

Singapore's IPS proposes scheme to help workers displaced by AI

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To ensure that workers are not completely replaced by artificial intelligence (AI), ad-hoc training programmes can be replaced with mandatory industry-specific courses, under what Singapore's Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) has termed Stay Ahead Scheme.

The scheme could identify and train Singaporeans in key skills and competencies that would enable them to operate in a world with AI and other emerging technologies, according to a report by IPS.

The report also proposed a new roadmap that could anticipate the changes in jobs and skills affected by the proliferation of AI technologies, local media Today said in a report on 31 January 2017. Jobs and skill sets most likely to be displaced by AI should be publicised. This is so that the government and industries can target specific groups of workers to reskill them.

Another suggestion was a framework to support workers displaced by AI technologies. This includes systems for welfare support for a limited duration, greater subsidies for reskilling programmes, and improved jobs-to-company skills-matching platforms.

Bridging the gap between school-taught content and skills required at the workplace

One pertinent issue concerning the skill sets of employees is the difference between content taught in educational institutions and the skills required in the workplace, The Straits Times said in a report on 31 January 2017.

IPS' report suggested developing academics with industrial experience. This could be done by sending teachers to various industries for a year, where they will be paired with industry experts to plan study modules.

These teachers could then draw up an academic syllabus that integrates workplace exposure and soft skills with educational content, said Teng Siao See, IPS Research Fellow.

"We have a scenario now where a degree doesn't guarantee you a job - employers are looking at skills relevant for their companies, for the future," Faizal Yahya, IPS Senior Research Fellow, told The Straits Times.

It is therefore necessary to have a framework to support displaced workers, as such situations will become more commonplace as new technologies are developed, explained Faizal.