ASCILITE 2024

Navigating the Terrain:
Emerging Frontiers in Learning Spaces, Pedagogies, and Technologies

Exploring the Needs of Facilitators of Microcredentials

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Microcredentials are a significant development as a higher education offering with potential for addressing learner, industry, and government needs (Varadarajan, Koh & Daniel, 2023). As a type of shortform learning, microcredentials can be taken as individual short online courses to upskill for industry, with some available for credit towards a degree in higher education. These emerging offerings are relevant to technology enhanced learning in their online design and in the pedagogy of shortform learning. In the context of the broader issues of graduate outcomes and diversity mandates (Australian Higher Education Standards Framework, 2021) microcredentials are affirmed as part of the promise of solutions in higher education with the release of the *Australian Qualifications Framework Review 2019* (Noonan, 2019), *National Standards Framework for Microcredentials 2021* (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2021) and *The Australian Universities Accord final report* (Department of Education, 2024). Other broader issues high on the agenda are quality assurance and the student experience (Australian Higher Education Standards Framework, 2021). As progress is made towards microcredential offerings becoming business as usual, research is needed to ensure practice and improvements are shared between universities as they too begin or increase their offerings of credit bearing microcredentials.

Facilitators of microcredentials are often experts whose industry experience is valued in higher education by learners and government, given the focus on the importance of graduate employability (Department of Education, 2020). Yet, the experience, perspectives and professional learning needs of the facilitators of microcredentials are not extensively addressed in the literature. This research will investigate the experiences and needs of facilitators of microcredentials, many of whom may not have the traditional prerequisites for being an academic or educator in higher education. This work engages facilitators as participants for insights into the ways higher education institutions could better support their contribution in the unique context of microcredentials as credit-bearing shortform learning.

This study is situated in practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in a university context with substantial online microcredential offerings facilitated by industry professionals. Much resourcing has gone into the learning design of the microcredentials in this context, optimising the technology enhanced learning potential of the online offerings (synchronous and asynchronous). This study has arisen from practice in the work of moderating microcredential assessments. It explores current facilitation and feedback practices within the technology enhanced learning context of microcredentials. This study aims to explore the research question: What further support is needed for facilitators of credit bearing microcredentials?, by investigating the priorities for professional learning support to facilitators, particularly in relation to curriculum and assessment practices. The research design is a qualitative study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) involving semi-structured interviews (Bearman, 2019) with facilitators of credit-bearing microcredentials. This project advances the call for further research into microcredentials (Che Ahmat et al., 2021; Selvaratnam & Sankey, 2021) and will inform future practice in supporting facilitators with the broader benefits of enhancing quality assurance and the learner experience.

This Pecha Kucha presents the practice context and initial findings identifying the priorities for professional learning needed by facilitators, specifically on feedback and 'assessment for learning' practices in credit-bearing microcredentials.

Keywords: microcredentials, facilitators, professional learning, technology enhanced learning, assessment, feedback

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