The issue of equal global distraction of artificial intelligence

The issue of the equal distribution of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology globally is a matter of profound significance as we navigate the transformative landscape of emerging technologies. AI has the potential to reshape economies, enhance public services, and address societal challenges, but unequal access could exacerbate existing disparities.

As member states such as the USA and China have invested heavily within the past 10 years, amassing a total of $250 billion since 2013, their overall access is much higher. This is a common theme with the more highly developed nations having greater resources and infrastructure to develop and deploy AI compared to those which are less developed. This inequality in access means that the many benefits of AI are not felt universally. This is a reflecting of the wider digital divide as you need digital infrastructure including the internet and digital literacy to access AI.

The current distribution of AI technology reflects a stark divide among nations. High-income countries, equipped with advanced infrastructure and robust research capabilities, are at the forefront of AI development. In contrast, lower-income countries face challenges in accessing and harnessing the transformative power of AI. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), only 53% of the global population has internet access, with significant variations across regions, with only 28% in Africa and 40% in Asia, highlighting disparities in access to the digital infrastructure necessary for AI development. Bridging this digital divide is essential for ensuring that the benefits of AI are shared inclusively.

Challenges to Equal Distribution

Access Disparities:
• Disparities in access to AI technologies are closely tied to economic inequalities. The World Bank reports that high-income countries allocate a significantly higher percentage of their GDP to research and development (R&D) than their lower-income counterparts. This resource gap hinders the ability of developing nations to actively participate in AI research and innovation.

Data Inequality:
• The unequal distribution of quality and diverse datasets is a fundamental challenge in AI development. Countries with access to extensive and varied data have a competitive advantage, while others may struggle to develop robust and unbiased AI algorithms. Addressing data inequality is crucial for fostering fair and ethical AI applications.

Skills Gap and Educational Disparities:
• UNESCO reports that the global skills gap in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields poses a significant barrier to equal AI participation. Educational disparities contribute to a lack of workforce readiness, limiting the ability of certain regions to engage effectively with AI technologies.

• Ethical Variances:
•A survey by the World Economic Forum found that attitudes toward AI ethics vary globally. While 41% of respondents in Western countries believe AI should be guided by ethics, the figure is 25% in Asia, emphasising the need for a shared international ethical framework.

Points to consider

What economic impacts would there be if this is not dealt with?
How can we ensure fair distribution whilst also recognising the investment from some member states?
Should member states be obliged to share AI technology?
To what extent should the UN govern this?
What would be the human rights implications if this is not dealt with?
What may be the impacts on employment?
How can we educate and spread awareness about these issues?

Useful links

<https://www.un.org/techenvoy/sites/www.un.org.techenvoy/files/ai_advisory_body_interim_report.pdf>
<https://www.tortoisemedia.com/intelligence/global-ai/>
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