



# What's in the Future of Learning?

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## Drivers of Change

Research shows that today's world is experiencing shifts that are likely to reshape the future landscape of our society; changes which affect how individuals learn and what it is that they should be learning.

These shifts are steered by "drivers". There are a group of drivers considered to be the most important and relevant to future work skills and learning.

These drivers are found within today's phenomena of demographics, globalisation and technology, i.e.:

- Increasing global lifespans change the nature of careers and learning;
- Workplace automation pushes human workers out of repetitive tasks;
- Massive increases in sensors and processing power make the world a programmable system;
- New communication tools require new media literacies;
- Social technologies drive new forms of production and value creation;
- Increased global interconnectivity puts diversity and adaptability in the center of organizational operations.

## Challenges

The shifts brought about by these drivers pose specific challenges to society, more specifically to individuals (learners), how they learn and what they should be learning. Research has identified three of the main challenges affecting the learning and training world:

1. Promoting a rapid and more fluent entrance to the labour market and job-placement for the workers of the new generation;
2. Keeping up with the rapid pace of change;
3. Focusing on permanent re-skilling to enable learners to keep their competences updated lifelong.

Today's learners have to face these challenges, and must be well equipped with the right tools (skills) to surpass them. We must be able to cultivate within our learners the right skills for a successful future.

## Skills

Research demonstrates that a specific set of skills are vital to surpass the challenges that today's society poses for learners trying to, not only learn but, enter and succeed in the labour market. Ten important skills have been identified, which can be classified into three different groups:

1. **Global skills:** Transdisciplinarity; and cross-cultural competency.
2. **Cognitive skills:** Sense making & critical thinking; design mindset; social intelligence; computational thinking; novel & adaptive thinking; and cognitive load management.
3. **Technological skills:** New media literacy; and virtual collaboration.

However, how do we make sure that our learners gain these skills from our courses? How can we cultivate these skills within our learners?

Research shows that the best way to foster learning today depends on current trends that, with influence from the drivers of change, have fostered new (and more effective) ways of learning.

## New Trends

**Personalisation, collaboration and informalisation** will be at the core of learning in the future. These trends are not new in the learning and training world, but they will become the central guiding principles for organizing learning and training. Moreover, ICTs will continue to be, and become stronger, conductors of learning and training in accordance to the new trends.

**Personalisation:** Technological advances are allowing individuals to effectively and efficiently (re-)qualify for jobs of their choosing by addressing their particular training needs and by offering them learning opportunities that are tailored-made to their level of competence, job requirements, time constraints, learning styles and objectives. Moreover, learners have more choices available and are faced with more independence and responsibility for their own learning; they have customized choices to make. This is making lifelong learning far easier, more effective and efficient.

**Collaboration:** Professional relationships are increasingly being characterized by open knowledge exchanges between colleagues and peers with similar professional profiles and learning needs, older and younger, as well as experienced and inexperienced workers. ICTs are supporting these developments by providing environments that stage, document, and archive this learning process, therefore, converting knowledge exchanges into accessible learning resources that are available anywhere and anytime. Examples: Using available and accessible online networks and tools for collaboration; as well as having peer-to-peer consultations.

**Informalisation:** Abundant learning and training opportunities are giving individuals more choices to choose from, as well as assisting them in turning professional experiences and personal skills into competences that are relevant for (new) job profiles. However, not all of these opportunities lead to formally recognized qualifications. Today, ICTs can support the documentation and validation for informally acquired skills. Examples: the growing movement of Open Badges being used to electronically document informally acquired skills; ePortfolios; Open Educational Resources; and Massive Open Online Courses.

## New Ways of Learning

The skills that our learners need in order to surpass the challenges can be cultivated (more effectively) through the new ways of learning, which are in harmony with the current trends mentioned above. These new ways of learning are:

1. **Adult-centered:** Teaching and training methodologies must take into consideration adult learning principles. Methodologies must be active, constructive, practical, hands-on, motivating, engaging, tailor-made and targeted for adult learners.
2. **Social:** Teaching and training methodologies must include community oriented activities that encourage peer-to-peer learning, sharing and collaboration.
3. **Lifelong:** Learning and training opportunities must be ready anywhere, anytime. Delivery modalities, whether virtual or face-to-face, must be blended, thus providing learners with various methods and approaches aiming to enhance their continuous learning experience when they choose and need.



## Implications

Today's learners are faced with challenges brought by the drivers of change (demographics, globalisation, and technology). Learning and training opportunities must equip learners with the right skills in order to empower them to surpass these challenges. To cultivate these skills within our learners in a more effective and efficient way, our training courses must:

1. Include more hands-on and practical (scenario-based) activities;
2. Include motivating, engaging and dynamic activities;
3. Include more activities that require interaction and exchanges amongst peers;
4. Include problem-solving (realistic) tasks that foster critical, rapid, creative and adaptive thinking;
5. Enhance flexibility for learners in the learning process;
6. Comprise content that is based on transdisciplinarity;
7. Comprise content that is intercultural;
8. Make strategic use of new media tools.

## References

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