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What we need today is to mobilise India's youth to solve large-scale problems through 'Responsible AI'

CREATORS, not consumers

■ MANAV SUBODH

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer the talk of the future – it is a thing of the present.

While there is plenty of talk about its potential problems, it also has the power to solve some of the biggest problems we are facing, be it climate change, education, or even global health. But this, of course, depends on a few things such as: Who will decide which problems to solve? How will we ensure AI systems are ethical and fair? Who will decide if AI will work for us or we work for it? The ability to answer these questions will decide the quality of our future lives.

To design an AI-powered and socially progressive world, students must be encouraged to move beyond simply knowing how to use AI as a technical competency. The focus should be on making them creators, not consumers, of AI. They need to be able to imagine new and creative ways through which to in-

fuse the power of AI to solve larger, structural problems that plague society. The real rub lies in the question: How can we gear our education systems to respond to this opportunity?

Take charge

What we need to figure out is how our curriculum can focus on developing problem-solvers who could use AI rather than producing students technically proficient in it. Students should be able to look at a problem and creatively think of ways they could harness the powers of AI to solve it. We need to go beyond the simple idea of treating AI as a “computer science” module. How can we do this?

Students should be pushed to identify larger, structural challenges in society that they could work on that are aligned

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to international frameworks such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This can be brought alive for students by exposing them to case studies on **how AI has been used to solve similar issues of healthcare, climate and agriculture in different countries and simultaneously connect them with technical mentors who could help in prototyping their solutions. Only after this holistic perspective should the technical competencies be taught.**

Interdisciplinary participation

The AI wave has to be unlike previous technological turns that were pushed into school curriculum – Python, for example, was simply taught to students interested in Computer Science and lent itself simply to the creation of a Python-ready workforce. **The most important thing to ensure is the participation of students across fields like Biology, Psychology and even arts. What this influx from diverse**

fields can facilitate is an open exchange between students to think of creative ways to use AI.

AI cannot become yet another specialised field for “computer nerds”. It must become a language – one that is spoken by all students. What we need are leaders of AI, not simple-minded consumers or back-office techies. We want a generation of leaders who can use AI to create solutions to solve the biggest problems plaguing our country and define its future growth. While starting early in school is one way of doing it, it will also happen only if we simultaneously focus on creating responsible AI leaders at the hyper-local level and equip them with mentors and coaches who can help lead the way.

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