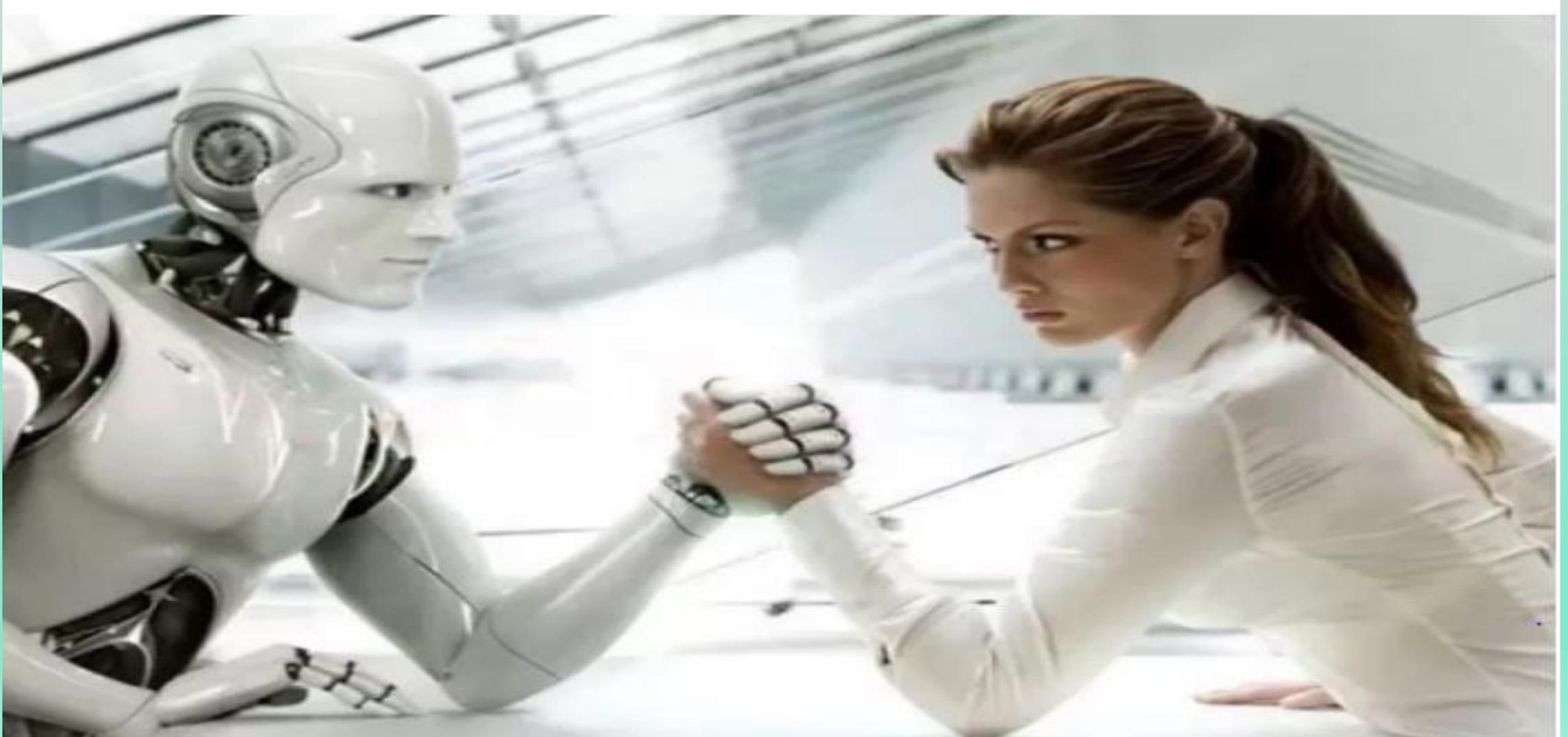


# Real People or Robots: Maintaining Personal Identity in Education and Guidance Provision



Bernadette Walsh: Adult Guidance Counsellor: HELLIN Conference: 7<sup>th</sup> December 2018

# Overview

- **The Irish labour market:** STEM careers and current/emerging skills shortages
- **Theme:** Information, advice and guidance and the links between **guidance counselling, education and life-long learning**
- My **non-traditional journey** into Higher Education
- The importance of the **learner as a unique individual** and valuing personal identity to support **meaningful** life-long learning

# The Irish labour market: STEM careers and current/emerging skills shortages

## Unemployment rates:

- The most recent Irish seasonally adjusted unemployment rate fell to **5.3 percent** (October of 2018)
- This is the lowest rate since February of 2008. It reached an all time high of **17.3% percent** in December of 1985.

## However!

- The youth unemployment rate is high at 15.4% and over a third of those unemployed are long-term unemployed.
- Despite economic growth - many young people and long-term unemployed need significant support to access labour market and educational opportunities.
- 79 designated 'blackspot' areas with up to 27% unemployed.
- According to recent statistics older people are less likely to engage in learning and upskilling opportunities (55-64 years at a low 14%)

# STEM Careers in Ireland: Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths

- People working in STEM in Ireland are changing the face of the world we live in everyday; research and innovation, life-saving drugs and devices, advancements in AI such as driverless cars
- Over the past ten years, employment in the technology sector has increased by 30% and salaries are on average 29% higher than in other sectors!
- Ireland has grown into a global technology hub; now home to **9 of the top 10 global software companies** and all **top 10 internet companies**.
- Ireland is rapidly becoming a global leader in technology. The **HEA** has incentivised the state Higher Education Institutions to provide additional places in their computing courses across the country.
- With exponential growth, so many STEM careers opportunities. Currently, the highest demand is for graduates with STEM qualifications, particularly in the areas of medical devices, renewable energy and ICT.

## STEM...

### However!

- The rate of graduate output is not keeping pace with the rate of jobs being created.
- Technology has been replacing people in the monotonous jobs with advanced machinery – Robots. No matter how advanced the AI becomes there will always be decisions that are to be made only by humans.
- In such a rapidly changing sector – difficult to plan for the future with many projected jobs that haven't been invented yet!

## The Irish Labour Market: Jobs in Demand “Skills Shortages”

- Employers are struggling to fill their vacancies across industry: **181 jobs in demand**. EGFSN [click here](#)

## **Theme: Information, advice and guidance and the links between guidance counselling, education and life-long learning**

- **Information:** Access and provision of relevant information in education and guidance provision is important but on its own is often meaningless. We are saturated with information.
- **Advice:** Supporting an understanding of information  
Central to the role of Guidance Counsellors and Educators is to support our clients and learners to make sense of information. The “content” is as important as the meaning-making “process”.
- **Guidance:** As in education provision, the Guidance Counselling interaction is often viewed as a “learning relationship” and the student/client is supported to explore themselves in relation to **meaningful** employment and educational opportunities.
- Guidance Counselling is underpinned by a **holistic approach** so that the individuals personal, social, economic, educational and vocational context are considered. The value of the individual’s **story, lived experience and non-formal learning** is also central to adult and community education philosophies.

- There are now many new and exciting opportunities in the Irish labour market and Education System but there are **still many barriers** for individuals in terms of **access and equality**.
- **Life-long learning** is about people accessing **meaningful** non-formal and formal learning opportunities at any stage of their lives...

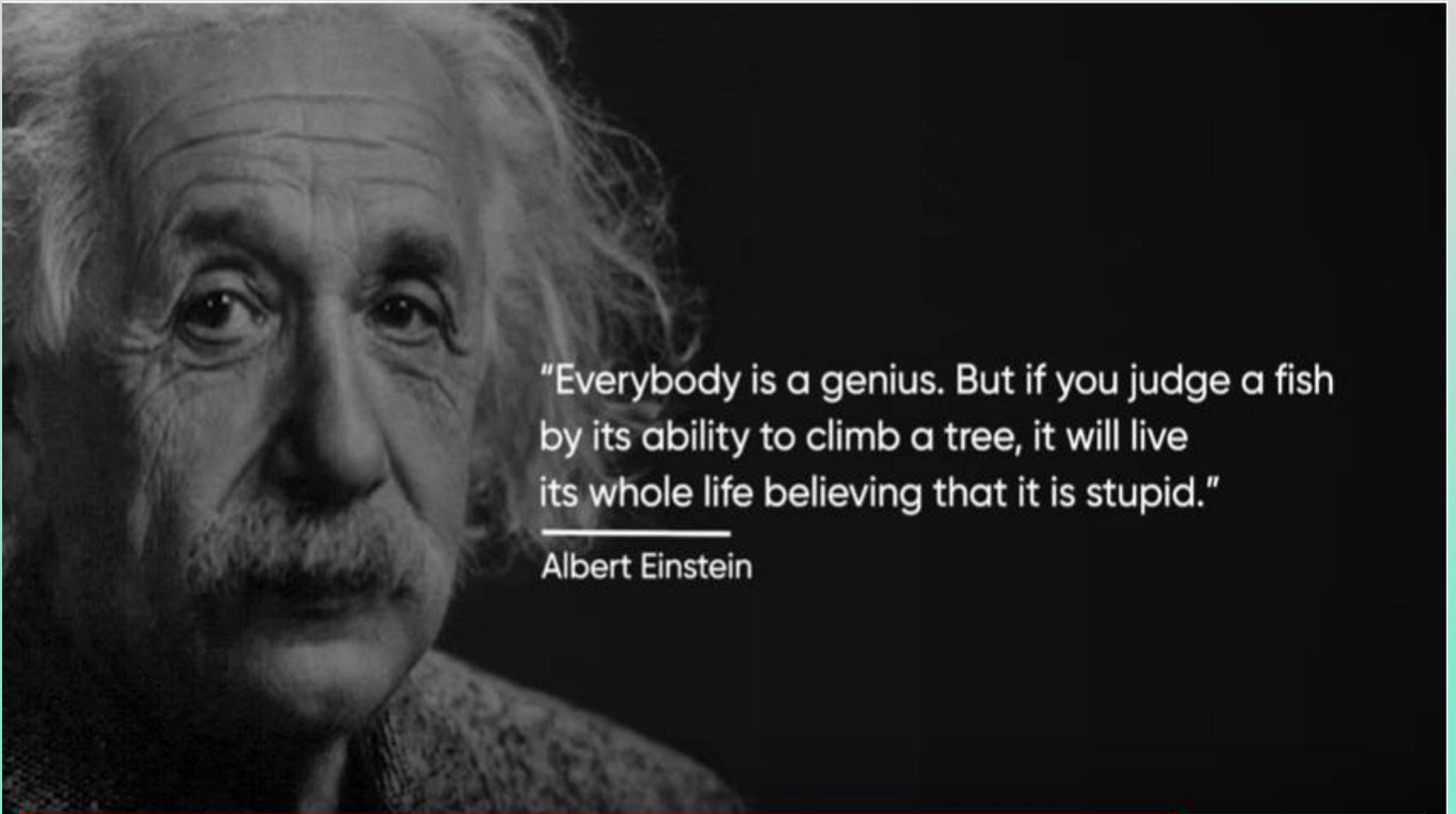
# The importance of individual story and experience in education and guidance provision



Jason's Learner Story...

# My non-traditional educational journey: My learner story...





"Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid."

Albert Einstein

Up skilling for jobs not the meaningful life-long learning opportunities  
Bring **out** the potential in the individual rather than concentrating on just putting knowledge **in...**

# The importance of recognising the learner as a unique individual to support meaningful life-long learning

- Our relationships with others have become permeated, shaped and influenced by technology.
- We are now more connected “on-line” than “off-line”
  - This has many advantages (and disadvantages) communication with family, friends, for education and guidance provision. For example: MyFuture+ career learning tool and extended reach to rural communities, skype guidance, distance learning etc.
- The world of work may be changing but our **core values** as educators and guidance counsellors do not have to. A continued emphasis on **every client/learner as an individual with their own story and life experience is crucial** so that we continue to be holistic in our approach.
- There is a danger that upskilling and educating our clients and learners **for the labour market alone** will dehumanise our work and devalue the life-long learning experience of the person. Encourage more diversity in age, socio-economic background, ethnic minority groups etc.
- Technology is here to stay so we will need to adapt to these changes for education and guidance provision.
- However, Robots do not have skills such as **emotional intelligence, empathy, respect and creativity** – humans do! Let’s continue to value and appreciate these skills **in ourselves and the learner**.

Thank you!



**Let us be always conscious of supporting the needs of the learner – this will in turn benefit the economy!**