

Policy Dialogue #3

Youth employability in a changing world:
how do HEIs adapt to the future of work?

Editorial

Co-written by

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This event took place on 25 March, 2021.

■ Editorial

Digitization and globalisation have sparked radical shifts in how we will work and study in the future. On 25 March 2021, the British Council France together with HESAM University and University of London Institute in Paris (ULIP) held jointly the 3rd Policy Dialogue which, since this series of conferences have been launched in 2019, has become a platform for reflection and sharing of best practices on key topics related to education in the 21st century.

The main purpose of this 3rd edition was to reflect on the future of jobs and the redefinition of work itself, as well as the way higher education institutions should adapt their strategy and learning environments to cater for the needs of the new world of work by 2050. As a Franco-British dialogue, we gathered renowned experts from both France and the UK, but also included Germany and the Netherlands. From the outset of the conference, we chose to mix both theoretical and hands-on approaches which proved extremely enriching given the many refreshing and thought-provoking inputs.

We touched upon a wide range of topics such as the main trends which will be affecting the world of work, by delving into different foresight scenarios arising by the year 2050. Given the rise of a VUCA world with uncertainty and volatility becoming the norm, we also question the way universities could reimagine their work environment by making best use of AI in teaching tools and methodologies, thus harnessing the power of meta-cognitive intelligence to prepare future-ready students.

We then moved on to the presentation of a number of case studies which spotlight the need to provide future students and PhD candidates with dedicated training programmes anchored in regional dynamics either in France or in the UK, therefore meeting the needs of local authorities, training providers as well as the industry. Creating the jobs of the future will also heavily rely on bottom-up approaches conducive to economic growth and youth employability at regional levels.

Furthermore, given the soaring demand for online learning reinforced by the health crisis as well as by the growing flexibility of career pathways, we took a look at how universities could take more advantage of micro-credentials and diversify their education portfolio beyond their traditional formats to reach out to new types of learners globally.

Finally, we concluded with an overview of how HEIs in engineering, design and crafts have been coping with the COVID-19 situation. This experience has been in many ways an accelerator in preparing faculty and students for the future of work. Despite obvious difficulties, this has contributed to increase the purpose and value of both teaching and learning.

■ Opening



“Digital transformation particularly in AI and robotisation has brought significant changes in the workplace and impacts new jobs, which ultimately means universities need to reframe teaching and learning to meet the challenges of an evolving skills-based work environment.”

■ Bob LEWIS
France Director, British Council

“Employability is part of the University of London strategy which stretches from 2020 to 2025. We are aware from our own students that they are facing significant challenges today but we know that they are up to the challenges and prepared for a world that is evolving very fast and sometimes in an unpredictable way.”

■ Tim GORE
Chief Executive Officer, University
of London Institute in Paris



“At HESAM university, we have the ambition of academic and professional excellence which is embedded in project-based learning in close collaboration with local authorities and the socio-professional world. Addressing the topic of the future of work together with our partners is critical because of our commitment to help regional communities and industries to address the challenges of a fast changing world.”

■ Michel TERRÉ
President, HESAM Université

■ Scene setting

Foresight on Work 2050: Insights on long-term scenarios by the Millennium Project



■ Cornelia DAHEIM
Founder and Director,
Future Impacts Consulting

“Universal basic income is not all a simple or clear-cut solution, but it could be part of the equation in dealing with a changing landscape of work in the future.”

As a foresight consultant realizing trend and scenario projects for corporate and public sector customers, Cornelia DAHEIM shared the main outcomes of a study by the think tank «The Millennium Project», dedicated to scenarios on the future of work and technology by 2050. She highlighted the critical changes the world of work will be undergoing, such as increased flexibility towards a more nomadic and platform-enabled organization of work, and a potentially massive shift towards the rise of self-employment. The three scenarios are as follow:

- a “mixed bag” scenario whereby some regions and groups cope a lot better than others;
- a worst-case scenario with political and economic turmoil, radically changing the world of work with a drastically increasing social polarization;
- a best-case scenario with a successful handling of the main challenges with work mainly seen as self-fulfilment and contribution to the community, as well as a greater balance between jobs and quality of life.

Despite this wide variety of potential futures, the common thread of the 3 scenarios showed that the end of lifelong jobs and the development of long-running and stackable learning will be prevalent across different assumptions regarding possible future pathways.

Learning in VUCA environments: challenges of HEIs to prepare future-ready students

Rosemary LUCKIN is a Professor of Learner Centred Design at UCL Knowledge Lab. Given her ground-breaking research at the crossroads between education and artificial intelligence, she provides us with fascinating insights as to how AI and automation are currently reshaping educational environments. She highlights the fact that we are at a tipping point where volatility, unpredictability and interconnectedness urge universities to adapt their learning & teaching methods as well as their tools to embed a culture of AI readiness amongst students.

One of her most striking findings was the assumption that meta-cognitive intelligence as a set of skills and techniques for problem solving and harnessing complexity will be crucial in the future.

Her strong belief is that humans will complement the development of AI and not repeat it.

■ Rosemary LUCKIN
Professor of Learner Centred Design, UCL Knowledge Lab - UCL Institute of Education and Director, EDUCATE London



“We want the students to augment AI and not the reverse. We need to think how different we are as humans and harness the meta-cognitive intelligence we have.”

■ Panel discussion #1 Regional dynamics : efficient lever for the future of work?

«Au cœur des territoires» training programme: a case study
by Le Cnam

“The moto of Le Cnam is that we can teach everyone and everywhere, and with «Au cœur des territoires» we have been faithful to this moto.”



■ Thibaut DUCHÊNE
Deputy to the General Manager,
Le Cnam and Digital Vice-President,
HESAM Université

«Au cœur des territoires», a Cnam-led initiative born in the aftermath of the yellow vests movement in France, aims at developing professional mobility and training in mid-sized towns in France. The rural and semi urban territories lack adequate short training programmes which can meet their needs in terms of economic growth. «Au cœur des territoires» works with different ministries, local authorities and politicians, local companies and professional organisations, education actors and local associations in order to develop the locals' skills and employability.

More than 120 applications from municipalities were received in 2019 during its first year of implementation, leading to the supporting of 65 projects and the creation of 30 training centres over the space of two years. 1800 learners are now registered in this national programme, which modifies the image of meritocracy in France by affirming that you can change your life at any age.

Locally-led research: «1000 doctorants pour les territoires» and CHASE Doctoral Training Partnership

*“1000 doctorants pour les territoires is matching
supply and demand – it’s a Tinder for PhDs.”*



■ Jordana A. HARRISS
Project Leader «1000 doctorants
pour les territoires» and
«COLOR CIRCLE, Interreg
Europe», HESAM Université

With «1000 doctorants pour les territoires», HESAM intends to increase, with the support of MESRI, the number of young researchers doing their PhDs in local government institutions or NGOs and to help local authorities flourish thanks to a three-year partnership. Each local authority receives 14000 euros per year to hire a young researcher.

This is especially noteworthy given the fact that, today, one third of PhD candidates in France in the fields of social sciences or humanities start their PhD without any funding. This scheme also prepares PhD candidates to work outside of the academic environment (for example by teaching them how to speak in front of politicians), where there are not enough positions available. Since its inception in 2017, the number of hired PhD students has more than doubled.

*“We are informed by regionality but not driven by it.
Our main focus is our student’s interests.”*

CHASE is a consortium of 9 universities from London and the South-East of England which offers studentships to arts and humanities PhD candidates, supported by the UK’s AHRC. The funding comprises a stipend, tuition fees (for EU researchers as well until 2020 but 10% of awards will be reserved to international students as from 2021), a placement scheme (eg National Gallery, BBC), training development opportunities, help with career plans, student networks, and a knowledge exchange hub.

A virtual learning environment has been developed so that training is accessible to people with caring responsibilities, working commitments, disabilities etc. The scheme enables students to locate their research, leading to a dialectical dynamic between local, regional, national and international levels.



■ Steven COLBURN
Placements & Partnerships
Officer, CHASE (Consortium
for the Humanities and the Arts
South-East England)

■ Panel discussion #2 : The challenge ahead: will HEIs seize the opportunity of portfolio education?

HEI positioning on micro-credentials and badges

“As career pathways move away from certainty and predictability, micro-credentials are extremely helpful for people to create their own learning journey.”



■ Liz WILKINSON
Senior Careers Consultant
at the University of London,
former Head of Careers at Royal
Holloway

As Senior Careers Consultant at the University of London, Liz WILKINSON highlighted the shift from education seen as core expertise towards a multifaceted education principle whereby a broader set of skills drawing on micro-credentials is becoming the norm.

As the VUCA world is accelerating career pivoting, she pointed towards three main career stages (starter/developer/changer) which all will require continuous educational agility and hence, help people shape sustainable and satisfactory careers.

Based on the fact that both the changing job market and the evolving higher education landscape is making the rise of micro-credentials unavoidable, Olivier WITORSKI as Vice-President Partnerships France by FutureLearn, advocates for more university engagement towards MOOC platforms. Given the deep transformation of career paths (it is estimated that young people will have 17 jobs over 5 different careers by 2050) and the up- and reskilling brought by the rapid pace of technological change, the flexible and short-term nature of micro-credentials cater for these new developments.

Embedding micro-credentials in their existing portfolio will allow universities to be more inclusive and to reach out to new learners globally. A larger uptake of micro-credentials could foster educational and economic innovation and contribute to a sustainable post-pandemic recovery.

■ Olivier WITORSKI
VP Partnerships France and
French speaking countries,
FutureLearn



“Micro-credentialing is a huge opportunity for universities with wide-reaching benefits: it makes education more inclusive and truly global, as it is accessible to all types of learners through its flexible and short-term approach.”

“A blank diploma based on credentials that students would have gathered for a self-made curriculum is a contribution to an open society and a stepping stone for co-creation.”



■ Serge RAVET
Reconnaître-Open Recognition
Alliance President

As President of Reconnaître-Open Recognition Alliance, Serge RAVET advocates for the development of open badges for the up- and reskilling of professional practice as an agile and actionable system.

One of his boldest proposals was the idea of a “blank diploma” whereby open badges could enable students to create their own diploma by curating their own study journey which ultimately would be validated by a higher education institution. This was based on the assumption that the implementation of interdisciplinarity in HEIs won’t unfold uniformly for all types of knowledge providers, therefore encouraging students to be more proactive and creative in the shaping of their own study journey.

■ Panel discussion #3 : How HEIs best prepare to the future of work?

Industry 4.0: what is the recipe for success?

“Our engineers will work in companies, in workshops. We need to train them to work in teams, but also from home. It’s a great acceleration for our education platforms.”



■ Laurent CHAMPANEY
General Manager, Arts et Métiers
and Vice-President Conférence des
Grandes Écoles

As General Manager, of Arts et Métiers, the largest school of engineering in France, Laurent CHAMPANEY stresses that the many challenges his School is facing now mirror the ones that already impact companies hiring engineers. How does Arts et Métiers prepare students to work situations that mix distance and on site occupation, and where virtual machines extend the activity of real machines from workshops to home offices?

This is a particular challenge for the faculty which has to adapt courses and interact with students in a very different way from the usual educational practice. The COVID-19 situation is only the top of the iceberg: the relation to professors, as to companies is evolving drastically. In a VUCA world, students are looking for companies with a purpose or will be challenging them to meet this new agenda. Arts et Métiers is making significant changes to include this new perspective.

“In immersive industry based learning, the teacher spends a full day once per month with the student at the company’s place to provide the learning resources, that are the most relevant at this very moment in the workshop.”



Patrick DOFFEMONT, Head of the Institute of Transmission at Compagnons du Devoir et du Tour de France, explains the importance of values and purpose in Compagnons’ education. Craft skills are all about creating artefacts that respond to specific needs, and meet three expectations: beauty, user friendliness and sustainability. These values are embedded in the learning experience.

An important part of the experience comes with workshops, and placement in the industry. Interestingly, the most resilient part of education during lockdowns has been placement. The “learning through immersion in the industry” training model was able to overcome distance, and helped to clarify the added value of activities in the classroom, distant learning and digital education.

■ Patrick DOFFEMONT
Director, Transmission Institute,
Compagnons du Devoir et du
Tour de France

Reinventing arts and design education: creative careers in the new world order



■ Siân PRIME
Deputy Director of the Institute
for Creative and Cultural
Entrepreneurship, Goldsmiths,
and Academic Lead : Enterprise

“Students come with a very clear set of values. They look for a framework to achieve an ambition. This brings a collaborative way of working.”

Siân PRIME, Deputy Director for Goldsmiths' Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship (ICCE) emphasizes the major questions for faculty in the past year: How do we do hands-on teaching in a context of distant learning? How do we build resilience? Engaging students to develop their creativity is the most important. While casual meetings that give room to creativity cannot be replaced, this new situation has made professors aware of the need to adapt teaching material to circumstances and has intensified the level of interaction with students. Professors can no longer view themselves as solely knowledge providers.

For many students purpose is important. They will work in companies, and they want to make an impact. How do HEIs give them the right tools to achieve this? The ambition at Goldsmith's Institute is to train students who will change industry.

“I don’t know of a student in design that wouldn’t seek purpose. It may well be that students choose design precisely because they know they will find ways here to serve a purpose, whether this is climate change or urban re-organisation. The COVID-19 crisis is only amplifying this trend.”



■ Pierre LEVY

Assistant professor at the Department of Industrial Design, Eindhoven University of Technology and Co-founder, European Kansei Group

Pierre LEVY, professor at the Department of Industrial Design, Eindhoven University of Technology, insists on students’ growing autonomy. The faculty teaches students how to keep learning. With internet on the one hand and 3D printers on the other, students are becoming self learners. The faculty develops a capacity for coaching themselves, while teaching students how to be critical towards the knowledge they keep gaining. This spirit of critical analysis is a key dimension of students’ autonomy and self-learning capacity.

Not surprisingly in this respect, entrepreneurship for Eindhoven students comes as a continuation of education, as a first experience in the industry where one has much to learn and gain, and little to lose. This is also a path to seek meaning.



To watch the replay of the conference : <https://bitly/3xiZkuD>.

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