education.

In brief

On December 11, Utrecht University's IOS community *Shaping Digital Societies* invites researchers from across the Netherlands and Flanders to the first Critical EdTech Studies Day that brings together researchers from both regions: an interactive and collaborative gathering for scholars working critically on education and technology. The day offers space to meet, exchange perspectives, discover shared interests and concerns, and bring in your own research questions and ideas. The aim of this day is to, for the first time, bring together researchers from the Netherlands and Flanders to foster a Critical Edtech Studies *community*, and to collectively outline what this critical community can do in the face of growing injustices, uncertainties, issues and complexities affecting democratic education in a rapidly digitizing classroom.

What?

The Critical EdTech Studies Day aims to explore and shape the intellectual landscape of this emerging research field in the Netherlands and Flanders. Through interactive workshops, small-group discussions, research mapping, and collaborative brainstorming, participants

will engage with emerging critical perspectives, questions, and challenges. The emphasis is on bringing together different yet shared research questions, cases and concerns, exchanging perspectives on what it means to *do* critical EdTech research, connecting researchers working on related issues, and collectively identifying shared priorities and directions for future research and collaboration.

The workshops will focus on shared challenges in doing critical EdTech research, such as:

- **Practicing critique:** What kinds of critique are necessary today in education and technology, and what might it mean to equally foster more affirmative and generative forms of critique?
- **Broadening our empiricism:** Which empirical sites and issues of education remain underexplored in Critical EdTech Studies? How might greater attention to alternatives, innovative and emerging practices in education and technology help us study how digital education could be organized differently or be disrupted?
- **Connecting research and educational practice:** How can we make critical EdTech research more accessible, practical, applicable and meaningful to educators and educational institutions?
- **Building relationships across education:** How might we strengthen collaboration with public educational institutions, educators, teacher education programs, and sector organizations?
- **Engaging with EdTech actors:** How can we involve commercial and EdTech actors in research and dialogue while upholding a critical perspective?

Why?

Across the Netherlands and Flanders, researchers from different disciplines, institutions, and educational settings are critically examining the changing relationships between education and technology. Yet, these critical engagements remain fragmented and opportunities to develop a distinct community are scarce. Bringing these perspectives together is especially timely given current developments and tensions in education policy and practice. These tensions become tangible in, for example, the simultaneous and often conflicting push for an increased use of AI in schools in the Netherlands and Flanders, the political ambition to foster more digital autonomy within education, and renewed concerns about declining basic skills and knowledge in education which is partly attributed to the use of digital technology in schools.

The day also connects to the broader development of Critical EdTech Studies across Europe, reflected in initiatives such as the ECCES conference and more locally organized gatherings

in countries including Switzerland, Germany, and Denmark. With this first gathering in Utrecht, we hope to contribute to these exchanges while strengthening connections among researchers in the Netherlands and Flanders.

The event will also mark the official launch of the NWO Vidi project *Reclaiming the Digital Classroom: Securing Public Value in European Education in the Era of Big Tech and AI (RECLaiM-EDU)*. The project will be introduced as one initiative within this wider community, centered on the question of how European schools can (re)claim control over public education amid the growing influence of Big Tech and AI.

Ultimately, drawing on participants' contributions, the Critical Edtech Studies Day aims to collectively explore and shape the future of this emerging research community in the Netherlands and Flanders. A central ambition is to identify opportunities for sustained collaboration, knowledge exchange, network-building, and public engagement, while creating space for early-career researchers to actively contribute to shaping the community's future directions.

Provisional Timetable

09:30 – 10:00	Walk-in and registration
10:00 – 10:15	Opening by organizers
10:15 – 11:15	Keynote "Critical EdTech in the Netherlands and Flanders"
11:15 – 11:30	Break with coffee
11:30 – 12:30	Workshops (Round I)
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 14:30	Workshops (Round II)
14:30 – 15:00	Break with coffee
15:00 – 16:00	Brainstorming session
16:00 – 16:30	NWO Vidi Launch
16:30 – 17:00	Plenary closing: Collective synthesis and future directions
17:00 – 18:00	Drinks & networking