THE PLACE OF MICRO-CREDENTIALS

NEW ZEALAND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING RESEARCH FORUM 2025
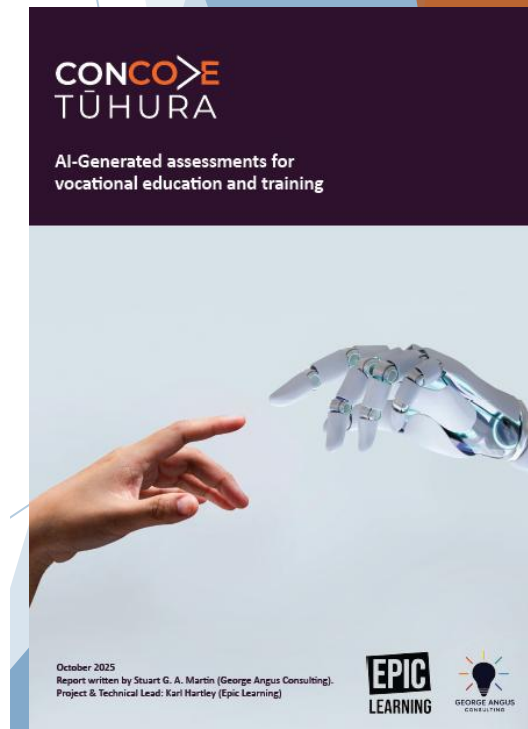
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AGENDA

▶ **Why do micro-credentials matter?**

▶ **Micro-credential policies around the world**

▶ **Going further: modularised systems**

▶ **Proposed system design**

▶ **Q&A**

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(WHY) DO MICRO CREDENTIALS MATTER?

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MICRO-CREDENTIALS: NEW ZEALAND

▶ New Zealand were amongst, if not the first, to put micro-credentials into legislation and embed in the vocational education framework.

▶ Originally defined as 5-40 credits (50-400 hours), content had to be mostly, if not all, unique, to not clash with existing qualifications.

▶ Currently 1-40 credits (10-400 hours), content can be the same, incorporate unit/skill standards, stack.

MICRO-CREDENTIALS: NEW ZEALAND

▶ Skill standards confusion.

▶ Lack of public policies relating to how to understand MC documents.

▶ Quality assurance practices and understanding of micro-credential policies different depending on the WDC.

▶ Personalisation findings in AI reserach very exciting opportunity.

▶ Writing for AI potentially way to improve the system.

MICRO-CREDENTIALS: INDIA

Defined as:

A form of micro-certification earned by proving competence in one specific skill at a time, via a portfolio of evidence, created through blended learning... They are smaller than a qualification and focus on skill development opportunities not currently catered for in the regulated skilling ecosystem.

They differ from traditional degrees and certificates in that they are generally offered in shorter or more flexible timespans and tend to be more narrowly focused.

MICRO-CREDENTIALS: INDIA

▶ Micro-credentials may be a permutation of units (performance criterion centred around identified learning outcomes) that may be developed within a sector or across sectors in a multiple of 7.5 learning hours in a learning day

▶ Up to 50% of degrees can be formed of stacked micro-credentials, and in exceptional circumstances up to 70% at Skills Universities.

▶ National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasised the need for skill-based learning. One part of this included the development of the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), which is to allow learners to store and accumulate credits, including those earned through micro-credentials, to work toward formal qualifications.

MICRO-CREDENTIALS: THE PHILIPPINES TVET v HIGHER ED

In the TVET sector, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) have used this definition of a micro-credential since 2022:

"A micro-credential course is an industry-recognized and/or qualification-related skill-specific training and certification lesser in coverage compared to a full qualification or TESDA prescribed cluster of units of competency. The curriculum of a micro-credential course does not require the inclusion of basic and common competencies". (TESDA 2022)

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MICRO-CREDENTIALS: THE PHILIPPINES TVET v HIGHER ED

Commission on Higher Education proposed these definitions:

► **Microcredentials (MCs)** are units of learning designed to allow recognition of a discrete set of skills that meet the learner, employer, industry, community needs (NZQA, 2022). It shows the records of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired over a short period of learning. These learning outcomes have been assessed against transparent and clearly defined standards (EU, 2021).

► **Non-credit (non-stackable, stand-alone)** are stand-alone Microcredentials that are offered usually to address lifelong learning needs of students. It is a short course for personal, professional, technical and academic development of the learners which is not part of formal qualification or degree.

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MICRO-CREDENTIALS: THE PHILIPPINES

- ▶ **"Bundling**

  - ▶ A micro-credential structure that combines multiple micro-credentials into a holistic qualification that encompasses a broad set of competencies...

- ▶ **Re-bundling**

  - ▶ A structure where micro-credentials from different training regulations can be combined to create new and tailored qualifications. This flexibility ensures that the education and training system can provide individual learner pathways as well as quickly respond to evolving industry demands and emerging skill requirements. Re-bundling transforms the qualification framework into a supermarket of competencies that can offer a flexible, customizable, and adaptable framework for qualifications.

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MICRO-CREDENTIALS: THE PHILIPPINES

▶ **Supermarket of Competencies**

▶ A system or approach where a wide range of competencies and skills are offered and can be selected by learners and workers based on their individual needs and career goals. This could involve a flexible and modular approach to learning, where learners and workers can pick and choose the specific competencies they want to acquire, similar to how one might select items from a supermarket shelf.

▶ **Unbundling**

▶ Allows for the disaggregation of qualifications into smaller, more manageable micro credentials".

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MORE THAN JUST MICRO CREDENTIALS

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SYSTEM DESIGN: DENMARK

▶ "A unique system that can quickly upskill the workforce with affordable and geographically accessible training – for the benefit of individuals, businesses and society,"

▶ ""As an AMU provider, we can design and completely tailor our programmes to employers' needs by creating packages of different AMU courses. We were founded to support the local business community together with businesses and public authorities, and "Your path to the construction industry" is an example of a course tailored to the expected needs of our local area""

The AMU system lets the Danish workforce continuously improve its skills, 2022, written by Dorthe Kirkgaard Nielsen, quote by Peter Thomsen, director of AMU Nordjylland,
https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/amu-system-lets-danish-workforce-continuously-improve-its-skills

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SYSTEM DESIGN: SINGAPORE

▶ Workforce Skills Qualifications integrating with Skills Frameworks.

▶ 38 Skills Frameworks, each including a list of available training programmes (covering both higher and vocational education) in that sector, separated by whether the viewer is looking as a student/fresh graduate or as an adult learner/mid-career switcher. Very granular, listing skills and competencies.

▶ SkillsFuture Initiative.

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SYSTEM DESIGN: SPAIN

► Reimagined the entire vocational training ecosystem rather than implementing isolated innovations within the existing system.

► At the core of this transformation is Organic Law 3/2022, this law established "a single, modular and flexible offer of formal vocational training from a lifelong learning perspective". This fundamental legislation created the legal foundation for a comprehensive redesign of vocational education in Spain.

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SYSTEM DESIGN: SPAIN

▶ Offers are organised from "micro-credentials" to vocational training qualifications, depending on whether they include a single learning outcome, one or more professional modules, or a complete package of professional modules, while maintaining their cumulative nature at all times.

▶ This model facilitates the generation of training pathways. Thus, any offer will be organised into units that take progression into account and can provide continuity. All offers will allow progress along training pathways leading to accreditations, certifications, and qualifications with national and European recognition.

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PROPOSED SYSTEM DESIGN

New Zealand Recognition Repository

▶ Expand the scope and provision of the current 'New Zealand Record of Achievement' system, owned by NZQA, leveraging established infrastructure while dramatically expanding its functionality.

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PROPOSED SYSTEM DESIGN

Learning Outcome focused

▶ The proposed expansion is to store every Learning Outcome (LO) earned by learners in New Zealand.

▶ For each learning outcome, the system would record:

  ▶ the outcome name, credit value, qualification level, achievement date, awarding institution, required assessments, theoretical components, and practical elements as minimum requirements.

▶ This system would be accessible to all registered training providers in New Zealand, employers, and the learners themselves.

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PROPOSED SYSTEM DESIGN

Skill Metadata Integration

► Requiring each learning outcome developer to provide for addition to the system, detailed skill metadata, similar to digital credential requirements. This metadata would specify the skills that learners earn, become competent in, or showcase through successful completion/achievement of each learning outcome.

► This granular approach would help there be more consistent training developed across the various providers wishing to train those particular learning outcomes, providing stronger credibility and validity. It would also signal to learners and employers exactly what capabilities each learning outcome represents, enhance opportunity for RPL

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PROPOSED SYSTEM DESIGN

Applied Learning Qualifications (ALQs)

▶ We propose that lifelong learners can 'stack' their achieved NZQA-accredited learning outcomes over a maximum seven-year period and receive recognition through ALQ issuance.

▶ ALQs will not be assigned specific qualification levels. Learners could undertake combinations from many different qualification levels within the NZQCF. As long as all learning outcomes are from accredited NZQA providers and total 40 credits (aligning with NZQCF qualification minimums), they can be issued an ALQ. The focus remains on recognising the learning itself rather than hierarchical positioning.

▶ Following stakeholder feedback, ALQs would allow for the incorporation of 'major' designations where at least 51% of the credits have learning outcomes which fall within the same subject field, using NZQA's 17 high-level classifications

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WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

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