

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

WEBINAR

CONNECTING LEARNING TO EARNING

Washington, D.C.

Tuesday, May 7, 2024

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PANEL DISCUSSION:

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TRUCANO: Hello and welcome everyone. Good morning, good afternoon, good evening, and today, wherever you may find yourself around the world, on the web, and on YouTube. My name is Mike Trucano from the Brookings Institution. On behalf of Brookings and our partners at UNICEF's Generation Unlimited program, I'd like to welcome you to the first in a series of online events and webinars exploring topics related to connecting learning to learning. We're going today, we're going to be talking about the use of digital learning and employment records around the world, with a focus on experiences, lessons, and insights from Europe and, and the Americas.

If you're not sure what learning and employment records are digital educational credentials, you're in the right place to learn from a number of experts who have practical experience around the world in using new technologies to try to unpack, understand, and provide greater opportunities, especially for young people, but really, for anyone who are trying to transition, from the education sector into the workforce and from one job to another. We'll be accepting we'll be happy to accept, questions, via a few mechanisms via email. If you could email events@brookings.edu, events@brookings.edu, that would be great. We'll see those. And we see that a couple of them have already now started to come in. Or if you want to whatever one does on the on the formerly known as Twitter/X platform, if you could with hashtag #learningtoearning, we'll also pick up those questions as well.

You know, many organizations and governments have been exploring the use as well of a variety of new technologies to support youth transitioning to employment and the use of what are now called, in some places, learning and employment records, in some places called digital micro-credentials, they go by different names in different places, they mean, perhaps, slightly different things in different places as well. These have been used to, variety of ways in a variety of purposes, with various degrees of success over the last ten years. The hope is that these types of digital records can enable young people to, well, do a number of things to talk about themselves, to articulate different skills and skill sets that they've developed so that they can be connected to job opportunities, and then so that employers can understand who is out there, who's available to them, a more diverse, more diverse labor pool. So there can be a greater opportunity for people to be connected, to jobs and to job opportunities. This is an adjunct to a replacement of, what we, traditionally call a résumé or, or a CV.

But all this is, perhaps easier said than done. There is a need for concerted effort around the world, and you're going to hear from a number of, examples from such concerted efforts, to bring together government, educational institutions, employers, non-profits and other members of the private sector to promote the adoption of these sorts of, digital records, and to integrate them into existing educational processes. And in hiring process, you're going to hear about, some of these efforts today. While in many ways the US has pioneered efforts in this area. It is really a global phenomenon. And you're going to hear today, especially, from lessons from across the Americas and across Europe.

A reminder, you can please post questions, via email to events@brookings.edu or on the former Twitter now known as X, using the hashtag #learningtoearning. So on behalf of Brookings and our partners at UNICEF, Generation Unlimited, I'd like to introduce our first speaker today. I'd like to introduce to you Colin Reynolds. Colin is a senior education designer at the Education Design Lab. He's been working for, well, almost two decades. As a as a teacher, as an instructor, as an administrator and as a consultant. He's been involved in projects, experience you last mile to hire, and he's, he's well known in the space and advising on projects related to the use of digital learning in employment records and especially, the use of open technology and learning standards to support the use of such records. He was previously the, the vice president at the Learning Economy Foundation. And I now turn it over to you, Colin. And welcome you to today's discussion.

REYNOLDS: Thank you. Mike. And greetings, everyone. Excited to share a couple examples of, some projects we've been working on in the LA space. And give a little context, to some of some of the technologies, and the ways that we've come alongside partners, in this space. So, a little bit about Education Design Lab. We are based in the US, now a remote company with a home office still in Washington, DC. But, we are a nonprofit that works with, a variety of organizations, both in higher education and from the employer side of this conversation. And we are increasingly working with, with states. And, and ecosystem level, groups, as we think about the way that technologies, other design tools, can really help to better address affordability, relevance, portability and visibility in, in our growing economy.

And so the technology is one piece. And I'll certainly talk a bit about the way we support, our partners using technology. But really, Education Design Lab is, is rooted in human centered design and equity centered design as we work with partners to address, challenges all across the learning to employment pipeline. We do spend a good bit of time working with our post-secondary education partners and learners, and that is increasingly, going in both directions. So continuing education for adults and also down into high school with some dual enrollment programs, and different opportunities that exist for, for youth that are looking for what it means to find a career, what it means to have experiences and have those documented, along the way. So just to level set, I'd like to share this slide just so that we're all on the same page about when we say LA learning an employment record. What is that and what does it mean? One of the partner groups that we work with, the T3 Innovation Network, which is housed in the US Chamber of Commerce foundations, portfolio and the learning and employment record is a digital record that really is meant to capture all learning experiences and employment experiences wherever they happen.

So I appreciate, Mike, you kind of comparing it to the resume. Some call it a resume of the future, but it's this idea that all these achievements are being unlocked and experiences are being had. And we're looking for ways to support learners to collect those achievements in some way, to share with, opportunity, or to help them find opportunities. So in the earlier conversation, we really focus on skills, visibility. And when we work with partners, we talk about elevating skills and highlighting skills in that learning journey. So for us at the lab, we have a set of micro-credentials that we, well, we've created around durable skills. So the soft skills, there number of different names for them, but we choose, durable skills as a way to identify those. And we have a collection of, of skills, durable skills badges that, represent those achievements.

So now here is, a bigger resume, like. Resume like 2 or 4 individuals that in many cases sits inside a digital wallet or some type of storage tool that is in a larger skills based ecosystem. So if you think about a wallet that you a digital wallet that you may have on your phone now that could be a storage place for learning achievements and employment achievements. But the idea is that the humans are really at the center of this work, and individuals need to be able to know how to capture their achievements and share those for opportunities and career navigation.

So I mentioned the durable skill micro-credentials that that we've created. We have assessment tools and learning modules that go alongside these, but we find these to be critically important in the learning and learning journey. So we think about sort of two sets of skills. You've got your software durable skills, and then you've got your technical or industry specific skills that you're learning along the way. And we see those twos pairing very nicely together in the learning experiences and, employment experiences that individuals have and are seeking. So this is an example of, some of the work that we do with our higher education partners are continuing education partners.

We work with both alert, both the learners and the higher ed partners to talk about the experiences that they need to, achieve specific industry certifications and be prepared for, high need or indeed, job roles in their area. We also work with employers, in that region to identify the skills that are most needed in, specific, job roles and in certain industries. So we want to make sure that what higher education partners are teaching and continuing education, learning experiences are being offered align with the skills and the priorities for employers when they're looking to hire and develop talent. So this is a sample of, what we call micro pathways. And this is something that, Education Design Lab, does with community college partners all across the US.

And will continue, this work in a growing at a very rapid rate because right now there's a huge need for non-degree programs. Noncredit, sometimes credit bearing and sometime degree, programs. But most micro pathways are non-degree programs, and they're developed directly with the continuing education providers. So what does this have to do with learning and employment records? Well, when you have a set of experiences that need to be documented, many of these are maybe outside the traditional realm of education. So if you think of the four walls of a school and credit courses and the skills that are being developed there, there are many experiences that are happening that are often not credit bearing.

Or maybe somebody has employment experiences that they, acquired some skills and they need to document that. And they, they need to bring that with them as they navigate their career journey. So this is a sample of, the larger infrastructure as we talk about it with our partners. And you can see sort of sitting in the middle, there is a credential and an issuing platform. These are the conversations that

we have with, with not only continuing education providers, but also increasingly more with employers, and other areas where individuals may be earning and learning, but it's not being documented. The credentials really a great way to document those achievements.

There are there are data standards that allow that credential to have rich assessment information attached to it, evidence to support the claims that are made about the skills that they have and the achievements that they they've unlocked throughout their career. And a great place to store that as a digital wallet, increasingly more where we're working with, technology providers that have digital wallet solutions, that are able to store these digital credentials and then share those digital credentials or help present them in a way that is akin to what we think about as a resume or a CV. So individuals can take the credentials from their wallet, generate some type of, of visual presentation, verified presentation, to help them in their job, seeking journey.

And in some cases, individuals use these to continue their education opportunities. In many cases, individuals are looking for new jobs and, trying to seek economic mobility through their achievements. So those get presented to an employer and employers verify this information. And I think that's what, is really powerful about the LA ecosystem is that the, the digital credentials are actually coded in a way that allows the verification, and trust to be transferred onto employers so that an individual who says they have skills that they've earned through specific, experiences, those that information can be validated with the technology. So this idea of credential registries, is, is increasingly, growing so that the trust comes from an organization. If I were to say I earned a certificate from Google, be, everyone here would have some frame of reference, I think, on what it means to earn something from an organization like Google.

Well, there are education providers and employers all over the world who would like to have that same level of trust built into, the experiences and learning opportunities that they provide. So I'm going to, transition, to another initiative that we're working on, that everything I've shared to this point is about learning now and moving forward. This project that we're engaged in with the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation and the T3 Innovation Network is about past experiences.

This goes for anybody who's done any kind of learning or earning, or has employment experience that already exists but isn't credentialed experience you? It's really looking at how we might leverage technologies, including AI, to take past experiences, put them into credential format, and allow individuals to take that on their digital learning earning journey. So this is really focused on this guiding question of how might we get skills rich, machine actionable logs into the hands of individuals so they can leverage our experiences for career and economic opportunity?

The concept is really the same, but we want to empower individuals who maybe are seeking opportunity but don't have the means to get credential information or get digital badges to represent what they've accomplished. In many cases, we're talking about, new majority learners or those who are skilled through alternative routes maybe have 5 or 6 years of learning experience, maybe a high school diploma, maybe not. But they have rich learning and earning, records that need to be documented digitally. So this concept we threw out and started last year to, organizations all across the US. And the basic premise was we want to take existing data and structure it in a way that empowers individual learners of all ages. I was really powerful in creating layers at scale for individuals, and we saw sort of three main areas of development for, for this work. One was around credential mapping. So when we say skills and we talk about skills. What I say as an employer, what you say as an education provider might actually be different.

And, and a little bit nuanced. Well, we've seen that, AI is really powerful at helping to be that translation layer between what I say is a skill and what you might say as a skill. Another area that has really powerful is in the extraction of skills, and competency information from, achievements I have. So if I took a course at a university or a college that was econ 101 or English 101, what does that actually mean? I, by building custom language models, we've seen that I can make really strong inferences about the skills that you might have achieved in those experiences. And we can credential that and give it to individuals in their wallet to take on their journey. The third the third area of application for, for AI and learning in employment records is around, chat agents. So I think many of us are probably most well aware of having a dialog with some sort of AI tool that's helping to get more information and give us information.

Well, we've seen the application of that for learning in employment records. If you have a, kind of like a coach or a teacher might do in a classroom, when you have a conversation with individuals about what they've done, well, the skills that they might have, practice or mastered in that process. We saw the ability of AI to, to extract that, that sort of skills dialog from an individual and then and then credential it. So rooting all of this work in and the human personas and human identities is really core to what Education Design Lab does with our partners. And we really focus on personas or the individuals that are going through and experiencing, and really in a lot of cases, co-designing solutions with us. Personas are really powerful, not in trying to really extract information about individuals or, groups of people, but really provide a baseline of conversation around here.

When we say we're talking about transitioning youth, what does that actually mean for the design process? And what does that actually mean for the ways that we are incorporating different technologies to support those individuals along their journey? A couple major takeaways here from this work and experience. You and just a lot of the work that we do, around learning and employment records with our partners is, is, rooted in a couple of key insights from these projects. First and foremost, standards, underpin everything that we do and our interoperable standards that make all of the learning and employment record conversation. Interoperable. So if you think about the way that you go on to a website or open your internet browser and type in a URL there standards that underpin that, and make sure that you get to the destination that you're intending to go.

Learning and employment records have standards that are very much like that, open global standards established by the World Wide Web Consortium to make sure that the, the data flows, the way it needs to. Individuals in this conversation need to own their data. So if you think about a learner, that is transitioning from opportunity in the classroom or an education space to a new career or trying to navigate their career, they need to have ownership over their data and be able to bring that data with them and understand what it says about them and the skills that they possess. We also really promote the, the support, and design of these solutions with the individuals that are using them. So we really don't design in a silo and then, and then throw that at, organizations and say, here you go.

We, we get into the weeds with our partners to do this work together, because it's critical that the individuals who are using these solutions are part of the design of those solutions. And that that last piece about the collaboration and community, really, this is what drives engagement and this is what drives opportunity. We see growth in the regional approach to the implementation of learning and employment records and other solutions. The issuance of credentials along, the learning and learning journey. And it's really important that we, collaborate together to make sure that solutions that we are implementing really empower, not just the people we're working with, but those that are around them and supporting them. So I know that was a lot of information thrown at you, during this, the short presentation, but I think we're prepared for a great discussion. And hopefully that was a strong primer for, what learning employment records are and can be. And, just a sample of how we've engaged in an area of ours with our partners. So I'll turn it back over to Mike.

TRUCANO: Yeah. Thank you so much, Colin, for that great introduction. And we thought we would start with, some US perspective and US experiences because a lot of this got started in the US. But it is certainly not an American or US phenomenon. We now like to, explore what this might mean, how this is starting to look in other parts around the world. We invite people to submit questions, to events@brookings.edu the email or on the platform formerly known as Twitter, hashtag #learningtoearning. I see we already have, questions from well, from Washington DC, probably, maybe a mile from where I'm sitting, but from Winnipeg, from Lagos, from Istanbul, from Islamabad, all around the world.

And to help, lead look around the world and our discussion. I'd like to introduce you now to, our partner in, in supporting this series of webinars on learning in employment records. Tom Kaye is the Senior Advisor for Global Programs at, the Generation Unlimited program, at UNICEF. Tom works with governments around the world, private sector partners, working to try to build and scale innovative approaches to support, the world's most marginalized 15 to 24 year old's as they transition and to provide opportunities for them to transition, into decent work. Tom also, previously, many folks may know him as the global country engagement lead at the Ed Tech Hub. He's worked for the World Bank and for many other places as well. Tom, I turn it over to you to broaden the discussion.

KAYE: Thanks, Mike. It's real pleasure to be here with you and all of our panelists and participants today. Thanks to everyone for their contributions so far and for all the questions that I've sent Corgi. It's really great to be having your online and virtual participation. Thanks. Also to call column. That was a really fascinating talk. I really appreciated the way that you stand up by level setting for us and, and positioned leaders in that that spectrum, including the Micro-credentials, as part of a digital wallet and part of the skills based ecosystem. I also really liked the way that you zoomed in on, trust and verification around that. The purpose of this, I think that's a really important piece that I'm sure will pick up as we continue the conversation. It's now my pleasure to introduce our other panelists. We're joined by two other panelists.

The first is Juan Barón, who's a Senior Economist at the World Bank, specialized in education mission Western South Central Africa, South Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as other regions and lands really driven to use and generate more and better evidence through a blend of different quantitative and qualitative methods, including impact evaluation and its work focuses on a variety of different areas, including library economics, gender equality, and the economics of education. We're also joined by William O'Keeffe. William O'Keeffe is a Policy Officer at the European Commission. He's a Project Manager who works on innovation in education and training. He currently works on the EU's approach to Micro-credentials.

Previously, he led the development of the Euro Past Framework for the European Commission, including the European Framework for Digital Credentials. So, with that and with all of the introductions done, we might now open up with a question. The question we're going to start with, it's actually for all of our panelists, and it's to build on Colin's great talk so far. It's a bit of a broad one to begin with. So I'm interested in hearing your opinions and your insights on how learning and employment records can really be used to support youth to transition from learning to earning. So we've heard a lot about the technology and the concept so far in the presentation, but how do we actually practically use this? I might start by asking one to provide his contribution, and then we'll move on to the other panelists. Over to you, Juan.

BARÓN: Thank you, Tim. No, thank you very much for the invitation. I tried to speak from, lower to middle income country outcomes, perspective and also trying to see what, or to point out where there are points of entry, some of which have started to being exploited by, by other institutions. I think at the bank, this is something that that has been is low to take on. We're starting very timidly these discussions about the that are very important. So let me to answer your question, Tom. Let me offer the three alternatives that were mentioned by my colleague, I believe, one is, a targeted training. I think, like having more information about, the kind of skills that, that are needed and skill gaps, and that is, that would be possible once you have, like, all this data to really see where the demand and supply of jobs is, especially for, for, for youth.

The second one, that is very important in many developing countries is to try to start recognizing more informal learning, in AI programs, of, of which many universities or schools don't provide. But there are like shorter courses that that could be potentially very useful for youth in developing countries. And then the third one with the, with the after the pandemic, with, with all these opportunities that have been created for it, for remote job opportunities is how we can, actually use this kind of, of approaches, on records to really validate and encourage, and support, employers with, with, with, with hiring the most appropriate skills for the job that they need. Let me ask, let me add, three other things that that, in my opinion, are very important. And that came already from this discussion. One is very important for youth. So when you if I think about, my records, to show a new employee, what I, that I'm ready and that I have the skills to show, to perform very well in a job, I will have to go back to Colombia, be in line for hours, pay some money, probably.

And then I will get, like, a piece of paper, and then I will have to do that for my high school. I would have to do that for my university. I have I would have to do that. So I think there is like that all the potential, for the improved management of the delivery of all those documents. Right. So and that's how waste of opportunity, especially for youth, right. In, in developing countries where there are lines even to get your records to, to show that you have graduated from whatever, primary or secondary. Right. So I think that it's a freeing, freeing time for these citizens become like, and a product of all these, architecture that it's very, very, very useful for you then, in the in the case of the bank, I see how we could work on these kind of approaches, even within projects. Right.

So, so, so identifying or creating records for specific beneficiaries. Right. So sometimes, and, you know, my can sometimes even hard to see which, which beneficiaries of, of, of programs exist and how many of them have received a different program. Right. So I think you could also think about, all of these, issues and how we can do better in terms of management. And then the third one is we also do a lot of capacity building of ministries of education, different stakeholders on different topics. So what I was thinking is why not, give more teeth to some of that, of that training by, for example, institutions like the bank and others issuing like Micro-credentials or some kind of better certification that allows people to show that they have received training and that this was the training and, and all the examples that were done. So I just wanted to add those ideas, because I do think that the Mo, the, the ones that benefit the most, are used, are looking for things to build their CV, but also to convey what they have been showing at least of their back to you time.

KAYE: Thanks, Juan. Really, really appreciate it. Not I really liked the way that you've made some really good, some very concrete suggestions as to how this can be applied, because often when we're talking about technology and cutting edge and new evolutions, it can be a little bit hard to think through the exact use cases. So thanks for going into a little bit of depth to, William, I might pass to you to answer the same question. From your perspective, how do you say your lab has been applied to support youth to transition from learning to any.

O'KEEFFE: Thanks, Tom. Good afternoon to all from, Brussels in Belgium. Really, I would say that when it comes to MERS, we've been, at a policy level, this idea of lifelong learning, of people being on their career paths, being employable, managing their upskilling and reskilling that idea, this idea of lifelong learning has been there since the 1970s, but I think, in fact, only over maybe the last 7 or 8 years and the advent of, you know, learning and education records are and yours are different types of portfolio tools. Have we really been able to start to construct a scenario in which people are really able to manage their lifelong learning, and, you know, manage how they connect their learning to earning? Indeed. We're in a situation now in, in Europe where actually the unemployment rates aren't that bad. They're relatively good, really. The number of young people say, from ages 15 to 29, who are not in employment or not in education and training is only around, is at 11%.

So that's, you know, it's an all-time low record in terms of the reference rates of employment for young people. But nevertheless, our evolving and modernizing labor markets, isn't getting the people it needs with the skills they need. Employers can fill vacancies. We need to continue to respond to new and changing dynamics in our labor market. That requires people to have the skills and really to upskill and reskill throughout their careers. So now with laws, we're putting tools, ownership, and opportunities within the hands of learners within the hands of young people who, really, I think can use the laws to connect them to choice, you know, that can connect them to, learning suggestions, learning opportunities, identify skills gaps.

They can connect them to support. They need information. We've already heard mention of the issue around, skills, needs and understanding where demand is, where, you know, employers are recruiting, the constant needs and the underdeveloped area of connecting with guidance, opportunities and public employment services to be able to help learners, young people and job seekers so learners as well can connect you with the support that you need. And then ultimately, I think the any of us is, well, are key. The achieve a key thing of portability. If you want to these young people are going to make one transition, but also multiple transitions throughout their career. There needs to be informed transitions and all at all steps, all transitions. They should be able to take their learning with them, take their evidence, take the digital credentials, their micro-credentials, and have a record of their achievements, that they can demonstrate their employability and adaptability and relevance for new opportunities.

So this is an idea that we've been building through the commission portfolio to, Europass, which is an example of, of an NDR that the commission has developed over the last number of years. And it really is, an illustration of that point, and the potential of really enabling lifelong learning. And I think ultimately, this is kind of the key first step or the key tool that should be within the arsenal of young people who are trying to, as I say, make that transition from learning to earning.

KAYE: Thank you so much, William. If we could, follow up, Colin, on, some of what William just shared and you talked about the, your past credential that they have, and you talked about what young people should do or what young people can do. What strategies do you see that governments

can use to incentivize youth to do? Exactly some of the things that William just discussed to obtain, to maintain and to update, these records, as a support mechanism as they study and as they transition and look for jobs.

REYNOLDS: Yeah, that's a great question, Mike, and want to build on what William offered and really highlight the Euro past and some of what, the European Union has done, in terms of policy and decision making, that's helped to really create an infrastructure that allows for portability, by, by implementing, specific standards and having some, some base level requirements for the data structures and the data tools that are being, implemented. I think that really enables, some incredible opportunity by providing common language. I think that's a big part of the conversation, is making sure that, we're aligning our language and aligning our definitions together to make sure that when we say one thing, that it means the same thing across, political boundaries and geographic borders.

And the euro pass has really been a great example of that. And some of the other tools that have come from that. So in the US context that, we see increasingly, state level conversations and state level governments getting into, the technology and trying to understand what is needed to really power a skills based economy. And how can that, go all the way down to youth who are having learning experiences, inside and outside of schools? And what's the best way to support, those individuals getting, the, their credentials and their achievements into some sort of portable form that allows them to take that with them from one place to the other.

And I think there are a few major transition points for, for most youth and most continuing, learners that are really those key junctures where being able to port your credentials from one system to another would be incredibly powerful for both the individual and the organization that's receiving those credentials. We're talking about technology that has, very rich, capacity for skills data and for kind of like, well, you mentioned helping an individual navigate their career. The amount of information that can be passed through digital credentials and an individual's wallet is incredibly deep. And so making sense of those credentials and making sense of those accomplishments will help, both sides, of that conversation.

And I think that's really one of the most powerful parts of an LA, is it's able to reflect back to an individual the accomplishments and achievements that they that they've had in their in their experiences, which helps them get a better sense of what they're good at and what they're not good at. So I think if governments and policy makers can, can help to build an infrastructure and help to make recommendations around a technical infrastructure that supports interoperability and portability, that would be a great place to start.

TRUCANO: Great. And I think I know Tom, Tom is in in Lusaka and Zambia. I think there was a power cut, but I think Tom is back with us now.

KAYE: Yeah. Thanks, Mike, and thanks to all the contributions so far. Colleagues, I'm next question over to you again. One. And what I'm interested in understanding a little bit more about is how leaders can help to address skills mismatches. So this has been mentioned a little bit in the initial presentation. And also you touched on Brexit in your response before. But we often have a mismatch in skills that young people have and skills that are required for jobs. So one I'm really interested in hear, hear your thoughts about how leaders can help to bring these two together a little bit more closely.

BARÓN: Well, I mean, the first one, in my opinion, is, by analyzing a lot of the data that we are that these kind of approaches that generate. Right? So if you have employers demanding a specific skills and then, you know, the kind of skills that exist in the labor market that, only that mapping really helps you identify like big issues. Right? Only that, and building on that is where like governments and jobs and multilateral other investment banks and other development institutions can, target skill development programs. Right? So, and then the third one, I would add is, is how it could really, make. Especially the micro credentialing. As part of this, an ecosystem can actually respond, to the, to the skilled jobs that are identified. Right.

So sometimes I don't need, an economist to do some specific kind of analysis. I need someone who knows how to interpret data and how, can and can write well. Right. So I think that that fracturing of, of, of those certifications that in the past were very general, I think, helped the labor markets help,

people make people and governments that make better investments on the kind of skills or specific skills that are needed. So I think, that all that contributes to, to, to, to filling those skilled, mismatches that the, that you were discussing. And one of the big issues that we have in development is that is just trying to measure the, the skill mismatch. Right? So, so that's the first step. And that the way we do it, we do surveys, we interview like employers. Then we go and try to figure out the kind of programs that exist. But it's always been perfect. We had like a lot of this information already. It's standardized and available from demand and supply sides that they, they get all that information will send better signals to the people who make the decision investment like citizens and, and, and governments.

KAYE: Thank you, Juan. We may turn to William before we go to questions from the audience around the world. And thank you again for sending those along to us at events@Brookings.edu and hashtag #learningtoearning on Twitter. William, Juan mentioned some, some specific, things that can be done, to address the skills mismatch. What do you see from your perspective sitting in Brussels and across, looking across Europe? What sort of support do countries need as they think about, supporting and implementing these types of innovations and these types of initiatives from a country perspective? What do policymakers need to think about and do?

O'KEEFFE: Yeah. It needs to come from, top and grassroots level. We, we see here my role as policymaker as having an important role in taking the fear factor out of all this, in particular, when it comes to the traditional structures around education and training. And we need this, perspective on lifelong learning and, employability and the even the idea of connecting learning with earning. There are some perspectives around education and training, traditional degrees, institutions, and they're slowly adapting. And it really has I've seen it most notably with the advent of Micro-credentials, over the last 3 to 4 years. Post-COVID, there has been this shift in culture, the shift in thinking, which is slowly happening.

So we see that we have, two roles to play that we need to make sure this language is featuring in our policy and in the initiatives led by the commission. So we're kind of, you know, doing piecemeal steps, like when we talk about qualifications and projects to support development of qualifications, we now

say qualifications, credentials and, including micro-credentials. So changing the language, changing the way that we talk about these different types of, initiatives, because ultimately what we're trying to enable is, a culture change. We've talked about the idea of lifelong learning being well established, but it isn't always a reality that hasn't become a reality because of this, you know, slow pace of, change in our culture and the way that we talk about these things. So we need to really be instrumental in the, the language and the way we talk about, the world of, of learning and deep learning.

Then also today's, meeting all the other speakers on this panel. They're all innovators. They're all trying to work to be inclusive. And it really is about giving a voice and highlighting the work that's going on in these innovative and inspiring projects. Certainly supporting them, offering incentives and funding. And this is all available through the EU funding instruments like Erasmus Plus to enable this. And then also make sure that there's, visibility and connecting all these projects. There's mutual learning. And really, that's one of the key things that the commission does. We are a facilitator. We do enable member states to connect the experts and projects to connect so that they are, learning from each other.

And then we'll emphasize key issues within this cooperation that it must be more holistic, that this where the, learning must connect with the world of active labor market policies and vocational providers, higher education unions, business, they all need to be part of these discussions. It must be more holistic. And this is what we can enable as well. Then lastly, one of the key thing is putting in place the infrastructure. There's resources, expense tools that are key to make this possible. I really don't want to repeat so many of the things Colin has just said, but with an Irish accent in terms of the importance of, interoperability, the importance of a common data model so that we've key ways and simple ways to exchange information using common or, you know, structured language. There's the European approach to digital credentials so that we can have authentic instant, fast authentication of qualifications.

And we also have a European Classification system for classifying different terms or skills in over 30 languages. So this is the key role that the commission can play as well. And also as policymakers

have put in place these building blocks to enable the easier exchange of information on credentials and unlearning. So yeah, this is what I would see as our role.

KAYE: That's really fantastic to hear. And I particularly like where you emphasize the bring different parties together to learn from and with each other. I think it's a really important facet. We know that education and learning systems are slow to evolve. And I think this has been a problem for many governments around the world. And I think that's only becoming more challenging as technologies like artificial intelligence and new and digital tech helps to drive change in society, it's quite difficult for the learning to keep up with the needs. And so I think bringing those brains together plays such an important role. Speaking of bringing brains together, we're not going to start passing over some questions from the audience.

Thank you again to everybody who's tuned in and who is you continue to send through questions. It's great to see so many of them coming through. The first one is for you, Colin, and it's from David from Winnipeg. And he's interested in understanding how a regulated alien, might impact the development of Micro-credentials and other online learning resources. I think you showed that that schematic before the framework of how they all fit together. But there's one impact the other. And if so, how does that occur?

REYNOLDS: Yeah. Thanks for the question, David. And, you might not know that I grew up about 2.5 hours south of Winnipeg on the Minnesota side. So, it's nice to know that, the, the upper Midwest of the Americas is being represented as well. I think that the development of micro-credentials in this conversation is, is it's key in, in enabling opportunity based on the data that's poured inside of them, what do they actually represent and what do they how does that information gets translated or ported outside of one system to another? So if I'm if I'm getting the question, but thinking about the question correctly, it's, it's really designing in a way that, allows the, the achievements from the learning opportunity and the employment experience, whatever it might be.

I think we're using those terms pretty interchangeably, because we're really talking about experiences that help individuals develop skills and help them develop, the tools for them to be successful in a

specific job role, or maybe a transitioning to a new job role where their skills will translate very well from, from one context to another context. And the credential structure really allows the data to represent that. So as an is navigating whether it's career choice or just trying to prove and validate, the information about them, that that's true. The credential structure allows for that. And then we are. But by pulling those credentials together helps to create a better, more, more holistic representation of an individual, in, in their journey and what they might be successful at and maybe what they might need to improve or, how they might remedy some of the skills that they've, they've developed elsewhere.

KAYE: Thank you very much, Colin. And, we'll go now from Southern Canada to a question from Baha in Gaza. Baha, we hope, your well, thoughts and prayers are with you, and your family. Thinking about this issue of, you know, how young people can articulate their skills and present a more holistic view of their skills, competencies, and experiences. Juan, how can we help support young people as they try to do that, as they try to interrogate their past experience and identify what skills they have? What sort of support can we provide, young people to help them along that journey?

BARÓN: I was a bit before I was, in, in the preparation for this talk, I was thinking, about the same question in a different way, which is what are the preconditions that we need to have in order for this to work? Right. So because once you have, like, all the different paths, you have the data, you have the ones that issue the, the, the credentials ones, the systems are in place then, then that question becomes like, well, engage, engage the citizens. Right. So just participate of, look for the credentials that of the institutions that you wind. Right. But I think that those preconditions in many parts of the world don't necessarily exist. Right. So and even William was talking about, you know, like, talking about micro-credentials that start in shifting the mindset like 3 or 4 years ago. Right?

So in many countries and, and, and we, we could see even, a middle, middle income countries, not, not even only low income countries, there is still an issue of, of digitalization in general. Right? So, so I think that is something that, that the Bank has committed to, to, to help countries speed up, in all sectors. But as part of those preconditions, one is the technological infrastructure that everyone has talked about here in terms of the Micro-credentials.

But the more general, I think, the government and institutional support there needs to be like frameworks and guidelines in general for private sector. But a public education institutions could be, a good way to start, and even like basic education systems. Right. So where it, where, where the systems start changing, and some of the requirements that are coming up. And then the third one is, all the issues that have been discussed that I'm not an expert in, and that is the standardization and integration of all the different parts.

I think when that happens, young people have a much better environment to thrive, to actually, split some of the, or get credit in that way for the things that they have done in the past, but also for the things that they could do in the future when they don't have, like, huge amounts of money or huge amounts of time to commit to longer term things. And one of the things that I like about Micro-credentials is that in many, many programs are structured under or under them can be split, right? So you don't need to do everything at the same time. You can, it becomes a system that is more flexible, that is more, young people can thrive in a much better way. Sorry, I think I kind of answered the question.

KAYE: I think you answered it well, and I think that your final comment there about supporting young people to thrive is really what we're really, really what we're focusing on, right? How can we leverage all of these different technologies for the teacher learning employment records to support you to, to really thrive? We have one final question, and I'm going to actually ask both you and, one and William to respond on this particular one is from Doctor and Canon, and she's asked, how do we translate such systems in largely informal work settings and in these settings? How do we ensure that young workers and learners actually get these credentials?

And I just thought it'd be really interesting to kind of compare and contrast the two different environments that you work in. William and one and, and get a feel for how that looks in different parts of the world. So my pastor, you, William, first to give your voice a little bit of a rest one and then we can have a minute or two from each of you on that. We might then hand over to Michael. Good to wrap this up. Thank you.

O'KEEFE: Thanks, Tom. Yeah. I mean, it's really one of the goes back to my remarks from the previous round, of connecting the worlds of, employment and education and this idea of active labor market policies. And so say that we have, initiative in, in Europe say that called the, the pact for skills, which are collaborations between industry, education and training social partners, designing in a, co-creation type of way. skills training, training responses, support for learner support for workers. And it is, trying to tackle this key issue of, employability and delivering supports and services for people during their career. Because this is where the needs, the access to upskilling and reskilling on an ongoing basis.

And then as part of the, you know, these collaborations and these projects, this is where we, introduce the employers and connect employers, say, with the idea of a year pass portfolio per employee or designing individual learning accounts, or making sure that they're aware that if they are organizing, training, in-house training, connecting with, H.R. Services or, you know, designing a H.R strategy for their workers that, you know, they should be aware of the European approach to micro-credentials or the lists of learning opportunities that are published on, your pass are connected via the, the, the member states. So it really is about trying to establish, you know, with a view to this idea of lifelong learning that the culture of learning should also exist within the workplace, and that really there are multiple types of, learning opportunities, learning achievements and outcomes.

And we're seeing it already with the, say, the rollout of European digital credentials, that certainly there is uptake amongst the formal education sector, but also, you know, in different scenarios by different organizations for different types of, learning achievements. So there were all this giving visibility to skills at different points in people's, pathways and their careers. So really I would say it's key. This would be one of the, the ultimate objectives of what we're trying to achieve with tools like, you pass, this broadened approach to credentials rather than qualifications, that we really highlight the importance of informal learning and, learning, through, through work, and using these European tools to identify them.

KAYE: Great. Thanks for, really, really good to hear that perspective and I'd love to. I want to pass it out to Juan to hear are a slightly different insight.

BARÓN: Was the question was about, informality on the labor market and informality on the acquisition of skills?

KAYE: So it was about how much informality of the labor market. So how do we translate these systems in largely informal, work settings? And how do we make sure that, the youth and the workers get these credentials?

BARÓN: I think the answer from me would be like, we have no idea. Right. So in countries, in countries where we're a big chunk of the labor market is informal, which means that a lot of the, of the, of the workers, of, of people that are trying to make a living are used like very basic, tasks and very basic in employment. Right. So, I do think that trying to bring these kind of systems, what it will bring is a little bit more, smooth the transition, perhaps, between self-employment and informal employment and more and wage employment. Right. So, so if you are a worker or youth who drop out of school, but you have managed to, you know, like gain some skills, maybe in jobs and then you manage to certify them in one way or another, maybe that opens up like the possibility for, for, for, for, for a better quality job, in a wage job. Right.

So in a bigger company or things like that. I think how to achieve that, I think is the question and, and I think that's why we're having these kind of conversations. Right. And, and it was very nice to hear from calling from Willian. Because that allows you to see like people like me that works with also with countries all the time is like, what kind of conversations do we need to start having? And I think I try to support governments. Is starting is more is starting is one. But build quickly because sometimes there are known like a lot of time there are like pressures of different kinds. So if we can, for example, start working with universities, perhaps that have a structure that are more established, and then started doing the part on the, the certification of them with Micro-credentials, for example.

And then employers have started seeing that that is a good thing. And then they, they start demanding that you start building the, the, the environment and the ecosystem. Right? I think I'm more skeptical of, especially on developing countries, on trying to do everything at the same time

because then it gets a little bit confusing. So it's better used to split it a little bit and then grow. It is lovely. I hope I again, I think I just kind of answer the question.

TRUCANO: Thank you. Thank you very much, Juan. And I think you, I think you did an answer or at least certainly address the question. And I think one thing we've heard, today is that there are common sets of questions, around the world, and perhaps there are some common and some very different, answers or responses to those questions, depending on context and circumstances, depending on, what group we are talking about. It's hoped that this, this webinar series will and can broaden the conversation. Some of the conversations that started, a while ago in the United States and bring in, a global audience and sets of, of global perspectives, not only, answers to these questions, but what the questions themselves might and should be as communities, as families, as people, as employers, as governments think about ways to promote a transition from learning to earning among various groups, especially groups who need the most support, no matter where they may find themselves in the world.

I'd like to thank, our speakers today. I'd like to thank Colin. I'd like to thank William. I'd like to thank Juan. I'd like to thank Tom and, our partners, Brookings partners at UNICEF's Generation Unlimited, program. Julia, I'd like to thank Aaron and Sophie co and the whole, Brookings technology team, here as well as well as Shawn. As mentioned, this is the first in a series of conversations about or exploring and exposing the wealth of experience, from around the world, some of which may be less visible and less well known to people around the use of learning and employment records to help aid in the transition from learning to earning. This is a topic that, Brookings has written a number of reports about, which are available on the Brookings website.

If you search for Brookings, LA or Brookings Center for Universal Education, you'll find some of those. We have a few recent blog posts, for example, and more will be coming, exploring and contextualizing European experience for American audiences and looking at a variety of lessons from governments around the world. We appreciate the few hundred people who are with us today on. Online and on YouTube, and the many more that will join in the long tail as this is, made available, permanently, on the Brookings, channel, on YouTube.

So with that said, I'd like to thank everyone for their attendance and participation today. We look forward. Hopefully you will join us for our follow on session, which will explore lessons and experiences and insights, from Asia and Africa. The new date for that webinar will be announced shortly. With that said, thank you so much. Thank you for so much for spending time out of your busy day today. As we all explore, the way that new technologies can be used to, help address long standing, seemingly intractable problems in different parts of the world. Be good and have a good day. Thank you very much.