CHAPTER 13

Artificial Intelligence and Social Mobility: International Experience and its Application Possibilities

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ABSTRACT

Social mobility is an indispensable attribute of social justice, inclusion and sustainable socio-economic development, as it reflects the extent to which individuals can improve their socio-economic situation from one generation to the next. In the context of rapid digital transformation, artificial intelligence has become a powerful force that can change the mechanisms by which mobility is facilitated or constrained. This study is concerned with the relationship between artificial intelligence and social mobility and adopts a comparative analytical approach based on global experiences and existing academic research. The initial premise is that artificial intelligence, on the one hand, opens up new avenues in education, labor markets and public services, while on the other hand, it creates risks related to automation, algorithmic bias and the digital divide. The results show that the societal impacts of artificial intelligence are very diverse and are largely determined by the preparedness of institutions and policy design. The study concludes with a sketch of policy directions aimed at promoting inclusive development, reducing inequality and preserving democratic social mobility in technologically changing societies.

Introduction

Social mobility takes a central role in discussions of social justice, economic inclusion, and institutional legitimacy. Fundamentally, it denotes the ability of an individual or a social group to change their socio-economic standing either over their lifetime or through generations. If the possibility of such mobility is not severely limited, societies are generally viewed as more fair, mainly because historical income disparities might be less prominent and institutional arrangements look like they maintain some level of openness at the very least. On the other hand, if mobility is almost entirely fixed, then inequality tends to be self-perpetuating, reducing opportunity and diminishing faith in public institutions. As has been highlighted in wider development discussions, deep inequality can cause civic trust and democratic legitimacy to gradually decline, especially when social progression is considered as closed to the majority of the population[1]. These issues become even more compelling when viewed in the context of a rapidly transforming technological environment. AI is no longer limited to specialized technical areas only; it has pervaded labor markets, educational systems, administrative governance, and the delivery of public services. Hence, AI and its impact on social mobility is a multidimensional issue rather than just a technological one. It involves broader questions about access, distributive justice, institutional changes, and the long-term societal effects of automation. Reports from the OECD indicate that AI will alter labor market trends in an economically significant way but with socially divergent consequences[2].

Academic debates over artificial intelligence usually mirror the conflict between the optimistic view of the technology and the cautious structural one. The first argument points to the efficiency benefits that come through the use of AI, such as increased productivity, accelerated processing of information, and the development of new types of jobs. The second viewpoint is much more doubtful as it highlights the fact that different social groups may not benefit equally from technological development and that the digital transformation may even strengthen the already existing inequalities instead of lessening them. Both viewpoints are worthy of analysis, especially when one considers the issues of social mobility as the

[1] UNDP. 2025. "Towards 2025 Human Development Report." United Nations Development Programme. https://hdr.undp.org/reports-and-publications/towards-2025-human-development-report

[2] OECD. 2023. "OECD Employment Outlook 2023: Artificial Intelligence and the Labour Market." OECD Publishing, Paris.

main topic, rather than technological capability only. On one hand, AI can open up new pathways for socioeconomic mobility. AI-enabled e-learning tools could, for example, facilitate more widespread learning, provide students with more personalized educational experiences, and lower certain obstacles related to location or lack of school infrastructure. In addition, digitization and technological change have led to the rise of new job sectors, especially those using data and technology. In these cases, AI might lead to higher job opportunities, particularly for people who can quickly adapt to new skills and technologies[3].

Technology does not spread out evenly to everyone, right. It is not fair or neutral at all. Things like digital tools, good schools, and knowing how to use tech stuff vary a lot between different places and people. Some countries have it better, and within groups too, it is uneven. That means when AI comes in, the good parts might mostly go to those who already have an edge, like better resources or positions. It seems like artificial intelligence could end up keeping old power setups alive, just in fancier ways. Not really leveling the field as much as people hope. Under these setups, it functions more to hold onto what is already there. The reproduction of hierarchies is the tricky part here, and it gets messy when you try to unpack it. The labor market really shows how tricky this whole thing is with automation. At the same time, there is growing need for skills that are techier, like digital or analytical ones, according to Autor back in 2015. It feels like that is the main split. Goldman Sachs had this report in 2023 forecasting that AI could shake up how employment looks overall[4]. Economic changes from tech might open up new jobs, sure. Yet, the costs during that shift probably will not hit everyone the same way. Some people might struggle more than others and it is not even across the board. In places where tech is already big, research points to how ready the systems are, like institutions that decide if workers get pushed out or actually adapt okay. Ilsøe wrote about that in 2024, and it seems like preparedness matters a ton. This part gets a bit messy to explain fully[5].

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[3] Germundsson, Nils. 2022. "Promoting the Digital Future: The Construction of Digital Automation in Swedish Policy Discourse on Social Assistance." *Critical Policy Studies*, 16(4): 478–96. https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2021.2022507

[4] Autor, David H. 2015. "Why Are There Still So Many Jobs? The History and Future of Workplace Automation." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 29(3): 3–30.

[5] Ilsøe, Anna, Larsen, Trine Pernille, Mathieu, Christopher, and Rolandsson, Bertil. 2024. "Social Partner Responses to AI in Denmark and Sweden." *ILR Review*, 77(5): 856-868. https://doi.org/10.1177/00197939241278956f