

EdTech Thoughts 12/5 - 12/11

Schrodinger's plates

[Matthew Tower](#) Dec 11

Hello!

This is my last regular update of 2022. I will have at least one more post covering 2022 reflections/2023 predictions before the end of the year, but am still working through the formatting. If you have any reflections or predictions of your own, I would love to hear them!

On to the news...

Funding / M&A

- [Hunt Club raises \\$40M](#): Chicago-based Hunt Club sits somewhere between an executive recruiter and a generalist hiring platform like Indeed. Specifically, the platform combs Hunt Club's 20K "experts" for connections to prospective candidates, and then curates a list of the top ~5 in-network candidates for client consideration
- [Uolo raises \\$22.5M](#): Founded less than two years ago, Guguram-based Uolo offers coding and English-language courses to 3.7M students in 8,500 schools across India. The company will use this round of funding to expand go-to-market operations within India and build out a broader, STEAM-focused content library
- [Loft Dynamics raises \\$20M](#): Joining an [eclectic but substantial crop of companies to raise venture capital for VR](#) this year, Zurich-based Loft

Dynamics builds VR training simulators for helicopter pilots that are approved for training credit by the European Union Aviation Safety Agency. This round of funding will be used for the company's expansion into the US market

- [Zeraki raises \\$1.8M](#): Nairobi-based Zeraki is a K12-focused Student Information System that is used by "almost half" of high schools in Kenya. The company will use this round of funding to expand its go-to-market operations in Eastern and Southern Africa
- [Top Hat acquires Aktiv Learning](#): New York-based Aktiv Learning specializes in Chemistry courseware for college students. Aktiv is Top Hat's [second acquisition](#) since their [\\$130M fundraiser](#) in February 2021. Top Hat has otherwise remained relatively quiet amidst the twists and turns of the EdTech market over the past two years. I'm curious to see if they will be more active in 2023
- [GoStudent acquires Studienkreis](#): Bochum-based Studienkreis offers in-person tutoring at 1,000 retail locations across Germany. The Studienkreis team joins Vienna-based online tutoring firm GoStudent, which is making good on their plans to spend a \$340M war chest [raised at the beginning of this year](#). This acquisition follows a curious trend in India that I've been following (but haven't written much about): tutoring companies are buying/[building physical presences](#) to [complement](#) what had been online-only offerings
- [Global University Systems acquires FutureLearn](#): London-based FutureLearn was one of the first and largest MOOC players but was [not able to keep up with Coursera and edX's user growth](#). What is left of the FutureLearn team will join Amsterdam-based Global University Systems (GUS), which owns a collection of for-profit online universities in the UK,

Europe, Canada, and Israel. I assumed GUS purchased FutureLearn as, essentially, a list of 19M leads for their university network, but FutureLearn CEO Andy Hancock announced the company would focus on expanding into "Africa, Asia, Central and South America and the Caribbean"[1](#)

- [Brilliant acquires Hellosaurus](#): New York-based Hellosaurus offers a platform and set of name-brand IP licenses (i.e. The Wiggles) for creators to build interactive videos for 2-8 year-old learners. The Hellosaurus team joins San Francisco-based Brilliant, which is known for its math and computer science curriculum targeted at high school/college audiences
- [McGraw Hill acquires Boards & Beyond](#): Columbus-based Boards & Beyond offers learning resources for medical students to study for their national board exams. It looks like this is a tuck-in acquisition, with the team set to join McGraw's existing portfolio of medical content

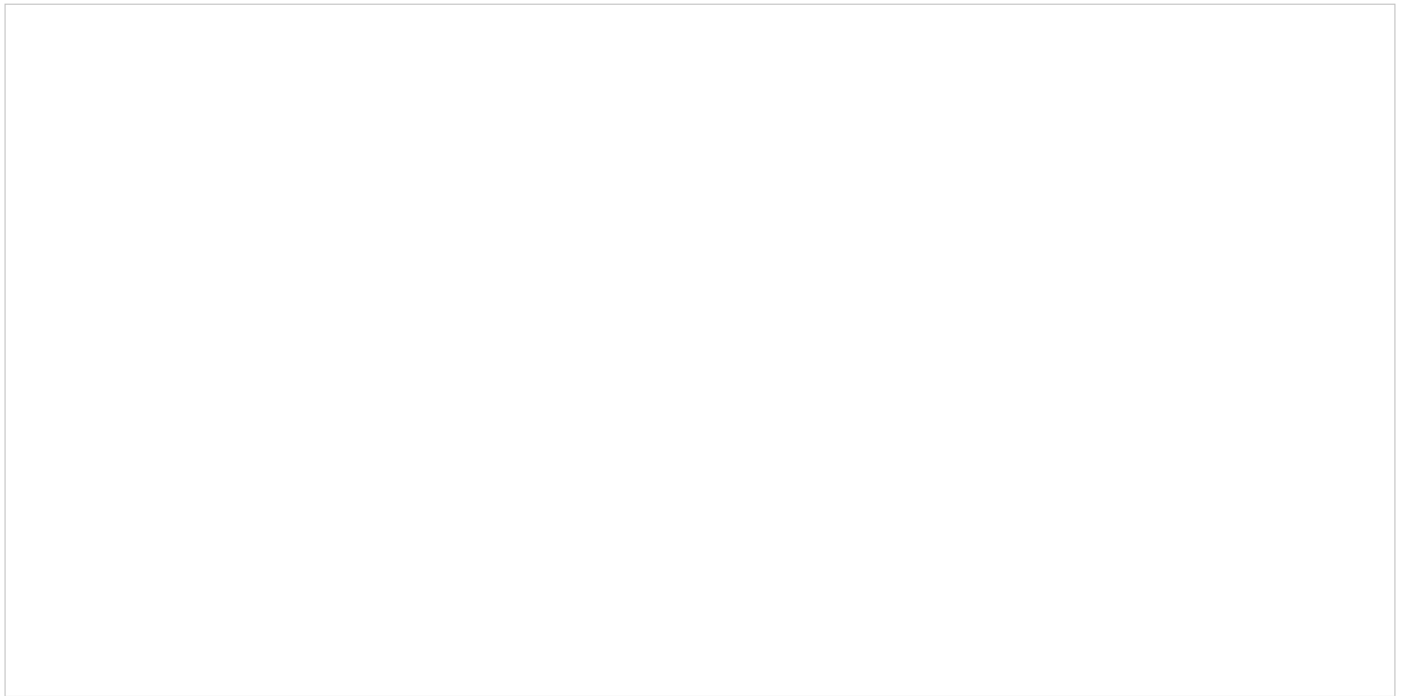
Story

Schrodinger's plates

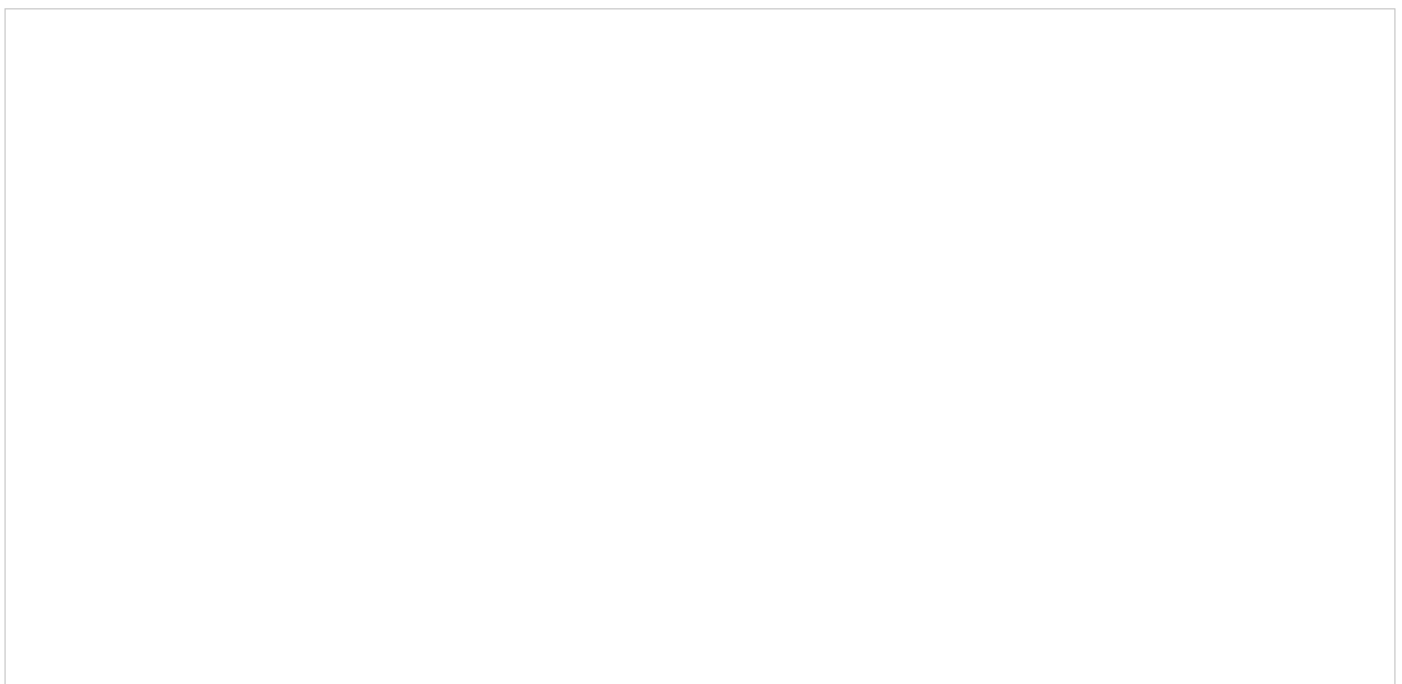
This week [Credential Engine](#) reported that there are 59,692 organizations in the US that, combined, offer 1,076,358 post-secondary credentials.[2](#) In addition to the report, the company offers a [searchable database](#) of every credential, spurring me to spend hours this week scrolling and contemplating what one million credentials really means.

I read [Inside Higher Ed](#), [Edsurge](#), and [Higher Ed Dive](#). I read all seventy-five pages (some are pictures) of the [original report](#). All offered reasonable takes, but they left me feeling not quite satisfied. So I turned to chatGPT - OpenAI's

[headline-grabbing](#), new chatbot - to see if it was any more helpful (Purple is me, green logo is chatGPT):



This answer was surprisingly reasonable and not great for the narrative I wanted to construct, so I decided to get a little more pointed with my questioning:



Much better - just the right amount of unsatisfying. For science, I also posed the above question to Google, who provided a more specific, but also specifically wrong, answer - [Lakehead Georgian University](#).

So, with industry media and generative AI tapped out, I dug in on my own thoughts.

One million credentials is sort of impossible to understand. How does one decide among the 11,158 variations of Project Management? Is there really only one way to learn Pottery?[3](#)

However, cross-examining the number of credentials is to miss the forest for the trees. One million credentials reflects the state of our post-secondary learning system sublimely:

It proves that no person, organization, or organizing body is even close to controlling the situation. There are hundreds of high-powered industry associations with continuing education requirements in addition to the [more than 100](#) accrediting bodies recognized by the US Department of Education. Volume is not necessarily problematic on its own, but it becomes so when none of these entities are able to provide reliable information about which credentials are best.

It proves how poorly traditional higher ed incumbents are doing. 65% of the credentials in the database come from non-academic providers as varied as Dell, Aon, and the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute. That is tens of thousands of organizations and hundreds of thousands of people saying "our higher ed institutions are not doing a good enough job, we are better off doing this ourselves."

And it grounds the conversation on how to make this system better. We now have a rich dataset to discuss these problems in detail.

Being able to see the problem is an improvement! But remains a first step. We've progressed from Schrodinger's cat to Schrodinger's plates and still have a ways to go.

Asks

- [Amar](#) is looking for teachers who want to [start their own microschools with KaiPod Learning](#)
- [Amy](#) is looking for introductions to VPs of Enrollment Management and Directors of Financial Aid and / or Admissions to talk about financial transparency. Email amy@meadowfi.com if you can help!
- [Edily](#) is looking for a Technical Co-Founder, please [apply here](#) or [email Jonathan](#) if this could be you or someone you know
- [Jacob](#) is offering to review copy for folks planning K12 school district outreach
- [Graham](#) is hosting a panel on [Fundraising Strategy for early-stage EdTech companies](#) on Tuesday 12/13

If you have an Ask you'd like to see published in EdTech Thoughts, [please fill out this form](#).

Links

[ED disbands parent engagement group](#)

This summer the US Department of Education put together the Parents and Families Engagement Council to "to facilitate strong and effective

relationships between schools and parents, families and caregivers." Concerned that such an organization might facilitate friendship and/or progress, multiple opposition groups sued so vociferously that the group was disbanded before it had even met

[Financial Aid offer chicanery](#)

In a GAO survey of financial aid offers from a nationally representative, 176-university sample, 90% of universities in the survey underreported the expected costs in their offer. Zero (0) universities in the survey followed all of the GAOs financial aid best practices laid out in a 2019 report. Two-thirds of the universities followed less than half of best practices.

[Holberton School opens NYC campus](#)

In a zag from a US bootcamp market that has been focused on online options, Holberton School will open a new campus near the UN Building in Manhattan. The move is sort of in keeping with Holberton's expansion model of partnering with foreign universities and organizations - in this case American University of Lebanon - to open campuses. I believe this is the first foreign partnership they've offered on US soil

[Revamping Title IV](#)

As (hopefully) illustrated above, we are closer to anarchy than order in the US post-secondary system. I appreciate that this op-ed does not offer a magic bullet, and instead uses data to call out the mis-matched expectations between what (many) learners (probably) need and what our system is willing to pay for

Question of the Week

POLL

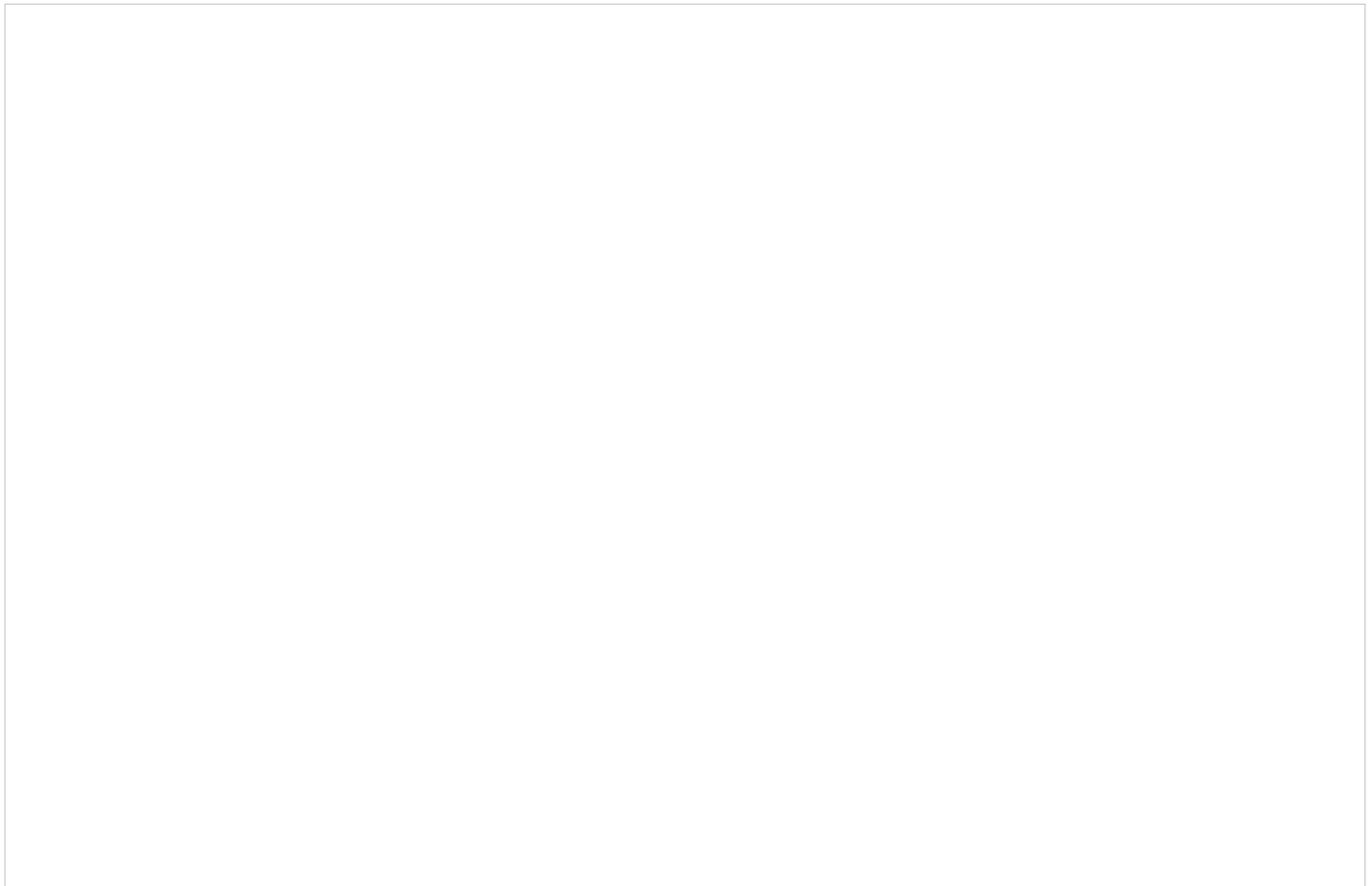
Which sub-category of VR are you following most closely in 2023?

Professional development simulation

39%

44 VOTES · POLL CLOSED

Results of last week's poll: Please note this poll was NOT scientific and should not be cited anywhere other than holiday cocktail parties. I will keep an eye out for any final disclosures about price from Zovio before the company goes poof.



Ed Tech Thoughts is a short (~ 5 mins), weekly overview of the top stories in EdTech, with a few (hopefully interesting) gut reactions attached. If you enjoyed this edition, I hope you will subscribe and/or forward to your friends!

If I missed something, or there is a topic you'd like to learn more about, I encourage you to submit a story! Submissions can be named or anonymous

[Submit a story](#)

Disclosure

[Disclosure - September 2022](#)

[Read more](#)

[2 months ago · Matthew Tower](#)

[1](#)

Adding tabloid intrigue, but (probably) not a whole lot of substance - Boris Johnson's (he of Brexit) brother will chair the board of the new entity. Jo Johnson is more qualified for the job than you might expect, having been Britain's Minister for Universities and Science between 2015 and 2018, but he had no easily-identifiable relationship to either company, or EdTech more broadly, prior to this chairmanship

[2](#)

The 1M+ count technically includes 50K+ secondary credentials, but this story focuses on the implications to the post-secondary system

[3](#)

Yes to both as of 9PM on 12/11/22. The Pottery cert is, appropriately, an apprenticeship