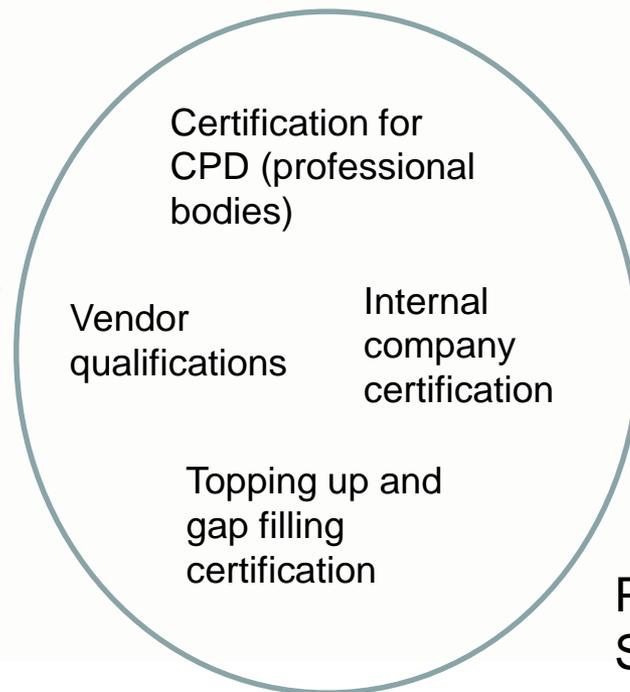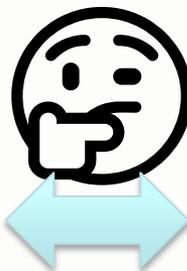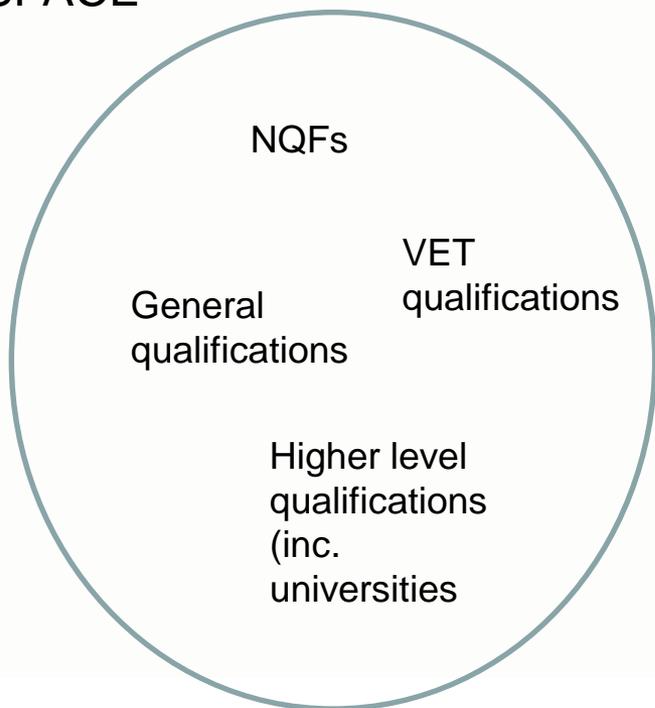**Cedefop Conference 25-26 November 2021 Microcredentials for labour market education and training**

Parallel Session 2: Interaction of microcredentials with existing qualification and certification systems

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Qualification and certification systems: taking the broad view

PUBLIC
SPACE

NQFs

VET
qualifications

General
qualifications

Higher level
qualifications
(inc.
universities

Certification for
CPD (professional
bodies)

Vendor
qualifications

Internal
company
certification

Topping up and
gap filling
certification

PRIVATE
SPACE

Why do microcredentials exist?
(Or, to put it another way, Why is the qualifications system not always used?)

➤ **History, inertia - industries, professions, occupations are already 'keepers of the standards'**

➤ **Stakeholders fill gaps where qualifications are not well tuned to labour market needs**

➤ **Rise of global skills standards in some sectors**

➤ **Digitalisation has been a huge facilitator**

➤ **Qualification validation processes are too slow and cumbersome compared to speed of changes in skills**

➤ **Some skill needs are too small and specific to be considered for inclusion in NQFs**

➤ **Gaps in CVET, under-developed sector**

Some downsides of (some) microcredentials in the private space

➤ **Recent proliferation in 'unregulated' microcredentials; over-supply causes devaluation**

➤ **Individuals can be faced with complexity and confusion; they lack the reference points provided by NQFs**

➤ **Lack of transparency regarding who is acting as guardian of quality**

➤ **Not necessarily clearly linked to professional development pathways**

➤ **Unable to obtain credit towards a full or partial qualification (tend to be added to individual portfolios)**

Different shades of interaction …?

MCs are part of the qualification system	MCs exist in publicly funded provision in parallel to the qualifications system	MCs exist separately to the qualification system
Holders of MCs get credit within QFs MCs benefit from the full trust and credibility afforded by public QA and validation systems.	Publicly funded provision of programmes leading to MCs outside the QF Trust and credibility may be strengthened by involvement of publicly funded providers.	Value depends on status and credibility of the body that stands behind it.

Main purposes that microcredentials have or would have in qualification systems

Top 5 purposes, according to national authorities:

✓ **More responsive to labour market needs**

✓ **Address need for workforce upskilling, reskilling**

✓ **Sustain lifelong learning policies and motivate lifelong learning behaviour**

✓ **Help individuals make their knowledge, skills and competences visible**

(To assist labour market transitions for new graduates)

Source: National authority survey respondents

Issues around how microcredentials interact with qualification systems

➢ **How do we define them? Do we need to define them?**

➢ **Can they be accommodated within the qualification system as it stands?**

➢ **Is there a limit to how small a credential should be?**

➢ **Do we need to streamline our qualification systems, a 'fast track' for microcredentials?**

➢ **Can modularized pathways be made a reality?**

➢ **Should microcredentials be in IVET, CVET or both?**

Microcredentials in a nutshell

''Microcredentials are evidence of practical, flexible, on-demand, and short learning experiences. This is what makes them so attractive. Common European standards must preserve this attractiveness and not limit it through over - regulation and - formalization. It is thus central to find an appropriate balance between fostering trust and transparency as part of a common approach without compromising the flexibility of microcredentials'' *Employers organisations survey, Germany*

Thank you!

Dr Andrew McCoshan

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