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The RISE of micro-credentials... Key trends and persistent challenges

South African Qualifications Authority - SAQA Talks

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Higher Education Section
UNESCO, Paris



The RISE of micro-credentials...

Key trends and persistent challenges

- I. Growing demand from learners and industry
- II. Definitions and diversity
- III. Strategic leadership and revenue generation
- IV. Digital transformation gaps and interoperability
- V. Recognition and the Global Convention on Higher Education
- VI. Micro-credentials for lifelong learning with agentic AI's

0. Transforming education: Why it matters

Macro-level view

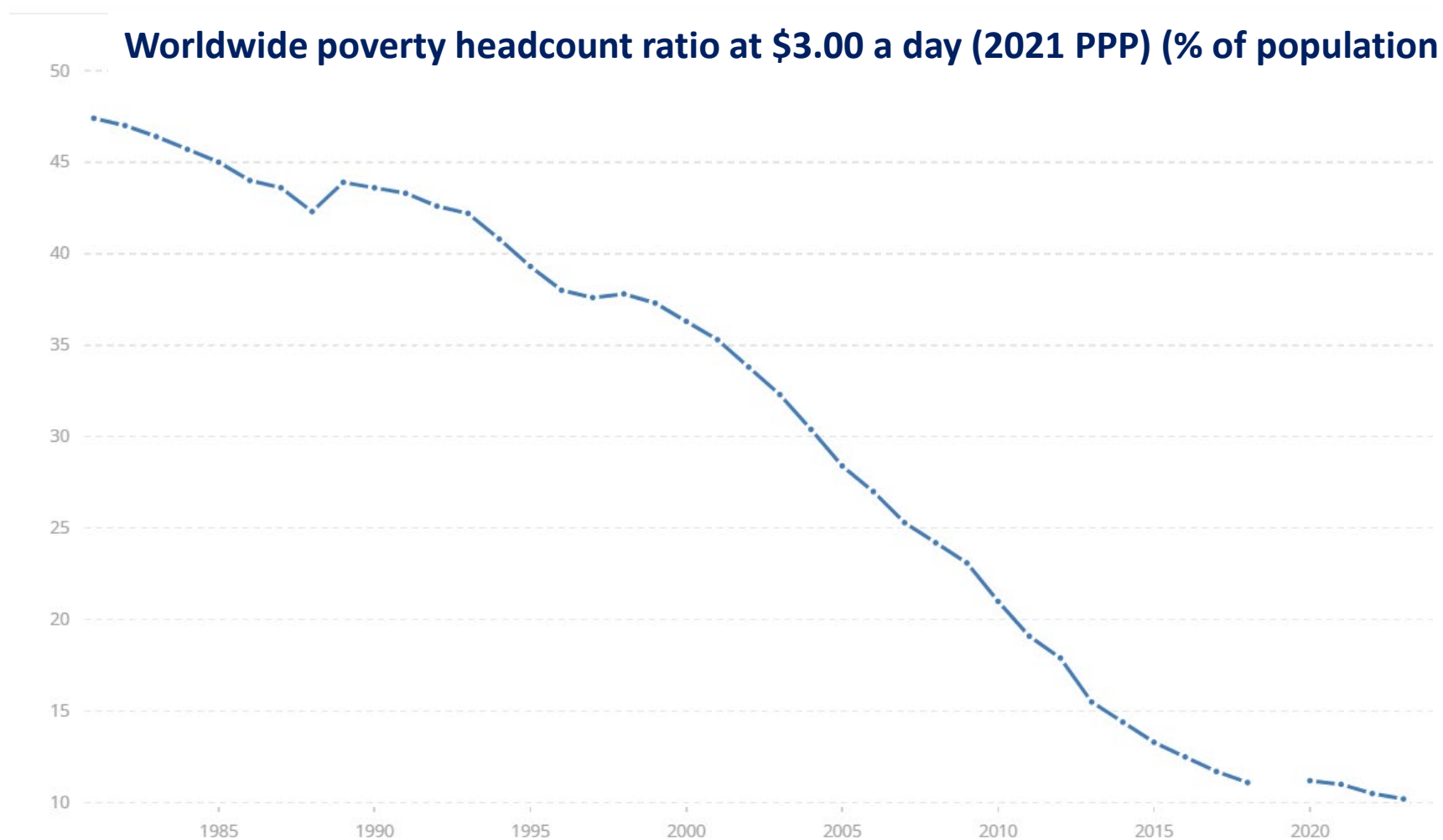
“We need to take **urgent action to change course**, because the future of people depends on the future of the planet, and both are at risk.”

Audrey Azoulay

Director-General of UNESCO

0. Historic reductions in poverty lead to gains in quality of life

Macro-level view



Source: [World Bank](#)

I. Growing demand from learners and industry

Micro-credentials as an all-purpose solution?



Considering the relative novelty and growing use of micro-credentials, **evidence of their value and impact** is still scarce.

Source: [OECD, March 2023](#)

II. Definitions and diversity

**Traditional
Higher Ed**

Expansion via depth and breadth

**Micro-
credentials**

Precision via acquisition or validation

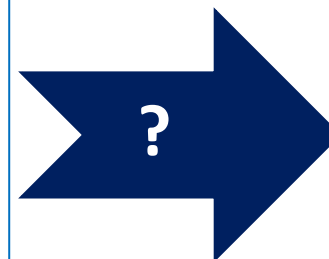
Source: Lena Patterson, 22 March 2023

[Micro-credentials Summit](#)

II. Definitions and diversity

Working definition of micro-credentials

1. 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 **standalone value** and may also contribute to or complement other micro-credentials or macro-credentials, including through recognition of prior learning.
4. Meets the standards required by **relevant quality assurance**.




Source: UNESCO, 2022

[Towards a common definition of micro-credentials](#)

III. Strategic leadership and revenue generation

Top-down change initiatives are “doomed to fail”

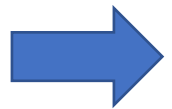
Institutional leaders are called to:

1. Massively increase their roll-out of micro-credentialing through **an appropriate strategy**
2. Contribute to closing the knowledge and skills gaps through **cross-sector collaboration**
-  3. **Access and financial sustainability:** How to widen access to education systems and standards (such as, but not only through, entrance-level micro-credential courses) to drive the relevance of formal education and the transformation of our economies.

Source: 2023 International Micro-Credentials Summit Declaration

IV. Digital transformation gaps and interoperability

Avoid silos that limit interoperability, portability and the ability to stack credentials from various issuers

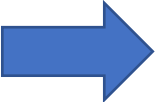


1. Provide transparent information on micro-credentials
2. Award digital credentials to learners using open standards based on [W3C Verifiable Credentials](#)
3. Support interoperability by enabling the learner to share micro-credentials and programmes between different micro-credential platforms as well as job platforms

Source: 2023 International Micro-Credentials Summit Declaration

V. Recognition and the Global Convention on Higher Education

Education, training and learning providers are called to:

1. Design micro-credentials with learning outcomes described with **skill and competency taxonomies**, aligned with qualification frameworks, as well as appropriate learning design and valid assessment methods
2. Share data on quality assurance, **learner-evaluation procedures** and criteria publicly.
3. Make micro-credential quality standards as well as recognition and validation procedures **accessible for non-experts**
-  4. Implement semi-automated, transparent, fit for purpose, fair and fast recognition procedures in line with international standards and **UNESCO recognition conventions**
5. Embrace recognition practices that enable learners to share credentials from their **digital wallets**

Source: 2023 International Micro-Credentials Summit Declaration

V. Recognition and the Global Convention on Higher Education



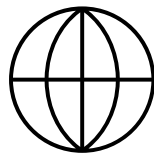
The first global UN treaty on higher education (adopted in 2019)



Entered into force in March 2023



Establishes **universal principles** for the recognition of qualifications
- Fair, transparent, and non-discriminatory practices



Open to UNESCO Member States and the Holy See

V. Recognition and the Global Convention on Higher Education



2 million (29%)

of the world's 6.9M mobile students are hosted by the States Parties



20+ Member States

Are reported to be well-advanced with ratification procedures, including countries in all UNESCO regions



Regional conventions

35 out of 38 countries that ratified the Global Convention are States Parties to one or more regional conventions

Africa



Cabo Verde



Côte d'Ivoire



Djibouti



Guinea



Senegal



South Africa

Asia and the Pacific



Australia



Japan



Mongolia



New Zealand



Rep. of Korea

Europe



Andorra



Armenia



Bosnia & Herzegovina



Croatia



Estonia



Holy See



Finland



France



Georgia



Hungary



Iceland



Lithuania



Luxembourg



Norway



Rep. of Moldova



Romania

Arab States



Palestine



Tunisia



Yemen

Latin America and the Caribbean



Cuba



Ecuador



Nicaragua



Uruguay



San Marino



Slovakia



Sweden

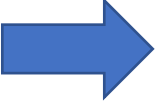


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**Improving lives through
equitable access to higher
education &
*fair recognition of
qualifications***

VI. Micro-credentials for lifelong learning with agentic AI's

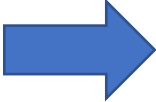
Education, training and learning providers are called to:

1. Provide **open-source micro-credentials**, e.g. by developing openly licensed or OER-based micro-credentials
2. Support **trials to unbundle** existing programmes to widen access to education and training opportunities to lifelong learners
3. Ensure that micro-credentials are **inclusive** and do not further reinforce the digital divide
-  4. **How to enable learner choice must be at the centre of micro-credential strategies** – agentic AI's are being used to help learners decide which micro-credentials are most appropriate for their strategies

Source: Adapted from the 2023 International Micro-Credentials Summit Declaration

VI. Micro-credentials for lifelong learning with agentic AI's

Education, training and learning providers are called to:

- 
1. **Fund open-source and inclusive micro-credentials**
 2. Mainstream micro-credentials in policy as a tool to **increase efficiencies** of public educational systems and **increase access to quality education for all**

Source: 2023 International Micro-Credentials Summit Declaration

Two points of departure

- Assure the right to quality education throughout life
- Strengthen education as a public endeavor and a common good



Source: [UNESCO, 2021](#)

Register for our next webinar on September 18th

Upcoming Session

Putting the Global Convention on Higher Education into practice



Online | **18 September**, 14:00 – 15:00 CET



English & French



Registration required



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Thank you

Learn more: www.unesco.org/en/higher-education

X @UNESCO

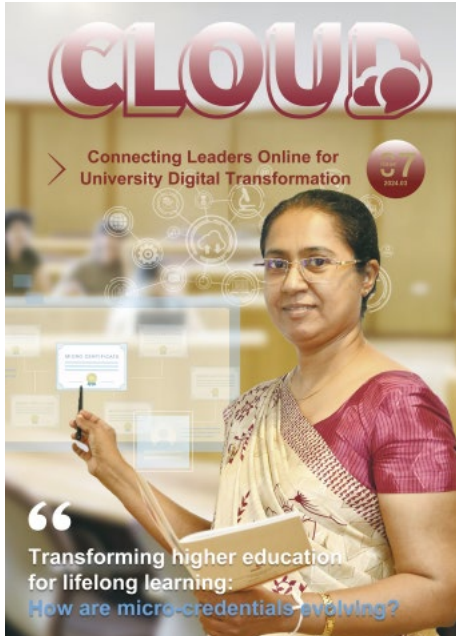


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United Nations
Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization

Education
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ANNEX

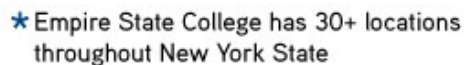


“To add to the complexity, the interface between formal recognition schemas (such as qualifications frameworks) and the non-formal sector can be difficult to navigate, and mostly reliant on some form of 'translation' process, such as the recognition of prior learning (RPL). To move beyond these constraints, the trend we have observed is towards national initiatives to develop micro-credential frameworks that **map out the complementarities and pathways to formal systems.**”

Source: Keevy, et al, 2023

In CLOUD magazine edited by UNESCO Bangkok

https://en.ichei.org/dist/index.html#/reader?id=1593&qk_qishu=7&lang=1



A Policy-Based Approach to Scaling Micro-credentials Across Different Institution Types

SUNY Micro-Credentialing Task Force

Report and Recommendations

January 2018



The State University
of New York

Office of the Chancellor

State University Plaza
Albany, New York 12246

www.suny.edu

MEMORANDUM

January 23, 2018

TO: Members of the Board of Trustees
FROM: Kristina M. Johnson, Chancellor
SUBJECT: SUNY Micro-Credentialing Implementation

Action Requested

The proposed resolution commends the SUNY-wide Micro-Credentialing Task Force ("Task Force") for its report and directs the University Provost to work collaboratively with campuses to develop strategies over the next year to support implementation of the Task Force's recommendations and to keep the Board apprised of progress.

Resolution

I recommend that the Board of Trustees adopt the following resolution:

Source: Cynthia Proctor, 23 March 2023, [Micro-credentials Summit](https://system.suny.edu/academic-affairs/microcredentials/suny-launches-new-micro-credential-policy/)
<https://system.suny.edu/academic-affairs/microcredentials/suny-launches-new-micro-credential-policy/>



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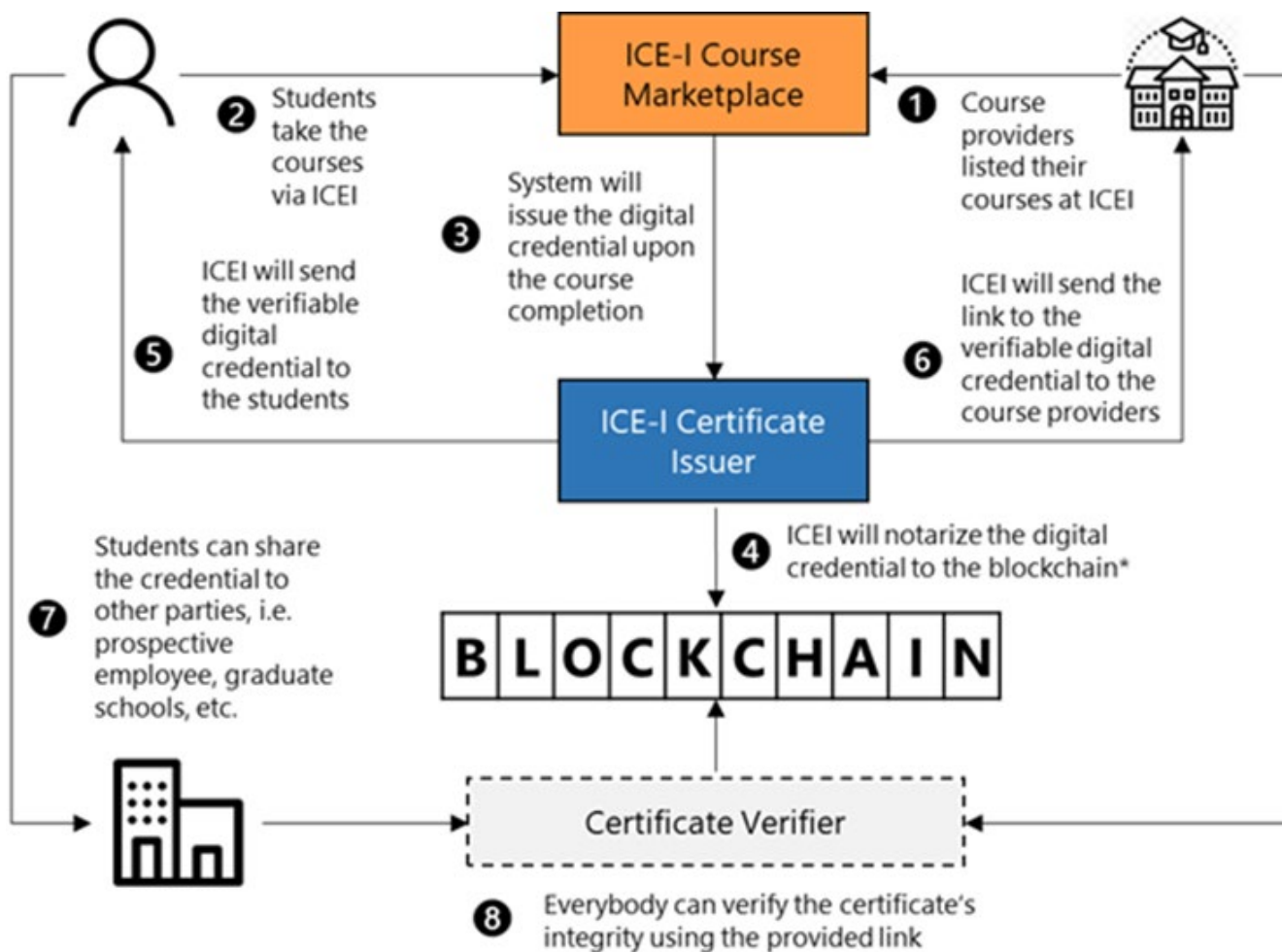
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SUNY's Policy-driven Approach to Developing Micro-credentials

- ✓ **High quality** – approved by faculty governance
- ✓ **Industry specific** – provide in-demand skills
- ✓ **Stackable** – pathways for learning
- ✓ **Portable** – seamless transfer policies and digital badges
- ✓ **Multiple audiences** – lifelong learning for diverse groups

Source: Cynthia Proctor, 23 March 2023, [Micro-credentials Summit](https://system.suny.edu/academic-affairs/microcredentials/suny-launches-new-micro-credential-policy/)
<https://system.suny.edu/academic-affairs/microcredentials/suny-launches-new-micro-credential-policy/>

Use Case: Micro-credentials and online learning in Indonesia



**INDONESIA CYBER
EDUCATION INSTITUTE**

**Collaboration between local
and international providers**



See also ICE-I's Micro-credential for Game Developers: <https://gamedev.icei.ac.id/>

Source: Fathony, H. (23 June 2021). Blockchain for Education: Learner Centered Credentials



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Use Case: BMW Service Apprenticeship in Thailand

DIHK Quality Categories and Certificates



“A” Certificate

German dual VET in foreign countries



BMW apply A Certificate only

Local dual VET closely related to German Standards



“B” Certificate



“C” Certificate

Local dual Qualifications with elements of German VET

Certification

This is to acknowledge that

born on 7 October 1996 in Bangkok has completed

the German-Thai Dual Excellence Education (GTDEE) Apprenticeship Programme in cooperation with BMW (Thailand) Co., Ltd. from May 2015 to April 2017 in

Automotive Mechatronics

with the overall result: Passed (81 Points) Grade: 2 (Good)

Theoretical Examination	Note	Points
Part A: Multiple choices (100 points)	Satisfactory	72
Part B: Written tasks (100 points)	Inadequate	45
Practical Examination		
Vehicle Diagnostic (100 points)	Very Good	93
Vehicle Inspection (100 points)	Very Good	99
Disassembly and Assembly (100 points)	Very Good	97

GTDEE Apprenticeship Programme matches the basic principles of the German Dual Education and Training Programme and includes theoretical education and practical training with fundamentals of professional experience.

Bangkok, 30 April 2017

Dr. Roland Wein
Executive Director

Markus Hoffmann
GTDEE Project Director

Phibul Chaowpetch
Head of Automotive Mechatronics Examination Committee

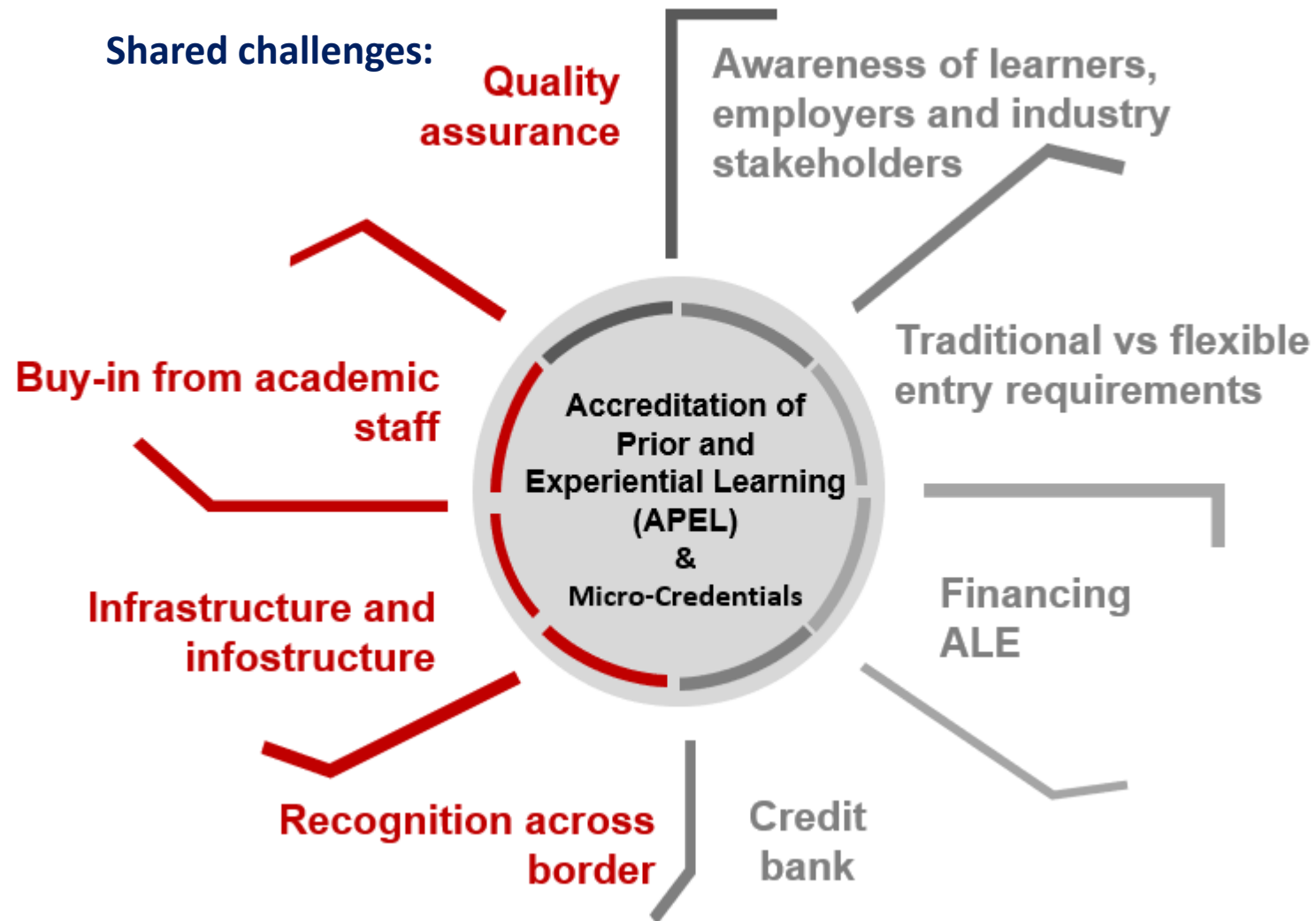
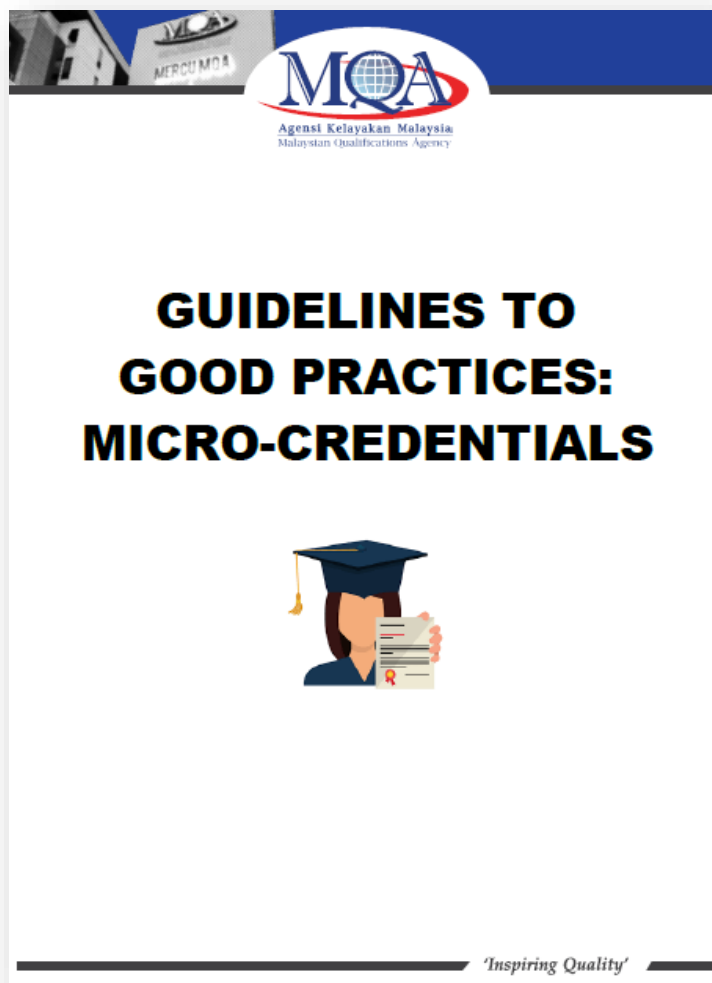
Source: Corporate Communications BMW Group Thailand



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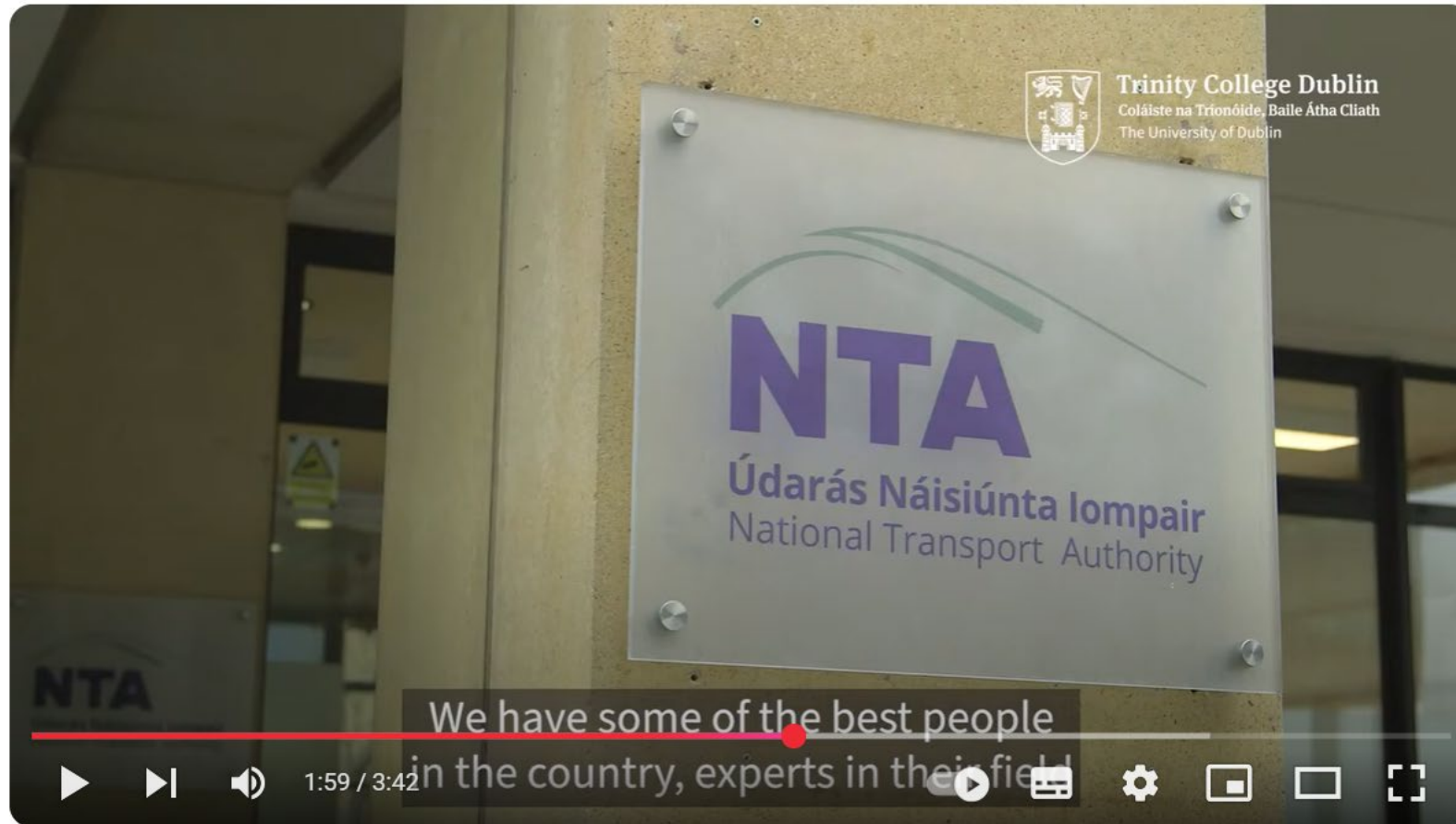
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Use Case: Widening the scope of Micro-credentials in Malaysia



Source: Dr Eddy Chong, 5 June 2022. Asia-Pacific Regional Education Minister's Conference (APREMC-II)

Ireland: National transport authority- an employer perspective



Source: [Trinity micro-credentials](#)

The value of micro-credentials - an employer perspective



Source: Adapted from
[CEDEFOP, 2023](#)