

# Reimagining learning is key for growth

**KNOWLEDGE** As technology has taken over all aspects of the world, learning to master it is our only bet for survival

**Ganesh Krishnamurthy**

letters@hindustantimes.com

The 4th Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0) is here and the current workforce is already feeling the heat due to the fluid shifts in the nature of work. With mobile internet and cloud technology providing capabilities like never before, large corporations are leveraging the infrastructure to disrupt existing business models. The world is at our fingertips - literally and figuratively. See how cars would soon be manufactured bespoke by 3D printers, powered by sustainable energy, and be driven by no one? That's the power of technology. The adage - nothing is impossible - has never been truer. In no time from now, as artificial intelligence and machine learning, advanced robotics, autonomous transport, 3D printing, and biotechnology take over; the world as we know it will never be the same again.

What intrigues me the most is the statistics on emerging and declining roles. The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2018 states that half of all surveyed companies expect their workforce to be reduced due to automation by 2022. Administrative and manufacturing roles are likely to see the steepest declines in hiring. On the other hand, many industries will evolve substantially in the coming decades. The future jobs - in public and private services - will stem from the new industries creating newer roles. So, as people progress to take on more complex roles, the tedious jobs will evidently be outsourced to bots. Or, if you look at it the other way round, when the repetitive roles will be automated, people will be compelled to take on more complex task.

The report also states that the roles of operations managers, accountants, auditors, marketing specialists, and management analysts are expected to see



■ The dramatically changing global job market will alter the way we live and work GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

higher demand between now and 2026. Interestingly, a survey done by the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on the Future of Software and Society says that people expect artificial intelligence machines will be a part of company's board of directors by 2026. And that would be quite something, right?

As for now, what is certain though is how the dramatically changing global job market will alter the way we live and work. And this pace of change will be fast. Very fast.

## GEARING FOR THE FUTURE: SKILLS YOU NEED

Just as the work, the worker, and working gets affected - to thrive and keep pace - the current and future workforce will need to align its skillset with those of the future. Team structures will become more agile and tech literacy will be of prime importance across sectors. Also, at least 54 percent of employees will need to re-skill or upskill to meet future

demands. Doesn't matter at what stage of career one is at, it would be imperative to review the skills, build on existing competencies, learn new proficiencies and invest in future-proof skills.

According to the 2018 Skills Gap Study by Deloitte and the Manufacturing Institute, there are five main skills that will be essential to succeed in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. These include technology and computer skills; digital literacy and competency; working knowledge of tech-enabled tools and techniques; robot and automation programming and critical thinking.

Currently though, we're at an inflection point wherein due to rapid technological advancement, the workforce is falling short of the demands of the job market. According to IT Skills and Salary Report, 70 percent of the IT decision-makers globally say their teams currently face a shortage of necessary skills. The report also states that the best tech professionals in the industry

use a blend of formal and informal learning as an upskill strategy for their existing workforce. The strategy that most employers are deploying to address the skills gap is multi-faceted. It includes automating the mundane, repetitive tasks so that it takes off the load from the existing staff. Secondly, retraining the existing staff which also helps in retention of talent; In some cases though, employers expect the workers to adapt and learn the new skills independently. Lastly, hiring new staff with the relevant competencies to bring a new wave of talent to the pool.

## REIMAGINE LEARNING

In times like these, maintaining a commitment to lifelong learning - for both employers and employees is the only way to succeed. Until recently, learning was only about knowledge but then all of human knowledge is now available on the internet and is only one swipe away. Learning has a completely new meaning. While a degree from a reputable educa-

tion institution would exhibit one's talent to take up the job, being skilled shows their commitment to make it through the future.

New age learning is more asynchronous, social and peer-to-peer. It is about the skills required to use 'knowledge' to solve real time problem. It is about learning to use 'knowledge' to take intelligent risks and to collaborate. It is about learning multi-disciplinary skills, on-demand. The future needs full Stack Professionals in every role in every sector. On those lines, NIIT is doing a great job through its Stack-Route programme by partnering with companies like IBM, Wipro and Boeing to create successful Full Stack Developers.

Fortunately, these days people have more than one way to educate themselves. The learning industry must leverage this and put artificial intelligence to use in order to build a more accessible, high-quality and learner-centric curriculum. A blend of classroom training with Virtual Instructor Led Training (VILT), self-paced e-learning and gamification makes an ideal learning methodology. Such learning is agile and allows updating of content; improves effectiveness; enhances the evaluation process and lowers overall costs - for learning providers and learners equally.

Coming to think of it, the Fourth Industrial Revolution - like the previous three - will be defined by the jobs it creates and the capabilities it enables across industries. Mastering it may take time, but it is imperative to know that change won't wait for us and so it's best to buckle up, learn and lead the change.

*The author is, Executive Vice President & Head - Solutions, Products & Alliances, Skills & Careers Group, NIIT Ltd*