

HIGHER EDUCATION'S DEW POINT AND THE ART OF *KINTSUGI*

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ABSTRACT

Publications focused on technology's impact on future society, especially from artificial intelligence (AI), have become almost ubiquitous, appearing in newsprint, panel discussions and on best-seller book lists. In particular, much of the discussion has focused on technology's effect on future jobs. For example, an author of the 2017 International Bar Association report claimed that "Jobs at all levels in society presently undertaken by humans are at risk of being reassigned to robots or AI..." Added to the discussion we need to include the reality that wage stagnation and minimal wage increases have been witnessed in several of the traditional powerhouse economies, from the United States to Japan. The McKinsey Global Institute reported that up to 70% of people in advanced economies had seen no real increase in their earnings for ten years since 2005. The slump has been particularly unkind on those without higher qualifications and toward those not of the Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) disciplines.

Conversely, the pressure to obtain a higher education degree has increased. But, higher education fees have followed an upward spiral trend in most countries, with some reports highlighting that the U.S. public university fees have increased dramatically more than private fees. The British Government has recently announced the possibility of a further rise in university fees, capped presently at £9000 (US\$11,000) per year. The increase will be allowed to those institutions that score highly on scales that measure time students spend in class, jobs offered and average graduate earnings. Given the British directive to focus on graduate earnings, the return on investment (ROI) of the degree should be commensurate and needs discussion. The evidence demonstrates that students graduating with professional STEM-related degrees will earn vastly more, not only over their lifetime, but also within the short term than nearly all Humanities graduates, raising serious concerns for those who choose non-STEM degrees.

Higher education is not immune to the changing paradigms in our contemporary society. This paper will discuss some oversights from higher education in adequately preparing futures for their clients by addressing these impacts above. The paper will conclude that higher education needs to consider a Japanese cultural artistic process, *kintsugi*. The futures present many unknowns. We in the academy must not merely let the futures be created for us: we must be a part of the creative process.