Artificial intelligence charts course for educational reforms

By Wu Dan (People's Daily) 13:41, December 28, 2022

Students have a class in a virtual reality classroom in an elementary school in Bishan district, southwest China's Chongqing municipality, September 2021. (People's Daily Online/Hu Yuejian)

The 2022 International Forum on AI (artificial intelligence) and Education was recently held online. Joined by government officials, scholars, teachers, and enterprise representatives from dozens of countries, the forum mapped out a blueprint for educational development in the era of AI.

As an important force driving a new round of technological and industrial revolution, AI has nurtured large batches of new products, technologies, business forms and models, bringing more possibilities to modern education.

An AI development plan issued by China's State Council said the country will accelerate the reform of talent training models and teaching methods with intelligent technologies. The Ministry of Education launched an action plan on AI innovation for universities and colleges and kicked off two batches of pilot programs of AI-enabled faculty construction. The Ministry of Science and Technology, together with the other five departments, jointly issued a notice requesting that smart education be included in the country's first batch of demonstration scenarios of AI application, so as to gain replicable experiences.

Photo shows a staff member of the education and sports bureau of Gongshan Derung and Nu autonomous county, southwest China's Yunnan province, establishing an online classroom on a smart education platform with a local school. The smart education platform was put into use in September 2022. (People's Daily Online/Liang Zhiqiang)

The combination of AI and education is injecting strong impetus into the reforms and innovations of Chinese education.

With such a combination, students from different schools can have a music class together with a shared virtual teacher, and their performance in gym classes can be shown in real time on smart devices. Besides, virtual reality technology will enable students to enjoy spacewalk simulations. More and more schools have started employing or are preparing for AI education.

Such a combination will bring a complete change to the educational ecology. Teachers are expected to have better performance with the assistance of AI, which helps with their teaching, testing, and management. The mix of physical and virtual scenarios puts students in a better learning environment. Massive online data and the increasingly stronger hashrate will make schools' management more targeted.

Students join a programing competition in Deqing county, Huzhou, east China's Zhejiang province, November 2022. (People's Daily Online/Cai Jun)

In addition, with the support of AI, quality digital educational resources will be shared by more, making education fairer and more open. For instance, thanks to the application of multimedia teaching aids and online classes, the enrollment rate for elementary school education in Medog county, southwest China's Tibet autonomous region has reached 100 percent.

China enjoys a solid foundation and unique advantages in developing AI education. The country is a leading player in voice and visual recognition technologies. Its national smart education platform gathers massive educational resources and well satisfies the demands of its 291 million students and 18.44 million teachers. All middle schools and elementary schools across the country have access to the internet, and 99.5 percent of them have multimedia classrooms.

The ecology of AI education shall be of higher quality and made more considerate. How to make human-machine collaboration more intelligent and how to make human-machine dialogue more friendly are topics that deserve constant attention in the field of AI education.

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