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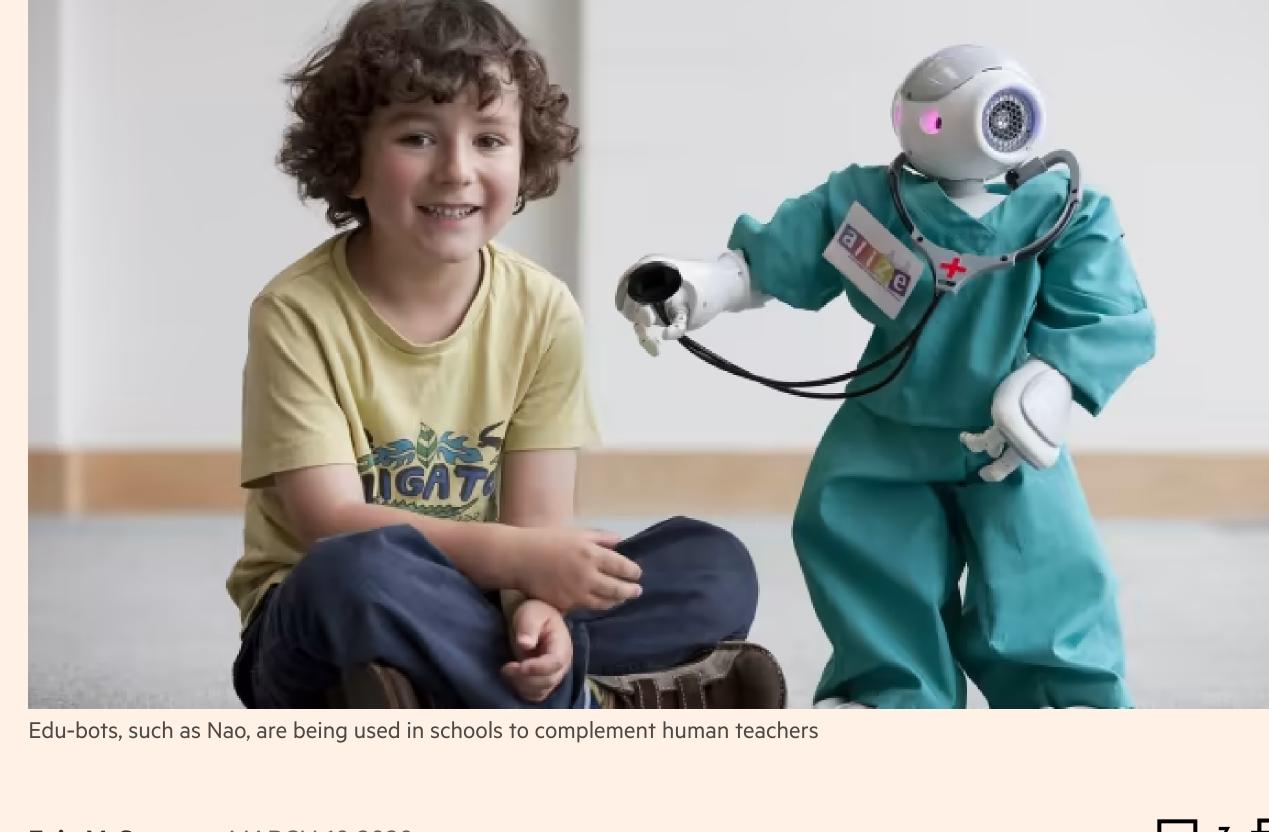
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## How AI eases teachers' heavy workloads

Using robots for mundane tasks frees up more time to spend with students

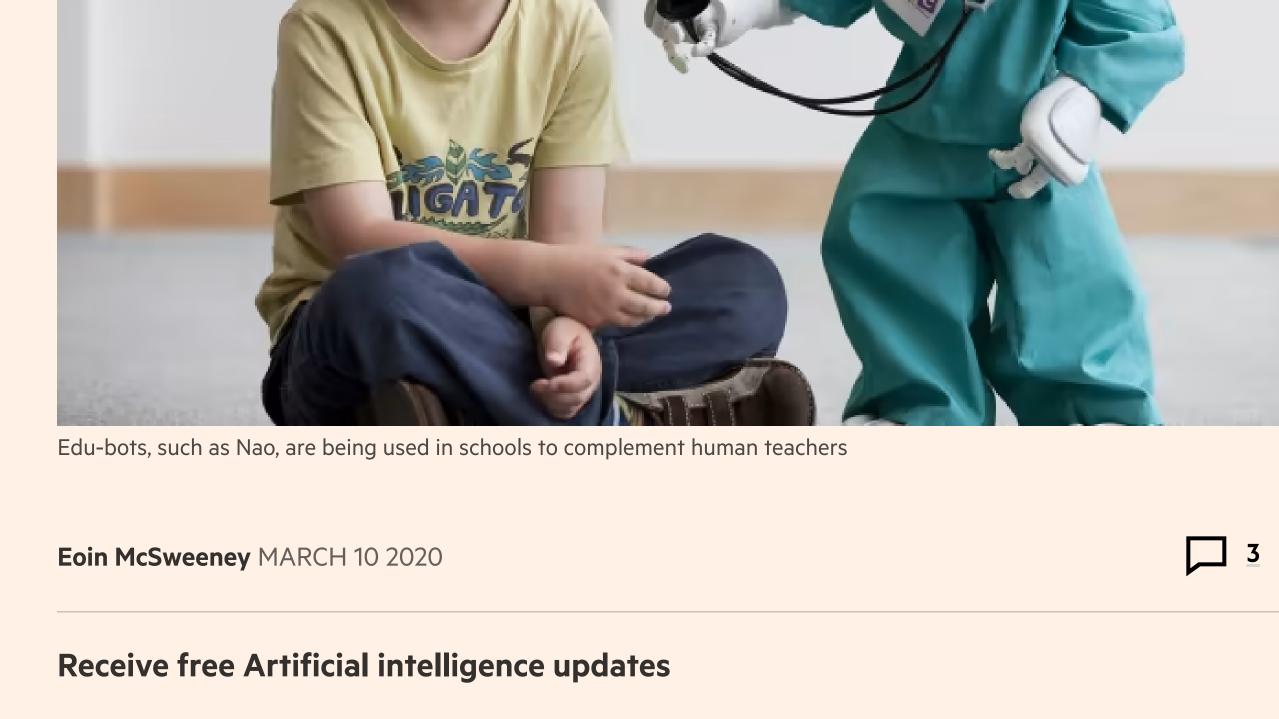


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**Eoin McSweeney** MARCH 10 2020



In a primary school in Plymouth, England, children sit across from Nao, a humanoid robot that is conducting an educational game using an electronic tablet. The machine, created by the robotics arm of Japan's SoftBank, is capable of recognising 20 languages and learnt how to conduct the lesson in three hours.

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raised concerns that human teachers could one day become redundant. It is estimated that 1.5m workers in England and 800m globally are at risk of being replaced by robotic automation by 2030, according to the UK's Office for National Statistics and McKinsey Global Institute. Experts, industry chiefs and governments say such fears are overblown, and are working together to harness technology to ease teachers' workloads, freeing

Nao and other advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics have

"Too much of our time is spent planning lessons and assessing students," says Isabella Kallan, a modern language teacher in London who has witnessed Nao in action. "Schools need to employ more teaching assistants but the government hasn't provided the resources. Technology like this would enable

us to help more of those students who are struggling."

them from mundane tasks to focus on spending more time with their students.

University College London report. The overall average was 47 hours during term-time, which is eight hours more than comparable OECD countries. While 98 per cent of teachers say they enjoy teaching, they spend less than half their time in the classroom because of the burdens of administrative work, planning lessons and marking, according to a report by Ofsted, the

A quarter of teachers in England work 60 hours a week, according to a recent

Education technology Global venture capital funding (\$bn) China

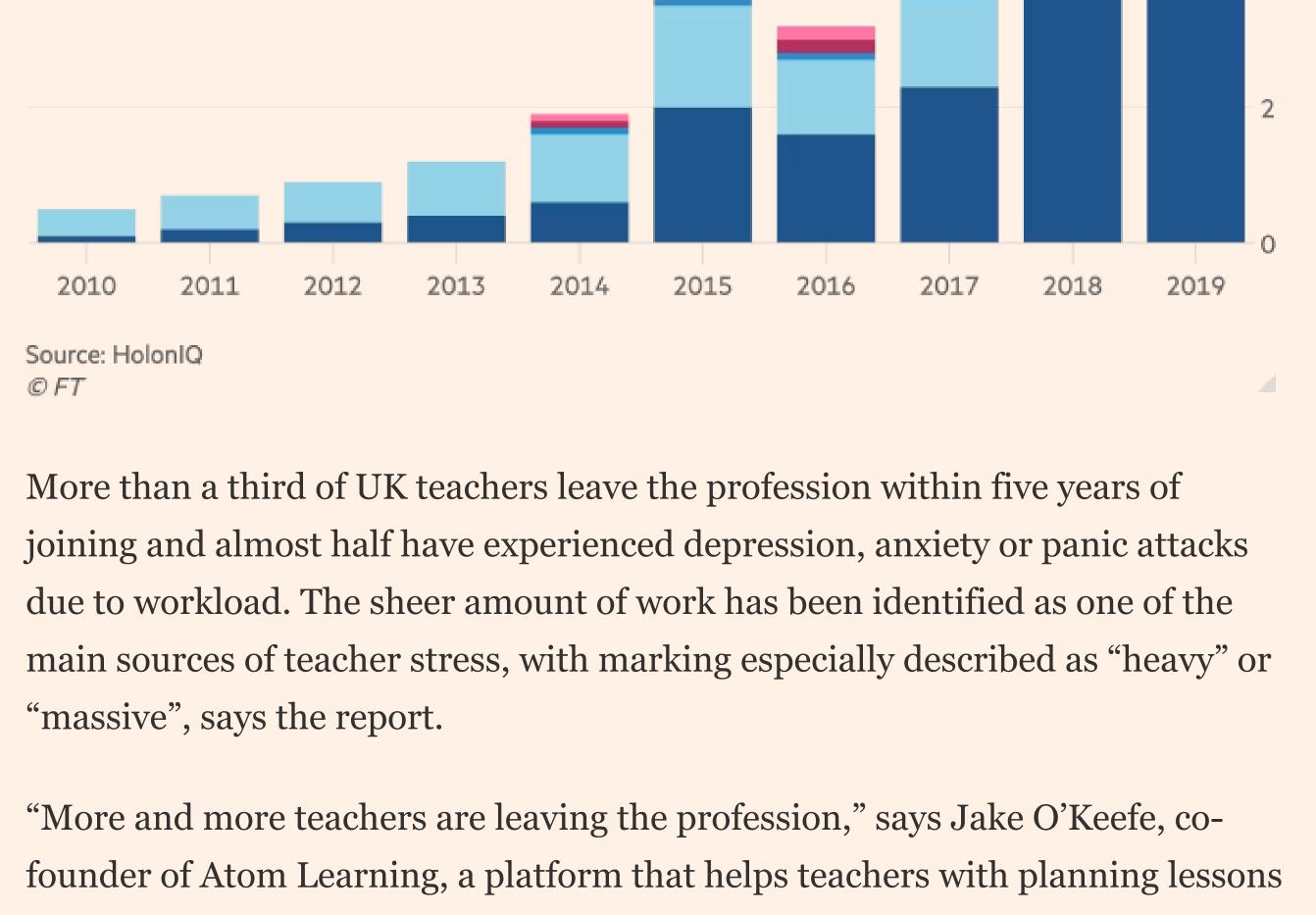
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government's inspectorate.



and gathering resources. "It's about the quality of the work and the stress put

The UCL report recommended a cut in workload and less time spent on lesson

planning and administration. However, it added that these recommendations

upon them both internally and from parents."

and machines is nonsense

Priya Lakhani, Century Tech

Atlantic.

will be difficult to implement without technology because teaching assistants are already overworked and there is a shortage of teachers. 66 "Tech... can empower the teacher to spend more time teaching, freeing them The idea that kids will walk up to focus on skills like critical thinking into schools run by robots

and collaboration," says Priya Lakhani,

platform for schools and universities.

chief executive of Century Tech, a learning

Century Tech's system marks each student's work automatically, collecting the data for teachers so they can identify who understood the lesson and who struggled. Funded by angel and social impact investors, it charges £5 a year per pupil, and invests revenues into research. Investors generally continue to be enticed by education technology companies

such as Century, with venture capital funding for the sector surpassing \$8bn in

2018, according to Holon IQ, a market intelligence agency. Think and Learn,

the Indian company behind learning app Byju, was recently valued at \$8.2bn

following fresh funding of \$200m from US private equity group General

The potential impact of automation on jobs

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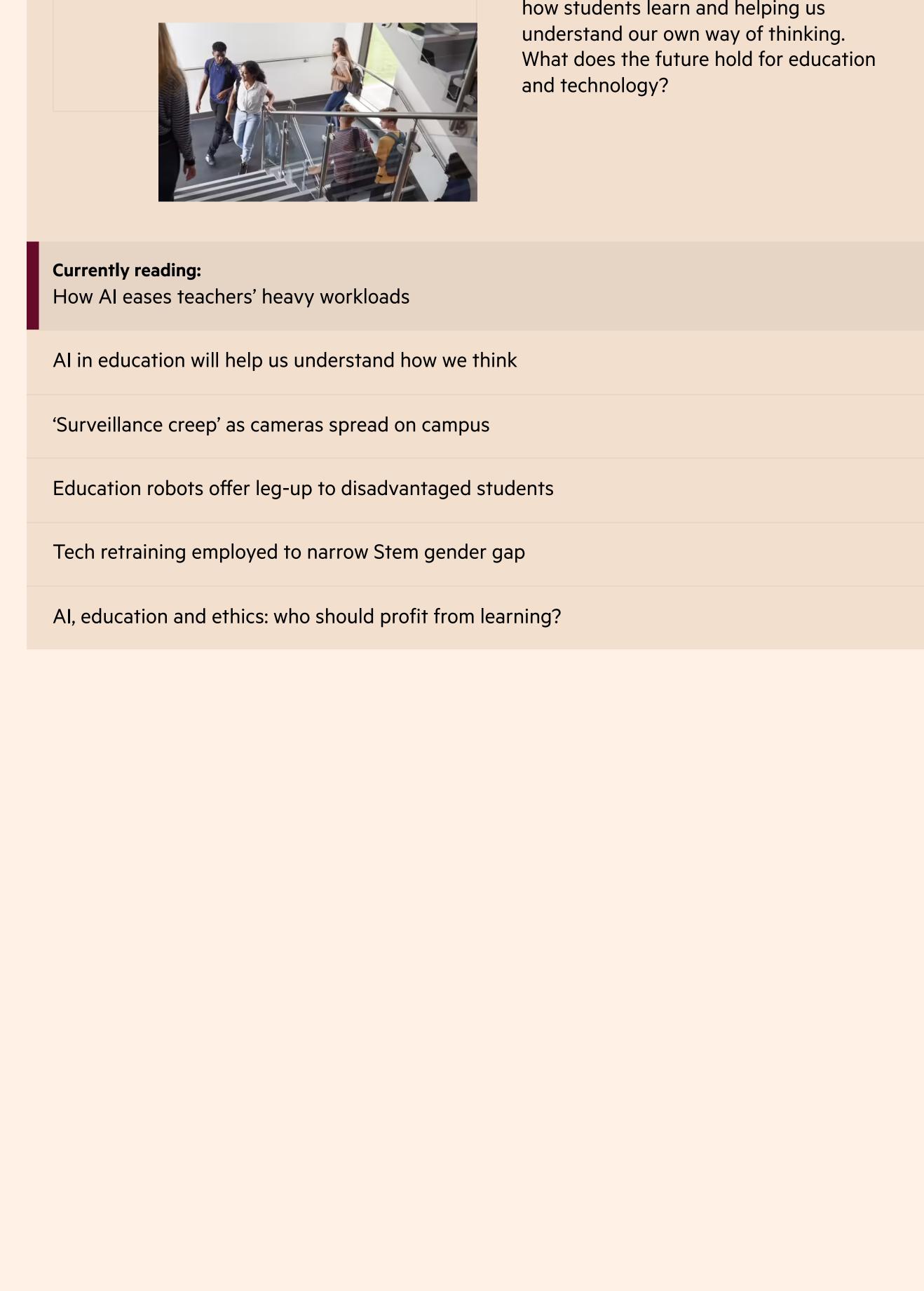
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Proportion of jobs by sector at high risk of automation (%) Technicians and associated — Managers and professionals Clerical workers — Service and sales workers Craft and related trades workers Machine operators and assemblers 70 60 50

Source: PwC © FT Elon Musk, Tesla chief executive, once described AI as "our biggest existential threat" and likened AI research to "summoning a demon". A recent report from the Institute for Ethical AI in Education, a UK based think-tank, warned that replacing emotionally-laden teaching and learning activities with algorithms could decrease independent thinking and depersonalise education, while personal user data could also be used inappropriately. Ms Lakhani is conscious of these risks. However, she is sure of one thing: "Technology cannot and will not replace the one to one interaction between the teacher and the student . . . The idea that kids will walk into schools run by robots and machines is nonsense."

2029



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