

## Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology



### What is Society 5.0 and why should young learners take note of it?

*By Prof Alta van der Merwe*

The concept of Society 5.0 was introduced in Japan in the 5th Science and Technology Basic Plan. The Cabinet Office of Japan (CAO, 2020) defines Society 5.0 as ‘a human-centered society that balances economic advancement with the resolution of social problems by a system that highly integrates cyberspace and physical space’. Society 5.0 follows the hunting society (Society 1.0), agricultural society (Society 2.0), industrial society (Society 3.0), and information society (Society 4.0) (CAO, 2020).

Technology has entered our society on all levels and we are using different forms of technology to assist us in our daily life. There are, however, a few advantages and disadvantages in being part of Society 5.0 where technology integrates in all levels of our life through mobile technology. Society 5.0 is linked with the fourth industrial revolution (4IR), which is the current and developing environment in which disruptive technologies and trends such as the Internet of Things (IoT), robotics, virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and artificial intelligence (AI) are changing the way we socialise, live and work (Techtarget, 2019).

In Society 5.0 we are living in a society where a vast amount of information is available. The access to information creates a number of opportunities such as access to resources in the blink of an eye. However, we are also faced with the possibility of information overload or infobesity, which is where we struggle to make decisions as we have too much information pertaining to an issue. As young learners we need to understand the sources where information come from and be careful in what we use on our learning path. We also need to distinguish between information and knowledge.

Gaming developers use the immersive abilities of technologies to integrate for instance gaming in our daily life. One example is *Anki Drive*, a new-generation game that uses AI for car racing against your friends. Although these are fun activities it has also emerged as an addiction where children and young adults cannot function outside of this gaming world.

We are living in a fast-changing world—technology has many advantages and we are connected daily with our friends and our family. However, in Society 5.0 where we are so connected it is important to stay aware that although there are many opportunities, there might also be some dangers that we need to be aware of.

**CAO (2020) Society 5.0, available at:**  
[https://www8.cao.go.jp/cstp/english/society5\\_0/index.html](https://www8.cao.go.jp/cstp/english/society5_0/index.html)

**Techtarget (2019) Fourth Industrial Revolution, available at:** <https://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/fourth-industrial-revolution>