

The fear and the future: what the emergence of AI can mean for our youth

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Though Ahmed finds the mechanism, even the scale and engineering, behind AI tools to be fascinating, he doesn't think it is reliable enough to replace humans. "I have seen how AI models deal with complex tasks. Each one has a context window, which can be a limiting feature as it can forget vital information. You can't replace humans with a tool that forgets or is unable to reason on its own. So, I just don't see how software engineers and developers can be replaced, at least not with the technology we currently have."

In a research paper by Isabeela Loaiza and Roberto Rigobon from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) - Sloan School of Management, the authors introduced the EPOCH framework to understand how human capabilities have the capacity to complement, rather than compete with AI. The EPOCH framework identified five groups of human capabilities that allow work in areas where machines are limited. These include Empathy, Presence, Opinion, Creativity, and Hope.

Findings from the paper suggest that US workers are shifting towards tasks that "emphasise the human-intensive capabilities". In fact, the results state that "new tasks" that appeared for the first time in 2024 are more human-intensive. It is also worth noting that human-intensive occupations were reported to experience more employment growth, hiring, and better projections. Some major occupations that had high EPOCH scores included Emergency Management Directors, Human Resource Managers, Sociologists, Clinical Psychologists, and Environmental Economists, amongst others.

Salma Begum reiterates that traditional career paths could take on a new form in the future, urging the young workforce to consider roles that bridge domains.

"Employers will want to hire

people who are good learners, can solve problems, and work with new systems. Individuals who can navigate uncertainty and integrate new tools into their existing workflow are highly valued. Your ability to successfully adopt these systems in your workplace will matter more than your proficiency

with any particular software," she says.

When asked what students can do to adapt to the emergence of AI tools, Salma Begum emphasised the need to build a broad set of transferable skills along with proficiency in their core area, as boundaries between industries are being blurred.

There is little doubt that AI tools

are a force of disruption, transforming and being integrated into workflows across sectors. What makes it a source of anxiety, however, is that we are still not sure just how disruptive it truly is. Given the rate at which it is progressing, the limits that previously defined the question are withering away; constantly expanding its range.

While we don't know the answer to this question, what it unravels is very human. As people, we are sceptical of the unknown. It is this instinct that forces us to ask questions, reason, and be critical. And this ability will determine not just how we understand AI tools but how we can use them to maximise their potential.



IMAGE: IMMO WEGMANN / UNSPLASH



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