What's the one thing you would say the Labour Party ought to consider to ensure that young people leave education work ready?

What are the problems? *Not enough action in preparing or upskilling people with the skills that employers require, and no discernable action in preparing people to work effectively with, and alongside, AI.*

The adoption of technology, particularly AI, into our workplaces has changed the nature of work and what it means to be an effective contributor. Considerable thinking has been done about the nature of the skills the workplace requires, resulting in a broad consensus about what they are and their importance. Countless reports and policy briefs[i] document that employers want people with 'no-regrets[ii]' skills like critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, problem solving, self-efficacy and the ability to learn[iii] so that people can be lifelong learners who can navigate complex systems and easily pivot into new roles as and when required.

Despite this, we see no prioritisation of these skills in our schools, colleges or universities, nor do we see a move to build out a system of lifelong learning. This inertia is troubling, but *it is not the whole problem.*

Future skills discussions tend to be about helping people work with other people. What is overlooked is how people will work effectively in the increasingly complex sociotechnical systems we are building. *We know AI is the biggest factor bringing about change in the workplace and that everyone needs to understand enough about AI to work with it effectively, but we are doing nothing to build skills focused on human-AI interaction nor to adapt our education systems to this reality.*

What can be done *Prioritise AI, digital and data literacy in all future education and skills training. Introduce community-based Local Lifelong Learning Hubs focused on building a broad base of AI, digital and data literacy in the UK population. Set up an emergency catch-up fund for areas most in need to ameliorate the damage done by years of failure to prioritise these essential literacies.*

1. One approach would be to introduce AI, digital and data literacy into the curriculum across all key stages. You would perhaps start with one key stage, provide the accompanying teacher training, and then scale. This approach would make clear that these future facing literacies are a priority. It would however be a massive undertaking, that would take time and patience. It could be seen to increase teacher workload and it would be hard to integrate with the existing assessment system, which as was reflected at the roundtable discussion, is a problem in and of itself. A range of approaches may therefore be more successful.

2. A second, more immediately viable and sustainable, additional move would be to adopt a local approach[iv] that brings businesses together with the public sector to build Local Lifelong Learning Hubs. For example, businesses setting up in a local community or universities expanding in a given area could be asked to pair with schools and work with them to develop community hubs to ensure students leave schools with AI and digital skills they need. This could be viewed as a more contextualized, community-based version of the Finnish 1 percent AI scheme, or a more AI-focused version of the US's Bendable project. Employers, educators, families and local community members would work together to build a lifelong learning infrastructure to deliver the knowledge and skills that people of all ages will need in order to get to grips with AI, and work with it productively and safely. Once in place, such a model could be used to help with the development of other 'no-regrets' skills and explore and scale new approaches to assessment.

    a. Where strong communities already exist, online learning resources developed through community partnerships and enabled by a technology platform, such as one of the existing MOOC platforms, could be complemented by social meet ups, events and mentoring sessions to create a Local Lifelong Learning Network. We know from a substantial body of evidence that a blended approach combining online and face-to-face delivery is an effective way of leveraging technology to support learning. The learning resources could be contextualized in a meaningful way through drawing on publicly available local data sets (e.g., local labour market information).

b. When there is not a strong existing local community, or basic capacity, and development is needed, an accelerator approach could help kick-start a new Local Lifelong Learning Network. Start with an event: a boot camp to bring people together to meet each other, find out a few core aspects of AI and data that has great relevance to them and motivate them to want to know more. Then provide an online platform and bring in some online community building expertise to help develop the new online community. This new embryonic community can learn from and partner with established Local Lifelong Learning Networks as they grown and develop.

3. A third complementary approach would be to create an emergency 'catch-up' fund. The AI, digital and data literacies have been neglected for far too long and this means that some areas of the country and the economy are particularly disadvantaged. In these areas, employers find it difficult to recruit appropriately trained employees or to reap the potential benefits of increased efficiency and productivity that advanced technology can bring to the workplace. An emergency catch-up fund could tackle those most in need and enable work with local businesses and educational institutions to create 'pop-up' local learning hubs in convenient locations, such as shopping and leisure centres. These 'pop-up' hubs could meet the immediate needs of the local community and trailblaze a pilot for the establishment of the Local Lifelong Learning Networks.

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[i] For example, https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/10/top-10-work-skills-of-tomorrow-how-long-it-takes-to-learn-them/, https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/defining-the-skills-citizens-will-need-in-the-future-world-of-work, https://www.oecd.org/future-of-work/, https://youtu.be/eH1fFdjzJAw

ii Upskilling: Building confidence in an uncertain world https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/ceo-survey/2020/trends/pwc-talent-trends-2020.pdf

iii Learning to Learn: The Future-Proof Skill https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/uk/pdf/2018/10/learning-to-learn_report.pdf

iv The word 'local' within a digitally enabled society means that resources, including people, can be grouped according to many factors, not just physical geography. This is important, because whilst the need to reduce our carbon footprint means that people learning, working and living in close physical proximity becomes more attractive, the need to address current inequalities reduces this attraction.