

AI revolution: My advice to young people is to commit to curiosity

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is redefining and reshaping every aspect of our lives. AI is not just a buzzword or distant scientific dream; it is upon us and will be a transformational force driving the future of every aspect of our lives.

This is why I firmly believe that we must address this challenge, and this may necessitate changes in our university courses and curriculum if we want to remain relevant in the future.

I am, however, optimistic because when I look at young graduates, I see more than just graduates; I see pioneers who will help write Africa's chapter in the AI revolution.

The question today isn't whether AI will change the world; rather, it is how do we prepare for this AI-driven future? How do we adopt to it not as a threat but as an ally? We must ask and respond to the overriding and pertinent question of our time: "Is our course content future-ready or not?"

For example, in the past, Computer Science was taught as a specialisation for a few. In the future, AI literacy must be a foundational skill for almost all graduate students, whether studying Law, Agriculture, Medicine, Business, or other fields.

All must learn to interact with and leverage AI tools effectively. Our graduates in the future should not just know how a machine works, they should be able to build and fix it. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer a futuristic concept; it's the current engine of the global economy. We are witnessing significant investments in massive AI infrastructure, including big data centres and potent chips, by the big AI players - dubbed the 'Magnificent 7' and comprising Apple, Alphabet, Amazon, Microsoft, Meta, Nvidia, and Tesla. AI is now playing a profound role in diagnosing diseases and making life-saving decisions in remote areas where doctors are

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Artificial Intelligence



scarce. Drones are also delivering medicines, as we have already witnessed in neighbouring Rwanda.

In agriculture, machine learning algorithms are predicting crop yields, helping farmers combat climate change and food security. In many cities, AI-powered apps are optimising traffic flow to reduce congestion. Languages are being translated in real time, and AI is fundamentally transforming industries.

The question is whether we will be passive observers or active participants in this AI Revolution. Many have expressed fear that AI will replace human workers (labour). I believe that AI will replace those human workers who obstinately refuse to embrace AI in their work.

AI is evolving at breakneck speed. The AI tools you will use five years from now don't exist yet. The problems you will solve haven't been identified. This means your most valuable skill is not what you know today, but your capacity to learn tomorrow.

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As AI handles more routine cognitive tasks, your human capabilities become more valuable, not less.

Machines can process data, but they cannot dream. They can identify patterns, but they cannot understand context, for example, the way someone rooted in the soil of Uganda understands their community. They can generate text, but they cannot have empathy! This contextual intelligence is your superpower, and therefore, do not abandon your inherent human agency amidst this AI revolution.

You may think that graduating from a developing country like Uganda places you at a disadvantage in comparison to the leading centres of AI innovation, such as those in Silicon Valley, USA; Beijing, and London. I disagree with this narrative entirely.

You can create appropriate solutions optimised for low connectivity, limited resources, and diverse linguistic environments. You can build AI applications that actually work for millions of people who don't live in wealthy nations.

AI's most significant potential lies in solving African problems with African solutions. You can turn challenges into opportunities.

You may be tomorrow's innovators, for example, of drones monitoring wildlife in Queen Elizabeth National Park. Go forth and innovate.

This is an excerpt from Sir Richard Kaijuka's speech to graduands of Valley University of Science and Technology (VUST). He is an experienced business leader and banker and chair, Board of Trustees at VUST.