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Reconnecting relationships through technology

Using Participatory Co-Design to identify industries' specific employability needs for targeted Micro-credentials

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Industry-focused micro-credentials are paving the way to a new 'culture of partnership' between higher education and industry (Dawkins & Bean, 2021). With rapid changes in industries and workplaces, micro-credentials offer potential to enhance transitions from learning to work and respond to industries' emerging workforce needs. However, this potential can only be realised if micro-credentialed learning achievements are both recognised and valued by industries and employers. Thus, strong and engaged partnership with industries is key.

Over the past five years, we have been utilising 'Participatory Co-Design' (PCD) (Kristiansen & Bloch-Poulsen, 2013), combined with an evidence-based, ethnographic Design Thinking approach (Liedtka & Ogilvies 2011, Liedtka, 2018), to develop employability frameworks for several professions with both educational and professional lenses. Gomez, Kya and Mancevice (2018) argue that PCD 'represents a sociocultural theoretical commitment to learning from, and designing for, local contexts' (p.403).

Our experience has shown that PCD offers a powerful pathway to productive partnerships that combine educational and industry expertise and insights, to surface current and future employability needs. Starting with global scans of emerging industry needs, we built out prototypes to test resonance with industry experts and gather feedback to iterate our models. This process resulted in employability frameworks that are being embedded in a range of post-graduate and professional short-form courses. The PCD process is a logical choice for validating industries' specific employability needs for micro-credentials across tertiary and professional education. Through applying this approach, contextualised design principles are co-defined, specific employability needs are confirmed, and industry leaders and stakeholders buy into both the process and ultimately the verified learning achievements targeted by micro-credentials.

This Pecha Kucha session provides an overview of our process, opportunities and challenges we have experienced, and what's next.

Keywords: Micro-credentials, Employability, Industry, Partnerships, Co-design, Design thinking

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