

Future skills and the future of employment

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Future skills don't yet come with your degree, but from what has been observed, unemployment, or more precisely "underemployment" is not seeming to decrease even with higher degrees.

In the rapidly advancing landscape of the job market today, questions are being raised about whether educational institutions are preparing the youth with adequate skills to work shoulder-to-shoulder with technology and its advancement. While people are worried that the upgrade of Artificial Intelligence (AI) means loss of jobs, if used with its proper potential, AI is a breakthrough tool that supports education and the development of future skills.

Skills such as technological, specialised, creative, and critical thinking - typically known to be 'future skills' - are the requirements for the future workforce. Various reports from bodies such as World Economic Forum (WEF) and McKinsey and Co. have already indicated that future jobs will require a different set of skills that education institutions should focus on to equip future talents.

However, the burning question is, how many learners are exposed to these, especially in Bangladesh?

Digging deeper into the current scenario, although as a population we are still getting accustomed to the skills required to adapt to the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR), we are already on the cusp of

Industry 5.0; and this revolution is predicted to focus on the integration of humans and machines, creating collaborative workplaces. And what does that have to do with the future of employment?

These industrial and tech advancements are the deciding factors of the talents and skills which will be valuable and sustain the changing job landscape. A report by McKinsey & Company states that up to 375 million workers may need to switch occupational categories and learn new skills by 2030 due to automation and digitalisation. This indicates that the current generation entering jobs, and many of those who are already in the job market are missing out on skills that employers are looking for hence, although "employed", a big portion of youth today are still "underemployed".

A significant portion of the population believes this new emergence of 4IR and Industry 5.0 is here to take jobs away. The way to adapt to it rather should be to accept that this revolution would focus on empowering human workers, rather than replace them.

This is where educational institutions are widely responsible, for not only

educating youngsters about future skills but also promoting the ability to adapt and learn according to the needs of their surroundings - the future of employment. For individuals and opportunity seekers, it is important that they too seek the learning opportunity to thrive in their professional journey. Instead of pointing fingers that technology is taking jobs away, the perspective to look at it should be "How do I utilise tech and AI to develop my skills and work smarter so that my employers and my industry value me". Considering knowledge today is available at the tip of our fingers, it becomes a responsibility of an individual to seek out that knowledge with all the means we have available.

While this might not be a luxury available to many, especially with limited access to digital devices, the eagerness to figure out learning opportunities will always open many doors for the ones who genuinely want to learn and succeed. Particularly in Bangladesh, digital literacy, and STEM Education are some of the foundational skills that some institutions such as BASIS and Bangladesh Computer Council (BCC) are trying to promote among the youth. What could also be worth considering is figuring out sustainable, engaging, monitored, and fun ways to introduce these from school, where the learning curve and ability are at their peak.

Given where we stand today in terms of globalisation, besides technology, jobs will also require talents to bring a "human touch" into the workplace. Skills like cultural competency, social responsibility, transferable skills, and leadership skills - with a diverse population and a rapidly changing social and cultural landscape, these cognitive and interpersonal skills will be important for working effectively not only in Bangladesh but anywhere around the world, and this has also been reported in a survey by McKinsey and Co. Such skills are harder and far more complex to automate and are essential for roles that require human interaction.

Regardless of the doors that artificial intelligence and Industry 5.0 might be closing, the skills we have mentioned so far and the ability to collaborate with machines and work in diverse teams to bring more human value will remain an important set of talent that every industry will always seek out for. Acknowledging the shift in skill requirements and proactively taking the initiative to learn and adapt will be the key to ensuring talents are not replaced but redeployed.

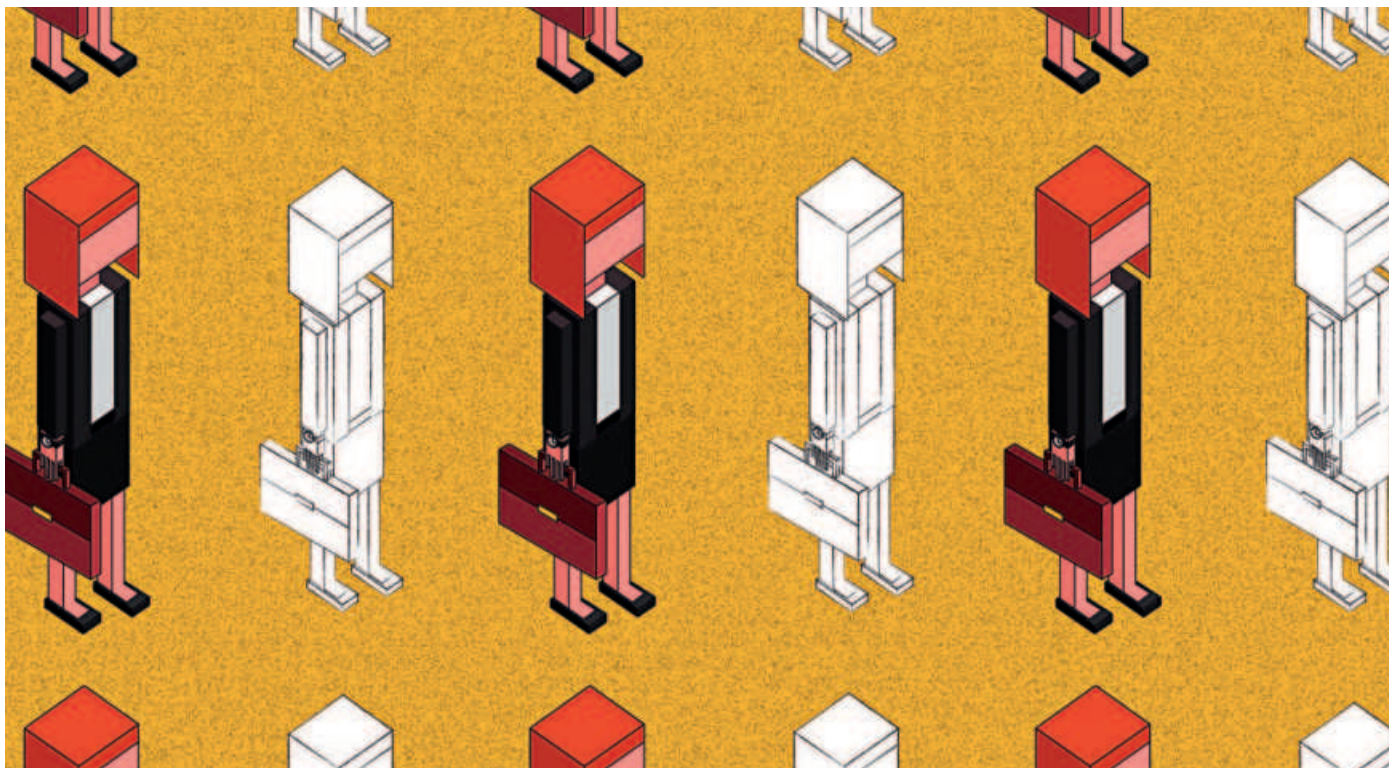


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