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Empowering Lifelong Learning: Student Mobility, Career Progression, and Global Insights in Continuing Education



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The Importance of Lifelong Learning in Continuing Education



63%

of employers identify skills gaps as the biggest barrier to business transformation.

Source: WEF, 2025

72%


of all jobs nationally will require training by 2031.
Highlighting the growing need for upskilling and continuous learning to remain competitive in the job market.

Source: Carnevale et al., 2023



1 in 4

people are already dealing with a mismatch between the skills they have and the skills they need for their jobs.



Source: Mateo Díaz et al., 2022

Challenge 1 Making Stackable Credentials Work

Traditional degree pathways often do not recognize prior learning, requiring additional coursework.



Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)

Helps learners bypass redundant coursework and accelerate credential completion.

- **49%** of adult students with PLA credit complete a degree within 7.5 years vs. **27%** without PLA.
- PLA helps students complete their degrees and re-enroll again, even when transferring to other institutions.

Source: [\(Klein-Collins et al., 2020\)](#)



Micro-Credentials & Badges

Validate competencies and improve recognition of skills.

- Increase portability across geographic borders, but require transparency for trust in the value of micro-credentials.

Source: [\(Oliver & United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2022\)](#)



Challenge 2 Cross-Border Credential Recognition

Without standardization, students and professionals face barriers in using their credits internationally.

- *NL Business BA → US Scholarship*
- *NL 1-10 vs. US A-F grading*
- *Delays in scholarship*

Barriers

- No **global standard** for grading and credential recognition
- **Different credit systems** block seamless transfers
- HEIs **limit transferable credits** to prevent “patchwork degrees.” (Nuffic, 2022)

Progress

- European Common Microcredential Framework (Antonaci et al., 2021)
- College & Institutes Canada agreement (Colleges & Institutes Canada, 2021)
- Regional efforts building trust and standardization



Vocational
degree

Business
degree BA

U.S.
Scholarship



Challenge 3 Lowering Barriers to Learning

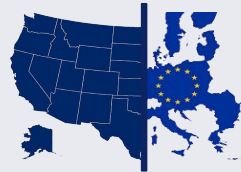


Financial Barriers

58% of learners see tuition costs as a barrier.

78% view college as “expensive.”

Source: [UPCEA & StraighterLine, 2024](#), [Lumina 2025](#)



US: Lack of **funding** for non-degree credentials **increases financial barriers** ([OECD, 2020](#))

EU: Micro-credentials **encouraged** but **still underfunded** ([Council of the EU, 2022](#))

More **employer-backed**, and **scholarship-based** micro-credentials

Source: [OECD, 2021](#)

Stronger collaboration between **institutions & employers**

Source: [Collegis & UPCEA, 2023](#)

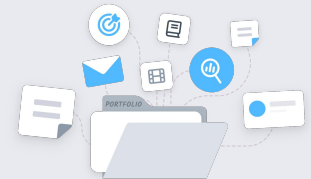


Value & Recognition Barriers



Shaped by Supply & Demand:
Value depends on market needs and availability.

Source: ([Cedefop.europa.eu](#)).



Digital Ecosystems Matter:
EdTech drives adoption, but employer trust wins.
Portfolios > Certificates

Source: ([Cedefop.europa.eu](#))

 **Vocational degree**

 **Business degree BA**

 **U.S. Scholarship**

 **Exchange minor UK**



How do I select the best courses to advance my career?

Challenge 4 The Skills Gap & Employer Recognition

Microcredentials with employer-recognized accreditation can build job-ready skills, bridging the workforce gap.



The Growing Skills Gap in the Workforce

- **40% of European employers** report being unable to hire **skilled workers** (Bridging the Gap, 2022)
- Employers feel graduates **lack job-ready skills** (RAND, 2023; Educause Horizon Report, 2024).

Microcredentials could be the **solution** to these problems, but...

*Traditional degrees continue to be more **valuable***

Source: (Harvard, 2019)

*17% of employers feel that **microcredentials** are **irrelevant***

Source: (UPCEA & Collegis, 2023)

*Most employers don't **recognize** non-degree credentials*

"How do I prove I have the right skills?"

Bankrupt company invalid marketing certificate

Vocational degree

Business degree BA

U.S. Scholarship

Exchange minor UK

First job

Challenge 5 The Traditional Education Ecosystem Falls Short for CE

With declining traditional enrollments, institutions expand online, hybrid, and flexible learning for adult learners.

1



Designed for credit-based courses, making **flexible scheduling & tracking** difficult

2



Built for for-credit enrollment process that is **too heavy handed** for a lot of PCO programs.



3



Lack group enrollment options for corporate clients (B2B). Not **enough flexibility** and **automation** by continuing education programs.

4



Structured for linear, semester-based degree programs with rigid pathways. **No** seamless **support** for **stackable** credentials' **modular** and **flexible** nature

 Vocational degree

 Business degree BA

 U.S. Scholarship

 Exchange minor UK

 First job

 First job, current, job and masters

Key Takeaways: Making Learning More Accessible

How do we ensure that every learner, no matter their background, has access to meaningful credentials?



Invest in **stackable**,
employer-recognized
credentials.



Ensure **global recognition**
& **portability** of learning.



Make learning more
accessible through **flexible**
pathways.

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