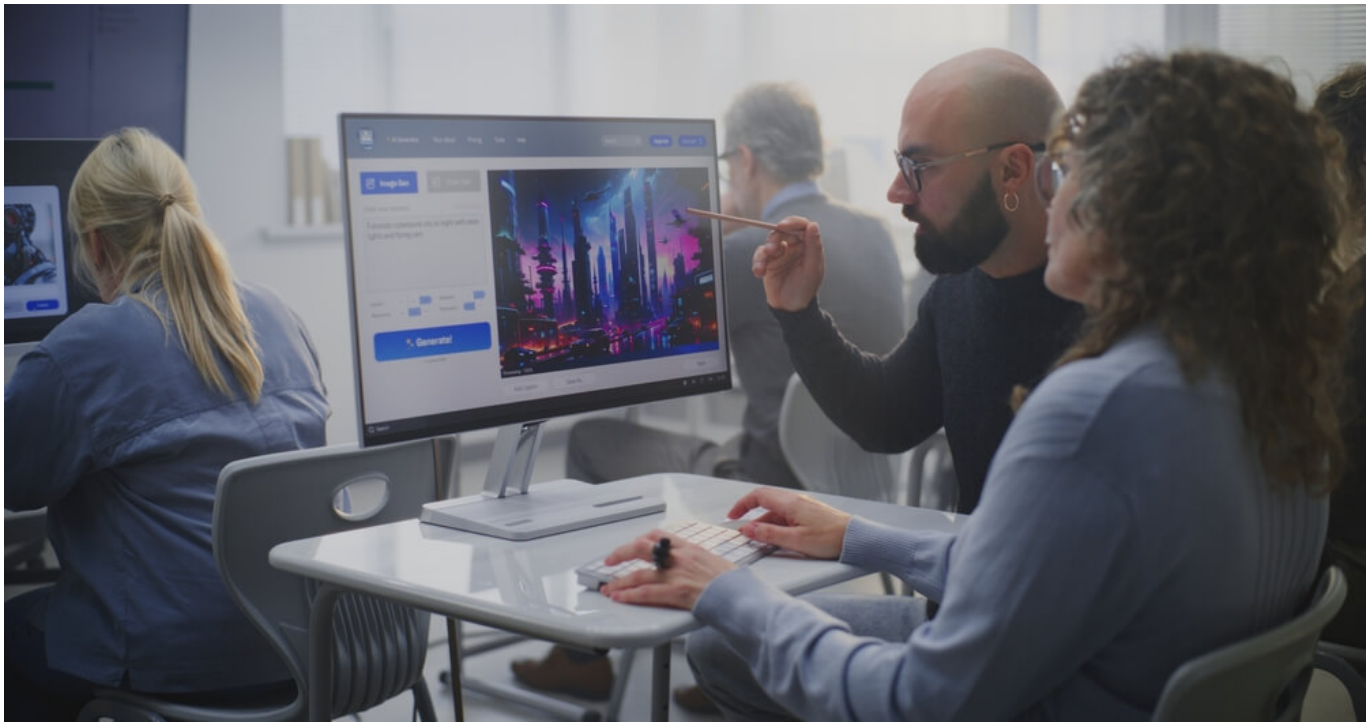
Tomorrow's Affairs
Analysis of today
Assessment of tomorrow

By: Elise Quevedo

AI literacy as a core life skill



The UK government has announced plans to expand its free AI training for adults to upskill 10 million people across the workforce by 2030.

AI literacy is a core life skill. It's a baseline expectation for anyone who wants to stay relevant in the modern economy.

AI is part of our daily life and work. We cannot wake up without someone mentioning AI. It facilitates customer service, drafts documents, analyses data, and automates specific repetitive tasks.

Many individuals use it without knowing how it functions, where it fails, or how to use it sensibly.

Just yesterday, whilst visiting one of the local shops, I got into a conversation with a manager about AI. I had asked her a question, and because she didn't know the answer, she said, "Hold on a sec, let me ask ChatGPT," which turned into a very funny moment. We talked about technology and AI for a bit, including the dangers that come with it.

What I see is that the knowledge gap can create anxiety, resistance, and uneven opportunity. By opening access to AI training at no cost, the UK is removing one of the biggest barriers to participation.

People choose not to participate in learning when it seems unattainable. The psychological barrier can be reduced just as much by free training as the financial one.

The government will deliver foundational AI skills through online courses and partnerships with industry, public sector bodies, and education providers.

Partners include Accenture, Amazon, Barclays, BT, Cisco, Google, IBM, Microsoft, Sage, Salesforce, SAS, and the NHS, among others.

For decision-makers, it will create a workforce with baseline AI literacy that adapts more quickly and efficiently.

Positives worth highlighting

The strongest part of this initiative is its scale. For the first time, this is not a pilot aimed at a small group. It's for individuals at every point in their career, including those who never thought of working in technology.

In the end, AI ought to be accessible to anyone. When governments define AI as a general skill, they normalise learning.

> Many employees are already experimenting with AI technologies at work, but they are not receiving the necessary training

Timing is another key advantage. Many employees are already experimenting with AI technologies at work, but they are not receiving the necessary training.

Since learning is no longer reliant on personal funds or employer budgets, free access should lessen gatekeeping if you are thinking about entering the industry or are already engaged in it.

Gaps and risks to watch closely

Let me clarify one thing. Impact cannot be guaranteed by free training alone. Foundational training can build awareness, not mastery.

The true danger is that after completing a quick course and earning a badge, people won't know how to use AI effectively in their jobs unless further development and follow-up courses are available.

> Governments should focus outreach on communities with lower levels of digital trust to prevent widening skills gaps

For those managing jobs, caregiving, and other commitments, flexible learning formats and company support are key, although engagement remains one of the biggest challenges. Training may become useless if organisational culture is not supported.

Uneven results are another risk, because those already accustomed to digital technologies will benefit more quickly. Governments should focus outreach on communities with lower levels of digital trust to prevent widening skills gaps.

Comparing the United Kingdom with the USA, China, Australia and Singapore

AI training is more widely available in the United States due to federal organisations sponsoring programmes through universities, community colleges, and research institutions.

While excellence-promoting programmes often emphasise advanced skills and innovative leadership, access varies by institution, region, and money.

China has always viewed AI education as part of its industrial strategy. Universities, career programmes, and workforce planning all offer AI instruction. The goal is to be prepared for future labour demands.

Australia has a skills-based strategy through programmes including business partnerships and TAFE digital initiatives. Access to AI training is contingent upon company involvement and enrolment paths.

One of the most structured models is in Singapore. Digital and modular AI training that satisfies industrial demands is provided by its SkillsFuture programmes. Citizens receive credits in order to promote lifelong learning.

The UK is somewhere in the middle. It allows for further specialisation while combining open access with national standards. It basically suggests that, with proper execution, there is room for growth.

Five-year expectations

Firstly, recruiting standards may include AI literacy. Similar to how they do with email or spreadsheet skills, employers will presume familiarity with AI tools.

Secondly, we saw the emergence of more distinct job trajectories. Programmes tailored to the healthcare, finance, manufacturing, and creative industries should follow foundational training.

Digital literacy will play a major role in shaping economic inclusivity. Governments can create access, but they should use it to generate opportunities

Thirdly, conversations about ethical AI should move from theory to practice. A broader base of educated users leads to stronger accountability and better decision-making.

Skills training only works when it adapts to the forever-evolving technology. Static courses, in my opinion, age too quickly in today's fast-paced world. This programme must remain dynamic, updated, and connected to real workplace needs.

We have the opportunity and responsibility to reconsider workforce development, promote involvement, create internal projects that use newly acquired abilities, and reward learning with accountability.

Free AI training opens opportunities for people who want to work in the computer industry, as learning boosts confidence, and confidence opens new paths.

Digital literacy will play a major role in shaping economic inclusivity. Governments can create access, but they should use it to generate opportunities.

If AI skills become universal, how will you use them to lead, mentor, and build something better for the next generation?

As my former mentor Jim Rohn used to say, the only day we stop learning is the day we expire.