

Studying hard subjects not enough to secure jobs in the age of AI, futurist tells UAE's students

Young people need to learn negotiation, communication and moral judgment



Our career paths are continuously evolving, and if our skills don't evolve, we will fall behind. Bloomberg

Young people need more than just science skills to secure a job in the age of AI, a top futurist has said.

Gerd Leonhard, author of *Technology versus Humanity*, said pupils and students need space and freedom to develop 'soft skills' - communication, negotiation and moral judgment.

He spoke about future job losses to AI and robots at Global Education Supplies and Solutions (Gess) in Dubai.

Children will need people skills, imagination and compassion to navigate a future where machines would be able work as engineers.

"The future is not just about technology and this is something that would be good for the region to understand," Mr Leonhard told *The National*.

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Gerd Leonhard

"The region needs to find its own way. Maybe we don't just need a minister of artificial intelligence, maybe we also need a minister for emotional intelligence.

"In 10 years' time, technology will be so powerful that it will be able to do a lot of things humans can, including programming. So, it does not make sense to plan on people having technical careers only. The solution to employment is not technology."

He said humans have started thinking like machines and have lost their creativity.

"We have more relationships with screens than we do with people. Let's put the human back in side of education," he said.

Mr Leonhard said that a computer scientist may easily find a job today, but that may change in a decade.

"Stem (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) seems like a good objective now, but in a few years machines will learn how to programme. Humanities ethics, imagination, creativity combined with Stem would be ideal," he said.

The author said engineers should also learn negotiation skills and develop emotional intelligence to prepare themselves for the future.



Gerd Leonhard said studying science or engineering is not enough to guarantee a career. *Antonie Robertson / The National.*

"Technology and humanity are coming together. Science fiction is becoming fact. This is scary but also amazing.

"Any job that can be done by a computer in the next ten years, will be done by a computer in the next ten years.

"If your job is routine, computers will learn it," he said.

Mr Leonhard said any job that requires improvising, conversation, making a moral judgment is difficult for machines and that's where humans are needed.

"A computer cannot simulate creativity, doesn't have imagination. Creativity, compassion, intuition, imagination, values, empathy, ethics, understanding, making judgements are the skills of the future." Machines now understand languages and in a few years, computers will speak with people and have opinions.

"If you work like a robot, you will not work in the future. The future of work lies in honing personality skills," he said.

Last year, experts told The National schools across the region need to do more to teach pupils core life skills such as personal finance and cooking.

Schools in the UAE and elsewhere realise the importance of integrating wellbeing and emotional intelligence into the curriculum.

Dr Rabaa Al Sumaiti, assistant undersecretary at the Ministry of Education, said UAE's moral education programme focuses on emotional intelligence and well-being of pupils.

Public and private schools now [weave in moral education into different subjects](#) throughout the school

day.

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"In addition to this we have programmes to engage pupils. Pupils are taught to respect each other," said Ms Al Sumaiti.

In Ireland, young pupils, seven to 10, spend 400 hours studying wellbeing every year.

Philip O'Callaghan, managing director at the Super Generation, an Irish company creating resources for well-being lessons, said a third of the schools in Ireland follow their Learn to Learn programme which helps to create confident and engaged learners.

"It helps children become better learners, gives them strategies, and helps them stay confident and connected," said Mr O'Callaghan, adding that he is working to collaborate with schools in the UAE who want to use their wellbeing programme.

"Well-being is an integral part of education going forward. We are trying to help children find their strengths and realise what they can contribute."

For years 11 and 12, the well-being programme focuses on developing emotional intelligence. Pupils learn to connect with others, their emotions, successes and failures.

They are also taught strategies such as mindfulness to cope with anxiety and stress.

In the UAE, mental health experts have warned that young people's reliance on social media is leading to increased rates of depression.

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