

Automation of Jobs Poster and Essay Sharmaine Williams

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Automation has been around since the 18th century with the beginning of the industrial revolution (3). It brought new opportunities, wealth, and economic growth. It was a new time. However, it also came with its own issues as we came to understand environmental pollution and hardship for workers.

rapid growth of technology throughout the last few decades has resulted in the automation of hundreds of tasks - Tasks which previously would have only been possible through tedious manual labour from humans. Whereas we once relied heavily on the patience of others and skills passed down from generations of hard-working humans, artificial intelligence, machinery and automation is now beginning to take over. Jobs and traditions have been threatened by this sudden technological change and brought one very prominent issue to light.

Is technological advancement causing a significant detriment to workers and their future job opportunities?

In this analysis, I will dive deeper into case studies and research on both sides of the coin to come to a fair conclusion.

Technological unemployment is the threat of humans becoming unemployed because of advancements in technology. This shift happens when jobs to be obsolete as demand for human work is minimised, which is happening today.

Throughout modern history; we have seen examples of new inventions taking over as we find more efficient ways to go about our daily tasks. In the late 19th century, the first car was invented. Henry Ford led the mass production of cars throughout the first half of the 20th century (2), which meant that we no longer relied on horses for transportation. Whereas ultimately this invention was a mostly positive thing for humans as it meant we didn't have to deal with the uncertainty of an animal's health, expenses and the labour involved in taking care of it, what happens when humans are replaced?

Some jobs today have already been replaced by machines, such as the self-checkout lines in stores which allow you to purchase items without approaching a cashier. An American survey showed that a massive 97% of people are deterred by long checkout lines and 65% of them say they would rather use a kiosk to save time. (4) On average, one cashier can oversee 6 machines, which saves companies money which they would otherwise have to spend on employee pay and other expenses. This is just one example of how the demand for a certain type of job has declined over the years. According to data from the CNBC, over 140,000 jobs in America were lost from January 2017 up to April 2019.

In 2013, Oxford University conducted a study in which 702 jobs were analysed to predict which jobs were at the highest risk of automation. Out of these 702 jobs, it was concluded that 47% of them could be replaced by machines (6). The jobs of highest risk were those with a repetitive set routine.

However, with the demand for retail workers seeing an overall decrease, there are other jobs in which have seen a rise as they cannot be automated by any sort of artificial intelligence or machinery and technology will not be able to replicate the necessary qualities required for these for a very long time. These are often because they require a degree of creativity, social skills and interpersonal relationships. The jobs that are least likely to be taken over by AI in the future are social workers, recreational therapists and healthcare workers (6).

Studies from other sources challenged this 47% statistic. One such from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) suggests that this number was closer to 14% (7), as they argued that the introduction of automation will simply *change* the way in which we work, rather than take our jobs completely.

In late 2019 and early 2020, the coronavirus pandemic began to spread globally, which meant that social distancing was temporarily implemented in society. This sped up the digitalisation of many things as they could no longer rely on physical paperwork and face-to-face interaction. The United States saw an estimated 40 million jobs lost due to the implications of the virus. Whereas some of them have since made a return, economists predict that up to 42% will never come back. COVID-19 sped up an inevitable process.

In the 90s and early 2000s, Blockbuster dominated the video rental industry and became a staple for many households, however, they failed to adapt to the rapidly changing world around them which became one of their biggest downfalls. Whereas Blockbuster relied on the form of the VHS tape, they failed to realise that the DVD was about to be one of the fastest technological advancements ever. This mistake would later manifest when they finally introduced its first online DVD in 2003, however it was already too late. As other companies like Netflix and Warner Bros had already expanded on this market, Blockbuster was unsuccessful in their attempts to catch up and filed for bankruptcy in 2010 (1). Technology was not the reason for Blockbuster's failure, but rather their inability to future proof their business and adapt to how everyday life was beginning to change.

There is a risk of any job becoming automated in the future. The advancement of technology is inevitable, however, there are things we can do to avoid being affected. It is essential that we individually research future career paths to see how safe they are from automation. Low-risk career paths are career paths that are reliant on humans to work efficiently. Choosing to pursue something in an expanding field of work will be beneficial for us all later down the line as it means greater chance of financial security. Automation is a complex issue, however not as detrimental to the working class as some may initially believe. As repetitive entry level jobs are being taken up by AI, it leaves more innovative, higher skill opportunities for humans climbing the career ladder in their respective fields.

REFERENCES

- 1) https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/5-reasons-why-blockbuster-failed-aishwarya-rao/?trk=articles_directory
- 2) <https://www.history.com/topics/inventions/automobiles>
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- 5) <https://www.cnn.com/2019/04/05/booming-jobs-market-is-leaving-the-retail-industry-behind.html>
- 6) https://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/downloads/academic/The_Future_of_Employment.pdf
- 7) <https://research.com/careers/job-automation-risks>
- 8) <https://time.com/5876604/machines-jobs-coronavirus/>

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GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

GENERAL COMMENTS

57 /100

Instructor

1. Engagement With Literature Skills (50%)

Evidence of references can be seen in the submitted work, which is good to see as it demonstrates an application of your research. To enhance the marks awarded here, the References/Bibliography section should adhere to IEEE format – a guide to this is posted up on each of my Moodle pages and can be accessed in the assessment brief.

2. Knowledge & Understanding Skills (58%)

Good points are raised about the nature of automation in workplaces – it may free people from repetitive work and allow for more creative or intellectually challenging pursuits... if people will accept that these are options, of course.

A good amount of knowledge has been presented in the work, including historical case studies where technology has changed and individual companies have not responded in a timely fashion. I feel this is the REAL danger, rather than the concept of automation itself.

3.Cognitive & Intellectual Skills (60%)

Good evidence of analysing the research is presented in the submitted work where a statistic by Oxford University is challenged by OECD, suggesting that the nature of jobs may change as opposed to jobs becoming totally redundant. This is good as you have not just taken one set of information and presented it as a hard fact. This

is why it is important
to conduct a good range of research when working on
university assignments.

4. Practical Application Skills (60%)

The report contains a few small typos but is
generally well written and easy to follow. Some
good points are raised about
automation throughout history

The poster is bold and composed well, with bold
text
used to highlight a few facts related to careers in
the age of AI. This is
good, though it may be useful to include some
positive information perhaps, or
pointers on how people can help themselves avoid
being replaced if this is what
they are afraid of. There is a typo in the text at the
bottom of the poster – I'd
show the work to someone else to look for things
like this in future just so
they can be picked up.

5. Transferrable Skills for Life and Professional Practice (60%)

The e-portfolio has been submitted with all
components required by the assessment brief by
the deadline date. In future
please also include your name and student details
in the document itself, as
this makes it easier for the work to be archived in
the event the file name is
changed by Moodle/Turnitin.