iDream Education

From My Recent Interaction with Shri Anil Swarup, Former Secretary of Education

Rohit Prakash · 31 December 2025

Opens 2026 by reflecting on a conversation with former Education Secretary Shri Anil Swarup, who argues large-scale ICT programs fail due to poor sequencing: hardware is procured before learning design, teacher training becomes a one-off event rather than a process, and content and digital safety are treated as afterthoughts. The author warns hardware providers of the long-term business risk of low usage and calls for treating hardware and learning software as inseparable.

Hi,

Wishing you a very Happy New Year. I wanted to begin 2026 by sharing a thought I closed 2025 with: the original vision behind device-led digital learning in government education was never about screens. It was about strengthening teaching, supporting children with better explanations, and reducing learning gaps.

But somewhere along the way, that vision got simplified into numbers: how many devices, how many schools, how many labs.

In my recent interaction with Shri Anil Swarup, former Secretary of Education, he spoke candidly about why large-scale ICT implementations – despite good intent – often fail to change what actually happens inside classrooms.

What He Actually Warned Us About

- Most programs don't fail because of bad intentions
- They fail because of bad sequencing.
- Hardware comes first, learning design comes later
- Tenders focus on specs, not classroom usability
- Teacher training becomes an event, not a process
- Content is added as a checklist item
- Digital safety is treated as optional
- The system becomes efficient at buying things – but not at building learning.
- The hardware bias in the system

The long-term risk is serious: Students/Teachers grow up using technology without truly learning through it. There is a long term risk to your business as well if you are a hardware provider. No usage means no learning improvement and hence no real impact. The chances of you being repeated become lower and lower with each transaction that you are doing today. We need to understand that in this ecosystem, the hardware and learning software needs to co-exist. If we try to live in isolation, we will do more harm to ourselves than to others.

Watch the Full Conversation to understand what he truly urges us to rethink while designing digital education initiatives, watch the complete conversation here:

What went WRONG with Edtech in India – Shri Anil Swarup | intel x iPrep Podcast

If you work in education, CSR, policy, or social impact, this is not a video to skim. It will make you uncomfortable – in the right way. It will make you question:

- Are we solving learning problems or procurement targets?
- Are we strengthening teaching or burdening teachers with digital devices?
- Are we empowering students or just adding more technology to their lives?

And I look forward to continuing this conversation with you, so we ensure we are digitising education in the right way.

Thanks and Regards,

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