



Future Skills

Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

Globalization, hyper global competition, and rapid advancements in multiple revolutionary technologies are transforming economies, industrial sectors, businesses, and societies around the world. These changes are driving the emergence of new industries, types of work, organizational forms, and models of services and production. These technologies are also expanding and accelerating automation.

The changes brought about by disruptive technologies can affect the workforce at every level of the economy — from the desktop to the workplace, to the labor market, to the mix of industries in a community or country — creating new opportunities for jobs but also hardships for some workers.

Today, such impacts on the workforce come at rapid pace and are likely to accelerate in the years ahead. This means individuals, companies, communities, educators, and trainers have less time to adapt and prepare than they have had in the past when the life-cycles of technologies were longer. As a result, it is more important than ever to understand emerging skill needs to adjust education and training programs to ensure those needs in the economy are met and that workers have the skills they need to thrive in a changing labor market.

Among the skills employers increasingly seek are those related to using digital technologies to perform complex work, and “soft skills” such as critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, adaptability, working with information, complex communications, interpersonal skills, and teamwork. As “smart machines” imbued with artificial intelligence and autonomy are increasingly deployed across the economy, the need for higher level skills will spread beyond manufacturing to employment and occupations that, historically, have not been affected much by automation.

Recognizing the changing nature of skill needs and labor market demands, countries are reviewing their national frameworks for workforce development. Industry organizations, and education and training institutions are experimenting with new types of non-degree credentials, occupational certifications, and

training programs. Workers are increasingly participating in career-advancing non-degree courses and engaging in continuous learning.

This report reviews some of these trends, and some of the innovative solutions being adopted to develop skills projected to be in demand in the future.

Megatrends Affecting the Global Skills Landscape

Several trends are reshaping the global skills landscape:

Increasing Demand for Digital and STEM Skills: As the Digital Revolution has scaled, demand for computer professionals has increased dramatically and, as economies based on knowledge, technology, and innovation have expanded, skills in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics have become more important. Many employers around the world report having difficulty finding the right skills or talent, or filling jobs. Areas of basic skill deficiencies include basic computer skills and mathematics, and applied skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, professionalism, work ethic, leadership, and written communications.

Structural Transformation in Labor Markets: Some labor markets are undergoing structural transformation due to consumer trends, demographics, and new technologies.

Experience Economy. As e-commerce has gained market share and disrupted the retail sector, many goods have become commoditized, increasingly abundant, and differentiation and consumer preferences are increasingly geared towards experiences. As a result, experience-related industries are likely to grow in the long-term — hiring more personnel, and demanding industry-specific skills and experience. However, post COVID-19, they may have a larger digital content requiring employees with skills at the intersection of digital and traditional experiences.

Human Longevity. Increased access to housing, sanitation, and healthcare — combined with dramatic improvements in disease prevention, medical treatments, and health technologies — have extended life expectancy and improved human wellness. Longevity creates a chain effect in the provision of health services: the more health services are available to people, the longer they are likely to live which, in turn, means they will require more health treatment. As a result, countries and cities will need more health professionals. However, research suggests that global demand for healthcare professionals will significantly exceed the healthcare worker supply.

Rapid Technology Advancement: Rapid advancements in technologies are the chief factor driving the need for future skills. Great revolutions in science and technology are converging on the global economy and society simultaneously — biotechnology, big data, nanotechnology, autonomous systems, and a new phase of the digital revolution characterized by vast deployment of sensors, the Internet of Things, and artificial intelligence, the apex technology of the next 50 years.

As these new technologies scale and are deployed across the economy, they will bring about a need for new skills, reskilling, and upskilling, and at a pace that matches technological change. In addition, automation has already eliminated many middle-skill jobs that have supported a middle-class lifestyle. As automation of routine tasks increases, the ability to perform non-routine work and complex tasks becomes more important in securing employment.

Need for a New Blend of Hard and Soft Skills: The use of digital technologies for both blue and white collar workers is likely to increase in the years to come, although not everyone will be required to create software or control digital hardware. To some degree, all workers can be expected to use digital technologies to execute general business processes, likely to be function and job agnostic. However, other workers will need more sophisticated skills to execute specific technical functions; program, maintain, adjust, setup, train and/or analyze digital artifacts; or develop and create digital technologies and artifacts.

In addition, employers are embracing new organizational forms such as work in multidisciplinary teams, management approaches that increase worker autonomy, and serving a diverse global customer base. These developments have increased the need for advanced cognitive skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving; socio-behavioral skills such as engaging with clients, and collaboration in complex working environments.

The Need for Greater flexibility in Education and Training Systems: Rapid advancement of technologies poses a challenge to skills training programs, and to education systems that seek to provide some foundational level of occupational or workforce skills. The skills and training required for jobs are ever-changing and need to be met with new curricula, teaching methods, and industry engagement. In addition, individuals already in the workforce increasingly must update their skills, and some must acquire new occupational skills if they change jobs, change industries, or their skills become obsolete due to automation. Many adult learners work part time or full time, have dependents, and responsibilities that compete for their time, energy, and financial resources. These workers need education and training options that can accommodate their adult and working lives.

National Skills Development Initiatives

Meeting the challenge of rising skill requirements in knowledge and technology-based industries and economies is increasingly among the top priorities for governments, businesses, labor organizations, educators, and research institutions. Different countries have commissioned studies, created bodies, and/or launched national initiatives to address the changes in skills requirements. Most of these initiatives have aimed to understand the skills situation, and many are experimenting with innovative action-oriented models, for example:

- **Canada:** A government-funded Future Skills Centre includes test-beds for new skill development models. These impact workers and employers, and serve as sources of learning and insights.
- **Singapore:** Government is funding the Skillsfuture Program which provides solutions to professionals, other workers, employers, and the Singaporean society at large.
- **Malaysia:** Convened Cabinet-level leaders and is using findings of a study on the “Future of Work” to inform strategic conversations and the design of new policy initiatives, such as the National Industry 4.0 Policy, focused on equipping future talent with the necessary skills for the future of work, and retraining existing talent.
- **France:** Launched a national initiative that encourages re- and upskilling of the French labor force, and provides every worker the opportunity to spend up to 5,000 EUR on training and education over the course of their career, and 8,000 EUR for workers with no prior professional skills.

- **Austria:** Education Account provides workers with the opportunity to apply for co-funding for educational and training courses. Depending on the education and training level of the workers, between 30–60 percent, and a maximum of 2,400 EUR of training costs are covered by the government grant.
- **Germany:** Kurzarbeit policy enables companies to keep employees during a crisis, but reduce their working hours; workers' lost income is partially replaced, and they are encouraged to spend the extra time in training and education.
- **Japan:** Education and training initiatives have been mostly focused on older workers seeking to transition between industries. The Silver Human Resource Centers focus on workers in the 60+ age group who are either unemployed or want to make late-in-life career changes.
- **Korea:** To reduce the financial burden of continuous education and vocational training on households, the Korean government introduced several policies to limit the costs and tuition fees for students of all ages.

These approaches highlight a diverse set of program characteristics to consider in program design and implementation: combination of action and experimentation at the micro level with institutional learning at the macro policy-making level (Canada), empowering citizen by providing a solution to individuals (Singapore), using foresight to guide policy design for training and education (Malaysia), public-private cooperation and embedding skills development into labor regulation (Germany), and focus on re-skilling and up-skilling the incumbent workforce (Canada, Germany, and Singapore).

Innovative Skills Implementation Solutions

The report examines 31 skills implementation solutions – initiatives directly training people and developing skills – across 15 countries: Australia, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, Mexico, New Zealand, Portugal, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. These solutions seek to primarily develop cross sector and cross industry skills – those needed in the economy as a whole – while several focus on meeting the need for sector and industry specific skills.

Several trends are apparent:

- The past decade experienced a proliferation of learning enterprises that aim to increase digital literacy, entrepreneurial skills, and professional upskilling.
- IT, data science, engineering, and technology are key areas of program focus. A significant number of solutions involve programs that teach coding and programming languages.
- Developing hard skills is at the core of 68 percent of cases presented.
- A blended learning method that improves technical expertise while also developing soft skills – such teamwork, creativity, resilience, and leadership – is also common in the cases examined.

The implementation solutions presented vary in audience, type of skill needs they address, scale of effort, and methodologies they adopt. All of the programs have innovative features. The following summarizes the programs reviewed:

Youth Education: These programs and schools focus on developing technology and soft skills before students reach higher education. Some feature industry collaborations, which provide students an opportunity to learn from industry specialists, engage early on in real-world projects, and test their ideas with an audience of real-world experts. Some of the initiatives allow students to start to build a professional portfolio while still in K-12. Some of the innovative features of these programs include:

- *Fire Tech*(U.K.) was one of the first companies in the world to offer programs to train children in technology. All programs follow the experiential learning method. Recently, the company started programs that allow students to engage in “real life” projects.
- *Líger Leadership Academy*(Cambodia) offers a curriculum that is experiential and project-based, and encourages individual initiative and entrepreneurship in one of the least developed countries in the world.
- *Ørestad Gymnasium*(Denmark) is entirely digital. The school's architectural design – an open-plan model with few closed-off spaces – is supposed to help facilitate learning.

- *The Singular School*(Israel) teaches students to work in teams using real-world problem-solving approaches. It partners with traditional schools, exposes students to cutting edge technology ideas, and develops entrepreneurship skills
- *Unistream*(Israel) has deep connections with industry and the Government of Israel, and helps teens establish their own start-up companies.

The solutions featured indicate that:

- Relevant cases exist in both advanced and emerging nations.
- Soft skills are critical for the future economy, and are at the core of youth programs.
- Industry engagement can start at an early age.
- Entrepreneurship training for youth is valued in innovation-oriented countries.
- Professionals outside of the education industry are driving change.

Digital Schools: These are non-degree programs and employ a bootcamp model in which participants are immersed in the subject for a limited and intense period of time, attaining a steep increase in their knowledge base and skills. The majority of these are coding schools. Some of the innovative features of these programs include:

- *Academia de Código*(Portugal) bootcamps allow workers and children to go from little knowledge to proficiency in a very short period of time. It also displays an innovative method to select participants.
- *Code Avengers*(New Zealand) programs are accessible online and can be completed at the student's own pace, while also having a focus on training teachers.
- *Coding Dojo*(USA) uses the bootcamp model for coding training, and has a strong approach to industry engagement. It offers programs in ten cities and online.
- *École 42*(France) 3-year model is unique to the industry; it has no teachers or professors, and leverages peer-to-peer and project-based learning. Students direct their own education, dictate their own pace of learning, and assess their classmates' work. It operates a franchise model.

- *General Assembly*(USA) was a pioneer school globally for focusing on the emerging set of digital skills – beyond coding – offering non-degree certificates in a variety of areas. It has strong ties with industry and on-the-ground needs for digital skills.
- *YouGrow Academy*(Germany) combines bootcamp-like software coding training with industry projects, and recruitment and placement in industry. Recruitment comes before training and participants are paid, a unique feature.

The solutions featured indicate that:

- The young age of the schools(all founded after 2010) reflects the continued widespread scaling of digital technologies.
- Getting to scale seems to be a challenge for coding bootcamp schools.
- Active learning methods for developing upper-level digital skills is important.
- Digital schools mirror the organizational models and practices of digital companies.
- Schools are enlarging their portfolios to cover other relevant areas and digital skills.
- They are increasingly connected to recruitment agencies, serving as talent brokers.
- Connections between schools, and labor market demands and trends are important.

Degree Institutions: These are innovative higher education institutions and/or programs, especially in engineering and technology fields. Some of the innovative features of these programs include:

- *Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education* (Mexico) Tec21 education model blends several elements, such as challenged-based learning, and is innovative because of its scale involving 100,000 students.
- *Olin College of Engineering*(USA) curriculum teaches students to think critically about the social implications of their work and the entrepreneurial skills necessary to transform their ideas into real solutions.
- *Minerva Schools at KGI*(USA) experience is global in nature. Through four years of study, students travel with a cohort of classmates, spending time in up to seven different cities around the world.

- *Aalto University*(Finland) focuses research on key areas of innovation: ICT and digitalization, materials, art and design, business, energy solutions, living environments, and health and well-being. Research and learning emphasize identifying and solving societal challenges.
- *E3 Program*(USA) combines educational instruction with practical hands-on industry experience. It reconceptualized entrepreneurship as a set of technical, business, and social skills that can be taught and learned.

The solutions featured indicate that:

- Multidisciplinary creates the opportunity for students to develop both hard and soft skills.
- Creating university organizational solutions to enable experiential learning is needed.
- Industry engagement is essential for experiential learning programs; developing social capital helps in building relationships with industry.
- Resources from outside university boundaries can be leveraged.
- Preparing students to work in global settings is important.

Professional Schools: These initiatives focus on people who are in the workforce and aim to upskill or reskill, and connecting them with demands in job markets. Some of the innovative features of these programs include:

- *AltMBA*(USA) leadership and management bootcamp, conducted over four weeks online, requires participants to work around the clock in teams to solve ill-structured problems and complete a flow of deliverables throughout the program.
- *Hyper Island*(Sweden) has a project-based curricula is designed by industry professionals. It works with high-profile companies to give students internships and training opportunities in their chosen fields.
- *Alberta Machine Intelligence Institute*(Canada) is one of the pioneer institutes in the world focused solely on AI and designed to combine research with translation through projects and training.

- *College for America*(USA) programs allow a maximum level of flexibility for students – the pace of learning is set by how long it takes to complete competency-based projects. Its flexible setup allows for people who work to engage in education, update their skills, and obtain degrees.
- *Davis Global Center*(USA) is a healthcare training and simulation facility with a heavy emphasis on advanced medical technologies and new techniques of patient care. It leverages emerging technologies such as VR/AR to train healthcare professionals and help students learn to work in teams the way they will in a real clinical environment.
- *Culinary Institute of America*(USA) is a vocational school offering undergraduate and graduate degrees, and adult learning programs. A pioneer school of its type in the Americas, it has evolved into a thought leader in the food world, convening conferences and creating industry-wide opportunities for culinary leaders and professionals to engage and drive industry innovation.
- *Disney Institute*(USA) is the training and development arm of the Walt Disney Company. It was a pioneer in implementing a curriculum focused on service excellence. It makes the expertise and resources of the Walt Disney Company available to clients and professionals around the globe.

The solutions featured indicate that:

- Industry engagement is essential to design, implement, and scale-up professional education.
- It is easier to digitalize training programs that do not require industry specific settings or equipment.
- "Train as you work" is a powerful concept.
- New technologies can boost in-person learning.
- Professional education can be coupled with cutting edge technology research.
- Economywide upskilling can be turbocharged.
- As schools grow, they tend to expand their portfolios.
- Distinctive industry assets and capabilities can be leveraged to build innovative programs.

Economic Development: Typically, these initiatives result from industry and government partnerships, and aim to foster economic development through workforce development and the creation of employment opportunities.

- *NYC Tech Talent Pipeline*(USA) is governed by a group that includes technology industry leaders, and was conceptualized to provide training solutions aligned with employer needs.
- *Chicago Codes*(USA) program is tuition free, making skills training accessible to larger portion of the population.
- *Talento Digital para Chile*(Chile) provides a common forum for companies, training institutions, and government, and combines the efforts of these entities to develop new capacities in people in tune with the demands of the digital economy.
- *Apprenticeship Carolina*(USA) targets only the industries that need workers the most, giving students the best chance of landing a job.
- *P-Tech*(USA) model has expanded to more than 20 countries and includes close partnerships with more than 200 universities that grant students access to opportunity in the labor market following successful program completion.
- *Skillful*(USA) works with industry at the city, region, and state levels to identify skills needs, and trains people in the workforce to meet industry needs. In some way, it is a broker and marketplace of skills, and training facility.
- *Industry 4.0 Higher Apprenticeship Program*(Australia) was co-designed by industry and academia, and combines the Germany-inspired vocational training method with a higher education framework.
- *National College for Advanced Transport & Infrastructure* (UK) is innovative in its degree of industry engagement. The college was founded for the express purpose of developing a workforce capable of performing high-quality work on specific rail projects.

The solutions featured indicate that:

- Industry partnerships are essential for effective skills development initiatives.
- Public-private partnerships can only exist in environments that have legal frameworks that allow for these partnerships in a practical and secure way.
- Learning from existing experience is valuable and adaptation is critical.
- New programs can harness the potential of existing solutions.
- Industry leadership is critical to build skills partnerships that provide participants with real-world experiences and equip them with relevant skills attuned to today's need.
- Skills development initiatives need practical solutions to scale up.

Lesson Learned

A number of lessons learned emerged across the cases examined by the GFCC:

1. Awareness and action related to future skills are on the rise.
2. It is easier to inspire than to actually develop skills.
3. Benchmark initiatives emphasize both soft and hard skills.
4. The most ambitious programs are problem-oriented and have strong linkages with industry.
5. Successful programs emphasize career services.
6. Significant social capital is needed to develop a program that resonates with industry.
7. Scaling up is challenging.
8. Innovative programs that target mid-career professionals are increasingly designed to accommodate participants' schedules.
9. Selection processes are very important for success.
10. Technology offers possibilities to expand access and enable new learning experiences.
11. There is growing interest in national and city-level public-private partnerships to develop digital skills.

INNOVATION AREAS

Implementation Solution	Curriculum	Education Method	Industry Engagement
YOUTH EDUCATION			
Fire Tech	X	X	X
Liger Leadership Academy	X	X	
Orestad Gymnasium		X	X
Singular School	X	X	X
Unistream		X	X
DIGITAL SCHOOLS			
Academia deCodigo		X	X
Code Avengers		X	
Coding Dojo	X	X	X
Ecole 42	X	X	X
General Assembly	X		X
YouGrow Academy		X	X
DEGREE INSTITUTIONS			
Monterrey Tech	X	X	
Olin College of Engineering	X	X	
Minerva Schools at KGI	X	X	
Aalto University	X	X	
E3 Program	X		X
PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS			
AltMBA		X	
Hyper Island	X		X
Alberta Machine Intelligence Institute	X		
College for America	X	X	X
Davis Global Center		X	
Culinary Institute of America	X		X
Disney Institute	X		
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT			
NYC Tech Pipeline		X	X
Chicago Codes			X
Talento Digital para Chile			X
Apprenticeship Carolina	X		X
P-Tech	X	X	
Skillful	X	X	X
Industry 4.0 Higher Apprenticeship Program	X	X	X
National College for Advanced Transport & Infrastructure	X		X

	Organization Set-up	Material	Online Platform	Physical Infrastructure	Skill Type
					X
					X
		X	X	X	
	X				X
	X				X
			X		
	X	X	X		
			X		
					X
	X				
			X	X	
	X				X
					X
		X	X		X
					X
					X
		X	X		X
				X	X
	X			X	
	X				
	X				
					X
	X				
	X				
				X	

Trends

Analysis of the cases presented in this report and lessons learned point to continuing trends and new developments in the years ahead:

Trend No. 1: Technology education and leadership skills development will be increasingly highlighted in early education inside and outside of the traditional education system.

Trend No. 2: As the digital revolution continues to scale, more coding bootcamps, and digital and innovation schools coming to the market can be expected.

Trend No. 3: The importance of soft skills will be increasingly recognized. As technical content and training become widely available online, the differences in performance and productivity arising from the lack of soft skills that are commodities in advanced economies will be increasingly noticed in emerging nations.

Trend No. 4: Online education will continue to expand – across the board, at all education levels, for all trades and professions, and for hard and soft skills. Enriched and immersive platforms are likely to become more widely used.

Trend No. 5: Experiential learning will probably gain momentum. As the design of experiential learning programs is generally more demanding than traditional methods, scale may be limited.

Trend No. 6: Demands will grow on education and training institutions to offer flexible training and education options for people in the workforce.

Trend No. 7: New programs to develop hard and soft skills will continue to appear in the market. In some nations, governments will empower citizens to make their skills development choices using vouchers and/or skills tax credits.

Trend No. 8: Education systems will be challenged to change, become more flexible, and widen the tools they use to certify skills, or even accept certifications from outside the formal education realm. As institutional change is slow and the performance of work and work teams increasingly cross national boundaries, there could be intense debates on the matter worldwide in the coming years.

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