

Micro-Credentials and the impact on Lifelong Learning

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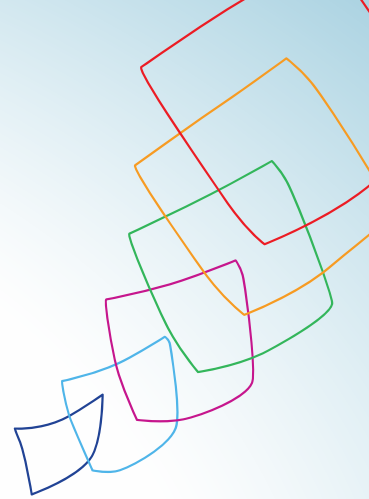


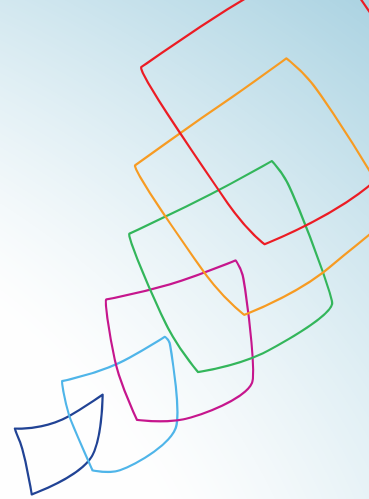
Projekt je sufinancirala Europska unija iz Europskog socijalnog fonda.

The Future of Work and Lifelong Learning

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) – Emerging trends

- The explosion of industrial innovation
- The fast-paced emerging technologies and digitalization
- The profound and systemic changes in organizational structures
- The ease of access to information facilitates personalized learning systems
- Job markets in the 4IR required more high-skilled and specialized workers.
- There was a shift directly connected to the field of education, where the role of professionals is to prepare students to successfully navigate within society.
- Educators and students need to be better equipped to succeed in the 4IR.





Technology - Remote Learning - Online
Learning - Personalised Professional
Development

Emerging Trends

- New ways of acquiring and signalling skills are emerging, and engaging millions of learners.
- So-called “alternative credentials” – such as **micro-credentials, digital badges and industry-recognised certificates**
- Fill a gap between the programmes that higher education institutions (HEIs) including Universities of Applied Sciences provide and the skills that firms seek.

OECD (2020):

‘Despite an increasing volume of these new credentials, great uncertainty persists. Definitions and taxonomies to structure these new credentials have not been widely agreed. The extent of their offer remains uncertain, evidence of their impacts is scant, and the response of governments to these new offerings has not been systematically documented.’

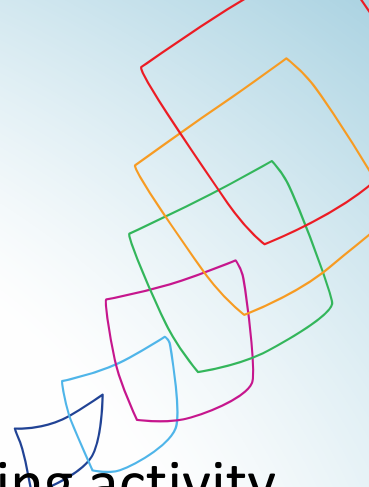
Definitions of Micro-Credentials in different ecosystems

- **European Commission:** A micro-credential is a qualification evidencing learning outcomes acquired through a short, transparently-assessed course or module. Micro-credentials are offered by higher and vocational education and training (VET) institutions, as well as by private organisations.
- **European Higher Education Area (EHEA):** an emerging definition of micro-credentials is a “sub-unit of a credential or credentials that confer a minimum of 5 ECTS², and could accumulate into a larger credential or be part of a portfolio” (MicroHE Consortium, 2019[6]).

Micro-credential

is a sub-unit of a credential that could accumulate into a larger credential or degree or be part of a portfolio. Examples are: Verified Certificates, Digital Badges, MicroMasters, Nanodegrees.

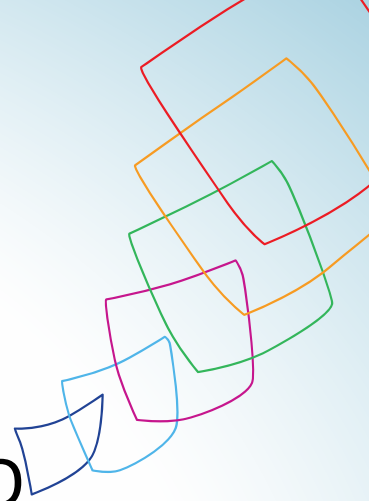
Definitions of Micro-Credentials in different ecosystems (Cont.)



- **United States:** micro-credentials are understood as learning activity consisting of “more than a single course but less than a full degree”, and are labelled differently across providers
- **Oceania:** tends to adapt a wider definition, and both of the above-mentioned types of micro-credentials, ranging from 5-40 credits, are regarded as micro-credentials (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2019).

Definitions of Micro-Credentials in different ecosystems (Continued)

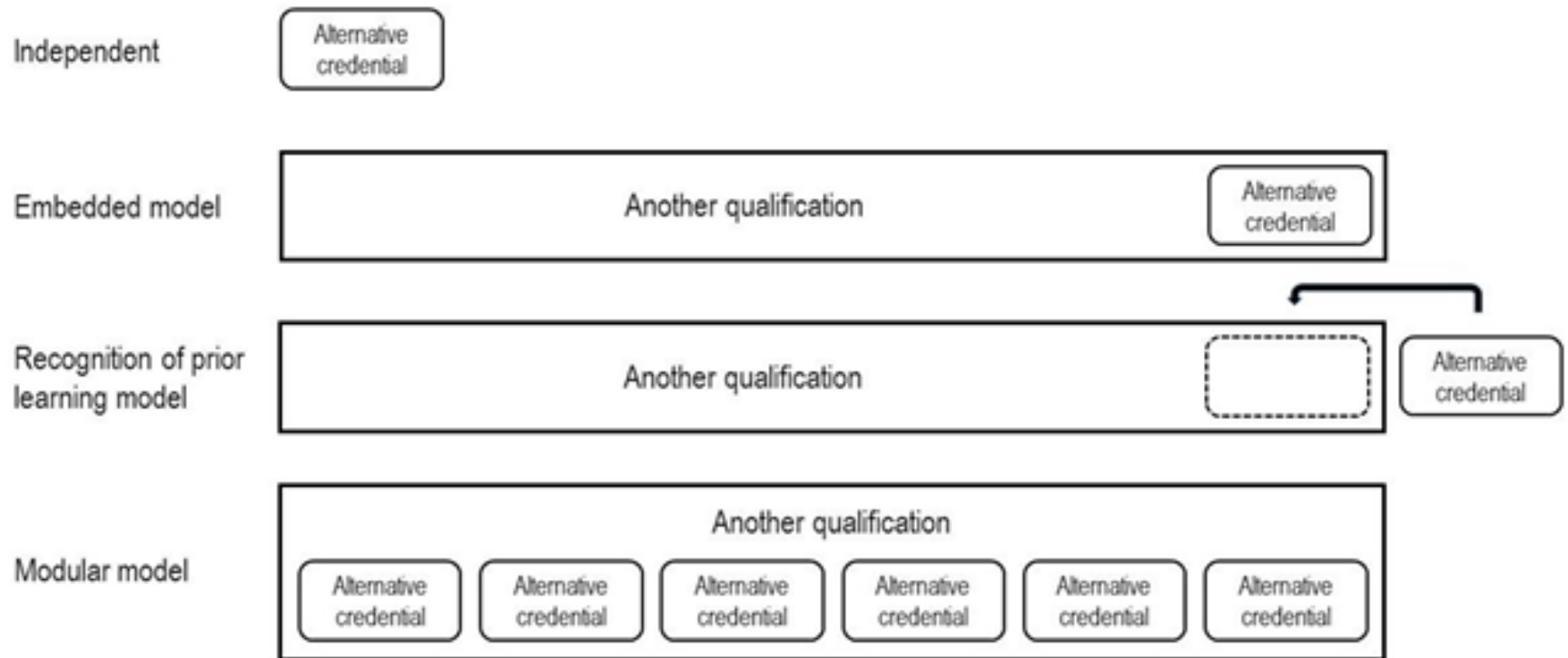
- Viewed within the ISCED framework (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012[9]), some alternative credentials may be classified as part of a formal education programme;
- others as a non-formal education programme (or part of a non-formal education programme);
- and still others would be obtained through informal learning activity.



Alternative Credential Model

There are three models of integration: an embedded model, a recognition of prior learning model and a modular model (Figure 2.3).

Abstract from: The Emergence of Alternative Credentials OECD Education Working Paper No. 216



New Zealand Qualifications Authority (2019)

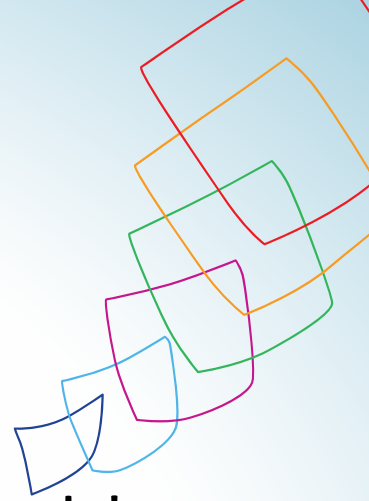
Guidelines for applying for approval of a training scheme or a micro-credential



- Good evidence that the training scheme or micro-credential enables learners to achieve the intended outcomes and purpose
- Good evidence that the training scheme or micro-credential is made up of components structured in a coherent way to achieve the outcomes and addresses the relevant needs of learners (if applicable)
- Good evidence that the education organisation has the capability and resources to provide the training scheme or micro-credential
- Good evidence that the education organisation can manage the impacts of any specific training scheme or micro-credential requirements
- No significant gaps or weaknesses in the training scheme or micro-credential
- No significant gaps or weaknesses in the self-assessment report, and/or the underlying capability and resources of the organisation
- Demonstrable evidence that the learning outcomes and activities match the purpose of the micro-credential Evidence the micro-credential addresses the identified unmet skill needs and is required or supported by relevant industries, employers or communities
- Evidence that the micro-credential is in addition to current learning, and typically does not duplicate current quality-assured learning approved by NZQA Note:

The Award system in Malta

An example of micro-credentials



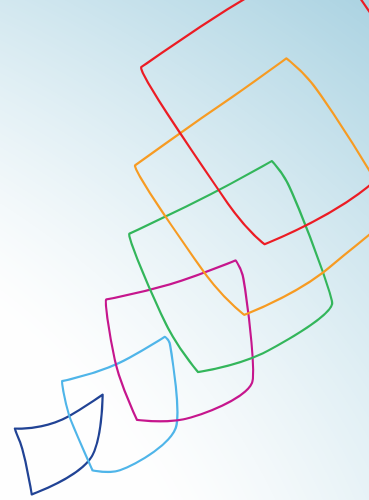
- In Malta, micro credentials are referred as 'Awards'
- In 2009, the concept of micro-credentials was implemented and accredited against the Malta Qualifications Framework.
- In 2016, the micro-credentials concept was developed further and recognised as an important aspect of the education and training provision in Malta.

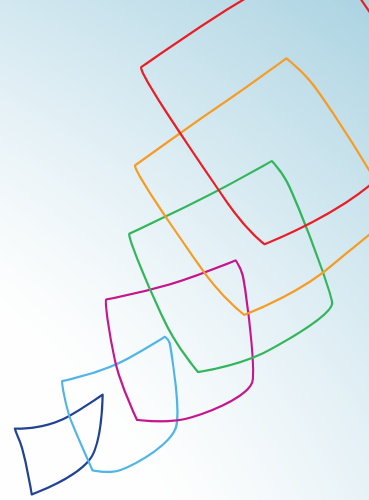
Awards system in Malta

- Employers and NGOs
 - get formal accreditation for formal, informal and non-formal training provided to employees and members of the organisation.
 - request formal training for their employees or members of the organisation from education and VET providers that is tailor made for the organisation.
- Education and training providers address the education and training needs of the labour market and of civil society by providing short, accredited and level-rated courses.
- Many young people and adults can embark on lifelong learning trajectories.



Micro-credentials as CPD Learning





Micro-credentials in workplace learning

- unfamiliarity with these new credentials;
- lack of standardised validation procedures;
- relative quality of these credentials as a signal.

Challenges of Micro-Credentials



- Bundled pre-designed learning programmes, hard to be sliced in sub-units;
- Differences in course descriptions such as learning outcomes, especially when very similar courses are compared;
- Lack of trust between different institutions; Learning hours and outcomes;
- Identity verification;
- Assessment of process and methods;

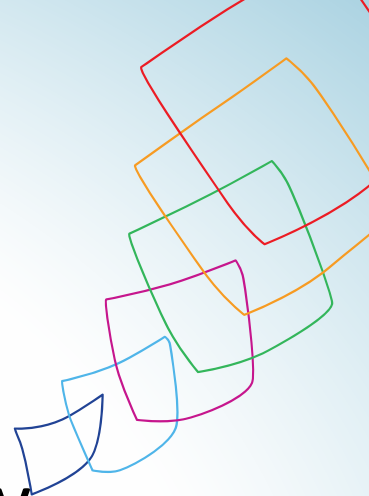
Challenges of Micro-Credentials



- Huge administrative challenge in changing the rules and regulations in the whole EU system.
- Employers are not much aware of the difference between a full qualification and an award in a particular area.
- Not all organisations, economic or voluntary, were well equipped to pass the quality test so that their formal, informal and non-formal education and training offer could be formalised into an accredited award or micro credential.

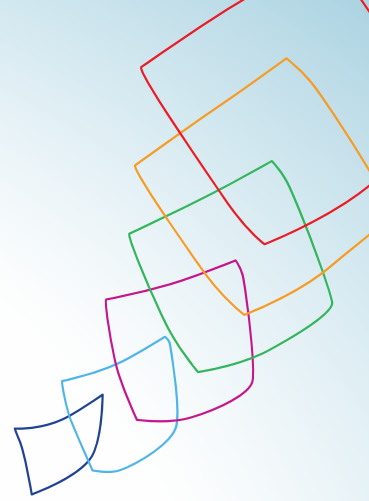
Concluding Remarks

- Micro-credentials do not yet serve as “alternative” to a formal post-secondary education qualification.
- Complement prior education, experience, and training.
- Employers still seem to view a degree as a signal of an individual’s skills and knowledge.



Concluding Remarks

- The majority of learners also seek alternative credentials in addition to formal post-secondary education qualifications.
- Micro-credentials may provide learners with skills and quality signals faster and at lower prices than traditional postgraduate programmes, which can be costly.



Prof James Calleja

THANK YOU