

Skills shortage threatens the UK's thriving manufacturing industry

Posted on Thursday 2nd September 2010

British manufacturing is thriving, not declining, due to innovative strategies by companies, but is at risk of collapse due to a severe shortage of skills.

Professor John Bryson, Chair of Enterprise and Economic Geography, stated in a talk to the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), that it is incorrect to hold the belief that British manufacturing is dead. In fact, it is flourishing due to survival strategies put in place by manufacturing companies. He also expressed the need for a new, modern definition of manufacturing.

According to the research, Britain is now producing more manufactured product than in 1966, when manufacturing employment was at its peak. The companies that are now the bedrock of British industry have transformed their businesses in order to mitigate the effects of globalisation and successful manufacturers based in low-cost economies, and have become producers of information-rich, design-intensive and high-value products.

However the successful firms are now concerned about the lack of high-tech. skills in the labour market and some are even worried that their businesses may not survive into the next decade due to their inability to recruit employees with the right expertise.

Professor Bryson says: 'British manufacturing is now about hybrid products, products that contain embedded services, products that require a constant dialogue with the customer, design-intensive products that have attachments with designated geographic locations and convey positive connotations of reputation and quality.

'It is therefore extremely worrying that the UK has so many success stories in manufacturing and has such a solid base in modern manufacturing, but that there is a huge threat to the continued survival and competitiveness of British manufacturing. This threat involves hard-to-fill vacancies and skill shortages that will make it extremely difficult for firms to grow and in some cases even continue to survive.'

Professor Bryson maintained that the opportunity for specialised training, making manufacturing more appealing at GCSE and A level, and using a more up-to-date definition of manufacturing, would make it an attractive career option.

[Manufacturing press release \(/news/latest/2010/09/2sept-manufacturing.aspx\)](/news/latest/2010/09/2sept-manufacturing.aspx)



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