

How will new technology impact on skills and salaries?

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The 2017 report by Gallup on the State of the American Workplace showed that 43% of workers work with some frequency remotely. Research shows that working remotely for two or three days is the most successful one in a five-day workweek. That gives the employee two to three days of meetings, communication and engagement, with the ability to only concentrate on the other half of the week's work. If the future of work needs restructured workplaces, redefined positions, fast learning, and trust reserves — and it does, companies are forced to do all that and more as they cope with the Coronavirus pandemic.

According to McKinsey Global Institute 2017 report on Jobs lost, jobs gained: Workforce transitions in a time of automation, by 2030, as many as 375 million workers or roughly 14% of the global workforce may need to switch occupational categories as digitization, automation and advances in artificial intelligence disrupt the world of work. Skills companies will require will change, with profound implications for the career paths individuals will need to pursue. The combination of labour displacement by automation and changing demand for occupations will have enormous implications for individual workers. A lot of individuals around the world may need to transition to new occupational categories by 2030. Nearly all jobs will involve a shifting mix of tasks and activities.

For nearly all jobs, automation will change the mix of activities that humans perform as some tasks are taken over by machines or software. Over time, occupational definitions may change. In Zimbabwe, already, physician assistants and registered nurses carry out many tasks that doctors used to do, such as handling routine cases or giving shots.

Within many jobs, the mix of activities and the capabilities required will shift toward more personal interactions and more advanced levels of cognitive capabilities such as high-level logical reasoning. Educational requirements will also change as a result of automation. A greater share of jobs in the future will likely require higher levels of educational attainment.

With regards to wages, in most advanced countries like the US, middle-wage jobs may decline the most as a result of automation. Growing occupations in these countries will tend to be either those that are less remunerative, for example, retail salespeople or childcare workers or the highly paid jobs such as software engineers and data scientists. In developing countries like China, the strongest job growth will likely be for middle-wage occupations, including service and construction jobs.

Earlier on, technological advances had a direct link to increment in wages. It made workers be more efficient and result in higher productivity. But with the coming in of automation there is a growing fear that jobs would be destroyed and with the current trend that employees want an increment in wages, employers are more likely to replace humans with automation. However, those machines will need to be serviced by humans thereby jobs created.

Many different reports have provided varied estimations of jobs to be lost with the labour sector set to face the maximum threat. However, some economists have argued that automation would have no negative impact on wages.

According to a report by TechRepublic, automation will increase wages for certain jobs such as technical support specialists and web developers. They both experienced more pay growth by 3.5% and 2.4% respectively, while Java developers slightly went down to 2.5%. Data scientists and data analysts that are usually ranked among the best jobs in America did not experience significant pay growth in December 2017.

In conclusion, technology brought new opportunities in the past after displacing some professions. The trend may not continue the same. Automation can only pave way for a new line of professions which may require more skills to handle, not completely going to leave a big hole of unemployment or a wide wage gap compared to years of no automation. It could only be a call for personnel development. Currently, in Zimbabwe, we can see that automation has already started. Form one enrolment is now run electronically through the electronic platform which is run by the ministry of primary and secondary education. Also, many banks in Zimbabwe has embraced automation. People can now transact from the comfort of their homes.

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