

# Bridging Learning, Gamification, And Digital Work: A Review of Modern Skill Development, Freelancing, And Job-Hunting Systems with Reference to Merituno

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**Abstract**—*Idea of Gamified learning platform and online working platform are coming these days and that is why new ways to mix learning and freelance and job opportunities are coming out. This paper will show the recent research on gamified learning platforms, and system for progress using an example of the Merituno project. It is a platform where users learn new skills by finishing their lessons, quizzes, and tasks, slowly opening freelance tasks and job opportunities while they increase XPs and move up through the star levels. This paper shows how the use of XP, and levels is very efficient in increasing engagement. However, a platform with equal task giving and secure payment systems is also required to make sure that equal access to freelance and job opportunities are given. The mixture of practical studies, systematic reviews, and case studies works best for progression-based learning, motivation driven task completion, and online work management. Research says that combining gamification with work opportunities can strengthen skill development, and employability. This paper gives tips for making learn-to-earn system that decreases the distance between education and job opportunities.*

**Index Terms**—*gamified learning, online work, skill development, Merituno, freelance jobs*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Gamified learning and online working are rapidly increasing, creating various ways to attach skill development with freelance and job opportunities. With the fast growth of online education, many open online courses (MOOCs), and learning platforms, gamification has come out as an effective way to increase motivation, and knowledge. At the same time, the freelance industry continues to expand, with

millions of freelancers worldwide depending on online platforms to do work and make careers. Despite this, there is limited knowledge of how gamified learning can be easily joined with real world work systems, allowing learners not only to acquire skills but also to apply them directly in professional way. Recent studies (2022 to 2025) have explored gamified learning, learner engagement strategies, progression systems, and online freelancing environments. Proof says gamification such as star points, and levels successfully increase motivation and participation. At the same time, features such as equal task and secure payments are important to make sure honest access to freelance work is given. Then too problems are there in making platform that balances internal and external motivation which decreases unfairness in task giving and support longer user engagement. Merituno project is a guide for this review which is showing an app that mixes gamified learning with XPs to get freelance work and job. Merituno shows how experience points (XP), star levels, and learning modules can be joined with skill profiles, task allocation systems, and proper work management. By mixing research and case studies this paper tells good use for making motivation driven and learn-to-earn systems. The goal is to give insights for research and platform makers looking to connect education with real world employment with the help of gamified online systems.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Gamified learning and online work places are mixing which makes chances to join skill development and

freelance and job work. Many studies have shown gamification, motivation, and online work in this context.

*A. Impact of Gamification on Students' Learning Outcomes and Academic Performance: A Longitudinal Study Comparing Online, Traditional, and Gamified Learning [1]*

This study examined how gamified systems affect academic performance over time. Results showed that people who use these platforms achieve higher consistency than those who do not. This paper shows how a star-based system contains motivation and matches with Merituno's XP model for long term user connection.

*B. Validating the Impact of Gamified Technology Enhanced Learning Environments on Motivation and Academic Performance: Increasing TELEs with Digital Badges [2]*

Researchers studied that badges or visuals help in gamified environments and the study confirmed that rewards improve persistence and learning. This proof backs up the concept of making use of stars and progressions to keep a user's interest.

*C. Game Mechanics and Motivation in Online Education [3]*

In this paper, gamification was the focus specially in the point of learning and the findings have shown that feedback improves the confidence of the people. In the application, Merituno gives personalization in the aspect of challenges and star upgrades.

*D. Experience Points and Leaderboards [4]*

This research tells methods for tracking engagement with the help of points, leaderboards, and badges. It said that visible progress bars increase participation. This platform also uses the same system of XP and ranking for showing involvement and competition.

*E. Motivational Impact of Reward Systems in E-Learning Balancing External and Internal Drivers [5]*

This research addresses how over dependency on rewards can lead to a decrease in motivation and recommends an approach that uses reward-based motivations and this platform does it well by using XP and Stars.

*F. A review of Gamification in online learning systems (2022 to 2024) [6]*

A review of over 80 studies shows that gamification increases motivation but it requires matching content and rewards for continuous participation. This supports Merituno's progression-based learning strategy for maintaining user retention.

*G. A Relative Study of Online Freelancing Systems and User Motivation [7]*

The aim of this paper was to look at the different freelancing systems, where it was shown that fair checking maintains the motivation in freelancers. Merituno's star and rating system is a progress of these concepts which creates better quality performance.

*H. Reputation and Trust Systems in Freelance Platforms: A Review of Fairness and Transparency Models [8]*

This paper discusses reputation algorithms used in major freelance platforms. It pointed out the risk of bias in the process and unfair task allocation. This was mitigated by Merituno through the use of verified skill stars in the process.

*I. Connecting Education and Employment by Gamified Verification of Skills Systems [9]*

Researchers proposed gamified assessments as certification tools for employability. The authors found that "verification of skills by means of gamification enabled increased employer confidence in the candidates' ability to perform their work." Merituno incorporates a similar idea by enabling learners to unlock access to the job through learning completion and star verification.

*J. Gamified MOOCs: Improving Course Completion Rates with Interactive Quests and Milestones [10]*

This study shows that including quests and milestones in the gamification package reduces the dropout rates of the MOOC significantly. The study concluded that persistence is a powerful motivator for the participants to remain for a longer time. The application uses a similar approach in the form of modules and stars for achieving milestones.

*K. Online Learning Systems and the Role of Gamification in Worker Preparation [11]*

This research shows that how gamification prepares

students for real world job roles with the help of mock tasks. Findings like these support Merituno's transition from learning modules to freelance tasks.

*L. Gamification for Continuous Learning: Challenges and Design Considerations [12]*

This research pointed to future problems like losing interest from rewards or non-engagement in long term gamified systems. It proposed difficulty and mixed feedback systems to maintain engagement.

*M. Adaptive Reward Mechanisms in Gamified E-Learning Platforms [13]*

This paper shows how reward systems based on user behavior and achievements affect users. The research shows that reward structures do increase user persistence. The merituno platform also includes different kinds of reward systems like XP and star levels.

*N. Motivation and Engagement in Gamified Freelancing: User Retention Patterns [14]*

This research talks about the motivation of freelance workers on a gamified platform. The research showed that transparency of progress and honest earnings have a positive effect on freelance workers, which is given by Merituno in the form of payments, tracking of XP, and star ratings.

*O. Integrating AI with Gamified Learning for Skill Assessment & Feedback [15]*

This research paper discussed how AI-based checking technology would be used in gamified platforms, which proves that performance tracking would add to more efficiency while learning.

*P. Mental Drivers of Participation in Gamified Platforms [16]*

The factors pointed as the motivators are the reasons for curiosity, competition, and accomplishment. It states that a well-designed star system can increase mental satisfaction and the star system of Merituno matches with it.

*Q. Sustaining Engagement in Long Term Gamified Systems: Lessons from eLearning Case Studies [17]*

This research found that users stay on the platform for a longer time with the help of progression, and new

rewards. This is applied by Merituno's star system, with new tasks unlocked for progression through XP levels.

*R. The Role of Community and Collaboration in Gamified Learning Environments [18]*

The paper also showed that features such as "shared progress" and "users challenges" improve motivation and retention. Team-based challenges and community leaderboards, which are part of Merituno's future plans, are all collaboration features.

*S. Evaluating Gamification Impact on Skill-Based Job Matching Platforms [19]*

In a similar study analyzed for the purpose of the present paper, gamified job matching systems where skills verification was associated with access to the labor market came into focus. According to the finding's, gamified credentials do significantly increase employer trust. In the case of the Merituno system, the idea is similar to the verified star level linked to user performance.

*T. Designing Fair and Transparent Reward Algorithms in Online Learning-to-Earning Platforms – [20]*

This work also provided transparent scoring models for fair rewards. It focused on the trust aspect of algorithms in a hybrid education employment ecosystem. This is achieved in the Merituno architecture through clear XP rules and task outcome transparency.

### III. METHODOLOGY OF REVIEW

This review has been done on the basis of a quick analysis of 20 recent articles published on gamified learning, online freelancing platforms, digital skill verification, and learner engagement, conducted between 2022 and 2025.

The main steps included:

- a) *Collecting Sources:* Papers were gathered from IEEE Xplore, ScienceDirect, Springer, and Google Scholar.
- b) *Organizing Themes:* Research was grouped into topics such as motivation due to gamification, reward systems, fairness in task allocation, and mixing of learning with real work.

c) *Comparing Findings:* Insights from the studies were compared to find common trends, best practices, and challenges.

d) *Relating to Merituno:* The research was studied to show how they support the design and functionality of Merituno’s learning-to-earn system.

This method gave this review an opportunity to elaborate the current knowledge and give recommendations for making platforms that mix learning with freelance and job opportunities.

#### IV. SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN

The design system of the Merituno focus on building a structured platform where members progress through a gamified learning environment. The employers post freelance tasks or jobs, and the admin is taking care of the transactions. This section elaborates on system structure, module design, database structure, and data flows that enables smooth working of the platform meanwhile joining gamification and real-world work opportunities.

#### A. System Architecture

Merituno uses a three-layer system that has the presentation layer (frontend), application layer (backend), and database (data layer) [1][2].

##### a) Frontend (Presentation Layer)

The frontend is made with the help of HTML, CSS, and JavaScript where Members, employers, and administrator have different interface and features [3][9].

##### b) Backend (Application Layer)

The backend is built with the help of Firebase which provides services like authentication, role-based access, real time updates, and job/task management [2][4].

##### c) Database (Data Layer)

Firestore is a NoSQL database which is used to handle structured data. The database can handle real-time data syncing between users, so data consistency can be ensured [2, 5].

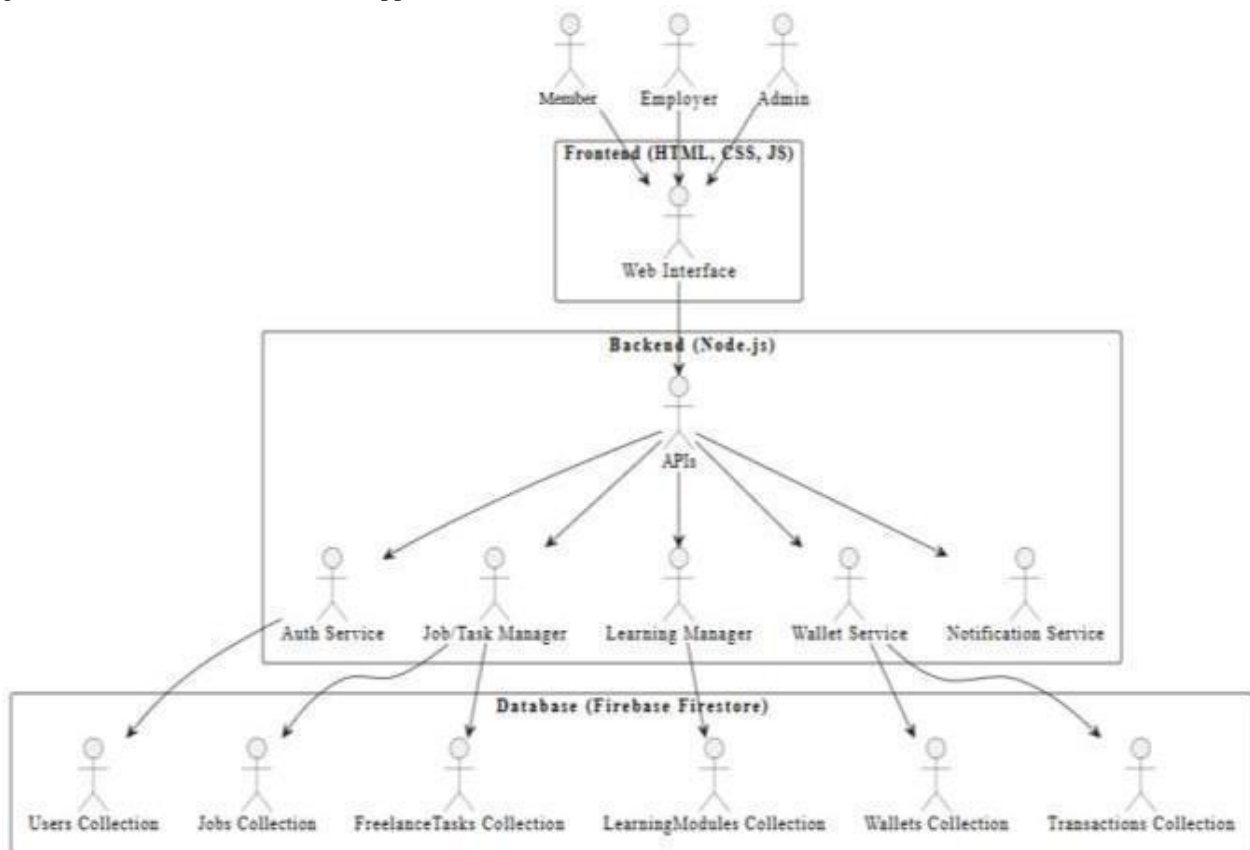


Fig. 1. Diagram showing user role.

**B. Use Case Overview**

Merituno provides different workflow for different user roles:

*Members:* They can register, log in and also can enroll in learning modules and complete quizzes, earn XP, and increase star level and open freelance or job opportunities [3][9].

a) *Employers:* Post freelance tasks and jobs with eligibility criteria, check submissions, approve work, give payments, and manage job/freelance listings [5][6].

b) *Administrators:* Upload platform content, see wallet operations, manage user roles and system settings.[2][4].

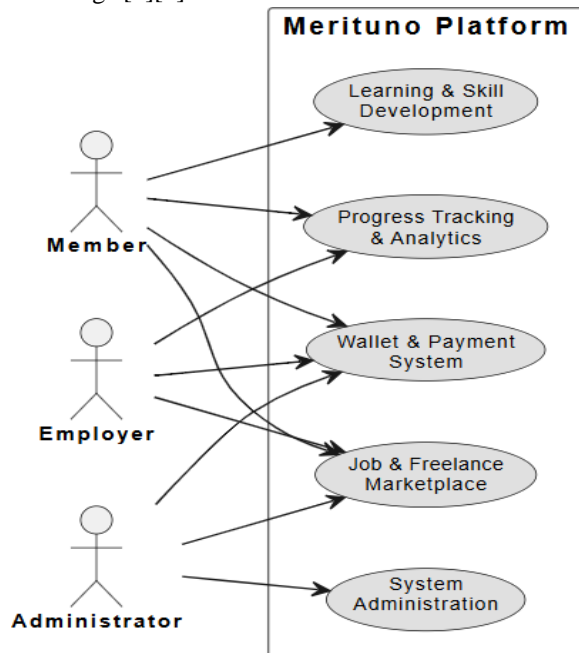


Fig. 2. The diagram of how users, employers, and administrators are connected.

**C. Data Flow**

The data flow of the platform shows the connection of the members, employers, and administrator:

a) *Learning Module:* Members select content, take the quizzes, and earn XP.

b) *Job/Task Management:* Employers post and manage tasks, while members apply and submit work [5][6].

c) *Application Processing:* Matches applications, updates status, and tells the stakeholders with the help of notifications.

d) *Wallet/Transactions:* Manages mock payments;

the members earn and the employers fund, admins see all the transactions [2][7].

e) *Admin Moderation:* Admins manage content approvals, user management, and system auditing.

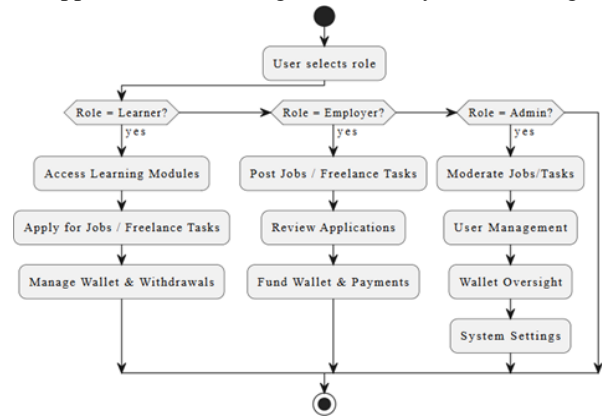


Fig. 3. The layers of Merituno: frontend, backend, and database layers.

**D. Database Design**

Merituno's NoSQL concept is based on dividing the database's structure as per the user's role, making it reusable.

a) *Members Collection:* It stores profile data, XP, star levels, completed modules, freelance tasks, and wallet data.

b) *Employers Collection:* Stores employer profiles, job and freelance task postings, notifications, and activity history.

c) *Admin Collection:* Maintains learning modules, transactions, email logs, system settings, and admin action logs.

d) *This system does the joining of gamified learning with real work management and equal access to freelance and job opportunities [1][3][5].*

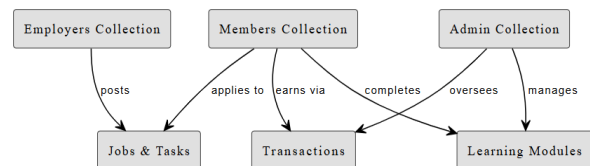


Fig. 4. database structure showing collections and relationships.

This system allows the mixing of gamified learning with fair tasks allotment and access to freelance and job opportunities [1][3][5].

## V. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

These reviewed studies tell how gamification, learning, and equal tasks can end up in shaping new learn-to-earn platforms. This chapter shows the research and their knowledge of how those topics are shown in the system of Merituno.

### A. Motivation through Gamification

Gamification continues to be a key differentiator in improving the learner experience. Motivation and retention. Several works underline those points: levels, and performance linked rewards serve to maintain focus. Thus, encouraging participation and regularity in the interaction process by all participants in the group.

Merituno applies these principles through:

- a) *Experience Points (XP)*: Awarded upon completing learning modules and quizzes to indicate learner progress.
- b) *Star-Based Progression*: Represents verified competence and access level for tasks and freelance opportunities.

These approaches correspond with findings that a combination of *intrinsic and extrinsic incentives* leads to better engagement than content delivery alone [3][4]. XP shows everyday participation, whereas stars show achievement.

### B. Reputation and Fairness in Freelancing

The old systems of freelancing are often dependent on client feedback, because it creates unfairness and uncertainty [5][6]. Merituno tries to stop such a situation by guaranteeing that user reputation and access to work are achieved from verified learning outcomes.

- a) *Skill-Based Reputation*: Learner progress and skill completion are tracked directly through XP and module completion rather than external ratings.
- b) *Fair Task Allocation*: Freelance or job tasks are unlocked in relation to star level, ensuring fairness and opportunity distribution.
- c) *Transparent Work Logs*: Progress and completion data provide evidence-based performance, minimizing bias in employer selection.

This format aligns with the fairness and trust-based principles proposed by Tadelis [11] and Zhang et al. [12], in order to encourage an assessment of skills.

### C. Adaptive and Personalized Learning

One of the key roles of adaptive learning is to ensure the effective use of gamified education. Research has also pointed out that personalized progression for the paths and context-based feedback increase motivation and knowledge retention [3][9].

Merituno merge this adaptability by:

- a) *Adjusting XP based on module difficulty* to reward effort proportionally.
- b) *Providing module recommendations* according to past performance and interests.
- c) *Encouraging reattempts and gradual skill mastery* using positive reinforcement mechanisms.

These methods reflect the *behavioral reinforcement* models discussed in [1] and [7], ensuring that learners advance through consistent interaction and personalized feedback.

### D. Integration of Learning, Freelancing, and Job Hiring

There has been a gap between learning and real employment opportunities [10][8][13]. This platform wants to reduce these gaps with a direct link between known learning outcomes and work hiring methods.

- a) *Learn-to-Work Flow*: When users come on a certain star level by completing their quizzes, the freelance and job opportunities are unlocked for them.
- b) *Employer Verification*: Profile of the users can be seen by the Employers before the hiring process, where their XP, skill, and completed modules are shown.
- c) *Real Job Hiring*: When users come on a higher level, they can apply for real jobs with the help of hiring panels.

Our platform accomplishes the mixture of learning and working methods discussed by Klein and Wang (2024) [13], showing evolution of Gamified Education towards jobs.

### E. Scalability, Security, and Sustainability

To manage real time user growth, new platforms should be reliable, secure and scalable [4][5][10]. Merituno's structure points to these problems by mixing cloud services and secure transaction management.

- a) *Cloud-Native Infrastructure*: It is built with the help of Firebase for updates and scalability.
- b) *Data Security*: Data storage for all users is safe and

secure.

- c) *Task and Payment Integrity:* Freelance and Job transactions are secured and they also provide transparency.

Scalability and cross role interaction will be provided by this system, which is the best practice for educational systems.

*F. Limitations*

Although it has its strength, Merituno faces some problems:

- a) *Limited Real World Task Diversity:* Current freelance tasks may not cover all professional domains.
- b) *Dependency on Platform Usage:* A lot of users and employer participation is must so that success can be achieved.
- c) *Skill Assessment Scope:* Developing soft skills or complex ability with the help of star level system or XP might not be possible.
- d) *Long Term Engagement:* After introducing gamification, maintaining motivation for long periods of time still remains challenging.

Faults like these create chances for future improvements, such as AI skill evaluation, and mentorship engagement.

*G. Summary of Analysis*

The following table below shows how Merituno uses gamified learning ways to create a strong learn-to-earn platform:

Table 1: Merituno System Analysis Summary

Feature	Implementation in Merituno	Benefit
Gamification	XP points and star progression	Keeps learners motivated with clear milestones
Reputation System	Verified skills and stars	Ensures fair task access and trust
Adaptive Learning	Module recommendations and adaptive difficulty	Supports personalized learning paths
Learning-to-Job Pipeline	Tiered access to freelance tasks	Connects learning with real world work
Cloud Infrastructure	Firebase backend with role-based access	Enables secure, scalable interactions

VI. CHALLENGES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

*A. Fairness and Bias in Task Allocation*

It is hard to maintain fairness while giving freelance tasks or jobs and sometimes old system are unfair to early users [5], [11].

- a) *Preventing XP Exploitation:* Making sure that users can't increase points to gain tasks early.
- b) *Balanced Task Assignment:* Allocating of freelance and job tasks to users with certain skill levels.
- c) *Equal Access for Newcomers:* Without being dominated by the old users we make ways to allow new users to compete equally.

Controlling these problems also completes the need of fairness algorithms in the online market [12].

*B. Aligning Educational Outcomes with Real-World Work*

There is a gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world practice which should be decreased. Alot of student have theory knowledge but they fail to apply it [7][13].

- a) *Credential Validation:* Skills and XP must show skills that employers can trust.
- b) *Job-Relevant Learning:* Modules should match with the tasks and skills required in freelance or job roles.
- c) *Mentorship and Guidance:* Users can provide feedback to ensure work readiness.

Merituno's system of star levels tells these problems by mixing learning results with task accessibility.

*C. User Engagement and Motivation*

When the starting interest decreases for the users, it is hard to maintain their engagement [1][3][9].

- a) *Regular Incentives:* XP, new levels, or regular challenges help the motivation to continue for a long time.
- b) *Personalized Progression Paths:* Flexible learning ways stops lack of activity and non-engagement of users.
- c) *Mentorship Rewards:* One on one guidance encourages participation for both mentors and students.

This method tells that motivation mixed with rewards makes users stay longer on this platform [2][7].

#### D. Scalability, Security, and Technical Framework

When platforms grow, scalability and security are big concerns [4][5][10].

- a) *Cloud Native Solutions*: Services like clouds are used to make sure that we get real time updates.
- b) *Secure Transactions*: Wallets and freelance payments should be secure and we should be able to check it later if any fraud happens.
- c) *Role Based Access Control*: Securing user data, employer data, and admin data meanwhile giving connection in between different roles.

This structure of Merituno shows working of principles to ensure the reliability in various roles of the users.

#### E. Future Directions

There are some new trends that point to different development areas for learn-to-earn platforms:

- a) *AI-Driven Task Recommendation*: assigning users to tasks on the basis of their XP and performance.
- b) *Blockchain Based Credentialing*: Verifiable badges and XP stored on decentralized ledgers to improve trust across platforms [10][8].
- c) *Cross Platform Job Integration*: Connecting Merituno to external freelance APIs for broader real-world opportunities.
- d) *Analytics for Mentorship*: Using data to optimize mentor allocation and peer learning outcomes.

These future directions will show that how these fields will continue to make the learn-to-earn platforms more engaging, and effective in reducing gaps between education and employment.

### VII. CONCLUSION

The mixing of gamified learning and freelance and job opportunities seems to be a good idea for making skill development and employment better. According to the studies between 2022 and 2025, gamification features like XP, levels, and progress can have a big impact on user engagement. It is clear from different features, for example modules, XPs and stars with the help of platforms like Merituno. Employers and students can grow trust through learning and feedback.

Merituno is an example of how a person can actually take these concepts and connect them with freelance and job work. This makes sure that online learning problems and opportunities to earn are taken in a positive way with the help of reliability, and security.

Additionally, equal task distribution helps in removing any unfairness in the overall environment. This way, education through gamified learning, can be connected in a way that is positive for all.

In conclusion, gamification, flexible learning, and the job model appear to be a practical option for new skill development in today's world. The capability of learn-to-earn models like Merituno in beating the limits of current e-learning programs is clear from its benefits.

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