

Chapter 6

Exploring the Potential and Future Directions of Micro–Credentials Through the Scenario Archetypes Method

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ABSTRACT

Micro-credentials have emerged as a flexible, skill-based alternative to traditional degrees, meeting the demands of modern education and employment sectors. Using the Four Archetypes Scenario model—continuous growth, collapse, disciplined society, and transformation—this chapter explores their future in higher education. In the continuous growth scenario, micro-credentials integrate with higher education, driving curriculum evolution and industry partnerships. The collapse scenario warns of institutional failures to adapt and employer skepticism, threatening micro-credentials' value. In the transformation scenario, micro-credentials are widely accepted, reshaping higher education by promoting flexibility, upskilling,

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and lifelong learning. This analysis aims to provide insights into micro-credentials' evolving role in the education landscape, offering a roadmap for their sustainable integration into higher education and industry.

INTRODUCTION

In a time when information is rapidly produced and consumed have ramped up the adoption of skill-based approaches in the workplace. Unemployment rates have risen dramatically following the COVID-19 pandemic, and competency and skill-based professions have become even more popular, providing impetus for this change. In this process, the number of students enrolled in higher education institutions has decreased as a result of the pandemic, and individuals have switched to programs and courses that enable them to easily find work opportunities by obtaining skills and qualifications in a shorter period of time. Micro-credentials, short training programmes, but also bite-sized courses are the leading practices for obtaining employment in an evolving workforce where up-to-date skills are in demand. The increasing interest in skill-based strategies for learning, such as micro-credentials, is an outcome of evolving requirements in professional settings as well as changes to higher education's traditional approaches to teaching. Moreover, the potential of micro-credentials extends beyond individual skill acquisition in that it has the potential to foster inclusivity and personalization in education, whereby learners themselves will be able to tailor their educational pathways toward unique career aspirations. According to Reed (2023) and Bruguera (2023), evidence-based practices imply that micro-credentials could support a more learner-centered approach to equity and access to education by diverse populations. Given the continuing development of the global micro-credential landscape, it becomes important that educational leaders struggle with an informed perspective about the trend at hand and ponder seeking novel approaches to management with great care towards integration into current structures (McGreal & Olcott, 2022; Ha et al., 2022).

Micro-credential programs, which may address the learning needs of many people, particularly those on the path to lifelong learning, enhance individuals' learning processes by providing a prevalent, flexible, and alternative option beyond the employment sector. In the higher education environment, micro-credentials become increasingly more popular as an alternative to traditional degrees, diplomas, and certifications (Pelletier et al., 2021). Consequently, higher education institutions have created structures around institutional or national initiatives that have encouraged micro-credentials programs and frameworks more frequently (Resei et al., 2019). In this regard, the objective of this chapter is to explore the potential and present

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