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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

The Classroom Goes Live: Teacher-Influencers and the Child Behind the Camera

 THE HINDU

15 July 2026

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CURATED & WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

 [linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

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The Classroom Goes Live: Teacher-Influencers and the Child Behind the Camera

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Source: ujjyari.com — researched, fact-checked & UPSC-mapped

✓ Every fact web-verified against primary sources (<https://ujjyari.com/how-we-verify/>)

THE LIFT LINE

A teacher's authority over a child rests on a boundary of trust, and the moment the classroom becomes content and the child becomes footage, that boundary is not blurred by accident but dissolved for an audience the child never agreed to face.

WHY THIS EDITORIAL MATTERS FOR YOUR EXAM

A growing number of teachers now run social-media personas, going live from classrooms, posting lessons and student reactions, and building follower economies around their teaching. The trend looks harmless, even inspiring, yet it quietly erodes the professional and ethical distance that safeguards children. When a teacher's incentive shifts from the student's learning to the viewer's engagement, the relationship of care can slide toward performance, exposing children to grooming vulnerabilities, surveillance, and the circulation of their images and data without valid consent. The issue matters because it sits at the intersection of child protection, professional ethics, and India's new data-protection regime.

GS Paper 2: Issues relating to development and management of education, and mechanisms and institutions for protection of vulnerable sections. **GS Paper 4:** Ethics in public and private relationships, and the ethical concerns of digital conduct.

For **Prelims**, hold the specifics: the [Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023](https://ujjyari.com/legislation/dpdp-act-2023/) (<https://ujjyari.com/legislation/dpdp-act-2023/>), which requires verifiable parental consent before processing a child's data and bars tracking and targeted advertising directed at children; the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, which frames safeguarding duties; and the constitutional and statutory recognition of children's dignity and privacy. For **Mains**, argue that professional ethics for teachers must now extend into the digital domain, and that a child's right to privacy cannot be waived by an adult acting in their own commercial interest.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

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The teacher-student relationship is a **fiduciary** (<https://ujjayari.com/terms/fiduciary/>) one, built on trust, authority, and a duty of care that places the child's interest above the adult's. Professional codes have long forbidden conduct that exploits this asymmetry. The influencer economy disturbs that settlement by adding a third party, the audience, and a new incentive, attention, which does not align with the child's welfare.

Two harms follow. The first is safeguarding. Livestreaming classrooms and posting identifiable children can attract **predatory** (<https://ujjayari.com/vocab/predatory/>) attention, provide grooming opportunities, and reveal a child's location, routine, and appearance to strangers. The second is data protection. Children's images, voices, and behavioural information are personal data, and broadcasting them monetises the child without their understanding or, often, their guardian's informed consent.

THE CORE ARGUMENT / ISSUE

The eroding adult-child boundary

Professional distance exists to protect the weaker party. When a teacher performs for an online public, the child becomes a prop in an adult's project, and the relationship's purpose is inverted. Even well-meaning content normalises a gaze on children that safeguarding norms are designed to prevent.

Consent, data, and the DPDP Act

Under the DPDP Act, 2023, a child's data may be processed only with verifiable parental consent, and tracking or targeted advertising aimed at children is prohibited. A teacher who posts a class online is a data fiduciary handling children's personal data, yet meaningful, informed, per-child consent is rarely obtained.

CONCERN	SAFEGUARD IN LAW	GAP IN PRACTICE
Grooming and predatory exposure	POCSO Act, 2012, safeguarding duties	Identifiable children broadcast publicly
Children's data and privacy	DPDP Act, 2023, verifiable parental consent	Consent absent or perfunctory
Commercial exploitation	Bar on targeting children	Child's image monetised for engagement
Professional conduct	Teaching codes of ethics	Silent on digital self-promotion

The ethics of divided loyalty

A teacher cannot serve the student and the algorithm at once. The ethical core, that the adult holds power in trust for the child, is breached the moment the child's presence is used to grow an audience. This is a conflict of interest as much as a safeguarding failure.

HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS (ANALYTICAL FRAME)

Treat this as a conflict-of-interest and duty-of-care problem, not a technology story. The teacher occupies a position of power over a dependent child, and any private benefit drawn from that position, financial or reputational, must yield to the child's welfare. The transferable rule for GS2 and GS4 is that in a fiduciary relationship, the vulnerable party's rights, including privacy and safety, set the ceiling on the powerful party's freedom. The examiner rewards the candidate who reads the DPDP Act's parental-consent requirement as a codification of this ethic, and who insists that consent for a child's data belongs to the child's interest, not the adult's convenience.

THE DIAGRAM IN WORDS

Teacher holds fiduciary power over child -> influencer economy adds audience and attention incentive -> classroom goes live, children become content -> adult-child boundary dissolves -> two harms follow: grooming and privacy exposure (POCSO safeguarding) and unconsented data processing (DPDP Act verifiable parental consent, bar on targeting children) -> teacher acts as data fiduciary without valid consent -> conflict of interest between student welfare and audience growth -> remedy: digital professional codes, consent safeguards, child-first ethics

WAY FORWARD

- ❶ **Codify** (<https://ujjayanti.com/vocab/codify/>) **digital conduct for teachers.** Education authorities should issue clear rules barring the broadcast of identifiable students and the monetisation of classroom content, embedding safeguarding into professional codes.
- ❷ **Enforce DPDP consent standards.** Treat schools and teachers who process children's data as fiduciaries bound by verifiable parental consent and the prohibition on targeting children, with the Data Protection Board empowered to act.
- ❸ **Build safeguarding literacy.** Train teachers and parents to recognise grooming risks and the permanence of a child's digital footprint, so that consent, where given, is genuinely informed.
- ❹ **Centre the child's interest.** Adopt a best-interest-of-the-child test for any classroom content, so that a child's privacy and safety, not an adult's reach, decide what is shared.

PYO LINKAGE AND PRACTICE

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UPSC has probed conflicts of interest, the ethics of professional relationships, and the governance of emerging technology. This editorial fuses safeguarding, data protection, and ethics into a single applied case, which is the integrated analysis the examiner prizes.

Practice question: “A teacher who turns the classroom into content places the audience above the child.” Examine the ethical and legal concerns of teacher-influencers with reference to professional duty, the DPDP Act, 2023, and child safeguarding. (250 words, 15 marks)

Sources: *The Hindu* (<https://www.thehindu.com/>), *Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology* (<https://www.meity.gov.in/>), *Ministry of Women and Child Development* (<https://wcd.gov.in/>)

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Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

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