Flexibilisation of Learning, Micro-credentials and the Role of Universities

Higher Education Policy Reform for Impact

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Objectives

→Link insight on current policy and practice of flexible learning through micro-credentialing to reform priorities at a regional, national and European level

- Problem Context
- Role of the University
- Flexible Learning
- Rise of the Micro-credential Movement
- Leadership and Strategic Planning

FACTS & FIGURES

87,500
students

95,000
graduates

6,500
course instructors and tutors

141 student home countries

over
44,000
students in Catalonia

over
24,500
students in the rest of Spain

over
6,500
students in the rest of the world

Universitat Oberta de Catalunya

Learning. Transforming.

About us: a pioneering online university | Research and innovation | Open knowledge | Global impact #2030Agenda | Course offering | Campus

Strategy

Labour market analysis

https://www.uoc.edu/portal/en/metodologia-online-qualitat/estrategia/analisi-mercat-treball/index.html

Problem Context

Digital Divide/Transformation/ Exclusion

Industrialization 4.0, 5.0

Climate & Sustainability Crisis

Rural/Urban Divide

Aging population

> To encourage lifelong learning, Member States have endorsed the EU 2030 social targets that at least 60% of adults should participate in training every year…

European Commission
2023 European Year of Skills

'New' unstable workforce in the digital economy

Expiring/Evolving/New Skills/Jobs

New Ways of working

Widening social divides

Digital Divide/Transformation/ Exclusion
Industrialization 4.0, 5.0
Climate & Sustainability Crisis
Rural/Urban Divide
Aging population
Empowered Citizen
'New' unstable workforce in the digital economy
Expiring/Evolving/New Skills/Jobs
New Ways of working
Widening social divides

Role of the University

Two Paradigms Happening Simultaneously

Legacy Systems and
traditional degrees

New Providers and Training Pathways
For lifelong learners

The Open Loop University

*Stanford **2025***

From

4 years during 18-22
Formal Classroom Learning
Limited access to academic setting later in life

To

6+ years spread out over the lifespan
Knowledge was applied in classroom & practical settin
Acquired learning applied in rapid cycles

https://www.stanford2025.com/open-loop-university

Are traditional degrees the fossil fuels of Higher Education?

Are Micro-credentials the electric cars of Higher Education?

Flexible Learning

DISTANCE EDUCATION
2019, VOL. 40, NO. 4, 454–468
https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2019.1681893

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

ARTICLE

Check for updates

An analysis of flexible learning and flexibility over the last 40 years of *Distance Education*

George Veletsianos and Shandell Houlden

School of Education and Technology, Royal Roads University, Victoria, BC, Canada

ABSTRACT

In this paper, we report the major themes we identified in the literature surrounding flexible learning that has been published in *Distance Education* over the last 40 years. We identified six themes: the qualities of flexibility as affording "anytime, anyplace" learning; flexibility as pedagogy; liberatory or service-oriented aspects of flexibility; limitations of flexibility, especially in terms of technology, the constraints of time and space, as well as cultural differences; flexibility as a quality needed by instructors and instructional designers themselves; and critiques of flexibility as a concept. These themes suggest a complex understanding of flexibility, and one that could support future teaching and scholarly endeavours.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 1 May 2019
Accepted 14 October 2019

KEYWORDS
flexible education; online learning; flexibility; distance education; anytime anyplace learning

agile continuous education

The ACE Model

The agile continuous education (ACE) model is focused on **providing education in a flexible, cost- and time-efficient manner**: ***online*** , ***on-site*** , or ***at-work***.

This more granular approach **provides a degree of freedom to students in their professional lives by**:

- Letting them **try new content** that could be accredited later as part of a full-time academic program
- Acquiring content and credentials in **smaller bite-sized chunks**
- Allowing them to **customize** their path **based on personal preferences and rapidly-evolving industry needs**
- Applying learned skills and knowledge in more **rapid cycles**
- Enabling these benefits in a more **cost-effective** manner

https://www.ace.mit.edu/ace-model

Rise of the Micro-credential Movement

Skills development in the EU

The EU Vision:

upskilling and reskilling for lifelong learners will become the norm

https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/european-year-skills-2023_en

Micro-credential Movement building across Europe

Council of the European Union

Brussels, 25 May 2022
(OR. fr, en)

9237/22

Interinstitutional File:
2021/0402(NLE)

LIMITE

EDUC 154
RECH 252
SOC 272
DIGIT 101
ENV 445

PUBLIC

'I/A' ITEM NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability *- Adoption*

CEDEFOP | European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

EN 1831-5860

Research paper

Microcredentials for labour market education and training

First look at mapping microcredentials in European labour-market-related education, training and learning: take-up, characteristics and functions

EU Political Agenda

The renewed EU agenda for HE adopted in May 2017 identifies four main goals (European Commission, 2017):

1. Tackling future skills mismatches and promoting excellence in skills development.
2. Building inclusive and connected HE systems.
3. Ensuring HEIs contribute to innovation.
4. Supporting effective and efficient HE systems.

A European approach to micro-credentials

'Micro-credential' *means the record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning. These learning outcomes will have been assessed against transparent and clearly defined criteria. Learning experiences leading to micro-credentials are designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills and competences that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs. Micro-credentials are owned by the learner, can be shared and are portable. They may be stand-alone or combined into larger credentials. They are underpinned by quality assurance following agreed standards in the relevant sector or area of activity.*

- record of learning outcomes
- small volume of learning
- transparent and clearly defined assessment criteria
- competency based
- learner owned and portable
- stackable
- underpinned by quality assurance

https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/micro-credentials

PLAN DE ACCIÓN

PARA EL DESARROLLO DE MICROCREDENCIALES UNIVERSITARIAS EN ESPAÑA

https://www.universidades.gob.es/plan-microcreds/

GOBIERNO DE ESPAÑA
MINISTERIO DE UNIVERSIDADES

Plan de Recuperación, Transformación y Resiliencia

Financiado por la Unión Europea
NextGenerationEU

PLAN DE ACCIÓN

The plan is structured in **5 pillars:**

1. Stimulate lifelong learning among adults and employers
2. Transform universities into training institutions for all ages
3. Offer microcredentials with employment and educational impact
4. Guarantee the right to training for all adults
5. Facilitate personalized educational pathways in adulthood

https://www.universidades.gob.es/plan-microcreds/

https://microcreds.ie/

https://www.suny.edu/microcredentials/

Gain New Skills, Knowledge, and Experience with Microcredentials at SUNY

Leadership & Strategic Planning

Microcredenciales para los macrorretos globales

Debemos superar la actual concepción del mapa de titulaciones fragmentada en ciclos y proyección lineal -grado, máster, doctorado- y transitar hacia una formación continua, donde oferta oficial y propia interactúan, donde se integra la formación profesional y donde se facilita la confección personalizada de trayectorias abiertas

Àngels Fitó

https://www.eldiario.es/opinion/tribuna-abierta/microcredenciales-macrorretos-globales_129_10298159.html

- How do you strategically position them?
- What type of institutional leadership is required?
- What type of internal structures are required?
- What type of business model(s) are required?
- What could possibly go wrong?

https://jime.open.ac.uk/articles/10.5334/jime.801

How do you strategically position MC's?

What Type of Institutional Leadership is Required?

"Get the right people on the bus and in the right seats"

(Clayton Christensen, 2015)

https://jime.open.ac.uk/articles/10.5334/jime.801

Members of a micro-credential design team

(Bigelow, et al., 2022)

Initiative lead: The lead is the lynchpin of the micro-credential development (is this you?). This person should be engaged about the initiative and be a good problem solver, able to navigate the internal processes.

Employer engagement lead: Getting employers on board early is critical. This person should have a track record of successful employer engagement and be able to talk their language and get calls returned.

Subject matter expert (SME): The SME co-creates content and advises on delivery in collaboration with industry or employer partners.

Pedagogical and edTech support: This is an instructional designer or educational developer who can help shape the learning plan and content, possibly in partnership with your institution's teaching and learning centre.

Visual design support: That first glance is crucial to respect and understanding. This person should be able to go beyond making the design attractive and correctly branded. The job is about how visual design can support the meaning of your micro-credentials.

Leadership champion: Sooner or later you're going to need this person—someone at the director, dean, or vice-president level who believes in what you're doing and can advocate at high levels.

Key interfaces

- Faculty Staff
- Finance Office
- LMS/VLE Support Unit
- Teaching Support Unit
- Learning Support Unit
- Library Support Unit
- IT Support Unit
- Quality Office
- Marketing Office
- Recruitment Office
- Admissions Office
- International Office
- Alumni Office
- Graduation Office
- Student Union
- Employers

https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/microcredentialtoolkit/front-matter/welcome-to-the-toolkit/

Micro-credentials Playbook

1. Translates strategic focus for MC's into an easy to understand processes

2. Provides **end-to-end** outline of the MC process from origination through to review

3. Outlines in a practical guide **the sequence of steps in constructing and delivering MC's**, including the roles and responsibilities and a set of actions to strengthen current operating model.

https://cdn.csu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/4153473/Charles-Sturt-Micro-credential-Playbook.pdf

European Universities initiative

Transnational alliances of higher education institutions, paving the way towards the universities of the future.

- A flagship initiative of the European strategy for universities.
- Sets the ambition to expand to 60 European Universities alliances involving more than 500 higher education institutions by mid-2024.

https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/european-universities-initiative

MICROCREDX
Micro-Credentials Exchange

What’s your playbook?

https://microcredx.microcredentials.eu/

Let’s talk about
flexible learning,
Micro-credentials and
the role of ***YOUR*** university

How mature is micro-credentialing at your institution?

Which units are responsible for MC STRATEGY at your institution?

Which units are responsible for MC OPERATIONS & IMPLEMENTATION at your institution?

Who is the intended audience for MC's at your institution?

25

What are some of the primary goals of MCing at your institution?

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Take a moment to reflect on whether your institution has

Thanks for your attention.

Questions and Feedback Welcome

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