HOUSE OF COMMONS

Science, Innovation and Technology Committee

Oral evidence: Innovation showcase, HC 523

Tuesday 20 May 2025

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Watch the meeting

Members present: Chi Onwurah (Chair); Emily Darlington; Kit Malthouse; Dr Lauren Sullivan; Adam Thompson; Martin Wrigley.

Question 16

Witnesses

I: Dr Majid Al-Kader, CEO, mXreality; and Jason Holt CBE, Co-founder, mXreality.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Dr Majid Al-Kader and Jason Holt.

Q16 **Chair:** Welcome to today's innovation showcase at the Select Committee for Science, Innovation and Technology. The Committee wants to understand how the UK supports innovators and what more can be done. To inform our work, each week we offer a showcase to an excellent innovator. Today's innovators are Dr Majid Al-Kader from mXreality and Jason Holt, from Metaverse, who work in immersive learning. I shall ask Dr Majid Al-Kader to tell us more.

Dr Al-Kader: Many thanks for the opportunity to come and talk to you. My background is mainly focused on innovation. I have had over 30 years working on immersive solutions to help the young generation on how to bridge the gap between them and employers, by creating a safe, virtual, real environment.

Today we are not going to talk about that part. We are going to talk about an initiative we are creating to help the young generation, which is to do with how we can help with career advice and sector attraction, and how technology can help. Over 30 years, I have seen how this has worked with parents and the struggle we have with children to understand where they are going to go, and for parents on how to advise their children. That is the focus of what I am going to talk about, very briefly.

Jason Holt: Thank you for welcoming us here and inviting us. I am a co-founder of Metaverse Learning with Majid. We have a mission, which is to be part of the toolkit of every teacher in the land. We believe that immersive learning is a fantastic and powerful tool to engage and address areas like skills gaps and work experience. It can address major areas around access to STEM. We are very excited to be on that journey.

We feel that we are at a crossroads where immersive learning and the community with which we are working are robust and very engaged. We are already working with about 70% of the FE colleges in the country. With CareerVerse, which Majid will talk about, and also Agentic AI tutors, there is a phenomenal opportunity for this country to be world-class as the model of how to engage adults and young people together, through technology, through an immersive experience. We are here to share that in more detail with you, if you are interested.

Dr Al-Kader: Going back to CareerVerse, in our opinion what we have seen in the market is that there is lots of information available, but it is all siloed and distributed. The work has been written by career experts but without consulting students and parents, but at the end of the day it is for them. As a parent, I really struggled to understand where to advise my daughter to go on her career pathway. It is the same thing with all employers that we speak to. They have a problem with attracting the young generation because the schools advise on specific areas, such as

business, economy, psychology and so on, but they are not talking about the other skills shortages that we have in this country.

To describe it briefly, our vision is to create an online, safe Metaverse hub to allow students and parents to go into the hub in 3D, walk around and go into a hall and find information about different education pathways, such as apprenticeships, HE and so on. They will be able to talk to experts and have a one-to-one chat or a group chat. It will give them information. Lots of parents have no idea, for example, what T-level or apprenticeship means. They all focus on a university degree. It is to educate them and tell them more about it.

We are going to do an AI profile for the students. That is not to say what they want to be when they grow up, but to tell us about their hobbies and what they like. We cover the SEN area as well. We then advise them of the different pathways. We do a big city view—the city of London—and they look at the different pathways or jobs they can get. They will experience this. You walk around and click on each pathway that you want to do. That will take you to another hub, where you walk around and can experience, for example, what nuclear is or engineering. You can walk around and talk. They will be surrounded by employers, who are going to have their own booth. They can come and talk to you. As soon as you approach them, they will know who you are, and they will talk to you. You can have information about that. It is to bridge the gap between parents, students and employers.

We are not going to replace anything that exists in the market; it is more about how we can filter the information and do it in a visual and immersive way where everyone can gather that information, because that is how our children like to learn. It is not via the traditional way of going and looking at a website; they refuse to do it. We have been listening to the young generation and working with them all our lives. This is the language that they understand. In the schools, they have influencers and people coming from industry. They come to the school to inspire students, but once they leave the school that all disappears with them. We are going to try to capture every inspirational speaker, have their video and put it on demand. All that source information will not disappear. It will be there to inspire everybody. It is going to be safe.

Obviously, it will take a very long time to build. We are building the first phase and have support from the right hon. Robert Halfon, the former Education Minister. He is working with us and supporting us. We have launched it to 27 organisations, including BAE and Rolls-Royce, the careers advice company and so on, to tell them about the vision, to have more consultation with them and to see what they think about the idea. That is now encouraging us to start building the first phase and the next one. We will launch it in September. Then we would like to build more and more on that.

Jason Holt: To build on what Majid is saying, I did not talk about my background. My background is apprenticeships. I have spent 20 years in the area of education. I had my own training provider in apprenticeships—the only apprentice training provider in the jewellery sector. I was then very involved with the Government on developing apprenticeships nationally in all sectors, and I wrote a Government review. Latterly, I co-founded the Association of Apprentices. Together, in our own different ways, we are innovators and disrupters.

In my view, the convergence of the power in what Majid is saying only comes from having got to the point where immersive learning is now mainstream, whether it is virtual reality, accessed through a headset, or using your phone, laptop or tablet or in an immersive room. This is now a mainstream part of technology. We have a phenomenal opportunity working together with Government agencies and industry to bring this all together. We talk a lot about a world-class apprenticeship system. What about a world-class apprenticeship system that is also using world-class UK technology? That could come together to create a formidable career advice and guidance tool. That is what we are super excited about.

Dr Al-Kader: One important bit about this tool is that it will be available free of charge to all schools. It is not a commercial model. We are not trying to make money out of it. Between us we would like to give it as a thank you to industry for the support. It is exactly our aim to help the younger generation to get on to the right career pathways.

Chair: Thank you; that sounds very exciting and innovative. Emily, these are your innovators. Would you like to close us out?

Emily Darlington: Yes, I have had the huge pleasure of seeing Majid and the team and trying out some of the VR training modules. Boy, it only takes you about two seconds to get completely immersed. What I think is really interesting is how much he is focusing on the skills that we need in engineering, construction, nursing and healthcare and being able to create, through AI, real-world experiences for them and to see some real-life safety improvements on those sites for the people who use it.

The career advice stuff is exciting. Having had a look at it, it not only tells you about different careers and gives you the ability to interact through AI or directly with employers through the platform, but it also shows you, and maps out, your own area so that you have real-life decisions about what jobs are actually going to be available to you if you do particular courses. Our young people are very savvy. If they are going to pay for education, they want to make sure that there is a job and a career at the end of it. This linking up is really exciting.

Chair: Thank you. The work of various research into access to careers, particularly STEM careers, emphasises that experience of it is one of the greatest drivers for those from non-traditional backgrounds—for example, women into STEM careers. If this product, service or initiative can help address that, it will be making a contribution. Thank you very much for

joining us today.