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Passage 1. *Alan Tuckett believes lifelong learning should be embraced.*

- 1 Education for the masses used to provide training for life. In traditional schooling, students add more years to education early in life, taking years to complete certificates and degrees. But that does not seem sufficient in the twenty-first century economy, argue economists. A new wave in education and training has arrived, one marked by continual training throughout a person's lifetime, consumed in short spurts when needed, rather than in lengthy blocks of time as they do now. 5
- 2 The decision to go to college still makes sense for most, but the idea of a mechanistic relationship between education and wages has taken a knock. A recent survey conducted by the Pew Research Centre showed that a mere 16% of Americans think that a four-year degree course prepares students very well for a high-paying job in the modern economy. Some of this may be an effect of the financial crisis and its economic aftermath of joblessness. Some of it may be simply a matter of supply: as more people hold college degrees, the associated premium goes down. But technology also seems to be complicating the picture. 10
- 3 The answer seems obvious. To remain competitive, and to give low-skilled and high-skilled workers alike the best chance of success, economies need to offer training and career-focussed education throughout people's working lives. In many occupations, it has become essential to acquire new skills as established ones become obsolete. Coding skills which most adults never learned in school, are now being required well beyond the technology sector. In America, almost half of the postings in the occupations with the highest pay are for jobs that frequently ask for coding skills. 15
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- 4 Learning throughout life thus makes sense. Research shows it is good for your health, your wealth, your civic engagement and your family's future prospects. It prolongs your independent life and enriches your quality of life. For companies, investing in worker skills makes sense too – it promotes flexibility and creativity, problem-solving, teamwork and an increased sense of agency among staff, making them more satisfied and more productive. These are, of course, exactly the traits needed as companies face the challenges of the latest industrial revolution. 25
- 5 Lifelong learning need not be restricted to one's work to generate powerful benefits. Skills and aptitudes generated in one context can be applied elsewhere. In a study, funds were allocated to support staff with learning outside of company training. They took the skills they developed for pleasure back into the workplace. The study found that absenteeism rates dropped, workplace disputes and strikes symbolic of poor labour relations came to an end. Investing in learning for pleasure improved the bottom line. 30
- 6 For governments, supporting learning in later life helps to delay the onset of dependency among rapidly ageing populations; plays an important role in overcoming inequality and exclusion; and supports inter-generational learning, creating more resilient families and communities. Indeed, the benefits of adult learning are felt across a range of government departments. Jacques Delors, then President of the European Commission, summed this up when he argued that lifelong learning was crucial to both economic prosperity and social cohesion. 35
- 7 A college degree at the start of a working career does not answer the needs of a lengthening career span. Vocational training is good at giving people job-specific skills, but those, too, will need to be updated over and over again during a career lasting decades. Vocational training has a role, but training someone early to do one thing all their lives is not the answer to lifelong learning. 40



Passage 2. *Edoardo Campanella examines the difficulties of lifelong learning.*

- 1 In today's fast-changing labour market, the most in-demand occupations, such as data scientists, app developers, or cloud computing specialists, did not even exist five or ten years ago. It is estimated that 65% of children entering primary school today will end up in jobs that do not yet exist. Succeeding in such a labour market requires workers to be agile lifelong learners, comfortable with continuous adaptation and willing to move across industries. If one profession becomes obsolete – a change that can happen virtually overnight – workers need to be able to shift nimbly into another. 5
- 2 Lifelong learning is supposed to provide the intellectual flexibility and professional adaptability needed to seize opportunities in new and dynamic sectors as they emerge, as well as the resilience to handle shocks in declining industries. Training centres, the logic goes, simply need to identify the competencies that companies will look for in the future and design courses accordingly. Yet, in the Eurozone, only about 10% of the labour force undertook some type of formal or informal training in 2017, and the share declined sharply with age. If lifelong learning is the key to competing in the labour market, why are people so reluctant to pursue it? 10
- 3 The truth is that reversing the process of skills obsolescence requires overcoming psychological and intellectual barriers that are too often ignored. Lifelong learning is thus dreaded because it is viewed as extremely costly in terms of time, money, and effort, and the returns are regarded as highly uncertain, especially amid technological disruption. Such views may be reinforced by feelings of depression and hopelessness that often arise when workers lose their jobs or face career crossroads. If the need to 'start over' after years in a certain job or field is demoralising, after decades it can seem like an insurmountable challenge. 15 20
- 4 In almost any society, age is associated with wisdom, experience, and growing social status. With one's powers of working memory, abstract reasoning, and the processing of novel knowledge at their peak before the age of 20, youth was the time for learning the fundamentals of the profession that one would practise throughout adulthood. Once in that job, a worker would refine their skills as they gained experience, but they would probably not have to learn new competencies from scratch. Middle age is where cognitive performance starts to decline. Those youthful abilities deteriorate substantially, making the acquisition of new skills increasingly challenging. Only the ability to use knowledge that was previously acquired through education and experience improves later in life. The reason why today's training programmes for older workers are ineffective is partly because they usually target those abilities most apparent in the young. For companies, retraining a workforce becomes too challenging, hence when new skills are needed, they turn to alternatives like automation and outsourcing instead. Teaching an old dog new tricks is simply not worth the effort. 25 30
- 5 The assumption that workers, regardless of their age and educational background, will independently do what it takes to keep up with technological change is a fallacy that risks creating an army of unemployed citizens. Such an approach can be expected only of the most highly educated and qualified workers – those whose jobs are ironically not even at risk from automation. This may change in the future, because younger generations are growing up with the expectation of lifelong learning. But, in the meantime, policymakers should take steps to mitigate the complicated mental processes at the root of many people's professional inertia. 35 40

