# Tope Fasua warns against over-reliance on AI and urges inclusive approach for Nigeria and the Global South



An in-depth reflection on the implications of artificial intelligence (AI) for Nigeria and the broader Global South has been shared by economist and author Tope Fasua, highlighting concerns about the potential for over-reliance on AI to overshadow human intelligence and the risks of missing significant developmental opportunities.

Fasua's commentary, published in Premium Times Nigeria, draws on his earlier article titled "The coming over-reliance on AI and the superiority of human intelligence," where he expressed apprehension that AI might become an exclusive asset for the wealthy elite rather than a tool for inclusive and sustainable development. He noted that this excludes many from the benefits AI could potentially bring, particularly in regions such as Nigeria where developmental challenges remain acute.

Central to Fasua’s analysis is the observation that while AI currently demonstrates remarkable capabilities—such as quickly generating detailed company profiles—it still lacks the unique human traits of epiphanies, serendipitous insights, and the physical capacity to execute complex construction or manual tasks without human oversight. He emphasises that human intellect and energy remain indispensable in many spheres, for instance when building houses or aircraft which cannot yet be fully entrusted to AI.

Drawing on insights from Tunisian intellectual Fadhel Kaboub, Fasua points out Africa’s struggles with sovereignty over critical resources like food, energy, technology, and value-added production. These deficits pose significant hurdles to achieving AI sovereignty in the region. He critiques the trend of purchasing AI solutions “off-the-shelf” simply for status or profit, warning against allowing AI to become a tool that deepens inequality rather than addressing the pressing socioeconomic issues such as poverty, food security, education, and infrastructure deficits that plague Nigeria and other Global South nations.

Fasua shared a personal experience of encountering aggressive marketing tactics when he explored an AI course online, reflecting a broader concern over the mystification of AI for commercial gain. He asserts that AI has already permeated daily life through devices everyone uses and urged individuals to proactively equip themselves with the knowledge to harness AI effectively.

Highlighting the broader societal impact, Fasua questioned whether AI simply making work ‘faster, neater, more professional’ genuinely improves human capability or leads to increased complacency, laziness, and narcissism. He raised concerns about the risk that AI adoption may exacerbate social inequality by leaving many behind as standards rise. He called for early adopters and technology experts to focus AI’s application on solving critical developmental challenges, rather than allowing reliance on solutions imported or implemented by foreigners.

Fasua advocates a multi-stakeholder approach to AI deployment, where diverse voices including those of sociologists, psychologists, philosophers, medics, and older generations are included alongside young tech enthusiasts. He warns against entrusting AI solely to government or political actors, underlining the need for inclusive engagement with the technology’s societal impacts.

The article also highlights formidable challenges in combating AI-enabled fraud. Fasua recounted a conversation with a senior executive at the US-based Visacard who described sophisticated scams involving voice cloning to gain unauthorised access to bank accounts and homes. Such vulnerabilities underline the unpredictable and complex risks AI introduces, which may include unprecedented “black swan” events.

Regarding employment, Fasua acknowledged prevailing fears that AI could induce significant job losses, especially in Nigeria and the Global South. He expressed scepticism about reassurances that new jobs will emerge, suggesting that only those at the forefront of technological expertise might benefit, thus potentially worsening unemployment for many.

Fasua situates these concerns within historical context, recalling how African countries, post-independence, were steered towards cash crop exports amid European strategies aimed at food sovereignty, consequently undermining local agricultural autonomy. He sees parallels in the need for Africa to strategically prepare for AI developments instead of adopting a reactive or dependent stance.

Emerging issues around data ownership and privacy also receive attention. Fasua noted that AI systems operate on vast amounts of data generated by users. He raised questions about whether companies profiting from this data should seek consent from its creators and whether users are adequately informed about intrusive features such as predictive typing, which reads documents as they are written. These points mirror global debates on AI ethics, data rights, and transparency.

In closing, Fasua urges sustained engagement with AI as a transformative global phenomenon, stressing the importance for nations, including those in the Global South, to remain alert and involved amid evolving technological and geopolitical dynamics.

Tope Fasua can be reached via topsyfash@yahoo.com for further commentary or discussion on these topics.

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