

THE WORKING OF UNESCO IN PROTECTING ETHICAL VALUES IN AI

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ABSTRACT:

The dynamic position of AI (Artificial Intelligence) in global landscape spheres including agriculture, pharmaceuticals, education, defence and more made it essential in upgrading the technology into it. But maintaining ethical values emphasizing the need for robust ethical frameworks and proactive strategies to mitigate biases and ensure equitable outcomes. In this view, this paper attempts to study the detailed working of UNESCO in protecting the ethical values in areas such as health and social well-being, education and research, communication and information, economy and labour, culture, environment and ecosystem, gender development and international cooperation, data policy, ethical governance and more. Paper also concentrates on the policy recommendation with Indian context where how the AI risk based analysis and legal reviews are taken and operationalising the ethical AI in India, where it also includes Central and state coordination with respect to strengthening the implementation of AI policies in protecting the ecosystem in AI. The study concludes that recommendation with Indian context in promoting diversity in ecosystem, integrating environmental sustainability.

KEYWORDS: Artificial intelligence (AI), UNESCO, Ethical values, AI governance, Scientific Knowledge

INTRODUCTION:

AI (Artificial intelligence) is all about the assumptions that the process of human thought can be mechanized and the adoption of artificial intelligence technology in the history of Businesses across multiple sectors at pace, with developing newer AI tools, techniques and capabilities the operations, manufacturing products and services, public and organisational administration, banking, education, entertainment, internal controls, reporting mechanisms, and socio-environmental impacts. 43.7% publicly communicate having an AI strategy, 76 per cent of these companies show no evidence of having policies to evaluate the quality of data used to train AI systems. From last one century to the present day, artificial intelligence has been rapidly transforming our world.

AI includes a diverse range of technologies that can be defined as 'self-learning, adaptive systems.' It can be categorized based on technologies, purposes - like facial or image recognition, functions - such as language understanding and problem-solving, or types of agents (including robots and self-driving cars. It also includes various methods and disciplines such as vision, speech recognition, and robotics, and serves to enhance traditional human capabilities. Recent progress in AI has been driven by advancements in computer processing power and data techniques. The ethical values and human rights issues of AI can be the benefits that AI promises. These are significant and affect many aspects of modern life. The most frequently asked question is to better and ethical use of data, rationalise and

improve economic processes and products. The economic benefits are difficult to count but are broadly believed to be enormous, which drives much of the policy debate.

In this view organisations like UNESCO is playing predominant role in AI ethics and governance stems from the recommendation on the ethics of artificial intelligence, Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST) that preceded the drafting of the UNESCO guidelines on AI. At least 84 public-private initiatives have produced statements describing high-level principles, values and other tenets to guide the ethical development, deployment and governance of AI. According to recent meta-analyses, AI ethics has seemingly converged on a set of principles that closely resemble the four classic principles of medical ethics.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

AI and medical Ethics

Brent Mittel Stadt (2019) “Principles alone cannot guarantee ethical AI” – In this paper, Brent tries to emphasis on the year ethics in medical the principles of medical ethics and the future of AI development and governance due to some of the limitations in AI technology and also highlights on suggesting Principal approach for better future.

UNESCO Commission on Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology

Dorine Eva van Norren , (2022): This paper demonstrate the relevance of worldviews of the global south to debates of artificial intelligence, enhancing the human rights debate on artificial intelligence (AI) and critically reviewing the paper of UNESCO Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST) that preceded the drafting of the UNESCO guidelines on AI.

Ethical vigilance, ensuring AI aligns with societal values and individual rights.

According to Benjamin A Olukunle et al (2024), emphasised on complex between technological advancements in AI and the overarching human values that guide societal norms. The background of the study establishes the urgency of addressing ethical challenges inherent in AI, such as privacy, bias, and accountability, within the broader context of regulatory and policy frameworks.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To study the concepts of AI and purpose and functioning of UNESCO
2. To understand the Areas of policy action role in protecting ethical values.
3. To analyse the UNESCO's work on AI Ethics and Governance globally and policy recommendations with Indian Context.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: This paper is an attempt of conceptual study where this article provided and limited to the study by collection of data, purely based on secondary sources of data collection.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence is the ability of digital computer or computer controller robots that performs the tasks associated with intelligent human being does, and this term is commonly used and applied in developing systems for projects where there is a need for intellectual processes where the need of human intelligence is much such as ability to reason, meaning, discovering generalising the things and learning from the past experiences. John McCarthy

defines AI, back in 1956 like this: "AI involves machines that can perform tasks that are characteristic of human intelligence".

Artificial intelligence is developed in 1940s where the digital computers were programmed to carry out the complex task like prove for mathematical theorems are playing chess with great proficiency with the continuous advancement in computer processing, speed and memory capacity. There is a is much challenge to programme the Computer Digital Computer that can match full human flexibility over wider domain and also task which human intellectual requiring in every day knowledge, the AI programmes have attended to the level of performance of human experts and professional in executing various unique task made achieving the projects achieving a completion of projects easier much easier.

Human intelligence is characterised by learning, reasoning, problems, solving perception, and using languages and more where artificial intelligence, in this view, the various research focused chiefly on these aspects. In an era where artificial intelligence (AI) increasingly intersects with every facet of human life, the imperative for ethical AI has never been more pronounced.

significantly highlighted on the ethical values in Artificial intelligence (AI) is now a global topic of discussion in academic and policy circles. Despite the initial credibility granted to a principled approach to AI ethics by the connection to principles in medical ethics, there are reasons to be concerned about its future impact on AI development and governance.

AI development lacks in common aims and fiduciary duties, professional history and norms, proven methods to translate principles into practice, and robust legal and professional accountability mechanisms. These differences suggest we should not yet celebrate consensus around high-level principles that hide deep political and normative disagreement.

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

The UNESCO constituted in the year 1945 in London and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, is a specialized agency dedicated to strengthening international cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture, and information. They set standards, produce tools and develop knowledge to create solutions to some of the greatest challenges of our time, and foster a world of greater equality and peace.

Protecting biodiversity, responding to artificial intelligence, advancing quality education, safeguarding heritage, and ensuring access to reliable information are some examples of the work that UNESCO does with its 194 Member States across the globe.

In consequence whereof they do hereby create the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for the purpose of advancing, through the educational and scientific and cultural relations of the peoples of the world, the objectives of international peace and of the common welfare of mankind for which the United Nations Organization was established and which its Charter proclaims.

The 5 C's of UNESCO (specifically the World Heritage Convention) are Credibility, Conservation, Capacity-building, Communication, and Communities. These strategic objectives aim to strengthen the credibility of the World Heritage List, ensure effective site conservation, build capacity, improve communication, and involve local communities.

Purposes and Functioning of UNESCO:

The important socio-economic needs of global society pave the fundamental roles and functions of UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization,

in fostering global peace and development. Article – 01 of UNESCO clearly explains the purposes and functions, which are

1. The purpose is to contribute to peace and security: By promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations.

2. To realize this purpose the Organization will:

(a) Collaborate: in the work of advancing the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples, through all means of mass communication and to that end recommend such international agreements as may be necessary to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image;

(b) Give fresh impulse to popular education and to the spread of culture:

By collaborating with Members, at their request, in the development of educational activities.

By instituting collaboration among the nations to advance the ideal of equality of educational opportunity without regard to race, sex or any distinctions, economic or social. By suggesting educational methods best suited to prepare the children of the world for their responsibilities of freedom.

(c) Maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge: By assuring the conservation and protection of the world's inheritance of books, works of art and monuments of history and science, and recommending to the nations concerned the necessary international conventions; By encouraging cooperation among the nations in all branches of intellectual activity, including the international exchange of persons active in the fields of education, science and culture and the exchange of publications, objects of artistic and scientific interest and other materials of information; By initiating methods of international cooperation calculated to give the people of all countries access to the printed and published materials produced by any of them.

3. With a view to preserving the independence, integrity and fruitful diversity of the cultures and educational systems of the States Members of the Organization, the Organization is prohibited from intervening in matters which are essentially within their domestic jurisdiction.

UNESCO'S WORK ON AI ETHICS AND GOVERNANCE

UNESCO's work on AI ethics and governance stems from the recommendation on the ethics of artificial intelligence, which was adopted by 193 countries in 2021.

The Recommendation mandated UNESCO to produce tools to assist Member States, including the Readiness Assessment Methodology, a tool for governments to build a comprehensive picture of how prepared they are to implement AI ethically and responsibly for all their citizens.

GLOBAL AI ETHICS AND GOVERNANCE OBSERVATORY

The aim of the Observatory is to provide a global resource for policymakers, regulators, academics, the private sector and civil society to find solutions to the most pressing challenges posed by Artificial Intelligence. The Observatory showcases information about the readiness of countries to adopt AI ethically and responsibly. It also hosts the AI Ethics and

Governance Lab, which gathers contributions, impactful research, toolkits and good practices across a range of issues related to AI ethics, governance, responsible innovation, standards, institutional capacities, generative AI, and neurotechnology.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS RECOMMENDATION ARE:

1. To provide a universal framework of values, principles and actions to guide States in the formulation of their legislation, policies or other instruments regarding AI, consistent with international law;
2. To guide the actions of individuals, groups, communities, institutions and private sector companies to ensure the embedding of ethics in all stages of the AI system life cycle;
3. To protect, promote and respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, human dignity and equality, including gender equality; to safeguard the interests of present and future generations; to preserve the environment, biodiversity and ecosystems; and to respect cultural diversity in all stages of the AI system life cycle;
4. To foster multi-stakeholder, multidisciplinary and pluralistic dialogue and consensus building about ethical issues relating to AI systems;
5. To promote equitable access to developments and knowledge in the field of AI and the sharing of benefits, with particular attention to the needs and contributions of LMICs (Low- and Middle-Income Countries, including LDCs, (Least Developed Countries), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), and Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

AREAS OF POLICY ACTION

Ethical impact assessment: All the member countries should introduce frameworks for impact assessments, such as ethical impact assessment, to identify and assess benefits, concerns and risks of AI systems, as well as appropriate risk prevention, mitigation and monitoring measures, among other assurance mechanisms.

Ethical Governance and Stewardship: All the member countries should ensure that AI governance mechanisms are inclusive, transparent, multidisciplinary, multilateral (this includes the possibility of mitigation and redress of harm across borders) and multi-stakeholder. In particular, governance should include aspects of anticipation, and effective protection, monitoring of impact, enforcement and redress

Data Policy: All the member countries should work to develop data governance strategies that ensure the continual evaluation of the quality of training data for AI systems including the adequacy of the data collection and selection processes, proper data security and protection measures, as well as feedback mechanisms to learn from mistakes and share best practices among all AI actors.

Development and International Cooperation: All the member countries and transnational corporations should prioritize AI ethics by including discussions of AI-related ethical issues into relevant international, intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder fora

Environment and Ecosystems: All the member countries and business enterprises should assess the direct and indirect environmental impact throughout the AI system life cycle, including, but not limited to, its carbon footprint, energy consumption and the environmental impact of raw material extraction for supporting the manufacturing of

AI technologies, and reduce the environmental impact of AI systems and data infrastructures. Member States should ensure compliance of all AI actors with environmental law, policies and practices.

Gender:All the member countries should ensure that the potential for digital technologies and artificial intelligence to contribute to achieving gender equality is fully maximized, and must ensure that the human rights and fundamental freedoms of girls and women, and their safety and integrity are not violated at any stage of the AI system life cycle. Moreover, Ethical Impact Assessment should include a transversal gender perspective.

Culture:All the member countries are encouraged to incorporate AI systems, where appropriate, in the preservation, enrichment, understanding, promotion, management and accessibility of tangible, documentary and intangible cultural heritage, including endangered languages as well as indigenous languages and knowledges.

Education and Research:All the member countries should work with international organizations, educational institutions and private and non-governmental entities to provide adequate AI literacy education to the public on all levels in all countries in order to empower people and reduce the digital divides and digital access inequalities resulting from the wide adoption of AI system

Communication and Information:All the member countries should use AI systems to improve access to information and knowledge. This can include support to researchers, academia, journalists, the general public and developers, to enhance freedom of expression, academic and scientific freedoms, access to information, and increased proactive disclosure of official data and information.

Economy and Labour:All the member countries should assess and address the impact of AI systems on labour markets and its implications for education requirements, in all countries and with special emphasis on countries where the economy is labour-intensive.

Health and Social Well-Being:All the member countries should endeavour to employ effective AI systems for improving human health and protecting the right to life, including mitigating disease outbreaks, while building and maintaining international solidarity to tackle global health risks and uncertainties, and ensure that their deployment of AI systems in health care be consistent with international law and their human rights law obligations. Member States should ensure that actors involved in health care AI systems take into consideration the importance of a patient's relationships with their family and with health care staff.

INDIA AI GOVERNANCE GUIDELINES BY UNESCO:

India has adopted a hybrid, principles-based AI governance framework combining cross-cutting legislation, sector-specific standards, and voluntary guidelines. India's current approach to AI governance is guided by the IndiaAI Governance Guidelines released in November 2025. Institutionally, the overall policy direction for AI in India is guided by the IndiaAI Mission under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology; the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser; and NITI Aayog, the apex public policy think tank of the Government of India.

The IndiaAI Mission is the Government of India's flagship initiative to build a comprehensive, pro-innovation AI ecosystem. Launched in March 2024 with a five-year budget of INR 10,371.92 crore (approximately USD 1.2 billion), it supports policy coordination, ecosystem development and implementation of India's AI strategy.

MAIN POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS WITH INDIAN CONTEXT:

Evidence-Based AI Risk and Legal Review: Undertake a national AI risk-mapping exercise led by the AI Safety Institute to identify emerging harms and develop a shared taxonomy of risks. Complement this with a comprehensive legal gap analysis across existing frameworks. This will ensure proportionate, context-sensitive AI governance grounded in evidence.

Operationalising Ethical AI: Co-develop practical guidance to translate ethical AI principles into deployable standards. Establish a voluntary repository of best practices, promote industry commitments, and enable regulatory sandboxes. This approach embeds 'ethics by design' while preserving innovation.

Centre-State Coordination: Strengthen centre-state coordination through formal mechanisms for AI policy planning and implementation. Publish adaptive toolkits to support state-level AI cells and local action plans. This will ensure coherence across India's federal AI ecosystem.

Expanding Access to AI-Ready Data: Leverage AIKosh to enhance access to high-quality, AI-ready datasets. Create dedicated AI data offices and encourage state-level and private-sector contributions of non-sensitive data. This will support inclusive and scalable AI innovation.

Advancing Public Trust: Promote transparency and accountability in public-sector AI systems through standardized disclosures and safeguards. Conduct a national public trust study and develop model AI procurement guidelines for guidance. These steps will strengthen legitimacy and citizen confidence in AI adoption.

Preparing the Workforce for AI Transition: Update and accelerate implementation of national AI skilling frameworks, embedding AI ethics across education and vocational training. Launch targeted upskilling of public officials, while investing in training-of-trainers programmes. A workforce transition platform for at-risk workers may also be developed. This will enable inclusive reskilling and future-ready capacities.

Integrating Environmental Sustainability: Undertake a comprehensive study on AI's environmental footprint and integrate findings into infrastructure planning. Expand environmental impact assessment frameworks to cover AI infrastructure and data centres. This will align AI growth with India's sustainability commitments.

Promoting Diversity in AI Ecosystem: Launch targeted mentorship and innovation programmes for underrepresented groups. Expand regional-language AI skilling in non-metropolitan regions and embed inclusion metrics in public research funding. These measures will strengthen diversity and equity in India's AI workforce and R&D ecosystem

CONCLUSION:

It has been observed that the rapid growth in use of AI technology in all the fields and this speed may lead to misuse of technology or improper use of it. Restoration of Dharma (concept which distinguishes good and bad), to make the effective use adding up of ethical values in AI this paper made an attempt to show how UNESCO is shaping an ethical digital future.

UNESCO is a specialized agency of the United Nations. It has marked achievements to its credit in the educational development fields worldwide through its various programmes in scientific and technological areas. Along with the governments of the countries UNESCO holds various programmes and organizes meets so that to find solutions for many challenges

the mankind faces and this collaborative efforts bear good results and foster development globally .The problems of the global world are many and when countries sit together then the solutions are underway without disturbing the policies and programmes of the respective governments of member countries. Thus, UNESCO plays a particularly significant role in bringing good changes in many sectors of development for human beings.

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