

LIFELONG LEARNING AHEAD

Responding to the unprecedented surge in unemployment

H2	ACT	PLAN	TRACK	PARK	OPP	THR	NEU
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The RSA's [Cities of Learning Project](#) is a digital platform that helps people find new learning opportunities near them. It is a response to RSA's concern that [low skilled and young workers](#) are disproportionately affected by unemployment caused by Covid.

The RSA offers [four insights](#) into the future of lifelong learning:

- ✦ Recognise learning wherever it happens: During the crisis, hundreds of thousands of people have engaged in volunteering activities, social organising, mutual aid and digital mentoring – learning and sharing new and vital skills. Most of that learning is invisible. Use digital credentials to define and recognise the skills people learn outside formal education environments.
- ✦ Make learning connected, not just digital. Millions of people have joined online courses during lockdown. For example, FutureLearn's traffic increased by 100% in March 2020 and 74% in April 2020. But access to learning content and progression in learning are very different. Human feedback and encouragement are necessary to push us forward when learning gets tough.
- ✦ Respond rapidly to change. If new skills or knowledge are required within a local economy, RSA can work with employers to rapidly build out credentials that capture those needs. Alongside that, they work with local learning providers to help learners access the skills they need and move towards employment. This is also possible at a national level. If businesses are willing to specifically define the skills that they need, learning brokers can quickly create meaningful credentials for those skills and connect them to learners.
- ✦ Build pathways not courses. Courses are expensive and time-consuming to build and are completed by relatively few people. Skills or knowledge gained by learners who drop out before completion is undocumented. Cities of Learning is built on the idea of pathways rather than courses. Pathways are about connecting discrete micro-credentials (that can be earned in multiple settings and through different learning experiences) to create routes to employment, work placements and other destinations.

INTENTIONAL LEARNING

Curious growth

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In August 2020, McKinsey updated the concept of lifelong learning for the post Covid world. [Intentional learning](#) is the practice of treating every experience as an opportunity to learn something. Rather than being something that occurs separately, the desire to learn should be an always-on, instinctive approach to everyday situations. "Although [intentional learners] are experiencing all the same daily moments anyone else might, they get more out of those opportunities because every experience, conversation, meeting, carries an opportunity to develop and grow," the McKinsey report argues.

Two things set intentional learners apart from everyone else: a growth mindset and a curious mindset. Although these are personality traits that people naturally have in varying degrees, it is also possible to adopt these outlooks, the report says. People with a growth mindset believe their capabilities and even intelligence can be nurtured, expanded and changed over time. "A growth mindset releases you from the expectation of being perfect," says the report. "Failures and mistakes are not indicative of the limits of your intellect, but rather tools that inform how you develop."

Some people are naturally more curious than others. Cultivating your curiosity can mean overcoming the fear of asking questions or of trying new things. It may mean taking on new challenges that do not relate to your day-job – learning a language, for instance, or taking up a musical instrument.

This matters because demand for new skills will be unprecedented, as detailed by the [World Economic Forum's call for a global reskilling revolution](#). Unlike the major workplace changes of the past (industrialisation, mechanisation and so on), the Fourth Industrial Revolution will not be a single moment of change. It will be an era of perpetual change, as tools like AI and automation expand their useful scope.

"Even before COVID-19 emerged, the world of stable lifetime employment had faded in the rearview mirror," says the McKinsey report. Instead, it has been "replaced by the expectation that both executives and employees must continually refresh their skills".

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