

SKILLS-FIRST: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?



► Workers in a dynamic and uncertain world

Rapid technological change, artificial intelligence, and demographic shifts are transforming how individuals learn, work, and plan careers

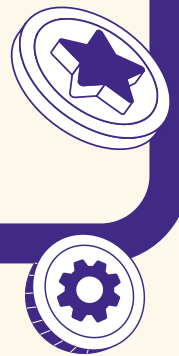
Traditional linear career paths are untenable as skill shelf life shrink

Workers face anxiety over skills obsolescence, job insecurity, and uncertain reskilling outcomes



► What does skills-first mean for individuals?

- **Prioritises individuals' capacity to manage their productive assets** i.e., experience, skills, proficiency, and networks
- **Empower individuals to take greater ownership of their personal career choices** by focusing on the acquisition, demonstration, and application of skills and capabilities
- **Skills are valuable currency** for career mobility, economic security, and personal agency
- **Individuals need to "make skills visible"** by signalling what they know and can do



► What's holding individuals back?

Situational barriers

- External work/life constraints
- Employer talent practices that prioritise only 10–20% of staff
- Lack of time to plan/upskill



The Life Design Lab

Offers a highly scalable approach to career and life planning by emphasising human-centred, iterative decision-making

Informational barriers

- Not up-to-date with fast-changing job requirement
- Low awareness of existing online/offline resources
- Lack of insights on the contextual requirements for a new job role and the work context for career switchers



Careers and Skills Passport by SkillsFuture Singapore

A centralised career record and skills repository to improve skills signalling and support skills-first hiring

Psychological barriers

- Fear of failure
- Negative career identity
- Complacency
- Learned helplessness
- Influence of social cues



European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning (EARLALL)

Strategic Plan (2023–2038): Places a renewed focus on skills that enable individuals to craft new career identities for social mobility, opportunity matching and facilitating internationalisation

Societal barriers

- Gender stereotypes
- Age-related disadvantage
- Undervaluation of trades and craft skills



UK Military Career Transition Programme

Provides tailored career support for retiring military personnel through skills mapping, mentoring, guaranteed job interviews, and public-private partnerships to ease career transitions

KEY QUESTIONS FOR ADVANCING SKILLS-FIRST READINESS AMONG INDIVIDUALS

1. How can individuals be supported to take stock of their productive assets and craft personalised learning pathways?
2. What beliefs and psychological barriers limiting growth must individuals unlearn to embrace lifelong learning and career adaptability?
3. How can labour market information be made more accessible, personalised, and actionable for diverse learners?
4. What societal norms and structural biases must be challenged to embrace diversity of success?
5. How can supervisors, mentors and career development professionals be better equipped with the resources needed to support individuals' career-skills-learning planning?



◀ Scan to view the full working paper

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