

New skills needed in the 4IR

ICT professionals will have to cultivate ethics, professionalism and a range of new skills to thrive in future, says IITPSA's Moira de Roche.



Moira de Roche, non-executive director of the IITPSA and IFIP IP3 Chair.

Education and professional development will need to focus on new areas such as creativity and entrepreneurship in order to thrive in future, according to Moira de Roche, non-executive director of the IITPSA and IFIP IP3 Chair.

Speaking at the Computer Society Botswana's Annual Symposium in Gaborone, Botswana on "The Future ICT Professional: What makes a professional? What skills do you need for the future?" de Roche said professionalism in the industry was as important as professionalism in other key sectors, such as medicine, law, accounting and engineering.

"You might argue that the work an IT professional undertakes is not life threatening, and it is less important that they always act professionally. But is this always the case? What if an IT error causes a traffic light to malfunction, with motor accidents as a result?" she said. "What if an air crash was actually caused by an IT worker who cut corners because he or she did not act as a professional should?"

Ethics is the glue that held professionalism together, she noted. But while it was crucial to retain core professionalism, ICT professionals would also have to cultivate a range of new skills to remain relevant and competitive, she said.

Top skills in demand

Citing World Economic Forum findings, de Roche said top skills and attributes in demand by 2022 would include analytical thinking and innovation; active learning and learning strategies; creativity, originality and initiative; technology design and

programming; critical thinking and analysis; complex problem solving; and systems design and analysis. Skills and attributes once highly in demand – such as time management and attention to detail, would become less of a priority for industries.

In order to prepare learners and equip professionals for the demands of the future, education would have to focus on areas where robots and artificial intelligence were not equipped to excel – such as creative endeavours, social interaction and collaboration.

“Robots don’t have emotional intelligence, so there will be a demand in future for humans who cultivate superior social interaction skills, as well as uniquely human abilities such as curiosity, scientific discovery, creative writing and physical dexterity.”

In a fast-changing environment, humans would have to develop the ability to learn, unlearn and relearn new skills repeatedly, she concluded.

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