Micro-credentials - some conversation starters

Emeritus Professor Beverley Oliver

Find resources here…

My journey with micro-credentials

And how much I am yet to learn

My experience

A lifelong learner

An anecdote

Secondary education, higher education - teaching, leadership, research and policy

Working in WA, Victoria, nationally and internationally

My lack of experience

Vocational education - I am the person on the room least experienced in TAFE talk…

2019

Edging beyond my higher education bubble

Making micro-credentials work
for learners, employers and providers

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Deakin University

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DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

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The proposed definition, derived from ISCED, is as follows:

A micro-credential is a certification of assessed learning that is additional, alternate, complementary to or a component part of a formal qualification.

Why this wording? The proposed definition:

- focuses on *certification* of learning through assessment. This is intended to clearly separate micro-credentials from unassessed experiences which are also within non-formal learning (as *unassessed certificates of participation*)
- is broadened to include 'component parts' of formal qualifications (single units within a formal qualification are sometimes called micro-credentials)
- is sufficiently broad to encompass the many forms and brand names that have already appeared – such as MOOCs, nano degrees and certificates, MicroMasters, Specializations, bootcamps, intensives, short courses – regardless of their mode (onsite, online or blended) or duration.

Put more simply, and **for everyday use**, the definition of a micro-credential could read:

A micro-credential is a certification of assessed learning that is less than a formal qualification.

4

2021

Draft Preliminary Report
September 2021

A conversation starter: Towards a common definition of micro-credentials

This paper was commissioned by UNESCO and drafted by Emeritus Professor Beverley Oliver. The views and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of UNESCO or partner organisations that took part in the consultation exercise.

The paper is a preliminary draft for consultation; a final version will be made available in due course.

For further information, please contact: Info.TVET@unesco.org

Way beyond my higher education bubble

Working with experts from *qualifications authorities, higher education, VET, continuing professional development, international and regional organisations*

We are all to some extent in our collective regional, sectoral bubbles

We're all in a bubble…

Our views about micro-credentials are strongly influenced by and often limited to our own experience of life-wide and lifelong learning
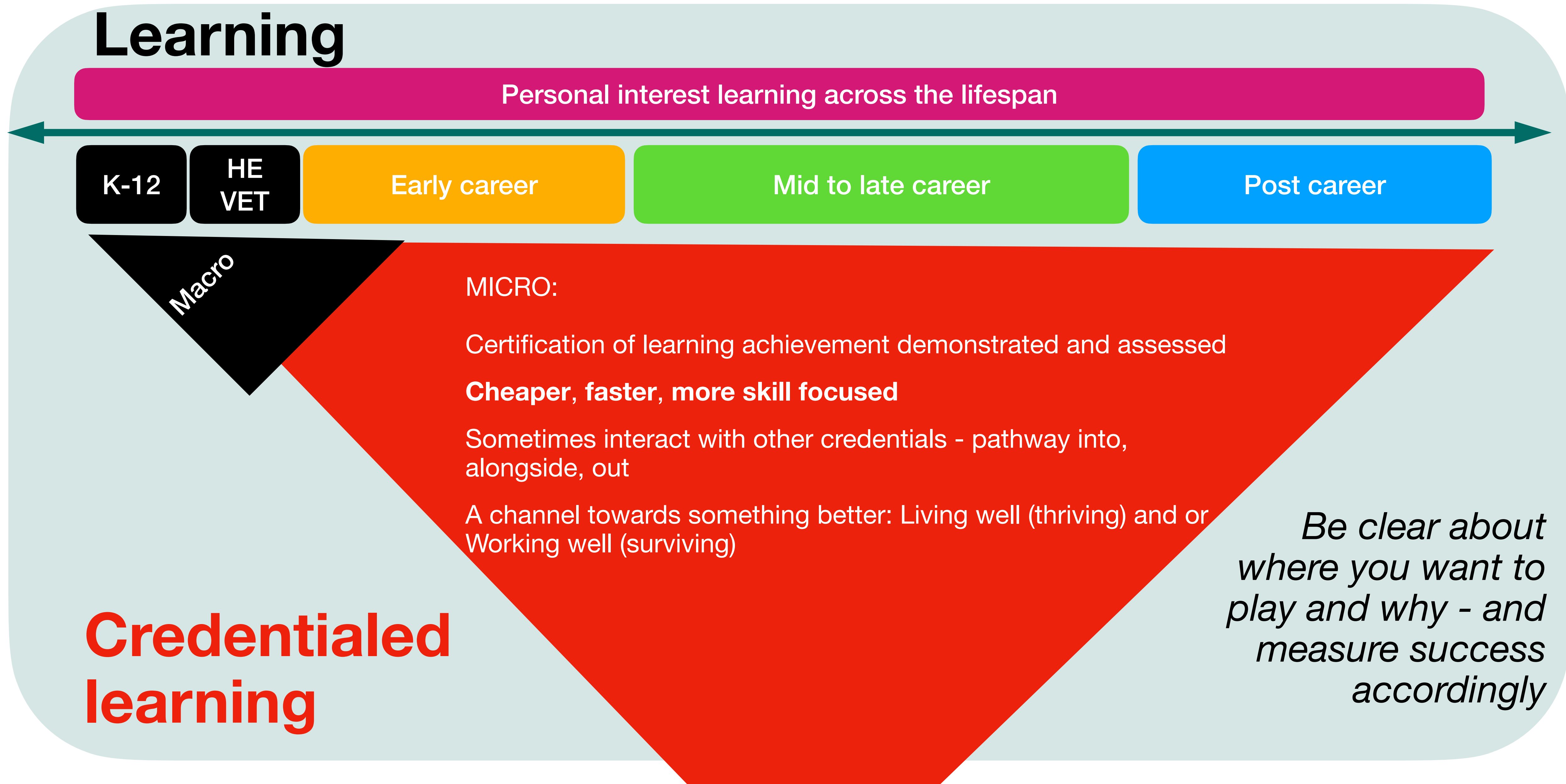
- Our own education

- Our working life - including in education

- Our region with its own language, and our region's language about education

- Sometimes we *assume* others do not understand our experiences

- Let's start with the learner, find out who they really are, and what they want to achieve

Six suggestions

For success with micro-credentials

1. Understand the crucial differences between *learning* and *credentialed learning*
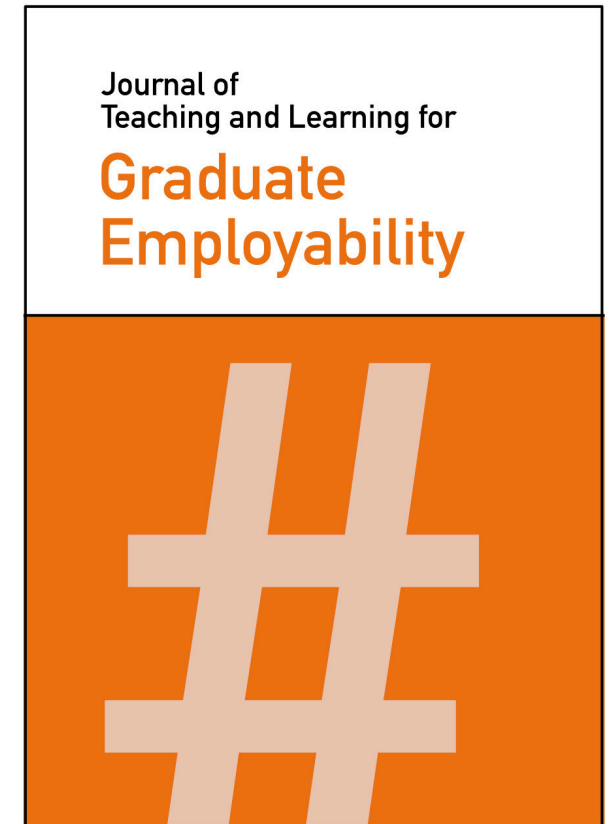
Learning

Personal interest learning across the lifespan

| K-12 | HE VET | Early career | Mid to late career | Post career |

Macro

MICRO:

Certification of learning achievement demonstrated and assessed

Cheaper, faster, more skill focused

Sometimes interact with other credentials - pathway into, alongside, out

A channel towards something better: Living well (thriving) and or Working well (surviving)

Be clear about where you want to play and why - and measure success accordingly

Credentialed learning

8

2. Understand the learner and the value they are seeking at this stage

Depending on the learner's circumstances:

Value = Benefits - Costs

Good value (benefits > costs)

Poor value (benefits < costs)

Journal of
Teaching and Learning for
**Graduate
Employability**

Micro-credentials: A learner value framework *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability*, 12(1), 48-51.

Maximise benefits most valued by the learner and moderate the "costs"

3. Agree on *the principles* that we agree on about micro-credentials

From the UNESCO work: A micro-credential

1. is a record of focused learning achievement verifying what the learner knows, understands or can do;
2. includes assessment based on clearly defined standards and is awarded by a trusted provider;
3. has stand-alone value and may also contribute to or complement other micro-credentials or macro-credentials, including through recognition of prior learning; and
4. meets the standards required by relevant quality assurance.

Good practice in micro-credentials? Verifiable learning, assessment, outcomes…

4. Think creatively about how to partner with industry

- Co-design

- Provide the assessment and quality assurance

- Validate, or provide credit towards a qualification

Provider	University alone	University with industry	Industry alone credit by University	Industry alone
CloudSwyft Global Systems, Inc. in partnership with Microsoft				4
QA accredited by AXELOS				2
FutureLearn in collaboration with AWS			Coventry	
FutureLearn in collaboration with Salesforce			Coventry	
FutureLearn in collaboration with Tableau			Coventry	
FutureLearn in collaboration with Xero & Tableau			Coventry	
Entrepreneurial Sales Institute (ESI) endorsed by Verizon Connect			Glasgow Caledonian	

Micro-credentials at FutureLearn, October 2020

5. Provide learners with a path, supported by evidence, not just a micro-credential

There are a gazillion short courses on offer - online and in other forms.
Many are on big platforms, and very inexpensive.

Micro-credentials are a data free zone.

Show me what this micro-credential will lead to, then back it up with the evidence that learners like me do achieve those goals

Is labour market literacy, especially post Covid, an essential life skill?

Coursera Professional Certificates as at 29 Sept 2020
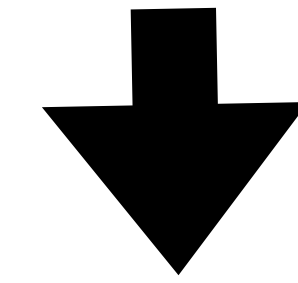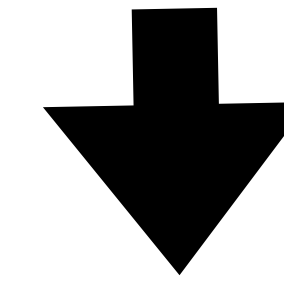
The headlines		Learner investment		Learner experience		Learner benefits	
Professional Certificate		Suggested hours	Likely fee[1]	Overall rating	Learners enrolled	New career	Pay or promotion
1.	(ISC)² Systems Security Certified Practitioner	112	$1500	4.7	4,129		
2.	Arizona State University TESOL	200	$680	4.9	12,981	53%	33%
3.	Cloud Architecture with Google Cloud	30	$102		43,998	36%	50%
4.	Cloud Engineering with Google Cloud	30	$102		41,058	36%	50%
5.	Data Engineering with Google Cloud	30	$102		35,053	45%	
6.	DeepLearning.AI TensorFlow Developer	80	$272	4.7	87,723	40%	12%
7.	Facebook Social Media Marketing	240	$408	4.8	7,701		
8.	Google IT Automation with Python	150	$408	4.7	145,045		
9.	Google IT Support	120	$408		398,400	84%[2]	
10.	IBM AI Engineering	192	$272	4.4	23,201	38%	18%
11.	IBM Applied AI	144	$204	4.6	23,533	41%	14%
12.	IBM Customer Engagement Specialist	20	$138	4.8	4,584	35%	30%[3]
13.	IBM Cybersecurity Analyst	128	$544	4.7	17,287		
14.	IBM Data Analyst	120	$162	4.7	1,732	42%	11%
15.	IBM Data Science	144	$162	4.6	212,231	46%	19%
16.	IBM Machine Learning	60	$162	4.9			
17.	IBM z/OS Mainframe Practitioner	36	$330	4.7	3,748		
18.	Salesforce Sales Development Rep	100	$340				
19.	SAS Advanced Programmer	60	$340	5.0			
20.	SAS Programmer	112	$220	4.8	20,015	21%	50%
21.	SAS Visual Business Analytics	40	$220	4.7	8,298		
22.	SRE and DevOps Engineer with Google Cloud	30	$102	4.7	2,147	36%	23%
23.	UCI Project Management	240	$4190				
TOTAL enrolment as at 29 Sep 2020					1,092,864		
Key		<100	<AU$300	>4.6	>25k	40%+	40%+

Empty cells indicate no data available.
[1] If learner follows recommended time required
[2] As reported separately by Google, see page 20 of this report
[3] In response to whether learner achieved a "tangible career benefit from this course"

6. Credential provider - credential thyself!

Provide micro-credentials for your own staff, so that when they leave, they carry portable and quantifiable evidence of their professional experience.

In summary

1. With regard to credentials, be clear about where you want to play and why - and measure success accordingly

2. Maximise the benefits most valued by the learner and moderate the "costs" (time and $)

3. Agree on what we agree on about MCs: verification, quality learning, assessment, outcomes.

4. Think creatively about how to credential in partnership with industry

5. A credential is a means to an end: find out what your learners want and offer them pathways to their goals - learning pathways, credit pathways, career pathways. Find out where paid work will be more prolific, safe and secure, and educate your learners towards those opportunities. Back your credentials with transparent data.

6. Professional development in any industry is ripe for credentialing - think about credentialing your own staff. This is especially important amid current churn.

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