Happier workers and better care for seniors? AI can improve life in S’pore

Artificial intelligence can help improve jobs and ageing if we can manage the risks, maximise the benefits and distribute the surplus.

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Artificial intelligence (AI) is no longer a futuristic concept. It is a present reality, shaping our lives daily and professionally. Recent advances have generated a mix of appreciation and concern among emerging industries and public sectors, as well as the general public. Industry leaders like the Microsoft founder Bill Gates believe that AI can help tackle some of humanity’s biggest challenges, such as reducing poverty, improving public health and changing the economic landscape. Academics, such as Dr. Cuffy Hines and others warn of potential dangers, including the spread of discrimination and harm to privacy.

As governments and societies are focused on the new technology and help workers stay relevant? Beyond the debate over the pros and cons of these pressing challenges, we need to understand how we can distribute the surplus value created by AI in a fair and regular way.

Preparations for Gaining jobs and Roles

AI will create stimulants and losers as it transforms jobs and industries. Educators and policymakers must start addressing the need to ensure the benefits of AI are spread more equitably and create greater value, so that the many gains of AI are shared with those who benefit from the AI revolution.

The risk is a continuous

AI can help alleviate work stress and burnout. It can support therapists in providing support to patients, improving patient outcomes and reducing treatment costs. AI can also help improve patient safety by detecting potential issues before they become critical.

This is a continuous effort. Even AI-designed salary projections may be revised, as improvements in AI further reduce the involvement of “human in the loop.” This will also require education and retraining for AI workers, as well as cultivating broader skills like agility, adaptability and resilience. We have to accept that the technical competencies will be of permanent value to AI workers. Hence, constant retraining and reskilling are necessary to keep up with the evolving AI landscape.

AI will have its downsides. Longer-term implications in reskilling workers mean it is crucial to steadily bring down the cost of automating such processes. Over time, AI-based automation will become less cost-effective to replace humans in an increasing number of tasks and professional jobs within certain industries and sectors will cease to exist altogether, such as certain parts of the retail and transport industries. As a consequence, policy changes are needed to ensure workers are equipped to seek opportunities in sectors more prone to automation, such as healthcare, finance and education.

A recent study in Singapore found that 47 percent of employed workers reported that they had received no training in AI-related skills in the last year. This highlights how AI may be unfair to the collective good in more areas.

Supporting Seniors and Caregivers in an Aging Society

AI can also help address challenges relating to ageing in Singapore’s population. First, AI can support caregivers by taking over routine tasks such as monitoring health conditions, providing reminders to seniors suffering from dementia. Caregivers can then devote more time to emotions, relationships, providing the human touch which cannot replicate. Employment opportunities, therefore, can be diversified to match the care sector.

Second, better care and comfort for frail seniors living by themselves may also benefit from the implementation of AI systems. Caregivers can help identify irregularities or trends to the home, provide alerts to caregivers when the floor is wet and slippery, or detect and record an increase in breathing patterns.

Third, AI can also give a boost to the healthcare system in its operation. AI can help improve the healthcare system’s performance in predicting diseases, improving outcomes and reducing costs. AI can also improve patient outcomes and manage the demands on the healthcare system in the population ages. This means that the “digital divide” by making it easier and more intuitive for less technologically literate seniors to use smart devices for day-to-day tasks. For instance, AI can enable seniors to voice instructions in natural language rather than having to press buttons on devices, making financial transactions, setting government e-services and connecting with loved ones.

DisDistributing the benefits of AI equitably

Even when we accept the benefits of AI and minimize job risks, Singapore must ensure that the net gains are spread equally across society. Britain’s AI strategy, for example, prioritizes value creation with the relevant skills and assets, even if some workers stand to benefit from AI and technology-enabled services. The importance of the trade and financial services sector is acknowledged, but the country can also consider investing in the role safety nets, including enhancing programmes and re-employment support. Reducing occupational stress and enabling workers to find a good job at a good price will also be essential.

Beyond these, policymakers will have to look at further ways to strengthen redistribution and social security, without losing sight of the importance of work and enterprise. Even ideas that may appear unlikely today, like job guarantees, national basic income or social dividends, may be part of the answer in future. AI, after all, is an unstoppable force in our society.