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The future of lifelong and executive education



carringtoncrisp





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Introduction

Three studies in 2021 all concluded the same thing – lifelong learning is on the rise. Working with EFMD, GMAC, LinkedIn and the Executive MBA Council around the world, CarringtonCrisp found growing demand from both employers and individuals for upskilling, reskilling and a host of other learning. But what is lifelong learning? Does it align with executive education?

The last 15 months have seen an acceleration of change in the learning and development marketplace. Employers have embraced online in all of their activities and see the potential and need for new approaches to learning and development. Individuals recognise the need to upskill and reskill to remain employable, but want to do this on their terms rather than simply accepting what providers offer. For business schools and other providers to thrive in this new normal, change will be inevitable. But what change will be required?

Three times in the last decade CarringtonCrisp has run a study on the future of executive education. In 2021, a new study was launched, The Future of Lifelong and Executive Education. The study included:

- A survey with 2505 employees from 22 countries
- A survey with 508 employers from 22 countries
- Desk research and interviews with employers and business school leaders

This report, published with LinkedIn, provides a summary of the key findings, with a focus on the data from the two surveys.



THE LAST 15
MONTHS HAVE SEEN
AN ACCELERATION
OF CHANGE IN THE
LEARNING AND
DEVELOPMENT
MARKETPLACE



Executive Summary

Whatever we mean by the 'new normal', the world has changed. Employers already facing the need to embrace the digital transformation of business have found themselves forced to adapt to new ways of working during the pandemic. It's no surprise that one of their priorities for learning and development is to build a workforce fit for the future.

That future will undoubtedly feature lifelong learning, reskilling and upskilling staff as needs change; 87% of employers in this survey will be developing a formal lifelong learning strategy to upskill and reskill staff.

EMPLOYERS WILL LOOK TO BUILD LEARNING ECOSYSTEMS, ALLOWING STAFF THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACQUIRE SKILLS FLEXIBLY, INFORMALLY AND ONLINE

Employers will look to build learning ecosystems, allowing staff the opportunity to acquire skills flexibly, informally and online, in ways that were previously not considered. Lifelong learning strategies will be vital, with a focus on better understanding the impact of education and development both on the organisation and the individual, to maximise returns.

As skills development becomes a more regular activity driven by changing business needs, individuals will seek better value from learning providers. The half-life of skills is diminishing driving individuals to seek quicker returns when they invest in themselves. Part of that return will mean picking providers with strong brands, brands that are recognised by employers and confer greater portability of qualification for individuals.

Brand becomes ever more important as:

- **The quality of online education continues to improve**
- **Competition in online provision grows, and**
- **Employers accept online qualifications as comparable to those obtained face-to-face**



Instead of being limited to largely local, regional or domestic providers, individuals can choose educators with strong brands from anywhere in the world. With online removing the need to give up a job, and travel and accommodation spend disappearing from the learning equation, individuals will have a much wider choice of who they study with and provider brand will grow in importance.

And it's not just the provider that may change, but the qualification as well. Masters degrees and MBAs remain popular, but they are not the only choice. Digital badges, diplomas and certificates are all options, often providing recognition for a shorter, more focused study.

These options better satisfy the need to quickly upskill versus a broad programme of learning over a year or more as part of earning a degree. Completing an undergraduate degree won't signal an end to learning, but rather just the beginning.

With so much change, business schools need to think about the future rather than simply trying to improve on what they've done to date. Already new providers are building brands and reputations for flexible, fast, impactful

learning. Indeed, as the survey found many of these providers are widely used and are growing quickly, backed by substantial funds flowing into the ed tech sector.

Business schools still have advantages:

- Selection of students adds value for employers when recruiting.
- Research that delivers thought leadership takes businesses in new directions, and
 - The experience of teaching, the pedagogy, helps learners learn better

But with the future of lifelong and executive education evolving rapidly, business schools will need to do more.

They'll need to:

- Co-create, working with employers to build learning
 - Collaborate across departments, faculties and institutions to provide a big picture for business
- Find ways to deliver new learning without waiting for the bureaucracy to catch-up, and
- Be clear about the impact they have across communities not just in business

WITH SO MUCH
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The Employer Perspective

In March 2021, 508 employers, drawn from a panel provider, took part in an online survey to better understand changing perspectives on lifelong and executive education. The survey focused on how employers are developing their staff, the skills most in demand, relationships with business schools, the impact of the pandemic and more.

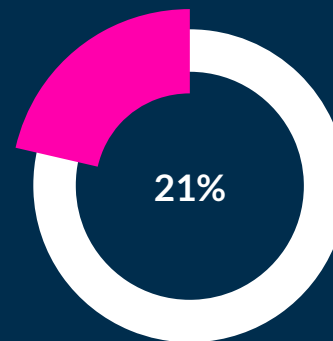
The largest group of employers responding to the survey are from the USA, followed by India, China, the UK and Germany. In total these countries accounted for 62% of the response.

Among the employer respondents, 54% indicated that they can decide which programmes staff in their organization attend and which providers they use.

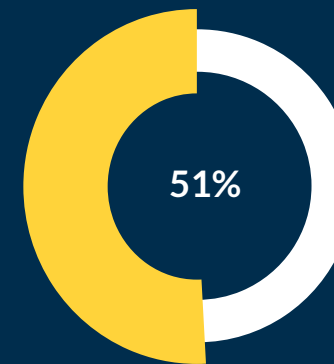
IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS, 48% EXPECT BUDGETS TO INCREASE FOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN THEIR ORGANISATION

How have budgets for learning and development in your organisation changed over the last two years and how do you expect them to change over the next two years?

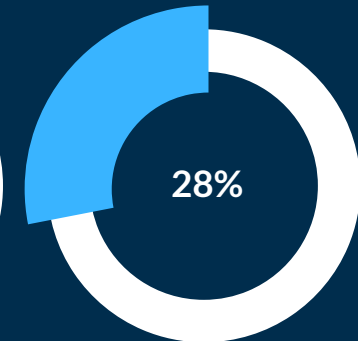
IN THE LAST TWO YEARS



HAVE DECREASED
/ WILL DECREASE

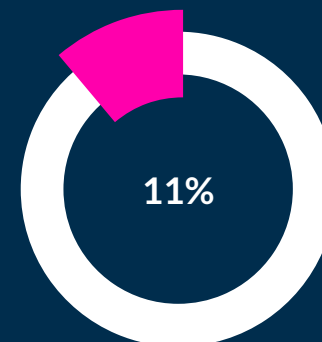


REMAINED / WILL REMAIN
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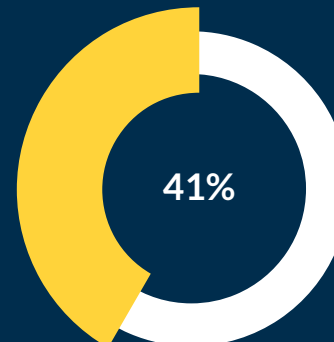


HAVE INCREASED
/ WILL INCREASE

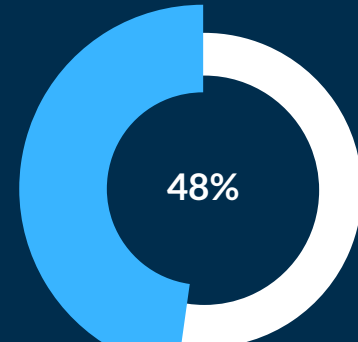
IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS



HAVE DECREASED
/ WILL DECREASE



REMAINED / WILL REMAIN
ABOUT THE SAME



HAVE INCREASED
/ WILL INCREASE



Pandemic Impacts

The pandemic has impacted all aspects of business and consequently, employers are seeking new skills in their staff and new ways of developing those skills. Many of the issues facing employers today were already in place ahead of the pandemic – uncertainty, equality, diversity and inclusivity, digital transformation, an ageing workforce and leading staff at a distance across cultures. The pandemic has accelerated and magnified the impact of these issues and the need for change in the workplace.

In the study, only 66% of employers expect to go back to business as usual. In the past year, many employers have seen a shift to online for much of their activity and this embrace of all things digital doesn't stop at the delivery of learning and development. Almost 9 out of 10 employers (85%) anticipate their organization will embed flexible working as part of their future operations.

Over three-quarters (79%) of employers anticipate online learning becoming the standard approach to developing people in their organisations.

Inevitably, in the economic downturn brought about by the pandemic, there has been pressure on learning and development spend. Only 28% of employers saw spend grow in the last two years, while 21% saw cuts. For business schools and other learning providers, the future looks more hopeful with 48% expecting spend to grow compared to only 11% forecasting cuts.



79%

OF EMPLOYERS ANTICIPATE ONLINE LEARNING BECOMING THE STANDARD APPROACH TO DEVELOPING PEOPLE IN THEIR ORGANISATIONS



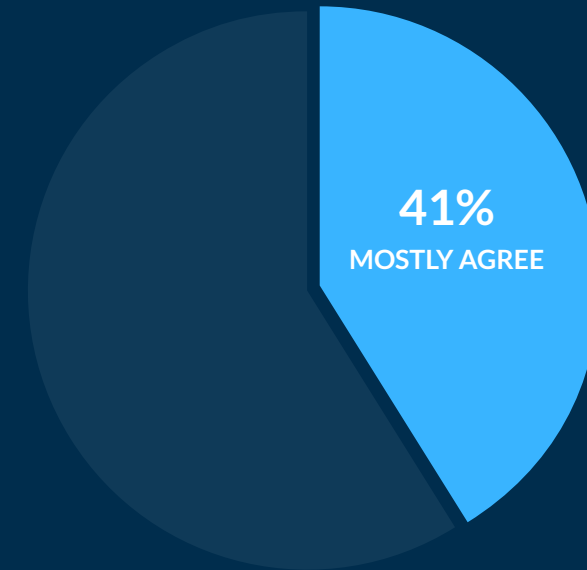
Online Changes Everything

Online meets the demands of both lifestyles and lifelong learning.

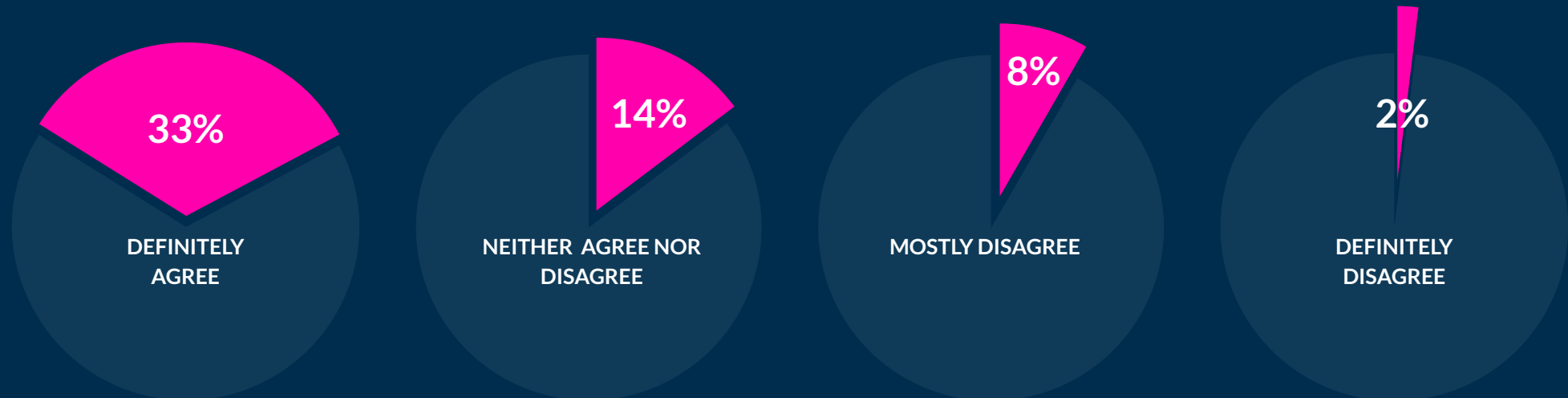
Three quarters (74%) of employers indicate that their organisation will, or already does, recognise qualifications gained online in the same way as those completed in a traditional face-to-face setting.

Given this shift, linear learning is no longer a necessity. Almost eight out of ten (78%) employers agree that short bursts of learning, delivered flexibly and providing microcredentials are valuable in meeting their development needs. Indeed, 17% indicate that they have already used microcredentials in the past two years.

Alternatively, employers may combine both short courses and degrees; 86% of employers agree that short programmes leading to a certificate with academic credit that can be banked and added to further study to create a degree are useful development options.



Our organisation will / does recognise qualifications gained online
in the same way as those completed in a traditional face-to-face setting.





Learning Needs

Working in the 'new normal' means employers needing new skills in their staff. In the survey, organisations identified five key skills that are not widely available:

- Change management
- Resilience/mindfulness
- Global mindset
- Ethics and ethical behaviour
- Managing across cultures

Employers L&D spend is being earmarked both for ongoing improvements in productivity and efficiency as well as the demands of the new normal, particularly introducing new technology and building a workforce fit for future needs.

A key focus of spend in the future, identified by 87% of employers in the survey, will be developing a formal lifelong learning strategy to upskill and reskill staff.

EMPLOYERS L&D SPEND IS BEING EARMARKED BOTH FOR ONGOING IMPROVEMENTS IN PRODUCTIVITY AND EFFICIENCY AS WELL AS THE DEMANDS OF THE NEW NORMAL

78%

AGREE THAT SHORT BURSTS OF LEARNING, DELIVERED FLEXIBLY AND PROVIDING MICROCREDENTIALS ARE VALUABLE





The Learner Perspective

In the second online survey, 2505 individuals provided their views on how they want to learn in the future, what might motivate their studies, who they want to study with and the qualifications they desire. Respondents were aged 25-55 and drawn from around the world with the three largest national groups from the USA (19%), Germany (11%), and the UK (10%). Respondents were almost equally split between men (51%) and women (48%). For 27% their highest educational achievement is an undergraduate degree, while 24% have no degree; 17% have a Masters degree and 7% have an MBA. A third classify themselves as being a manager, 11% a company owner, 9% a Director and 6% are in the C-suite.

Individual learners have traditionally been largely degree takers with a small number of executive education candidates, often placed on programmes by their employer. A host of new learning providers - enabled by technology and a growing interest in lifelong learning among individuals - has introduced a shift in the pattern of demand for learning. Individuals are now much more open to non-degree study and seeking learning options on their own rather than via their employer.

**INDIVIDUAL LEARNERS
HAVE TRADITIONALLY
BEEN LARGELY DEGREE
TAKERS WITH A
SMALL NUMBER OF
EXECUTIVE EDUCATION
CANDIDATES,
OFTEN PLACED ON
PROGRAMMES BY
THEIR EMPLOYER**

2505

INDIVIDUALS PROVIDED THEIR VIEWS ON HOW
THEY WANT TO LEARN IN THE FUTURE



What Employees Want from L&D

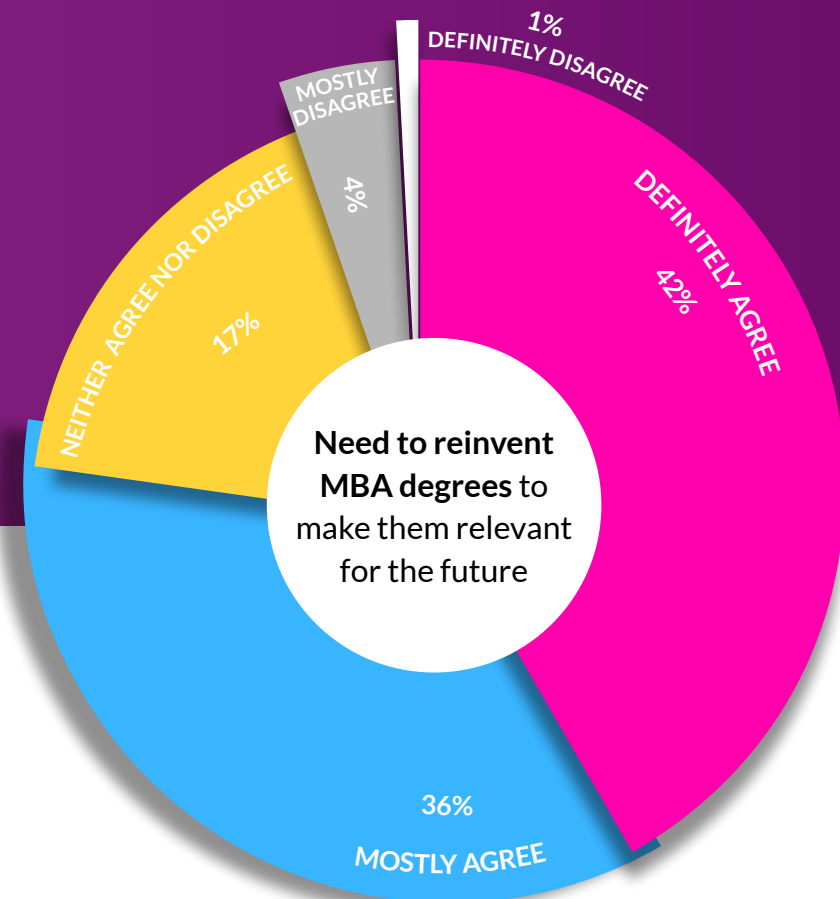
Prior to the pandemic, employee attitudes to the workplace were already changing. Many staff expect to work longer in line with ageing populations, creating a need to update and add skills throughout a lifetime. Add in the impact of the pandemic and a growing need to reskill, and it's perhaps no surprise that two-thirds of employees expect to undertake more learning in the future.

Money remains a key motivator for further learning with almost a third (32%) wanting to learn to improve their earning potential. However, others are more likely to be driven by sustaining employment, perhaps recognising how many have lost jobs during the pandemic.

Key reasons given by employees for undertaking future learning are:

- Improving employability (27%)
- Updating or refreshing current skills to support a career (23%)
- Improving job security (23%)

MANY STAFF EXPECT TO WORK LONGER IN LINE WITH AGEING POPULATIONS, CREATING A NEED TO UPDATE AND ADD SKILLS THROUGHOUT A LIFETIME





How the Pandemic Impacted Employee Expectations

It's not just motivation for learning that's changing, but the nature of future learning may also be different. Experience of the pandemic, having to work from home and make more use of online tools, has also had an impact. While 65% of employees expect this year to return to working in largely the same way as before the pandemic, 69% want to work flexibly in the future, blending work from home with time in the office.

Historically, learning and development took place at work. Today it can be anywhere or anytime, especially for individuals looking to grow their careers. However, new patterns of learning may cause divides among employees:

- 41% are not prepared to undertake learning outside of work hours
- 58% expect their employer to pay any costs associated with lifelong learning

With uncertainty about future roles, 70% of employees would also appreciate guidance on the most valuable skills to learn to further enhance their career prospects. Knowing which are the in-demand skills will be key to making informed decisions about learning choices.

65%

OF EMPLOYEES EXPECT THIS YEAR TO RETURN TO WORKING IN LARGELY THE SAME WAY AS BEFORE THE PANDEMIC

69%

WANT TO WORK FLEXIBLY IN THE FUTURE, BLENDING WORK FROM HOME WITH TIME IN THE OFFICE



Many Ways of Learning

How employees learn will also vary, perhaps based around the age of employees and their previous learning experiences. Two-thirds are clear that whatever their attitudes to online learning they will increasingly use online to develop themselves and their careers. Similarly, 68% believe that a blended model combining face-to-face and online learning is an ideal skills development path.

While blended may be ideal, not all learners buy into the online elements of learning; 63% believe face-to-face learning provides a richer and more effective experience than online learning.

However learning is provided, 71% agree that it needs to be delivered flexibly if they are to engage in lifelong learning. Employees clearly want a development approach that ensures any study is suited specifically to their lifestyle, career and commitments.

71%

WANT FLEXIBLE DELIVERY IF THEY ARE TO ENGAGE WITH LIFELONG LEARNING

68% BELIEVE THAT A BLENDED MODEL COMBINING FACE-TO-FACE AND ONLINE LEARNING IS AN IDEAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PATH





What Qualifies as Learning?

Getting a degree was often the end for many learners, but today it may be just the beginning. Executive education has always offered short-course non-degree studies with the provider's brand being key for many learners. Looking ahead, individuals want employers to embrace a wider notion of learning; 69% believe employers need to recognise informal learning as well as formal qualifications when making hiring decisions.

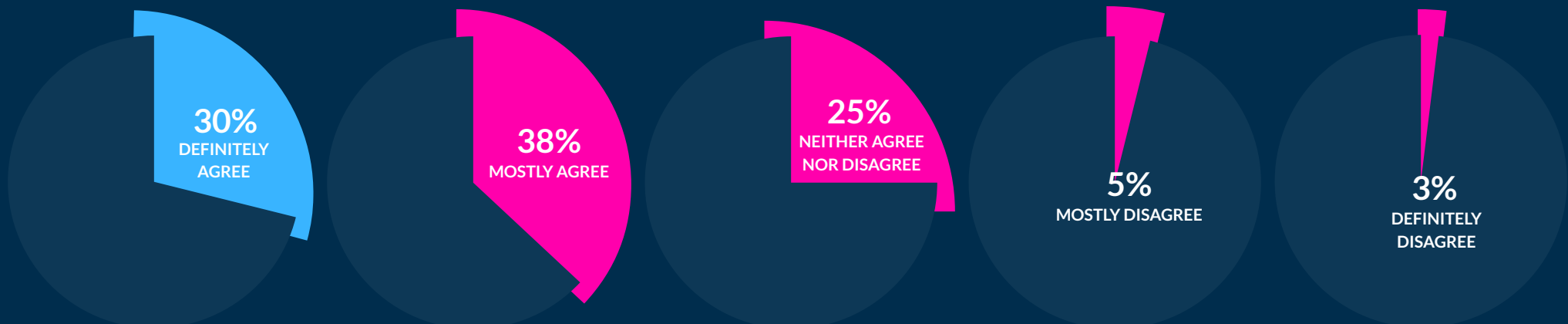
With individuals able to acquire skills through short online courses without formal qualifications, companies need to consider how to recognise such development in their recruitment and promotion activities. As a minimum employers should recognise qualifications gained online in the same way as

those completed in a traditional face-to-face setting according to 70% of the study participants. Businesses are likely to develop a more motivated and effective workforce if they build learning ecosystems to value on-the-job skills development, experiential learning and peer-to-peer learning.

69%

BELIEVE EMPLOYERS NEED TO RECOGNISE INFORMAL LEARNING AS WELL AS FORMAL QUALIFICATIONS WHEN MAKING HIRING DECISIONS

I EXPECT TO UNDERTAKE MORE LEARNING TO UPSKILL AND RESKILL IN THE FUTURE





The End of the Beginning, More Than Degrees

As the nature of learning changes, so do the qualifications that employees seek. In a further hint as to how learning might change, individuals expressed interest in a wide range of qualification types beyond traditional degrees.

Asked what qualifications they might seek in the next five years:

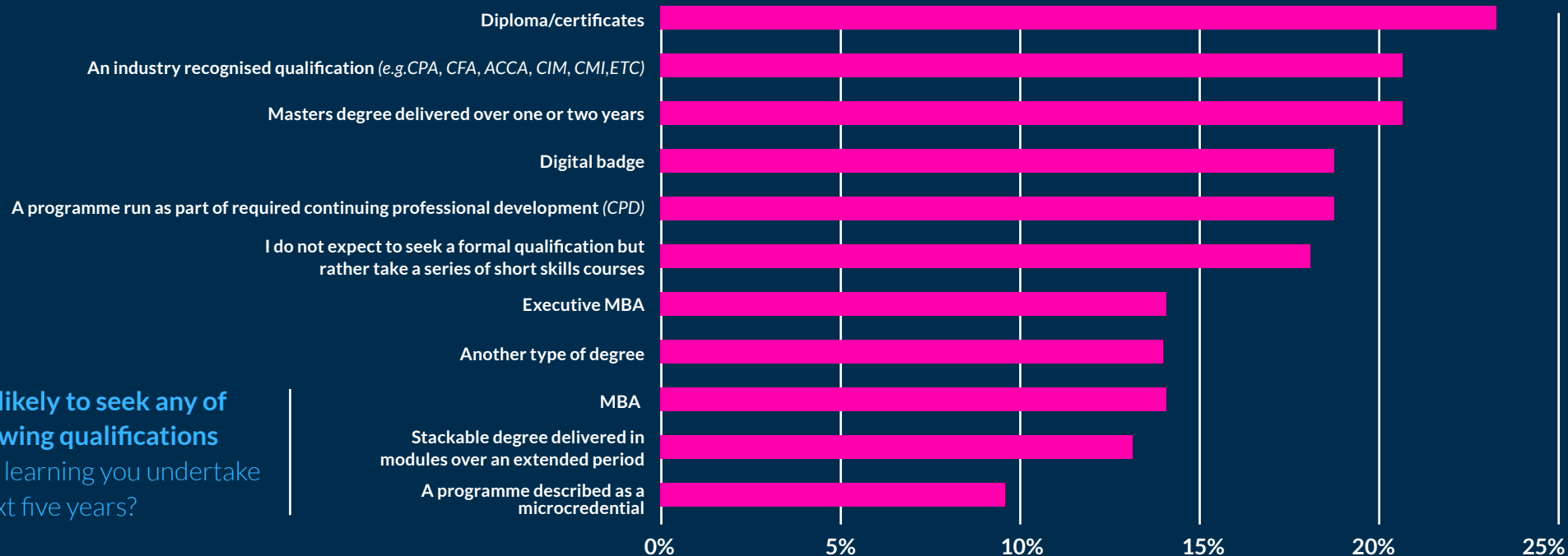
- 23% selected diplomas/certificates, the most popular choice, which might be a stepping stone to a degree

- 13% are interested in a stackable degree
- 21% choose a traditional Masters
- 14% both selected an MBA or Executive MBA

When it came to more innovative qualification options:

- 19% seek digital badges
- 10% are interested in microcredentials

Are you likely to seek any of the following qualifications from any learning you undertake in the next five years?





What Change Means for Business Schools

The market for business education has been evolving rapidly. Alongside traditional business schools, training companies have long provided corporate solutions. In recent years, new entrants have joined the market often backed by technology to provide both traditional degrees as well as new solutions such as massive open online courses (MOOCs). In the last year, the edtech sector has expanded, with more providers emerging on the back of online learning.

For business schools, getting insight into the growing education marketplace is key to ensuring a sustainable business model. Schools are moving from an environment that has tended to be dominated by degrees for learners in their early careers to multiple qualifications, non-degree studies and learners aged 18 to 80. A successful transition means understanding the different demands and needs of both employers and employees highlighted throughout this report.

**NEW PROVIDERS
ARE BUILDING
BRANDS AND
REPUTATIONS FOR
FLEXIBLE, FAST
AND IMPACTFUL
LEARNING**



Why Choose Business Schools?

For business schools wanting to make the most of the growing learning and development market, they must understand how employers and employees perceive their offer. Only 35% of employers taking part in the study currently use business schools for their learning and development, placing schools fourth behind professional industry/trade bodies, consulting firms and in-house services.

Asked why they don't use business schools, more than 20% of employers gave four reasons:

- Other providers offer programs which better meet our development needs (24%)
- Business schools are too expensive (24%)
- Our organisation only uses in-house provision (21%)
- Business schools are too theoretical and not sufficiently abreast of the real-world business challenges we face (20%)

For employees, cost and value are also issues:

- 52% consider business schools too expensive for their learning needs
- Just over four out of ten (44%) say colleagues have not realised benefits after investing in a business school programme

Business schools still have advantages over other providers, with 68% of employees indicating that their main reason for choosing a school is the opportunity to build personal networks. For 52% previous study with a business school would be key to their future choice of provider. Business schools will need to grow their alumni engagement if they are to make the most of such an opportunity.

52%

CONSIDER BUSINESS SCHOOLS TOO
EXPENSIVE FOR THEIR LEARNING NEEDS

44%

SAY COLLEAGUES HAVE NOT REALISED
BENEFITS AFTER INVESTING IN A
BUSINESS SCHOOL PROGRAMME



A New Market for Business Education

For business schools, the challenge is not just to build a flexible offer with new types of learning and qualifications, but also to fend off competition from new providers. More than half (58%) of employees agree that the growing provision of learning and development content on platforms outside higher education makes them question the value of formal university programmes.

Learners are clearly open to different ways of learning. In addition to flexibility and the notion of extended and lifelong learning:

- 34% are very interested in a degree they can earn in a series of modules over an extended time period as and when it suits them
- 28% are very interested in a degree that can be topped up at a low cost over the next ten years with updated or new skills

While employers are open to working with business schools, learning impact is key. Among employers:

- 81% agree that their organisation will seek to create long-term relationships with learning providers to build understanding of their business and maximise impact from learning
- 83% indicate that measuring impact of learning and development will become key when selecting a provider

Getting the impact message right is key for business schools as both employers and employees can choose from a host of providers, many of which didn't exist a decade ago.

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RELATIONSHIPS
WITH LEARNING
PROVIDERS

28%

ARE VERY INTERESTED IN A DEGREE THAT CAN BE TOPPED UP AT A LOW COST OVER THE NEXT TEN YEARS



New Schools on the Block

Many new providers are based online and/or make considerable use of technology in their learning delivery. Already these providers are capturing around a fifth of learners, a group that are themselves technology-savvy, using digital and online tools in every part of their lives.

Learners were asked about awareness, previous use and future consideration of 11 alternative providers. LinkedIn Learning was best known (27%), most used to date (20%), and most likely to be considered in the future (27%).

The only other provider used by more than 1 in 5 of the respondents is Udemy (21%).

While LinkedIn Learning is the most likely alternative provider to be used in the future, more than 20% of respondents would consider a host of others:

- FutureLearn (23%)
- eduCBA (22%)
- Coursera (22%)
- ServiceSkills.com (21%)
- Open Sesame (21%)
- General Assembly (21%)
- 2U (20%)
- edX (20%)

However, these new providers sometimes lack brand reach and reputation.

MANY NEW PROVIDERS ARE BASED ONLINE AND/OR MAKE CONSIDERABLE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN THEIR LEARNING DELIVERY

27%

LINKEDIN LEARNING WAS BEST KNOWN (27%), MOST USED TO DATE (20%), AND MOST LIKELY TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE FUTURE (27%)



Brand Matters

Brand matters in learning and development. With many people taking non-traditional qualifications, provider brand will become ever more important for learners to guarantee portability of their qualifications and employer recognition when recruiting new hires. Asked about the importance of brand in decision-making, 62% of respondents agreed it is important for any future learning they undertake to be with a provider with an international brand reputation.

Better quality online learning mean an employee unable to take a career break to study has the option to study on the other side of the world with a well-known brand rather than a nearby institution.

Provider location is declining in importance:

- Nearly two-thirds (65%) of employees agree that location of a learning provider will become less important as online provision becomes more sophisticated
- Just over three-quarters of employers (76%) also suggest that location of a learning provider will become less important as online options grow their quality

62%

OF RESPONDENTS AGREED IT IS IMPORTANT FOR ANY FUTURE LEARNING THEY UNDERTAKE TO BE WITH A PROVIDER WITH AN INTERNATIONAL BRAND REPUTATION

BETTER QUALITY ONLINE LEARNING MEAN AN EMPLOYEE, UNABLE TO TAKE A CAREER BREAK TO STUDY, HAS THE OPTION TO STUDY ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD

3/4

OF EMPLOYERS (76%) ALSO SUGGEST THAT LOCATION OF A LEARNING PROVIDER WILL BECOME LESS IMPORTANT AS ONLINE OPTIONS GROW THEIR QUALITY





What I Want from a Business School

Digging into what employees expect from learning brands, four elements stand out: cost, flexibility, technology and reputation, all chosen by more than 1 in 5. The value of the offer and the experience of the learning are highlighted.

Looking forward, individuals say it is important that future providers are known for:

- Offering low-cost learning (35%)
- Embracing digital delivery of learning (27%)
- Accelerating and transforming the career prospects of students (27%)
- Being highly ranked (26%)

But that's not all. Different values are becoming more important in future learning brands. Between 20% and 25% of employees want their provider to be known for:

- Open access to allow learners from diverse backgrounds to benefit from learning (26%)
- Challenging world views by combining innovative and critical thinking (24%)
- Seeking a culture of enterprise, engaging with start-ups and social entrepreneurs (23%)
- Focusing on social responsibility (23%)

WHEN CONSIDERING
LEARNING BRANDS
EMPLOYEES
FOCUS ON COST,
FLEXIBILITY,
TECHNOLOGY AND
REPUTATION



24%

WANT A PROVIDER THAT CHALLENGES
WORLD VIEWS BY COMBINING INNOVATIVE
AND CRITICAL THINKING



A Business Relationship for Business Schools

What is the future for business schools? The signs are already there in the collaborations that have emerged in recent years. Historically, double degrees have been a key way for institutions to collaborate. More recently, innovations such as CEMS and QTEM have seen multiple schools partner to deliver business degrees. Increasingly, new entrants such as Coursera, edX, Emeritus and FutureLearn are seeking to leverage content from established universities to build their offer and market positioning.

Employers would like a closer relationship with business schools to develop programmes relevant to the future of work:

- 79% are interested in co-creation of content
- 79% are seeking approaches to taking a degree that don't involve full-time study
- 77% would like short, inexpensive programmes that deliver relevant skills for employees
- 77% believe the MBA degree needs to evolve to be relevant for the future
- 76% want more short and flexible programmes that meet the requirements of lifelong learning

While COVID has dominated the headlines, a host of other changes across society are impacting business, especially around issues of diversity, equality and inclusion. Just over three-quarters of employers (76%) suggest that business schools need to be clear about how their offer positively impacts wider society, not just business and industry.



79%

ARE SEEKING APPROACHES TO TAKING A DEGREE THAT DON'T INVOLVE FULL-TIME STUDY

With the world still dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, a school that continues with the same offer it had before the crisis will have misjudged the potential uncertainty and change facing employers. Instead, listening to employers and learning with them about the 'new normal' is a must-do activity to develop relevant programs for the future.



How to Win Future Learners

As with employers, employees are also looking for a new relationship with business schools. Getting learners signed up is a matter of being attuned to their expectations and interests. Most importantly, highlighted by 69% of learners, is that business schools develop short, inexpensive programmes to deliver relevant skills for those working. And just like employers, a large majority of employees:

- Believe schools need to develop more flexible approaches to taking a degree that don't involve full-time study (68%)
- Expect schools to build an offer that meets the requirements of lifelong learning (67%), and Feel schools need to work more closely with employers to develop programmes relevant for the future of work (69%)

Again, employees see a bigger picture. Two-thirds want business schools to be clear about how their offer impacts wider society, not just business and industry. Perhaps more so than employers, individuals are conscious of changes in society beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, whether that's global challenges such as climate change or issues such as diversity, equality and inclusion in the workplace.

Business schools will have to consider new ways to deliver new learning:

- 30% of learners are very interested in the idea of a Netflix-style learning platform allowing an individual to choose from a variety of providers to build their own degree
- 25% are very interested in communities of learners that enable continued peer learning beyond formal studies

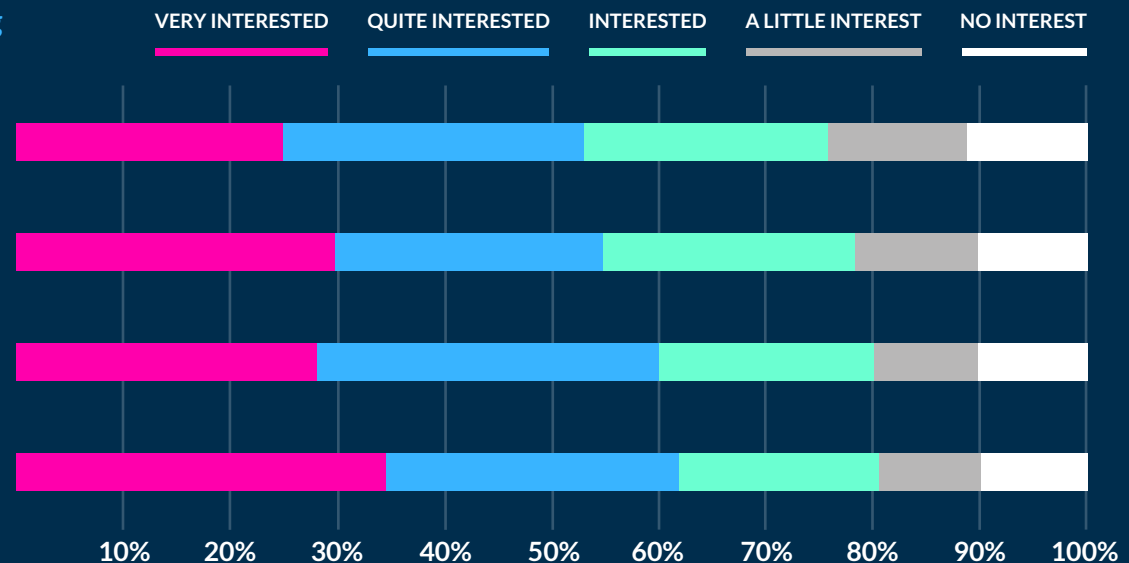
How interested would you be in any of the following options for your future learning and development?

Providers that build communities of learners to enable continued peer learning beyond formal studies

A Netflix-style platform for learning where I can choose from a variety of providers to build my own degree

A degree which offers opportunities to do further study at a low cost over the next ten years to top up or add new skills

A degree which I could study in modules over a period of several years as and when it suits me





Knowing What I Want to Learn

Beyond how to learn, where to learn, who to learn with and what qualification to aim for, the other choice for individuals is what to learn; most importantly, what skills they need to develop their career. Traditional subjects remain popular and head the list of employee choices: Leadership is selected by 17% and Communication Skills by 16%. However, more than 1 in 10 of the survey respondents chose a long list of other topics, a mix of both well-established subjects and those reflecting changing needs at work:

- Digital Transformation
- Strategy
- Marketing
- Innovation
- Entrepreneurship
- Business Development
- Creativity and Design Thinking
- Data Analytics
- Productivity
- Risk Management
- Social Impact
- Decision Making in Complex and Uncertain Times, and
- Responsible Management



LEADERSHIP AND
COMMUNICATION
REMAIN POPULAR
AND HEAD THE
LIST OF EMPLOYEE
CHOICES



Conclusions

In the world of business education, change was already happening before COVID-19 arrived. Whether it was technology, an ageing workforce or a demand for short, more impactful programmes, business schools saw employers and employees looking for something new. The Future of Lifelong and Executive Education report confirms much of the change underway while also highlighting several new directions for business education.

1 COVID accelerates digital adoption.

As businesses have moved to remote working, embracing technology to keep working and seeing the benefits of online, so learning and development naturally followed. Face-to-face learning still has a significant role to play, but much of the future will be blended and many programmes will be wrapped in digital or have a digital core.

2 Flexibility and personalization will be at the heart of future learning.

Employers will look for on-demand solutions that can quickly add new skills to their workforce or update existing knowledge. Employees will want to study in a way that suits their lifestyle and commitments while allowing them to continue to grow their careers.

3 Brand will be ever more important for learning providers.

As technology reduces the impact of geography in learning, so brand will rise. Employers will look for brands on a CV when they recruit and in partners when they seek providers to develop their staff. Employees will want brands to assure the portability of their qualifications, ensuring that they can take their learning from employer to employer.

4 New business models are already emerging among alternative providers.

As new market entrants quickly respond to demands for new skills and offering a variety of qualifications, traditional providers such as business schools will need to refocus their offer. Beyond delivering degrees, traditional providers must offer solutions for all ages and leverage their content, pedagogy and connections across universities.

5 Collaboration becomes the new normal.

Co-creating new programmes and new approaches to learning will become commonplace, whether between business schools, between universities and employers or between alternative and traditional providers.

Business schools will need to leap forward as they seek to build a learning and development offer for the future, experimenting, evolving and embracing new opportunities.

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