

Chapter 14

Small Chunks, Deep Learning: Micro-Credentials for Equity- Driven Instructional Leadership

Ken N. Simon

Institute for Educational Leadership, USA

Lawrence Hodgkins

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8328-670X>

East Carolina University, USA

James Argent

East Carolina University, USA

ABSTRACT

Project I⁴ is a cohort-based, year-long program incorporating micro-credential experiences as a key element of learning for school leaders. The project focuses the micro-credential (MC) design, implementation, and study on a central aspect of a school leader's work: classroom observations and post-observation conversations. The leaders learn to observe academic discourse in STEM classrooms. To fully engage in the learning from the MC, leaders collect observational evidence on equitable instructional practices and use the evidence to have coaching post-observation conversations with teachers with the aim of changing instructional practices in classrooms. In the authors' model, a key component for the MC experiences is the opportunity for school leaders to work with leadership coaches in equity-centered networked improvement communities (EC-NICs) of 5-6 persons. This chapter presents a qualitative review of 10 school leaders from the first Project I⁴ cohort.

INTRODUCTION

Micro-credentials provide substantial opportunities for higher education to reconceptualize learning opportunities for current and potential students and practitioners (Gibson et al., 2016; Gibson & Knezek, 2011; Matthews et al., 2018; Milligan & Kennedy, 2017; Ghasia et al., 2019; Digital Promise, 2016a).

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-3820-3.ch014

Educators in the K-12 environment currently utilize micro-credentials to support their professional development. However, staff in colleges and universities currently do not embrace them as a large-scale learning tool. A team from the Department of Educational Leadership (LEED) at East Carolina University (ECU) and the Institute of Educational Leadership (IEL) not only embraced the concept but created a micro-credential program for school leaders. The program, Project I⁴, aims to cultivate equity-driven instructional leaders by leveraging evidence-based observations and effective post-observation conversations with teachers. Funded through a research grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Education, Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED), Project I⁴ is a one-year, university-based, cohort program resulting in the first micro-credential digital badge authorized by ECU.

In Project I⁴, we provide personalized and authentic learning experiences for school leaders by focusing on equitable instructional leadership. The team specifically created the micro-credential to support improved principal observation skills and post-observation conversations to ensure rigorous, equitable academic discourse in STEM classrooms. By concentrating instructional leadership on supporting teachers to use equitable calling-on and questioning strategies, we have designed an effective pathway for school leaders to cultivate the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for equity-driven instructional leaders (Berry et al., 2016; Digital Promise, 2016b; Finkelstein et al., 2013; Matthews et al., 2018; Milligan & Kennedy 2017; Tredway et al., 2021).

The initial Project I⁴ micro-credential design included: 1) evidence-based observations; 2) post-observation conversations; and 3) academic tasks and discourse in STEM classrooms. The micro-credential experience included support from a leadership coach who facilitated a network of four to five school leaders in an Equity Centered Networked Improvement Community (EC-NIC) (Bryk et al., 2010). Coaches met with these peer support network groups and held monthly 1:1 coaching sessions with each participant. In turn, each participant created an EC-NIC with school community-based staff. The school-based EC-NIC met monthly as a group and in individual 1:1 meetings between the school leader and the staff member. The Project I⁴ participant facilitated the school-based meetings, creating a nested coaching model. We designed the EC-NIC meetings to cultivate the knowledge and skills embedded in the micro-credential as well as provide much needed peer support for leaders trying to disrupt inequities in their school (Theoharis, 2010).

The 1:1 coaching experience supported school leaders implementing new practices for observation and post-observation conversations. Analysis of school-based artifacts such as completed observation notes and videos of post-observation conversations provided a focus for each 1:1 coaching session and served as micro-credential assessments. Finally, we enhanced the micro-credential experience by engaging in virtual Community Learning Exchanges (CLE) throughout the year (Guajardo et al., 2016). In these experiences, all participants (74 in cohort 1 and 68 in cohort 2) engaged in relational trust activities and equitable practice tools with members from other EC-NICs. Figure 1 shows the micro-credential design elements utilized by the project team: new content, authentic practice, reflection, and authentic assessment.

In this chapter, we present an analysis of ten school leaders from the first Project I⁴ cohort, including their experiences with a leadership coach and EC-NIC in the micro-credential program. We discuss the salient extant literature and the methodology framing the study. The findings demonstrate the effectiveness of the Project I⁴ process for implementing micro-credentials in a university setting. Our assertions and discussion highlight understanding of our primary research question: How do university faculty utilize micro-credentials to transfer knowledge, skills, and dispositions of equity-driven instructional leadership of school leaders into the school setting?

22 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/small-chunks-deep-learning/288581

Related Content

Technology-Enhanced Student Learning, Improved Engagement, and Performance in an Anatomy and Physiology Course

Clement G. Yedjou, Lekan M. Latinwo, Richard Alo, Caroline O. Odewumi and Phyllis Y. Reaves (2022). *Experiences and Research on Enhanced Professional Development Through Faculty Learning Communities* (pp. 178-193).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/technology-enhanced-student-learning-improved-engagement-and-performance-in-an-anatomy-and-physiology-course/310569

Using Communities of Practice to Identify Competencies

Mambo G. Mupepi (2021). *Research Anthology on Facilitating New Educational Practices Through Communities of Learning* (pp. 411-421).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/using-communities-of-practice-to-identify-competencies/269261

Closing the Skills Gap and Enhancing Employability Through Industry-Academia Collaboration

Jean Beaupre, Sondra Simpson, Adrienne A. Wallace and Hannah Walters (2024). *Advancing Student Employability Through Higher Education* (pp. 146-164).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/closing-the-skills-gap-and-enhancing-employability-through-industry-academia-collaboration/338017

Common Scenario for an Efficient Use of Online Learning: Some Guidelines for Pedagogical Digital Device Development

Walter Nuninger (2019). *Pre-Service and In-Service Teacher Education: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 891-925).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/common-scenario-for-an-efficient-use-of-online-learning/215600

Alternatives to the Traditional Doctoral Dissertation: A Research Literature and Policy Review

Gary Berg (2022). *Research Anthology on Doctoral Student Professional Development* (pp. 117-127).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/alternatives-to-the-traditional-doctoral-dissertation/300705