



MICRO-CREDENTIALS IN NEW ZEALAND'S EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

Submission from the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand

The Education Council

The statutory purpose of the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand (the Education Council) set out in section 377 of the Education Act 1989 is “to ensure safe and high quality leadership, teaching and learning ... through raising the status of the profession”.

The Education Council also has responsibility for establishing and maintaining standards for qualifications that lead to teacher registration, and standards for ongoing practice.

Summary

The Education Council supports the proposal to recognise micro-credentials, alongside qualifications, within New Zealand's regulated education and training system.

As professionals, teachers are life-long learners. To gain entry to the profession, teachers earn their teaching credentials through an approved initial teacher education qualification. They continue to learn new skills throughout their careers, and micro-credentials can support on-going professional development which is responsive to changes in education, and flexible enough to support a teacher's career choices.

In support of the proposal we note specifically that:

- Recognition of micro-credentials in New Zealand's regulated education and training system can support teacher learning and development, and career pathways, by enabling the delivery of flexible and relevant credentials that enable the learner to own their own learning and gain recognition for specialisations that may not require a whole qualification
- Recognition of micro-credentials in New Zealand's compulsory schooling years can also support student learning and development, by enabling the delivery of personalised, flexible and relevant credentials that reflect the competencies and skills a student develops beyond the classroom
- Micro-credentials are valuable because they offer discrete, personalised and flexible components of learning which would not replace formal qualifications for entry into the teaching profession but complement them
- Professional bodies can enable a successful system of micro-credentials through their support of strong links between professional standards, quality and the needs of their profession
- Inclusion of micro-credentials in New Zealand's education system should recognise the professional development and learning currently designed and delivered by non-tertiary education organisations.



Discussion

The Education Council supports the proposal for recognition of micro-credentials within New Zealand's regulated education and training system.

The recognition of micro-credentials in the education and training system can strengthen the learning and development of teachers as they move through their careers. For teaching, micro-credentials should be aligned with the Standards for the Teaching Profession (the Standards) which set out the expectations for effective teaching practice in New Zealand. The Standards are supported by professional development.

Micro-credentials can formally recognise teachers and leaders' expertise in areas such as mentoring and leadership. They can be useful for introducing new skills into the profession following changes in pedagogy, curriculum or standards, and helping returning teachers refresh their knowledge of teaching.

We agree that micro-credentials should not take the place of formal qualifications including approved initial teacher education qualifications. These qualifications are required for entry into the teaching profession as a trusted and validated demonstration of the skills and knowledge needed to deliver effective, safe and high-quality teaching in Aotearoa New Zealand.

However, embedding micro-credentials into our education system alongside full qualifications, through the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) and the Record of Achievement, will provide integrity and assurance of quality credentials that have the confidence of learners, employers and the public.

The Education Council agrees the characteristics of micro-credentials are suitable for the New Zealand education and training system, and for the teaching profession.

Micro-credentials enable flexibility and responsiveness to help individuals meet emerging skill needs and grow their capability. We recognise their potential to contribute to the transformation of learning for both learners and teachers.

We see the key characteristics of micro-credentials as:

- Specific - based on a competency and discrete skills
- Portable - readily and easily shared (such as digital badges shared through online platforms)
- Flexible - earned at a time that suits the learner (while they are working)
- Accessible - earned through a channel that suits the learner (online)
- Personalised - based on a learner's specific needs and professional development goals
- Evidenced - based on validated research and evidence, and the profession's expertise
- Responsive – quick to develop and bring to market.

We agree that micro-credentials are not built by breaking down approved programmes to be delivered in parts but that credits from micro-credentials may be counted towards a formal qualification once a teacher has entered the teaching profession. This will be particularly attractive to teachers wanting to gain professional qualifications and different pathways in their teaching career, while they continue to work.

Similarly, we see potential in micro credentials for learners in their compulsory schooling years. While not replacing a formal qualification, micro credentials recognise the range of learning throughout the day that a student might be involved with, and the community or employers working as education partners of the school or kura.

The credits awarded for a micro-credential should validate a meaningful credential and be aligned with the credit limit of similar existing New Zealand credentials such as short awards or certificates of proficiency.



Professional bodies can enable a successful system of micro-credentials and other organisations outside of the tertiary providers sector are well-placed to deliver micro-credentials for teachers.

There are tertiary education providers and other organisations delivering professional development for teachers. The Education Council supports the proposal to determine the equivalence of the level and credit value of micro-credentials to the NZQF for organisations who sit outside the tertiary providers sector. This will recognise the expertise of these organisations and provide for consistency and credibility across the system.

The teaching profession owns its professional Standards and so understands the skills and components of learning needed for teachers to be successful in their profession. Professional bodies like the Education Council have a role in gathering and disseminating of evidence of the need for specific micro-credentials in the teaching profession and utilising our expertise in programme approval and monitoring.

It is important to consider that micro-credentials delivered by organisations other than tertiary education providers will not attract Student Achievement Component funding, and it is critical that costs do not prevent teachers from accessing credentials.

Views of the teaching profession

As the professional body for the teaching profession, we asked teachers their view on micro-credentials. Of the 738 respondents, 553 (75%) agreed or strongly agreed that recognising micro-credentials within New Zealand's regulated education system would be useful. 99 (17%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. 62 (8%) indicated they were neutral.

The Education Council welcomes the opportunity to continue working with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the profession on the proposal to recognise micro-credentials within the New Zealand education and training system. This can include a more comprehensive consultation with teachers and leaders on the proposal.

