# Chapter 6
# Learning 3.0:
## Bringing the Next Education Paradigm Into Focus

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## ABSTRACT

*The U.S. higher education system is struggling to adapt to the needs of modern society. Employers hire for specific skills and are increasingly looking outside of higher education degrees as those degrees fail to deliver needed skills. Across the country and globe, a growing number of innovative projects are underway to realign higher education's human and technological systems with the skills and competencies necessary for modern work and life. These projects illuminate core elements of the next paradigm of education. In this chapter, authors from Microsoft and LinkedIn highlight some of these promising innovations as well as the risks of this new paradigm. The core elements outlined in the chapter include skill-based education, verifiable credentials and learner records, the infusing of data and intelligence into personalized education-to-employment loops, the unbundling of higher education degrees and the separation of learning from the certification of skills, and new business models and sources of revenue in education.*

Over the last 10 years, most Americans have experienced dramatic changes in how personalized and unstructured life and work have become. For consumers, mobile phones and Internet access have transformed everyday life, enabling new levels of personal access, choice, and agency in retail, travel, information, and other experiences. In the world of work, we are living through transitions to more fluid career patterns, remote and hybrid work, and the digitalization of every job. These shifts in consumer and work life require "soft" or durable human skills that traditional liberal higher education is meant to provide, like creativity, communication, resilience, self-awareness, initiative, critical thinking, and collaboration, as well as the need for everyone to continually advance their technical skills (Aoun, 2017).

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America's education systems and employers are struggling to provide this type of personalization and fluidity in learning and work, and to expand the pipeline between the two so that everyone can develop the skills needed to thrive and have a clearer path to high quality employment (Roslansky, 2021). This chapter focuses on the innovations happening in education around the world as we all strive accelerate the adaptation and expansion of our lifelong learning systems. The chapter highlights how two global organizations, Microsoft and LinkedIn, are observing changes in the structure of education, skills-based hiring, learning-to-employment loops, and workplace learning both in the United States and internationally. The authors have worked for decades in education and skills, learning through dialogues with K–12 education systems, higher education institutions, and businesses globally. We have founded boot camps training thousands of students a year with 95%+ employment rates (Lighthouse Labs, 2020), taught at universities in Canada and the United States, worked on policies regulating education, and designed and implemented technology to support schools and systems.

Education and skilling programs that go beyond traditional education structures are rapidly growing. School districts are setting up apprenticeships with local employers where students get college academic credits while being paid for applied learning. Parents and students are proactively seeking tutoring services and alternative education opportunities in higher numbers. Employers like Starbucks, Target, and Walmart are funding their employees' higher education aspirations (Steele, n.d.). Governments are partnering with companies to empower workforce development initiatives that serve labor market needs. And universities are providing formal credits towards degrees for learning provided by third party organizations that specialize in employment-related skills. As these innovations emerge, however, there is a risk that a web3 model of education (Koenig, 2022), where all learning opportunities are disaggregated and offered through an open marketplace could lead to deeper inequalities and a society less educated in areas that do not have immediate value for employability but are essential to the health of our communities and world.

Further innovations are already underway, such as piloting the use of comprehensive learner records to better represent learners' achievements and the growing use of data to align courses and programs with employment outcomes. However, some adaptations are nascent, such as the unbundling of higher education, skills-based hiring, and the shift to new models of revenue for higher education institutions. What is not yet clearly understood is exactly how these innovations and directions will achieve goals of reduced costs, higher equity, and more efficient education and employment loops.

Conditions are ripe for Learning 3.0. This chapter provides a sketch of the next era of education and explores some of its likely core elements: comprehensive and portable learner records, a skills-based focus, data infused throughout education-to-employment loops, unbundling the ingredients of today's higher education degrees and institutions, skills-based hiring, and new business models for higher education. The goal of the chapter is to show how better alignment between education experiences and modern employment can be achieved, while addressing inequities in the current system.

## BACKGROUND: WHAT IS LEARNING 3.0?

Taking the long view of education's role in relation to labor markets transforms one's perspective on today's challenges. Learning 1.0 represents how teaching and learning took place up until the 19th and 20th centuries, when most of humanity was illiterate and only a tiny fraction of the population became educated. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, what many think of as "education" was primarily an elite