



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

**Micro-Credentials as  
Catalysts for  
Supporting Strategic  
Development Goals in  
Education in the  
Commonwealth  
Caribbean**



CARIBBEAN  
EXAMINATIONS  
COUNCIL

# **Micro-Credentials as Catalysts for Supporting Strategic Development Goals in Education in the Commonwealth Caribbean**

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is an intergovernmental organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to promote the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources, and technologies.

© 2024 by the Commonwealth of Learning



*Micro-Credentials as Catalysts for Supporting Strategic Development Goals in Education in the Commonwealth Caribbean* is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 Licence (international): <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

For the avoidance of doubt, by applying this licence the Commonwealth of Learning does not waive any privileges or immunities from claims that they may be entitled to assert, nor does the Commonwealth of Learning submit itself to the jurisdiction, courts, legal processes, or laws of any jurisdiction.

## **Acknowledgement**

We acknowledge the valuable contributions of Professor Rory McGreal, who conducted the desktop review and survey for this project and co-authored this report in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning and the Caribbean Examinations Council.

Our thanks are extended to Dr Eduardo Ali, Pro-Registrar and Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC®), for his guidance in data collection and interpretation and for facilitating the stakeholders' feedback meeting.

We also recognise the contribution of Dr Mairette Newman, former Education Specialist: VUSSC, Commonwealth of Learning, for their role in initiating and coordinating the early stages of this project.

Appreciation is extended to Dr Tony Mays, Director: Education, Dr Schontal Moore, Adviser: VUSSC, and Dr Evode Mukama, Adviser: Teacher Education, Commonwealth of Learning, for their coordination of the project, input during the stakeholders' feedback meeting, and efforts toward finalising this report.

We also thank Ms Waranuch Tanubamrungsuk and Ms Julianne Williams for their administrative support, and Mr Dan Wilton for his technical assistance.

Finally, we acknowledge the use of ChatGPT v.4, a language model developed by OpenAI, which supported the development of this report.

Published by:

Commonwealth of Learning  
4710 Kingsway, Suite 2500  
Burnaby, British Columbia Canada V5H4M2  
Telephone: +1 604 775 8200  
Fax: +1 604 775 8210  
Web: [www.col.org](http://www.col.org)  
Email: [info@col.org](mailto:info@col.org)

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	5
Introduction .....	7
Caribbean Examination Council and COL Support.....	8
Process and Methods .....	9
Issues Identified in Strategic Plans and Other Documents .....	10
Definitions.....	10
The Benefits and Challenges of Micro-credentials.....	11
Quality assurance.....	12
Cost of Education .....	12
Access and Equity .....	13
Agility and Speed .....	13
Collaboration .....	14
Curriculum Reform .....	14
Flexibility .....	14
Labour Market analysis .....	15
Lifelong learning .....	15
Organisational Effectiveness .....	16
Personalised Learning .....	16
PLAR (Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition) .....	16
Professional Development .....	17
Regional Accreditation .....	17
Student Retention.....	17
Systemic alignment.....	18
Transitional Guidance.....	18
TVET and CVQ.....	19
Workplace.....	19
Limited scope of current programme offerings.....	20
Valid and Reliable Assessment.....	20
Summary of Benefits and Challenges.....	20

Analysis of Data Provided from the Micro-credentials .....	22
Countries .....	22
The University of the West Indies (UWI) .....	23
UWI and other universities .....	24
Subjects or Fields .....	25
Types of Institutions .....	26
Micro-credential Formats .....	28
Micro-credential Course Duration .....	29
Micro-credential Course Types .....	30
Tuition or Fees .....	31
The Stakeholder Survey .....	34
Section: 1 Demographics .....	34
Section 2: Awareness of Micro-credentials .....	35
Section 3: Experience with Micro-credentials .....	35
Summary of comments (Q7) .....	35
Summary of comments (Q9) .....	35
Designing Micro-Courses .....	35
Learning in a Micro-Course .....	36
Impact on Work .....	36
Certification .....	37
Implementation .....	37
Neutral or Negative Experiences .....	37
Challenges and Considerations .....	37
Section 4: Micro-credential policies .....	38
Summary of comments (Q14) .....	38
Summary of comments Q16 .....	38
Awareness and Promotion .....	38
Incentives and Support .....	39
Training and Implementation .....	39
Policy .....	39

Access to Learning .....	39
Cost.....	40
Other Comments .....	40
Section 5: Suggestions and Feedback from Respondents .....	40
Survey of comments Q20 .....	40
Awareness Campaign.....	41
Increased Publicity of Its Credentials.....	41
Advertisements and Marketing.....	41
Student Engagement and Feedback Sessions.....	41
Stakeholder Collaboration .....	41
Need for Upskilling and Reskilling.....	41
Educate, Train, and Promote.....	42
Public Education and Training.....	42
Online Course Availability.....	42
Strategic Communication .....	42
Alignment with Compensation.....	42
Financial Incentives.....	42
Integration with Traditional Degrees.....	42
Promotion and Endorsement by Institutions.....	43
Linkages with Renowned Institutions.....	43
Foundation for Other Courses .....	43
Employer Acceptance .....	43
Role of Accreditation Bodies.....	43
Regional Policy and Market Strategy.....	43
Quality Assurance Structures .....	43
Resource and Accessibility Considerations.....	44
Budgeting for Promotion.....	44
Affordability and Accessibility .....	44
Multi-Stakeholder Approach.....	44
Stakeholder Buy-In .....	44

Key Observations .....	44
Recommendations .....	45
Summary .....	47
Documents Consulted.....	48
Annex A: Microcredentials List.....	52
Annex B. Letter to Participants.....	53
Annex C: Stakeholder Survey.....	54
Annex D: Stakeholder Survey Results .....	59



## Executive Summary

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC®) spearheaded this initiative to explore the integration of micro-credentials (MCs) in the region's educational infrastructure. The initiative, proposed by CXC® and adopted by COL, comprises 5 phases of research, analysis, policy support, regulation capacity building and education system integration to enable the education ecosystem in the region to introduce and standardize the adoption of MCs in the secondary and post-secondary levels. This report covers Phase 1 of the project, the scoping study, which explores the adoption and potential impact of MCs across several Commonwealth Caribbean countries, with a focus on their application in democratising education and enhancing regional development.

There is a growing recognition of MCs by major educational bodies like UNESCO and COL. They consider them to be critical in achieving educational and professional development goals. A comprehensive baseline study was conducted across seven Caribbean countries, namely Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis, and Trinidad and Tobago, to assess the current state and potential of MCs for the region. In addition, the degree of awareness and the opinions of regional stakeholders were solicited in a survey of 11 Caribbean countries including those mentioned.

Micro-credentials are defined as certifications of learning for educational interventions shorter than traditional semesters, typically less than 45 hours and focusing on specific competencies or outcomes. The study employed a multi-faceted methodology, including online research, document reviews, data collection and analysis, and an online survey. The aim was to map the existing landscape of MCs, gauge stakeholders' awareness, and assess their potential to support educational and policy goals identified by the jurisdictions and regional educational institutions studied in the Caribbean region.

The investigation revealed no explicit policies on MCs within the region, although most institutions had begun to implement them informally without identifying them as such. Identified benefits of MCs include increased accessibility, flexibility, and affordability of education, which are crucial for addressing diverse learner needs and regional disparities. Additionally, MCs offer opportunities to enhance curriculum flexibility, facilitate lifelong learning, and align education with market needs. However, challenges such as lack of awareness, variable quality, and integration into existing educational frameworks persist. Other obstacles mentioned included the lack of formal recognition and understanding of MCs, and the cost of development, delivery and sustainability.

However, challenges persist including a lack of awareness and acceptance of credentials, resistance to change, and quality concerns. Stakeholders called for increased awareness, structured support, and incentives. They recommended a regional awareness campaign, increased publicity, and engagement with students and stakeholders to improve programs. They also suggested integrating MCs with traditional degrees, strategic communication, and aligning with compensation to enhance acceptance and participation.

Despite these challenges, most stakeholders were familiar with the concept of micro-credentials, even if they did not use the specific term. Awareness was consistent across countries, with primary sources of information being the internet, social networks, professional associations, and institutional websites. Many respondents had experience with short courses, motivated by administrative directives and personal interest. They noted benefits such as professional growth, skill enhancement, and improved instructional methods, highlighting the productivity and efficiency of targeted learning opportunities.

Key survey observations emphasised the need for a comprehensive approach encompassing targeted education, clear communication, and ongoing support. Successful implementation and sustained impact of micro-credentials (MCs) will depend on continuous evaluation and adaptation. The survey highlights the potential of MCs to address regional educational needs, emphasizing strategic implementation, stakeholder engagement, and continuous improvement in realizing their full benefits.

Forming strategic partnerships among educational institutions, industry, and government is crucial for aligning MCs with labour market demands and ensuring their relevance and sustainability. Additionally, institutions must invest in staff training and new infrastructure to support the effective implementation of MCs.

Recommendations for advancing MCs in the region include:

1. Developing a comprehensive MC framework and registry
2. Leveraging Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain and Open Educational Resources (OER) for cost-effective development
3. Adopting Creative Commons licenses for MC content
4. Fostering regional collaboration to ensure diverse input and acceptance
5. Establishing clear policies
6. Enhancing stakeholder engagement
7. Utilizing technology to support MC delivery and administration

In conclusion, MCs offer a promising avenue for supporting educational goals in the Commonwealth Caribbean by providing flexible, targeted learning opportunities aligned with specific skills and contemporary needs. Effective implementation will require collaborative efforts to overcome existing barriers and fully harness the potential of MCs to transform the educational landscape.

## Introduction

The Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC®), the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), UNESCO, and other organisations have recognised micro-credentials (MCs) as crucial tools for achieving Strategic Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG4: Education for All. CXC® and COL have collaborated to establish a Micro-credential Framework Project for the Caribbean. This project has five phases: i) scoping study; ii) Reframing the CARICOM Qualifications Framework to support MCs; iii-iv) capacity building of CXC®, Ministries, Employers and External Quality Assurance Agencies to introduce standards for regulation and v) project evaluation. COL has supported Phase One which is a scoping study of what is happening with MCs within the Commonwealth Caribbean region. This examination of different government objectives and goals that could be addressed by focusing on the development of a common MC system for the Region was key.

This report investigates the current landscape of short courses and MCs, analyses relevant government documents and explores the potential of MCs to address both local and regional educational policy concerns. It includes a detailed description of the methodologies employed and comprehensive summaries of the findings.

Drawing from a definition proposed by UNESCO (2022): A micro-credential:

- *Is a record of focused learning achievement verifying what the learner knows, understands or can do.*
- *Includes assessment based on clearly defined standards and is awarded by a trusted provider.*
- *Has standalone value and may also contribute to or complement other micro-credentials or macro-credentials, including through recognition of prior learning.*
- *Meets the standards required by relevant quality assurance.*

In addition, relying on the OECD (2021), CXC® (2024) defines an MC as an attestation of an educational intervention lasting one semester or less, typically under 45 hours, with some exceptions allowed. The shortest interventions recorded were five hours or less. MCs typically assess specific competencies or outcomes, which should be explicitly communicated to learners, though this is not always the case.

This Phase 1 study employed a multi-faceted approach, incorporating:

1. Online research
2. Creation of a spreadsheet documenting short courses offered by regional institutions and organisations
3. Examination of official documents
4. An online stakeholder survey

This comprehensive methodology ensured a thorough consideration of baseline data and regional stakeholder perspectives, revealing a clear understanding of the current MC environment in the Caribbean. The investigation has identified both benefits and challenges, along with a rationale for aligning MCs with existing policy directions in the studied countries, focusing on openness, accessibility, affordability, and innovation.

As MCs gain prominence as catalysts for democratizing education, this report highlights their importance for regional development and serves as a valuable resource for the wider educational community and policymakers interested in implementing MCs and supporting more open access to official educational credentials. The described process and resulting recommendations offer insights into various strategies for implementing MCs in the region.

Through this report, stakeholders in the Caribbean, COL, and readers elsewhere can explore the MC environment. The hope is that the experiences shared can contribute to a broader discourse on shaping MC policies in the Caribbean and beyond.

COL continues to be an international leader in promoting MCs to support quality teaching and learning while increasing equitable access to education. It facilitates collaboration among institutions, governments, and organisations in MC implementation, promotes relevant capacity-strengthening processes for staff, and shapes and promotes new models for open MC implementations. The Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC®) is an inter-governmental educational enterprise that serves 20 Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth Caribbean territories through qualifications and assessments from primary to post-secondary levels in the education ecosystem. CXC® has been developing and introducing MCs in the secondary education system and desires to prepare Ministries of Education with whom it works to standardize and implement MCs through CXC®'s qualifications and awards.

## **Caribbean Examination Council and COL Support**

The Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC®) and the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) have partnered with this consultant to implement a project to establish a baseline on MC usage in the Caribbean Region. This project includes an examination of policies, strategic plans, and other relevant documents from participating countries. The initiative CXC® developed with COL is focused on the preparation of the region's education ecosystem for the adoption of MCs at the secondary levels with further consideration for post-secondary/tertiary education policy and regulations. CXC® is spearheading an "educational transformation agenda" for MCs in the region, collaborating with COL, the UWI, CARICOM and the Caribbean Employers' Confederation to standardize the models and approaches by creating a CARICOM Micro-Credential Framework for both secondary and tertiary education levels (Ali, 2023).

To facilitate MC adoption, CXC® has introduced the *Surpass* platform across centres and schools, providing access to digital assessment products (e-testing and e-SBAs) linked to *LACHain* blockchain technology. This platform now supports the issuance of all MCs and digital badges. Additionally, CXC®'s Professional Learning Institute offers modular teacher orientation and training workshops, as well as non-credit courses ranging from a few hours to several days, using *Moodle Cloud/4.0*. CXC® now issues digital badges for each completed module in these workshops and courses (E. Ali, personal communication, March 4, 2024).

## Process and Methods

The methodology employed in the process of investigating the impact of MCs and the views of stakeholders followed these steps: First, the consultant began a document examination by reviewing 12 government strategic plans and other documents produced by Caribbean governments in seven countries. These included the larger countries in the region, namely Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. Three other countries were also included in the investigation: Belize, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis. From this examination, a table was created listing the 20 educational issues raised by the various countries in their strategic plans and other documents and checking which issues were considered important by each country. Note that Cost and Quality were universal concerns expressed by all.

Google and Bing searches were conducted using the following keywords: “micro-credential”, “short course”, and “Caribbean”. No micro-credential policies or other documents were discovered pertaining to the Caribbean region. A search for relevant articles and reports was then conducted using ChatGPT Google, Google Scholar and possibly relevant papers on MCs were examined. Following this, CXC® provided the consultant with several documents, related to different government concerns and goals for education in their respective jurisdictions. These were indirectly related to, or helpful in understanding the possible links for MCs in addressing issues highlighted in the documents. Along with other documents discovered online by the consultant, these resources were very helpful in providing direction in focusing the investigation. All documents consulted appear in the Documents Consulted section at the end of this report.

An investigation, to find every MC, short course or certificate offered by institutions in the seven countries followed the initial document search. A spreadsheet of all short courses was created with a total of +800 courses identified (See Annex A)

After consultations with CXC® and COL, the consultant went on to draft a stakeholder survey, which was approved with comments, and improvements suggested by CXC®. COL transferred the survey to a website where it hosted the survey, and the consultants distributed the link to approximately 300 stakeholders in 11 Caribbean jurisdictions (and one in the UK). They were identified as stakeholders by CXC® staff, and an individual email inviting participation in the survey was sent to each one by the consultant (See Annex B). There were 157 responses. Only 112 responses contained partial or complete data. This survey was intended to gain an understanding of the awareness and interest of stakeholders and their knowledge of, and possible experience with MCs, along with their expressed concerns.

## Issues Identified in Strategic Plans and Other Documents

### Definitions

**Country:** Caribbean nations investigated in this research.

**Access & Digital Equity:** The ability of the populations to equally access learning opportunities.

**Agility/Speed:** The ability of institutions to quickly update their curriculum to adjust to evolving societal and economic realities.

**Collaboration:** Faculty, staff, and administrators working with industry and small businesses to identify the skills needed for employment.

**Curriculum Reform:** The ability of institutions to change their syllabi and course content as well as learning approaches to meet social and market demands.

**CVQ:** Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) is a CARICOM-approved award that represents the achievement of a set of competencies which define core work practices of an occupational area.

**Flexibility:** The ability of institutions to change or adapt their curriculum according to societal and economic demands.

**Labour Market Analysis:** The process by which institutions identify the labour market needs to ensure that students can access training that can increase their employability.

**Lifelong learning/Incremental Paths:** The ability of citizens to, step-by-step, follow learning pathways to recognised credentials throughout their lives.

**Open Educational Resources:** learning, teaching and research materials in any format and medium that reside in the public domain or are under copyright that have been released under an open license, that permit no-cost access, re-use, re-purpose, adaptation and redistribution.

**Organisational Effectiveness:** The ability of institutions to achieve their goals efficiently and cost-effectively.

**Personalisation:** The ability to adapt a course or programme to the individual needs of learners.

**PLAR:** Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition is a process that permits learners to obtain official credit for demonstrating their knowledge and skills earned informally.

**Professionalisation:** This is a social process in which professionals can continually upgrade their skills, practices and qualifications.

**Regional Accreditation:** The acceptability within the Caribbean region and externally of credentials earned by local institutions.

**Retention of Students:** The ability of institutions to minimize student attrition (dropouts).

**STEAM:** Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (as subjects of study).

**Transition:** When students move from one level of education to another, for example between school and college or university.

**Systemic Alignment:** The process of implementing initiatives in which the constituent parts of a system (human, technological, administrative, curriculum, etc.) work together towards goals or objectives identified to achieve a common purpose.

**TVET:** The extent to which vocational training is prioritised in the documents consulted.

**Workforce Needs/Employability:** The demand for skilled workers and the ability of workers to achieve the competencies of workers capable of meeting this demand.

## **The Benefits and Challenges of Micro-credentials**

A comprehensive examination of country education plans revealed no explicit policies related to micro-credentials (MCs). Only three references to MCs were found: one from The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus in Trinidad and Tobago, one from the University Council of Jamaica, and another from the Commonwealth Caribbean University in Jamaica. Consequently, the investigation shifted focus to explore how MCs based on short courses, workshops, and similar interventions could address the stated goals of different countries as outlined in their strategic plans and official documents.

Quality and cost emerged as universal concerns across all countries. Other issues were identified by several countries, as well as by CXC® and UNESCO. Some concerns were mentioned by only one or two countries but could reasonably be considered relevant to all.

An Excel spreadsheet was developed which lists hundreds of short courses, seminars, workshops, and lectures that can be considered to be MCs or at least "micro-credential ready." Most of these offerings provide certificates as official recognition of successful completion.

While it has been argued that MCs can be used to constructively address many issues raised by the different strategic plans and other documents released by several governments, there are also significant challenges. The primary obstacle to MC acceptance would be the creation of awareness, establishing credibility and gaining acceptance among stakeholders. This process should lead to active support or, at a minimum, reduced opposition. Awareness-raising efforts must target not only institutional, organisational, and governmental decision-makers but also private sector

leaders, students, faculty, staff, and potential learners in the wider public. This can be particularly challenging with limited or no budget.

Despite these challenges, MCs can be an effective means of achieving many goals outlined in strategic plans and other documents, including:

1. Supporting more personalized learning
2. Guiding the transition between secondary and tertiary education levels
3. Identifying at-risk learners for early intervention
4. Allowing for greater curriculum development flexibility
5. Increasing accessibility to professional development opportunities
6. Rapidly re-skilling the workforce, addressing the requirements of emergent industries

The issues raised in the documents examined are listed below, along with a rationale for how MCs can be helpful in addressing these concerns, followed by the implementation challenges. While quality and cost were universal concerns, other issues varied in prominence across countries. It's important to note that the absence of an issue in a particular country's documentation does not necessarily mean it is not relevant locally or regionally. A comprehensive list of consulted documents is provided at the end of this report.

## ***Quality assurance***

### ***Benefits***

Quality assurance in education depends on institutions monitoring, maintaining, and improving the relevance of the course content, as well as identifying efficiencies and deficits in the system. The educational system includes course delivery, administration, technology, evaluation, and assessments as well as a commitment to equity for all learners. MCs can prove to be a catalyst in improving not only the quality of the course content, but also by simplifying administrative tasks, student assessment and the application of appropriate technologies.

### ***Challenges***

Maintaining the quality and rigour of MCs in ever-changing technology-based environments can be difficult to sustain when industry requirements are constantly changing, and new businesses are emerging. Instructors need to be trained and retrained on a continual basis. New principles and techniques need to be regularised, creating a stable environment where faculty and staff can work to deadlines. There are also many obstacles to integrating MCs into existing quality frameworks and accreditation processes.

## ***Cost of Education***

### ***Benefits***

MCs are linked to shorter and more focused courses than traditional ones. Since learners only pay for the MC that they need, they do not have to pay for a full rack of courses leading to a diploma or



degree. Institutions can benefit from reduced costs for teaching personnel with shorter courses and reduced overhead, especially if the course is delivered online.

### *Challenges*

The cost of tuition for students is another major challenge. While some very short courses are inexpensive, the tuition for others is beyond learners' capacity to pay. The approximate mean price of courses, as revealed by many institutions is equivalent to that of USD 369, with a median of USD192. For institutions, stacking credits made up of MCs, whether from credit or non-credit courses could result in higher administration and assessment costs.

## ***Access and Equity***

### *Benefits*

MCs can help promote educational equity by providing anyone with learning opportunities, especially people who would not otherwise seek them. Anyone can succeed, regardless of their background. MCs can offer different entry points and pathways to learning and help level the playing field, ensuring more equitable access to education. MCs can be delivered as digital courses made available online, rendering them accessible to all, including those in remote or underserved areas, to the disabled, or others who are housebound, with few geographical, financial, or other constraints. This increased accessibility enables learners to upskill, anywhere at any time. Online and hybrid MCs can enable students to continue their education outside traditional classroom settings. Many learners do not want to commit to a full degree program of several years because of cost or time commitments. MCs provide these learners with the steppingstones towards a full degree while providing them with knowledge and skills as they work.

### *Challenges*

The lack of access to physical classrooms for face-to-face lessons or to reliable internet connexions or even to computers or tablets for online learning is a reality for many citizens. The lack of study space in the home is also an important consideration. These challenges can put to sleep any hope for learners wishing to access MCs. MCs can be effective in training learners for the workforce, but first access to the learning space or relevant technologies must be ensured.

## ***Agility and Speed***

### *Benefits*

Because they are based on short courses, MCs can support programmes that can be quickly developed or adapted to the changing needs of industry, providing learners with the skills needed for employment in a timely fashion. Digital MCs can be immediately made available online to learners wherever they are and at whatever time they desire. Their learners can be fast-tracked towards employment; or employees' skills can be promptly updated, thus placing the region in a possible competitive advantage in attracting innovative industries.

### *Challenges*

Rapid development of MCs can lead to quality and sustainability challenges. Time must be sufficient to ensure good course design, testing and learner assessment processes. Traditional

skills may be sacrificed to market trends, leading to a decline in longer-term, transferable competencies. Moving too fast can also lead to strains on the resources available.

## ***Collaboration***

### *Benefits*

Partnerships with industry and the community can be strengthened through collaborations in developing MCs. These partnerships can ensure that the MC competencies align with industry standards and are responsive to community needs while preparing learners for real-life applications of their learning. Such collaboration with industry is essential when implementing MCs for employment to ensure that the MCs match the priorities of the workplace and provide learners with the practical skills and knowledge required by employers.

### *Challenges*

Sustaining long-term partnerships, although an admirable goal, can nevertheless prove challenging. The continuing alignment of educational institutions with industrial partners will need to be monitored and maintained over time to ensure that synergies endure, and consensus continues. Conflicts of interest and implementation challenges must be kept to a minimum without draining the resources of the participants.

## ***Curriculum Reform***

### *Benefits*

MCs can be used to integrate up-to-date skills, directly into the curriculum without modifying other courses in the programme. The MCs can address skill gaps or the ever-changing needs of both education and the workforce. A relevant curriculum divided into short manageable units with MCs can be very effective in increasing both teacher interest and student engagement. MCs can be developed for a specific purpose (e.g. First Aid, Excel or SAP training) for a specific group (e.g. nurses, the disabled, soldiers, etc.), or to address high-priority gaps identified by governments or businesses.

### *Challenges*

Overhauling traditional curricula to include MCs requires significant effort and buy-in from stakeholders. Efforts must be focused on ensuring alignment with standards and regulations while addressing quality requirements. Overworked faculty and staff may not be agreeable because of increased workload demands. Faculty will not be capable of producing MCs without the assistance of instructional designers and technologists.

## ***Flexibility***

### *Benefits*

A major strength of MCs is the flexibility that they can provide for both learners and instructors in their schedules and in addressing their needs. This modular approach allows for diverse learning paths, with major and minor options. Learners do not have to spend as much time or money, enabling them to gain marketable skills quickly and affordably. With MCs, learners who

experience disruption can quickly return to learning, allowing them flexibility in their learning paths.

Different learning modalities (face-to-face, online or hybrid learning) are also possible empowering students to meet the standards of a wide range of certifications. When combined with Open Educational Resources (OER), the MCs can be adopted, adapted and assembled in a wide variety of ways to meet the specific goals of a course or programme.

### *Challenges*

Flexibility needs to be balanced with structure. When there is too much flexibility both faculty and learners can flounder due to the copiousness of decisions to be made. The more flexibility, the more self-management skills are needed. Students with poor self-management skills often drop out. They need structure. More flexibility may lead to increased workloads for faculty and staff. Overwork can lead to the loss of control, followed by procrastination and failure.

### *Labour Market analysis*

#### *Benefits*

MCs can help align education with industry and market demands to match workers with employer needs. Labour market data can be analysed in collaboration with industry professionals to ensure that MCs developed are aligned with labour market needs in a timely fashion. Emerging fields, especially, need trained workers – MCs save employers time and costs while enabling them to move quickly into new markets.

#### *Challenges*

Rapidly changing job markets make it hard to keep programmes up to date. One could argue that, rather than focusing on specific job skills, students need to learn to be adaptable and open to change. While this may be true, so is the opposite -- workers need specific knowledge and skills in order to be adaptable in any given environment. Wheelahan and Moodie (2021) warn that MCs tend to focus on a specific skill for employment and could atomize education and subvert it to the labour market.

### *Lifelong learning*

#### *Benefits*

Modular MCs support lifelong learning by making available short courses that can be completed by learners while working. The fear of failure is common. Small packages of learning, exemplified by MCs allow learners to get a taste of learning without a major investment of money or time. Early success in MCs can 'open doors', motivating learners to continue their learning path to more credentials. These MCs can be related to needed work skills, career goals or personal interests. The world is changing quickly, and MCs can provide learners with the opportunities they need to maintain relevance and improve their career prospects.

#### *Challenges*

Lifelong learning is an admirable goal, but there are major challenges to overcome, although MCs can be effective in addressing these problems by providing new paths to assessment and accreditation, they are not a panacea. These problems for learners include cost of tuition, illiteracy, lack of training resources, lack of internet etc., not to mention family constraints, especially for women. Poverty and the lack of self-confidence this produces are also mitigating factors.

### ***Organisational Effectiveness***

#### ***Benefits***

Targeted training enabled by MCs can upgrade the performance of employees in achieving institutional goals. Internal processes in need of improvement can be targeted and MCs developed and delivered to encourage employees to focus on identified needs. In emergency situations, such as the recent Covid-19 epidemic, organisations can speedily develop MCs, upskilling workers quickly to meet specific needs.

#### ***Challenges***

Aligning MCs with organisational effectiveness requires a clear vision and a strategic plan. Weak leadership, limited budgets, and the need to maintain employee motivation, morale, and capabilities over time can all put a hold on the most ambitious plans for improvement within any institution. MCs could also threaten the traditional degree model that is the cornerstone of existing schools, universities and colleges.

### ***Personalised Learning***

#### ***Benefits***

Because they are modular, MCs can be used to focus on highly specialised areas of study. Being short and limited in scope, MCs can provide learners with customised learning paths that motivate them to achieve the competencies required to meet their goals., at their own pace according to their learning styles or unique interests. Traditional degrees cannot meet these requirements in such a timely fashion.

#### ***Challenges***

Creating MCs that include scalable, personalised learning experiences can be resource-intensive and so requires strong support from the institutional leadership, and highly motivated faculty. Creating self-paced personalised learning modules is also labour-intensive and takes time, especially when an institution is transitioning from traditional teacher-led instructional formats.

### ***PLAR (Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition)***

#### ***Benefits***

MCs can form part of a portfolio, which is used to provide a structured framework for assessing and recognizing skills gained informally or through practical experience. Thus, learners' MCs can validate their competencies and accomplishments to employers or institutions and so can be used to expedite the progress of learners towards higher credentials. PLAR could prove to be the main

catalyst for the acceptance of MCs and student mobility within the region. An experienced PLAR centre already exists at UWI Global Campus, so this process could be centralised for the region in this one centre. Experienced personnel in assessing the validity and integrity of documentation with an understanding of PLAR processes are essential.

### *Challenges*

Training in PLAR and raising awareness of the benefits will be a major challenge. The political will among the different institutions to accept PLAR credits is another obstacle to overcome. Policy on PLAR that demands quality in the assessment practices is of paramount importance.

## ***Professional Development***

### *Benefits*

MCs can provide ladder pathways (credential stacking) for teachers and other professionals to continually improve their competencies while achieving further certifications recognizing their enhanced knowledge and skills. Professionals in different fields can use MCs to upgrade their technology skills, embrace the latest developments and keep up with changes in regulations. MCs can be used not only for vocational skills training but also for highly complex graduate education.

### *Challenges*

Ensuring that MCs are accepted, valued, and accredited by professional bodies, institutions and employers in the region is an important objective that could take time. To achieve this, effective monitoring and assessment not only of the MCs but also of their impact on the profession, the institution and the workplace must be implemented.

## ***Regional Accreditation***

### *Benefits*

MCs can be used to create a cohesive, organized and unified approach to learning by evaluating specific competencies and outcomes in alignment with institutional goals. Learning gaps can be bridged by using a standard format. MCs can provide the impetus needed for institutions to approve policies and agree on common guidelines and standards for effecting credit transfer and student mobility among local institutions and throughout the Caribbean region.

### *Challenges*

To ensure the acceptability of MCs and other non-traditional learning paths (e.g. PLAR), establishing Caribbean-wide assessment standards and accreditation is important for learners and particularly for employment mobility within the region. Support from institutions, professional bodies and employers is essential.

## ***Student Retention***

### *Benefits*

The inability of institutions to retain students through attrition within or at the end of a diploma or degree programme is well recognised. MCs, when engaging and relevant, can prove to be an

effective means of supporting student retention and reducing attrition. When students cannot see the “end of the road”, for example, the years needed to earn a credential, they can become discouraged. Short courses with attainable MCs can be used to engage students in small steps that can be ladder-ed eventually into a diploma or degree. MCs can be used to address learning gaps, which can be identified more quickly, allowing for the possibility of timely interventions with students at risk of dropping out. Students who fail in one short module can be quickly directed to targeted MCs that address the gap. Moreover, successful students can be given access to upper-level modules that are more challenging and can maintain their interest.

### *Challenges*

Student retention can be supported with MCs, designed to address the diverse needs and motivations of learners. However, this can be cumbersome, but it can help to prevent dropouts. Keeping not just the MC curriculum up to date, as well as training equipment and practices up to date with industry standards, helps ensure that learners can be confident in the value of the knowledge and skills acquired and the credentials conferred. Training must be aligned with actual workforce gaps, and industry needs for attrition to be reduced. Learners need confidence that they are learning real-world skills to increase their motivation. In addition, data on students must be integrated and of high quality so that students-at-risk can be judiciously identified for early intervention by instructors and other professionals.

### *Systemic alignment*

#### *Benefits*

MCs can be used to align existing educational priorities with current industry needs and future job markets. They can enable and empower those seeking employment, by providing them with the job skills that are most in demand. With MCs, the institution can increase its collaborations with industry and thus support the sustainability of both its institutions and the economy of the country.

#### *Challenges*

Ensuring that MCs can support system alignments can require comprehensive collaboration between education providers, government, and industry. Communicating common strategies is difficult within institutions and even within the higher education sector, not to mention other levels of education. This can become much more problematic when including partners in government and the private sector. Monitoring progress over time is also challenging.

### *Transitional Guidance*

#### *Benefits*

MCs can serve as a bridge from secondary to tertiary education. Because they certify achievable learning outcomes or competencies, earned in a short period of time, this can also aid in increasing the confidence of students during the transition process. Upper-level MCs can be accessed by students while still in lower school. This allows students to better adapt, knowing that they are capable of making the transition. MCs also offer an alternative to traditional entrance examinations. MCs can be used to recognise a wide range of competencies, supporting a more

holistic assessment process. Learners who have expertise but who lack specific skills relevant to their work or career path can fulfil their need for upgrading, either academically or vocationally. MCs also offer more flexibility for students who need to balance their studies with other responsibilities. MCs can also provide students with opportunities to explore different career paths before committing to a field that could prove unsuitable in the long term.

### *Challenges*

The standardization of MCs must be achieved for quality assurance and recognition by the different colleges and universities. Variability in quality can negatively affect the transferability and market recognition of an MC. Financial aid must be made available for learners; otherwise, they are inaccessible to many learners, especially those that need the MCs the most. There is also a significant risk that MCs will lead to the fragmentation of learning -- education that is not comprehensive.

### *TVET and CVQ*

#### *Benefits*

MCs are particularly appropriate for short training courses instructing learners in skills that can be verified and then applied to TVET certificates and diplomas. MCs can be used to assess competencies achieved through in-time training. They are especially useful for addressing urgent skill needs that must be rapidly addressed. They can empower workers and industries and used as steppingstones to higher CVQs. The flexibility of MCs can be an essential asset in integrating short courses with MCs for students in secondary schools orienting towards vocational education. Other STEAM subjects could also benefit with MCs.

#### *Challenges*

In TVET training, keeping training equipment and practices up to date with industry standards is a major challenge. This is a direct result of reduced public funding and the lack of support from private industry, combined with wasted energy consumption aggravated by the use of outdated machinery, and the increasing ongoing costs of digital transformation.

### *Workplace*

#### *Benefits*

MCs can be assembled, adapted, or developed to address the emerging requirements of the job market for practical skills. Just-in-time learning is enabled by MCs. The economy of Caribbean nations is presently based on growing sectors such as tourism, financial services, and information technology. Moreover, implementing MCs can be one step forward in creating systemic efficiencies linking training more seamlessly with the needs of industry. By focusing on real gaps in the workplace, MCs can ensure that resources can be effectively applied where needed, training workers for jobs that are being advertised.

### *Challenges*

For workforce training, the primary challenge for MC implementors is continually monitoring and communicating with the private sector, ensuring that training remains aligned with real world workforce gaps and needs.

### ***Limited scope of current programme offerings***

#### *Benefits*

MC implementations could play a significant role with the creation of simple pathways to increase programme offerings more quickly and efficiently, especially in niche areas. MCs are linked to courses created using cost-effective agile modular approaches to course development. MCs can be rapidly targeted for specific skills that are in demand and kept up to date, while creating robust pathways to higher diplomas and degrees.

#### *Challenges*

The proliferation of MCs could lead to the perception that the credentials are of poor quality, especially if there is no standardisation for assessment. This could result in lack of recognition by institutions and employers. It may be difficult for institutions to integrate and credit MCs in existing programmes and ensure their stackability.

### ***Valid and Reliable Assessment***

#### *Benefits*

MCs can drive innovation in assessment, including project-based assessments, simulations and problem-solving approaches, which measure real-world competencies. This can lead to higher completion rates as competencies can be tested when reached rather than after a specific number of hours. Collaborations with private businesses can ensure that assessment practices are in line with the actual needs of industries.

#### *Challenges*

Traditional assessment measures are often not valid when assessing specific or emerging skills. Reliability is also a concern when trying to maintain consistency among the students being assessed. Subjective criteria could negatively affect the reliability. So, standardized assessments are critical to ensure fairness and equity. Assessment can be expensive for institutions, so they need to be economical and scalable without compromising consistency.

### ***Summary of Benefits and Challenges***

Micro-credentials (MCs) offer a promising solution to many educational challenges faced by Caribbean nations, serving as a catalyst for comprehensive educational reform. They introduce a more cost-effective, adaptive, responsive, and inclusive approach to learning, enhancing educational opportunities for learners while simultaneously addressing the evolving needs of the workforce. By providing targeted, relevant training for both employed and unemployed professionals and tradespeople, MCs play a crucial role in mitigating systemic issues and aligning educational outcomes with market and societal demands.



However, the adoption and implementation of MCs are not without challenges. Despite their potential to provide flexible, targeted learning opportunities that align with contemporary job market demands and lifelong learning goals, significant barriers must be overcome. These obstacles include raising awareness, establishing credibility, ensuring equitable access, managing costs, and adapting existing systems and pedagogies to accommodate this new approach.

These challenges underscore the need for an inclusive, collaborative approach to implementing MCs. Such an approach should prioritize the development of real-world competencies while supporting equity and accessibility. Moreover, it should focus on the systemic alignment of educational standards, quality assurance measures, and industry needs. By addressing these challenges head-on, educators, policymakers, and industry leaders can harness the full potential of MCs to create and sustain a robust regional educational ecosystem that fosters a more adaptable, skilled, and resilient workforce.

Expanding program offerings through MCs allows for quick adaptation to niche skills, but standardization is vital to maintain perceived quality. While MC-driven assessment practices can effectively measure real-world competencies, ensuring consistency, fairness, and cost-effectiveness remains a significant challenge.

Finally, MCs can catalyse a transformative approach to education and workforce development, offering flexibility, targeted learning, and alignment with industry needs. However, their successful implementation requires careful management of quality, access, costs, and collaboration. By striking the right balance between these factors, Caribbean nations can leverage MCs to revolutionize their educational landscapes and better equip their workforce for the challenges of the future, ultimately contributing to sustainable economic growth and social development in the region.

# Analysis of Data Provided from the Micro-credentials

## Countries

The seven countries investigated in this research all offered micro-credentials (MCs), although, with few exceptions, these were not explicitly labelled as such. Instead, short courses were typically recognised or attested to through certificates. The distribution of over 800 MCs across the countries revealed some unanticipated patterns.

Contrary to expectations, Jamaica, the most populous country among those studied, did not rank in the top three for MC offerings, accounting for only 16% of the total. Trinidad and Tobago led the field, contributing 35% of all MCs, followed by Barbados at 19% and Belize at 14%. This distribution suggests a strong emphasis on continuing education and professional development in these countries, possibly reflecting their larger and more diverse workforces that require ongoing skills training and education. Interestingly, the smaller countries in the study demonstrated substantial activity in MC offerings. This robust engagement may indicate a prioritization of educational offerings relative to their size, possibly as a strategy to enhance their competitiveness and workforce development.

The distribution of MCs across these Caribbean nations provides valuable insights into their educational priorities and approaches to workforce development. It highlights the varying degrees of emphasis placed on short-term, targeted learning opportunities across the region, potentially reflecting differences in economic structures, educational policies, and workforce needs. This pattern of MC offerings underscores the importance of considering factors beyond population size when evaluating educational initiatives in the Caribbean. It suggests that smaller nations may be leveraging MCs as a tool for rapid skill development and economic advancement, while larger countries may have a more diverse array of educational options or different priorities in their educational strategies.

Figure 1. Number of micro-credentials offered by country.

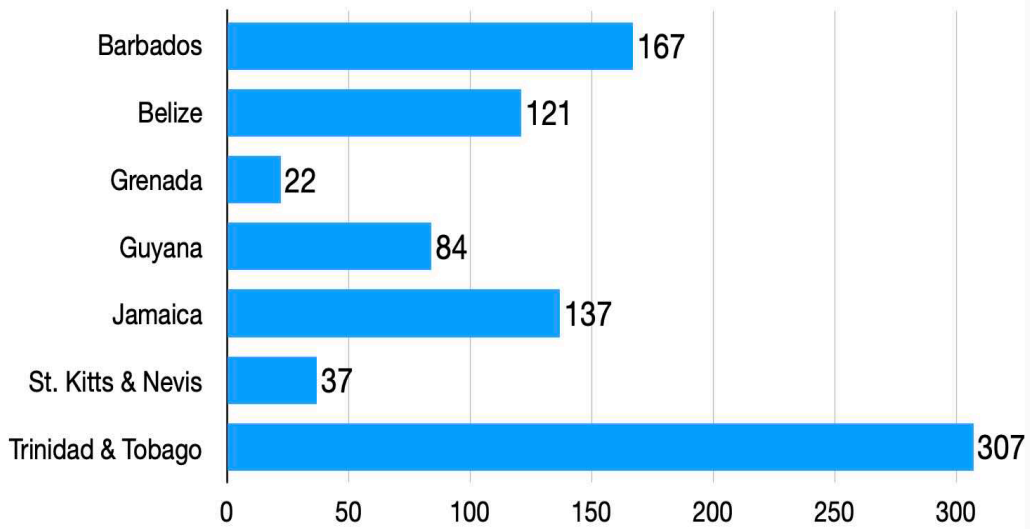
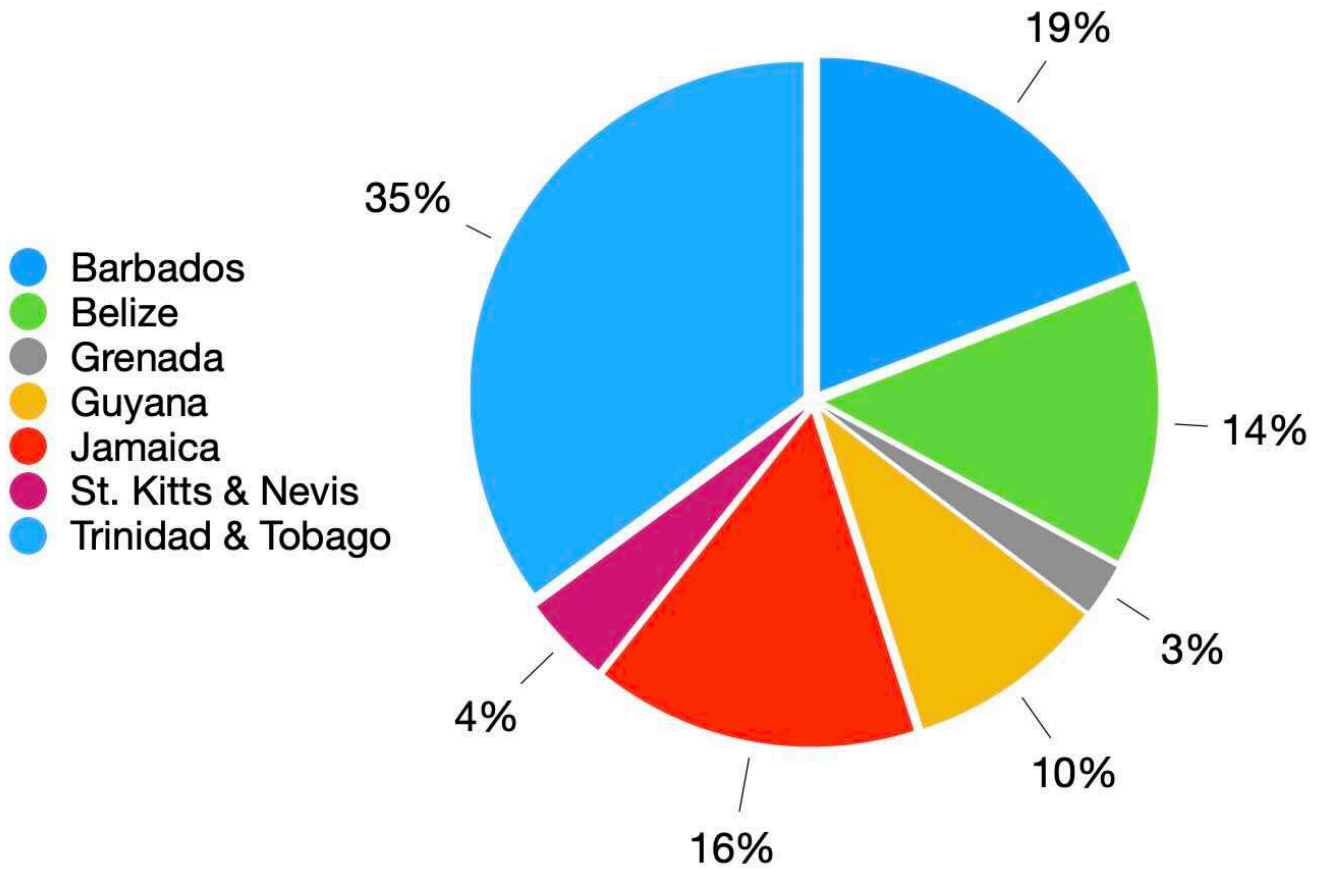


Figure 2. Percentage of micro-credentials offered by country



***The University of the West Indies (UWI)***

The participation of the UWI Global Campus was a significant factor in the total number of short courses (255). The UWI local campuses were also significant contributors (125). See Figure 3. Figure 4 shows the percentage of MCs offered by each type of UWI campus.

Figure 3. Number of UWI micro-credentials offered by campuses.

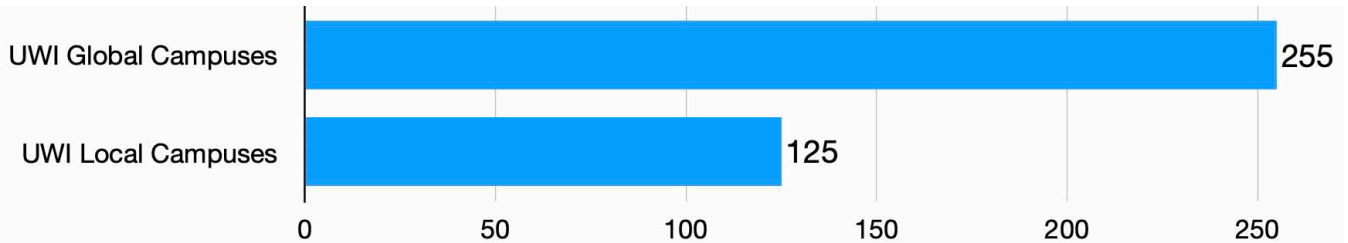
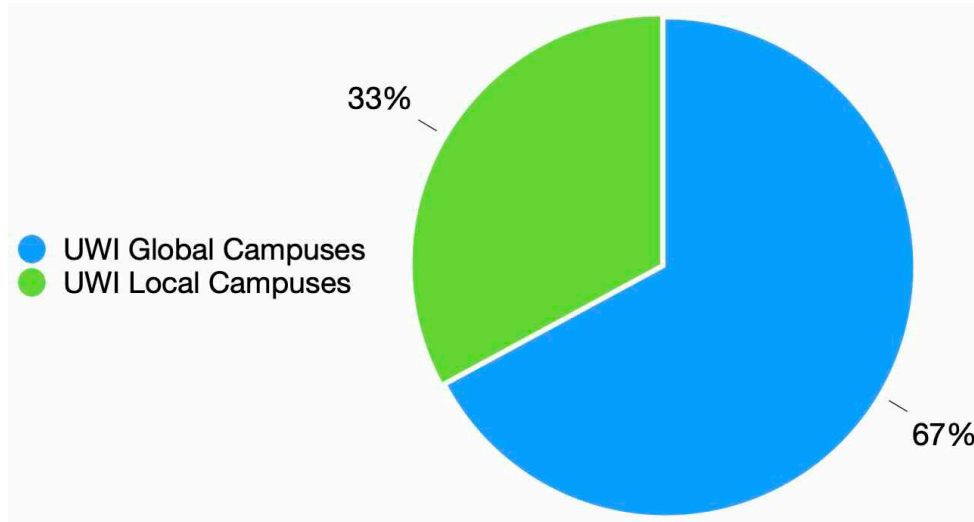


Figure 4. Percentage of micro-credentials offered by UWI campuses.



### *UWI and other universities*

In comparison to the other universities, UWI's 380 micro-credentials, represented 67% of the university total compared to only 187 MCs (31%) from all the others. In this study. See Figures 5 and 6. The large number of MCs offered by UWI Global Campus results primarily from its focus on online delivery making the course offerings accessible throughout the Caribbean and further.

Figure 5. Number of UWI MCs vs. other universities in the region.

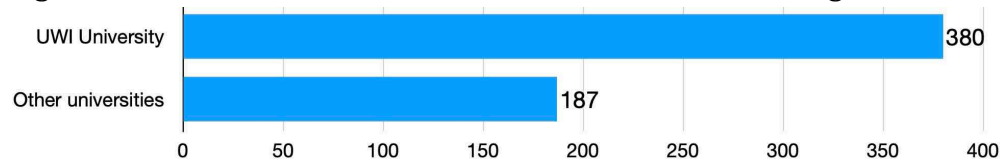
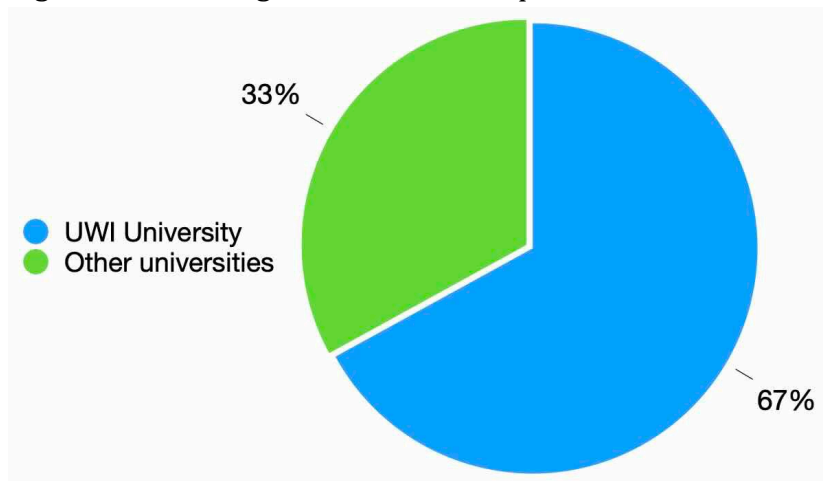


Figure 6. Percentage of UWI MCs compared to other universities in the region.



### Subjects or Fields

Please refer to Figures 7 and 8. Despite the wide range of subjects being taught, over one-third (38%) or 331 micro-courses (MCs) focused on business-related topics. This trend likely reflects the regional emphasis on meeting job market demands, where entrepreneurs, managers, economists, and marketers are in high demand. The strong focus on business education underscores the significant need for business knowledge and skills in the region.

Additionally, industrial skills training is well-represented, highlighting the importance placed on empowering workers to grow industries and sustain economic development. Together, business and industrial skills courses constituted the majority of the total courses, accounting for 468 out of 875. Technology courses ranked third at 7%, followed by Computers and Education, each at 6%. Tourism courses (5%) were notably present, primarily due to the offerings from one school in Trinidad. Culinary courses, also at 5%, were popular and available from a variety of institutions across several countries. The Caribbean's unique cuisine plays a significant role in promoting regional tourism, making these courses economically important throughout the region.

A diverse array of other subjects comprised 2% to 5% of the total courses. Despite being represented in smaller numbers, these courses demonstrate the flexibility of tailoring MCs to suit specific country or business interests and cultural values. See Figure 8 for more details

Figure 7. Number of MCs by subject area.

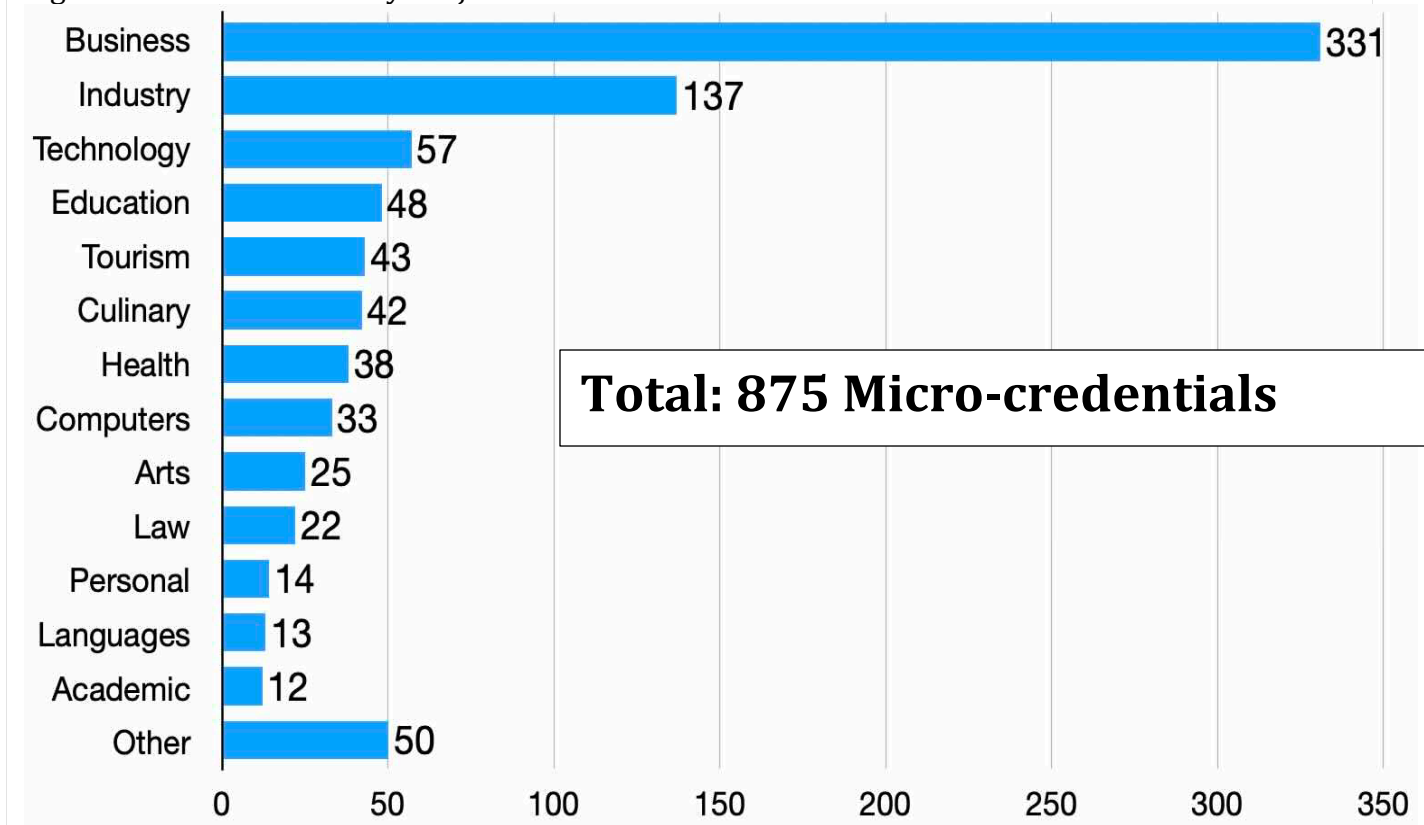
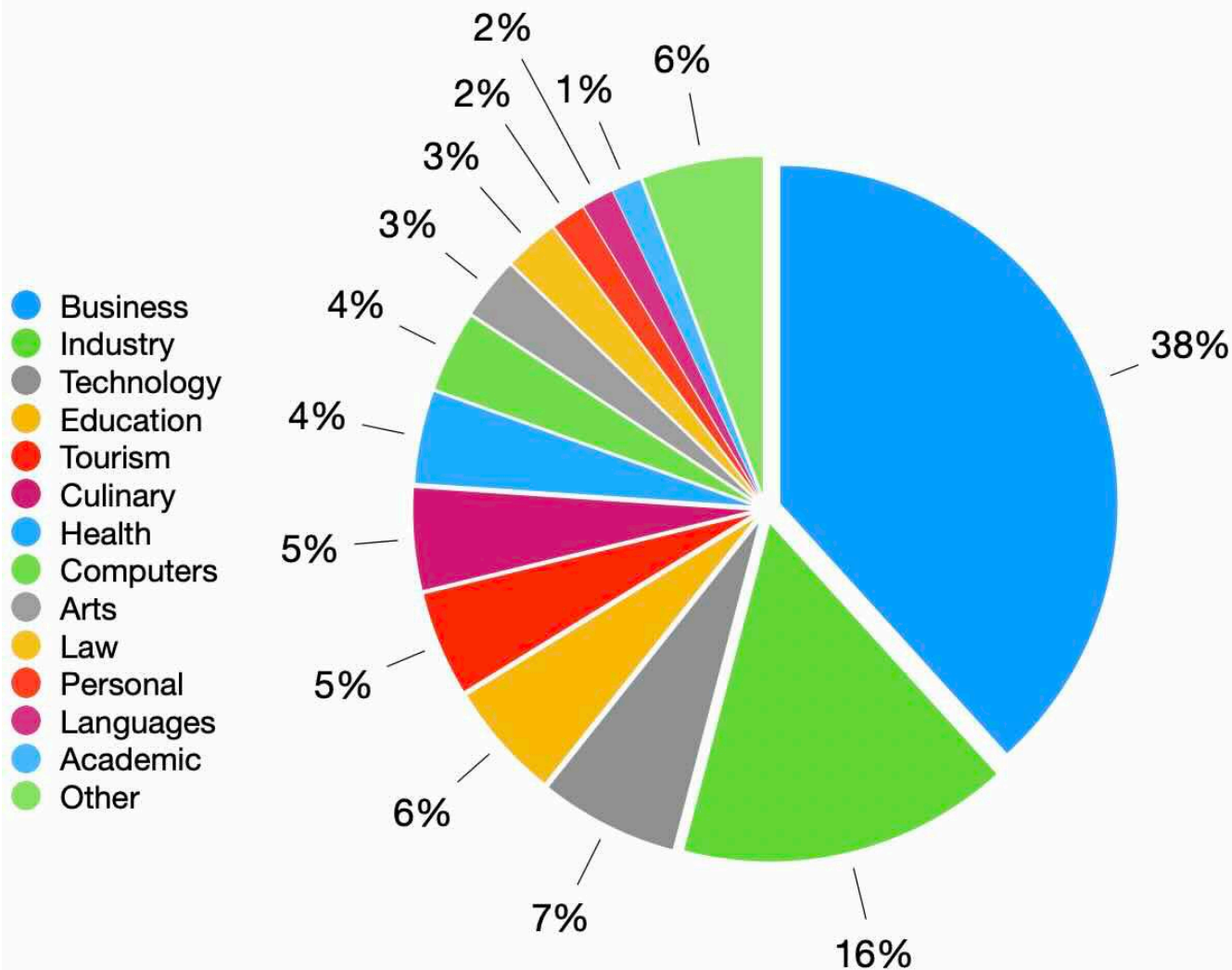


Figure 8. Percentage of MCs by subject area.



### *Types of Institutions*

The data shows that the majority of institutions offering micro-courses (MCs) were universities, accounting for 535 or 60%, which is more than three times the number offered by public colleges (153 or 18%). Private colleges (125) and non-profit private institutions (56) together comprised 20% of the MCs. See Figures 9 and 10. Although a few MCs were offered at the secondary level, they were tailored for an adult clientele in both the public and private sectors.

The predominance of universities in delivering MCs could be attributed to their established infrastructure for education and training, their capacity to offer a wider range of topics, and their ability to award recognised credentials upon completion. This trend suggests a significant interest and demand for such courses at the university level, possibly due to the public's perception of higher education quality or the alignment of university-offered MCs with professional and academic advancement goals.

Private institutions and NGOs/non-profits also play a crucial role in this educational sector, indicating a diverse ecosystem where multiple types of organisations contribute to lifelong

learning and professional development. Their participation suggests there might be niche areas or specialized training that these institutions are better suited to provide, or that Figure 9. Number of MCs offered by institution type.

Figure 9. Number of MCs offered by institution type.

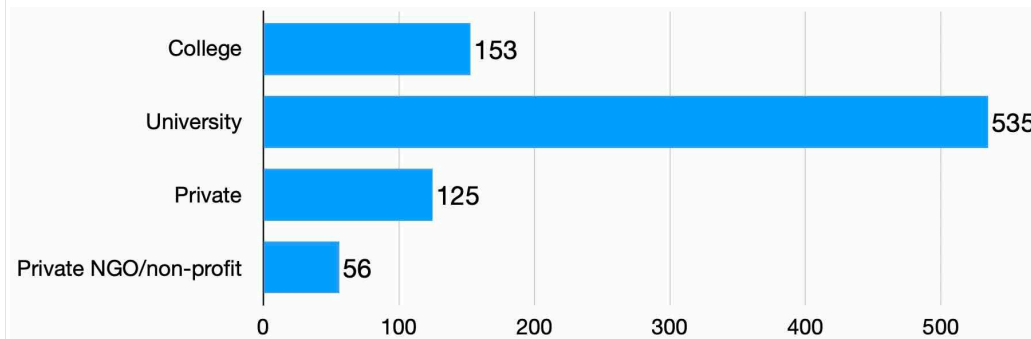
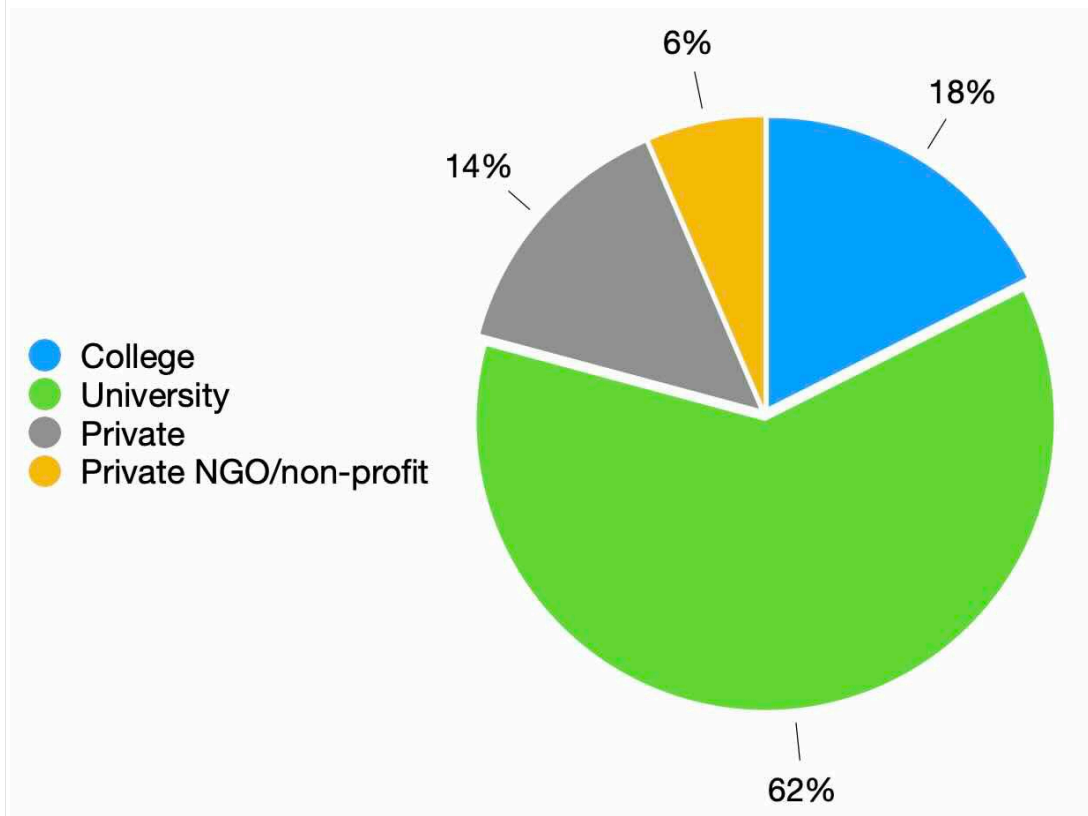


Figure 10. Percentage of MCs offered by institution type.



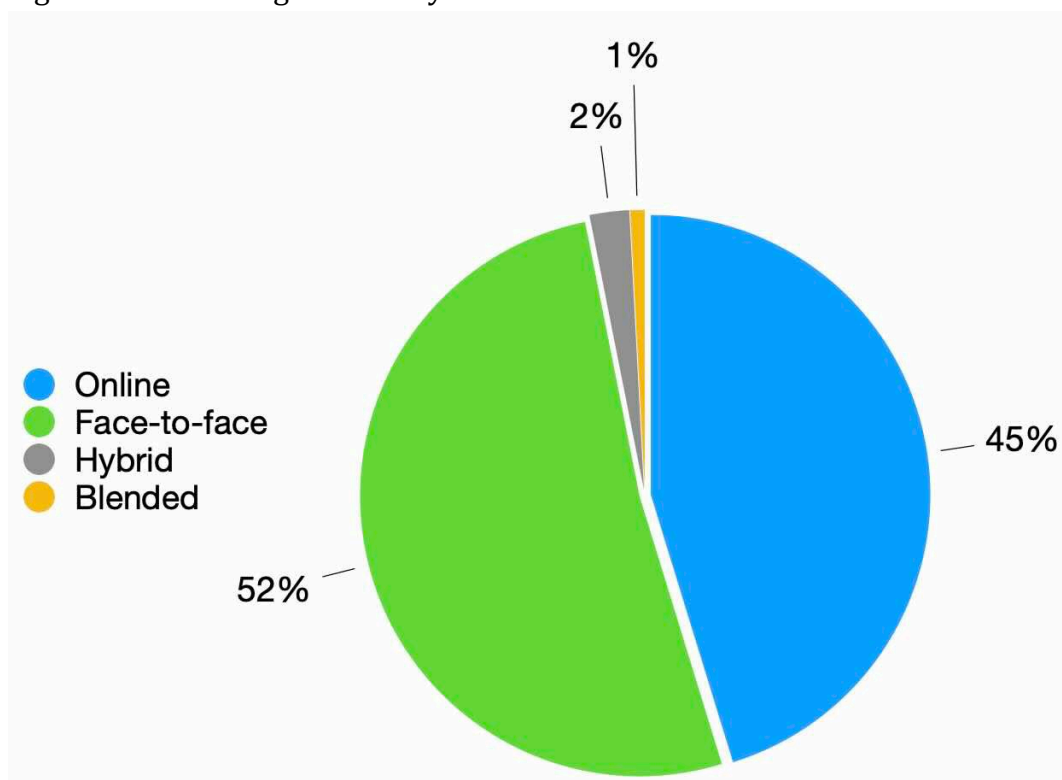
### *Micro-credential Formats*

A majority of the MCs (53%) were offered online, with nearly an equivalent number available in a face-to-face format. Only a few courses were provided in hybrid or blended formats. In hybrid courses, some learners attend in person while others participate online. In blended courses, all learners engage in both modalities. Two institutions offered Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), although no data is available for these.

The dominance of online formats aligns well with the predominance of university-level MCs and the UWI Global Campus. This trend is likely due to the accessibility and flexibility of online courses, which are particularly valuable in the Caribbean, with its many islands, dispersed populations, and varying levels of infrastructure. Nevertheless, face-to-face teaching remains important due to traditional classroom settings and the belief that they offer more person-to-person interactions.

Hybrid and blended formats, despite being less utilized, represent a middle ground that combines elements of online and face-to-face learning. These courses could well prove to be harbingers of a future in which institutions and learners take greater advantage of the affordances inherent in both online and face-to-face formats.

Figure 11. Percentage of MCs by format.





### Micro-credential Course Duration

The majority of the courses follow the typical one-semester comprehensive course model, with 488 courses representing 56% of the total. This is expected, as universities account for most of the offerings and commonly use the one-semester model, which requires a high level of student commitment. This contrasts with the significantly fewer and shorter courses offered, suggesting that both students and institutions view the one-semester course as the standard.

The second most common duration was the shortest, with 91 courses lasting 1-10 hours, representing 11% of the total. Similarly, courses lasting 11-20 hours also accounted for 11%. These shorter courses indicate a demand for more accessible and flexible MCs, particularly for learners with limited time, such as working professionals.

Fewer courses were offered in the 21–40-hour range (52 courses or 9%), and only 13 MCs exceeded 50 hours (2%). These longer courses are typically highly specialized and expensive. Notably, 99 courses, or 12% of the total, were offered with no information on duration. This could be due to a lack of data tracking by institutions or technical issues. See Figures 12 and 13 for more details.

Figure 12. Number of MCs by duration.

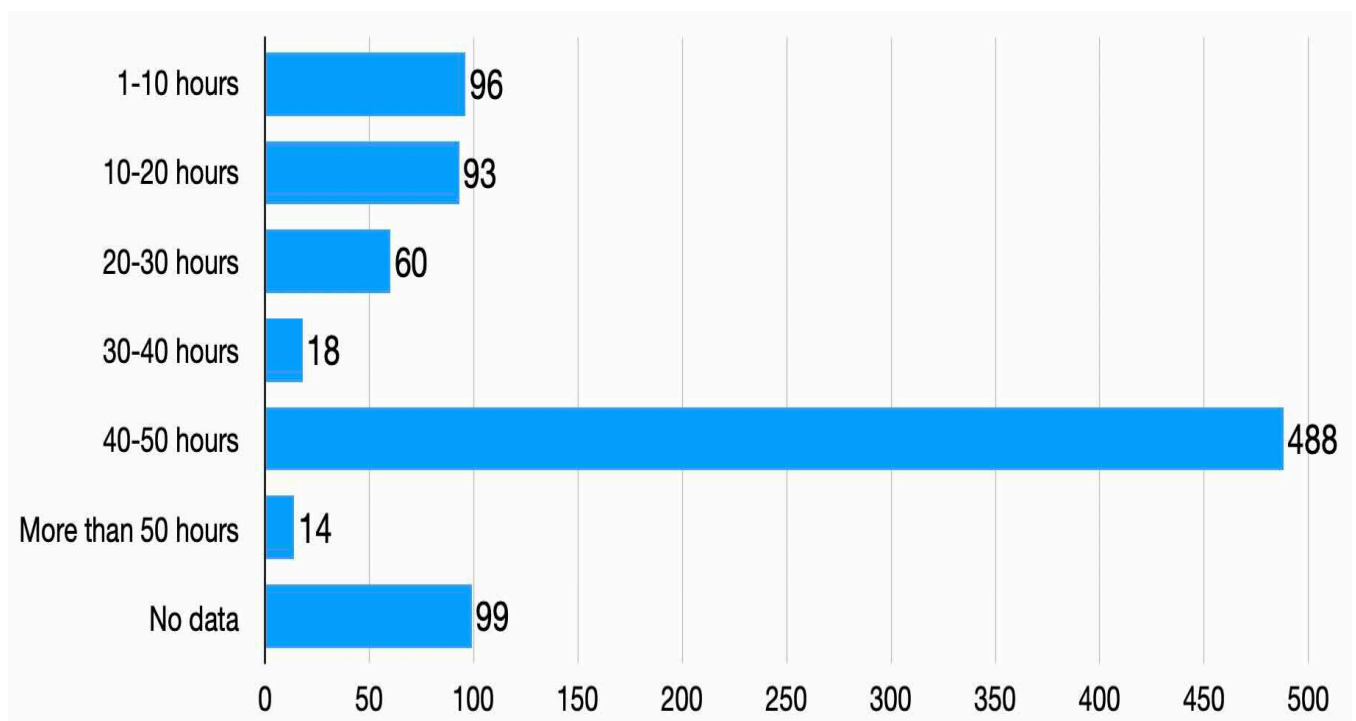
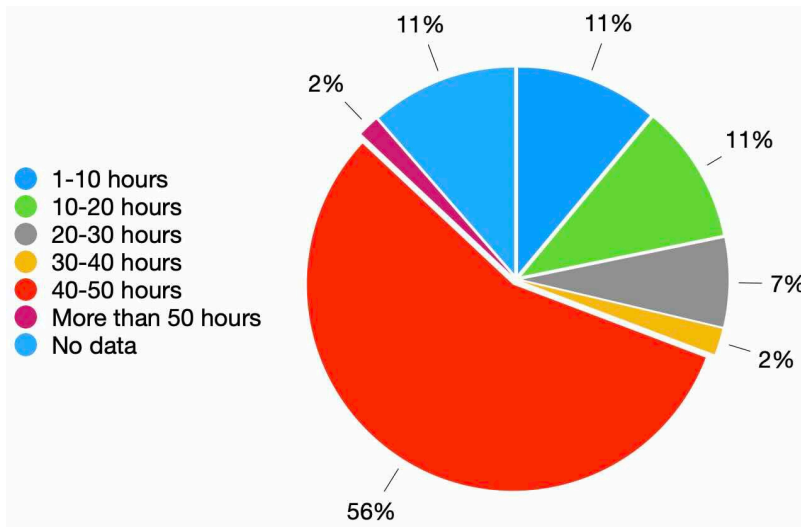


Figure 13. Percentage of MCs by duration.

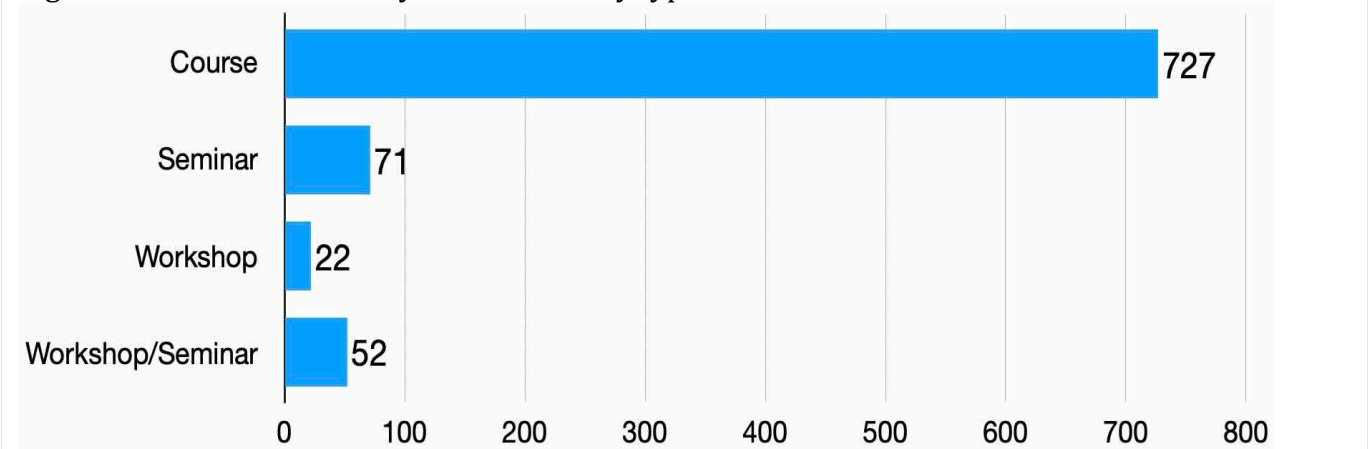


### *Micro-credential Course Types*

While the majority of MC offerings were described as "courses" (727), other types were also present, including seminars (71), workshops (22), or a combination of workshops and seminars. The prevalence of MCs described as "courses" is primarily due to the dominance of universities in offering MCs. This may also indicate a preference among learners for more structured learning formats or for official credentials from recognised institutions.

Workshops and seminars, on the other hand, are typically designed to address specific needs and are delivered in a timely fashion. While courses may be more aligned with long-term career development, workshops and seminars often focus on immediate skills enhancement or knowledge updates. There may be an opportunity for institutions to expand their offerings of shorter sessions in specific areas of need for practical skills, as expressed by companies and organisations in the region. See Figure 14 for more details.

Figure 14. Number of MCs by course delivery type.



### *Tuition or Fees*

The websites of most institutions (502) did not provide information on fees (57%). This indicates that a significant number of courses lack publicly available information regarding their costs. The absence of listed tuition fees poses a challenge for potential students seeking to make informed decisions about their education. The lack of cost information online could potentially be due to institutions' budgets not being finalized, rather than a lack of transparency. However, this absence of information could prove to be a barrier to access, as cost is a significant factor for most people when considering further education or training. Institutions should strive to be more transparent by providing comprehensive fee information for their MCs. This would not only improve transparency but also assist prospective students in their decision-making. See Figures 15 and 16.

Figure 15. Number of micro-courses according to tuition fees. (In USD equivalents)

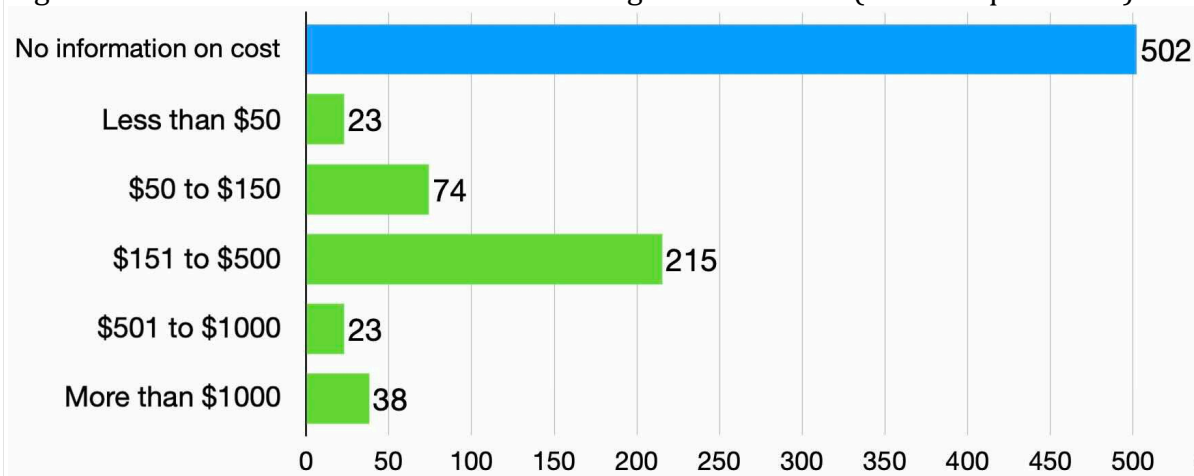
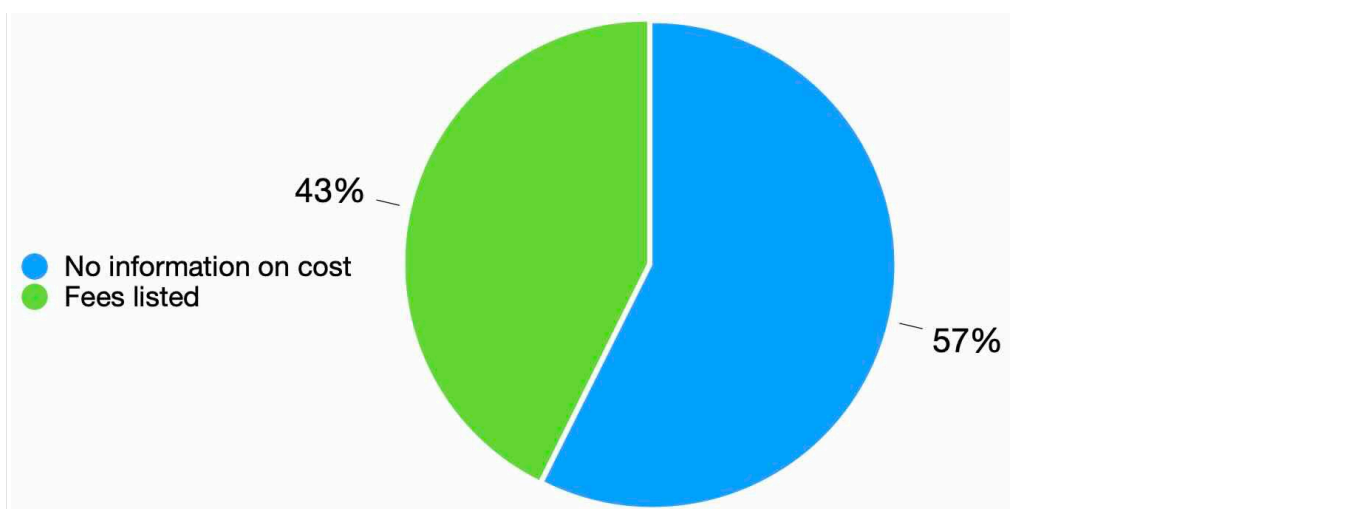


Figure 16: Percentage of MCs: Fees listed vs no information.



Among the MCs that displayed fees (43%), the fees are presented in US dollar equivalents due to the different currencies involved. More than half of these institutions charged fees ranging between USD151 and USD500, which aligns reasonably well with the data on course duration (56%), reflecting the cost of a one-semester course. The higher-cost courses are predominantly face-to-face, with some hybrid and online options available in technology-related fields. In contrast, the lower-cost courses consist of a mix of face-to-face and online courses of short duration (hours or a few days). Secondary-level courses for adults in Guyana are available in both face-to-face and online formats, costing USD 24 or less.

Excluding the no-cost MCs, the remaining data suggests that the majority of MCs offered (215 or 58%) fall into the mid-range price bracket (\$151 to \$500), indicating that institutions may be positioning these MCs as valuable yet still widely accessible. The next most significant category is the \$50 to \$150 range (74 or 20%), likely representing entry-level or introductory courses.

Notably, the combined percentage of courses priced above \$500 (6% + 10% = 16%) is almost as high as the \$50 to \$150 range, indicating a substantial market for premium, potentially more specialized, or advanced courses. MCs priced at less than \$50 constitute the smallest percentage, suggesting that very low-cost courses are less common. This scarcity could be due to the costs associated with developing and delivering these courses not being covered by such low fees.

Overall, the region offers a range of options from more affordable to premium offerings, potentially reflecting the diversity of course content, duration, and audiences. See Figures 17 and 18 for more details.

Figure 17 Number of MCs by tuition fees (no information MCs removed)

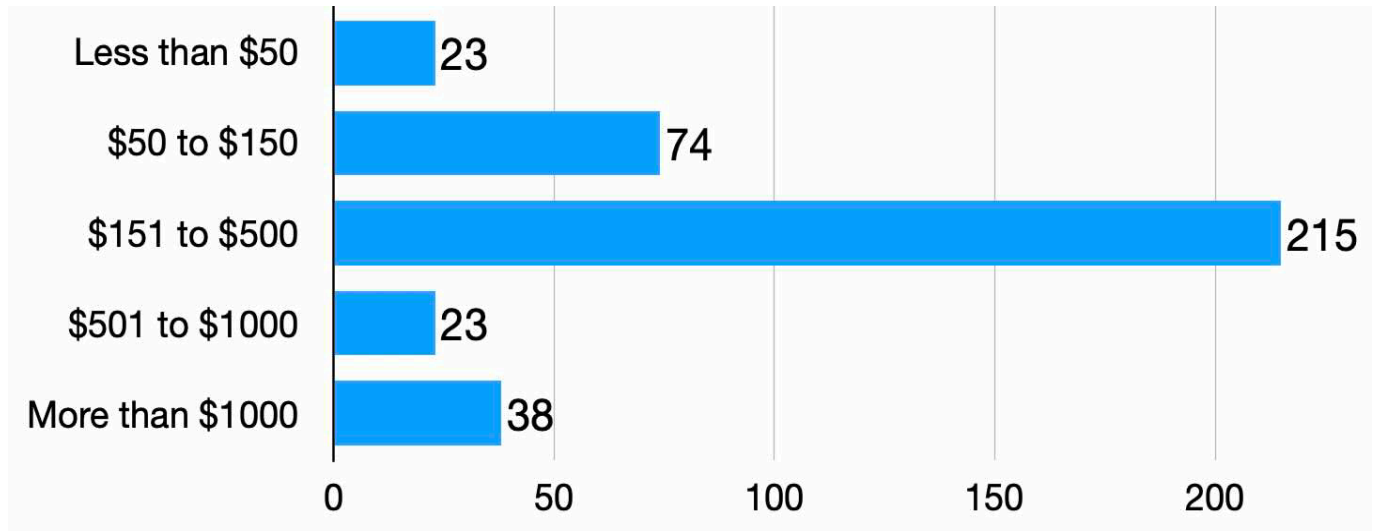
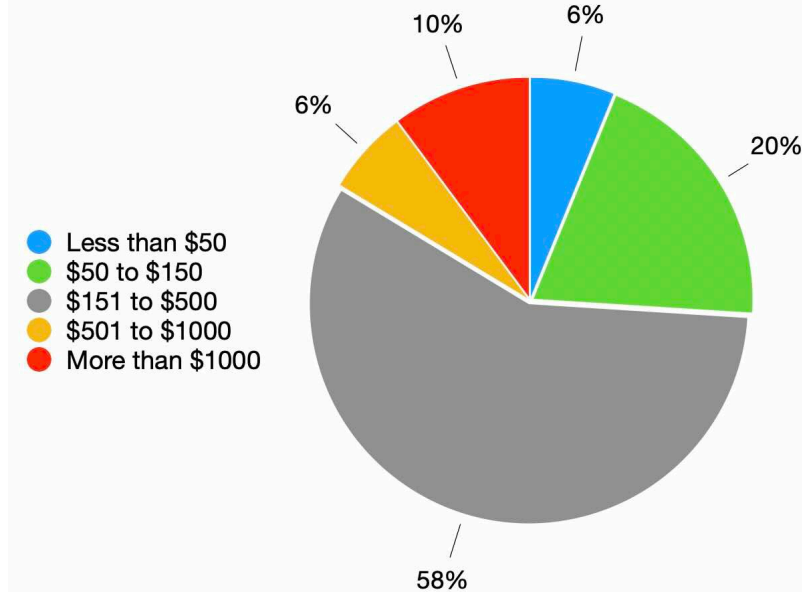


Figure 18: Percentage of MCs by tuition fees (no information MCs removed)



The statistics in Table 1 below provide a comprehensive view of the MCs fee structure across different institution types in the spreadsheet. Universities have the highest average fees, followed by colleges, private institutions, and private NGOs, which have the lowest. The Median fee is the midpoint in the fee distribution. The Mode fee indicates the most common institutional fee charged.

Table 1. A summary of the mean, median, and mode of the fees (in US\$ equivalents) for each type of institution:

<b>Institution Type</b>	<b>Mean Fee</b>	<b>Median Fee</b>	<b>Mode Fee</b>
College	\$324.27	\$272.50	\$224.00
Private	\$145.69	\$168.75	\$168.75
Private NGO	\$21.79	\$10.00	\$10.00
University	\$486.32	\$300.00	\$175.00

This is one-time data from March 2024, which references the fee structures across different institution types. There is a positive correlation between course duration and cost for the majority of MCs, with the exception of secondary level (low fees) and some high-value technology or business courses (high fees). No student data is included, so there can be no information on enrolments, retention, sex, age, educational levels and other factors influencing the success of students.

**The Stakeholder Survey**

As previously mentioned, the consultant created a survey that was circulated to both CXC® and COL. The survey underwent revisions based on feedback received. Subsequently, COL posted the survey on a website which it hosted. Approximately 300 stakeholders identified by CXC® staff received individual emails inviting them to participate in the survey, facilitated by the consultant (See Annex C). Ultimately, there were 157 responses, of which only 112 contained partial or complete data. The purpose of this survey was to gauge stakeholders' awareness and interest in, as well as their knowledge of and potential experience with, micro-courses, along with their expressed concerns.

A summary of the survey is provided below, and the full survey, including graphs and respondent comments, is available in Annex D for those interested in further details. The comments from respondents, which have been categorised and summarised for clarity, provide the most valuable insights. Annex E includes the survey spreadsheet as an attachment.

***Section: 1 Demographics***

**Q1** The survey primarily gathered responses from educational administrators and managers, who formed the majority of participants, followed by faculty and instructors. Most respondents were affiliated with governmental ministries, organisations, and tertiary institutions. A significant portion of the respondents were veteran employees with over 10 years of experience in the education sector, with a female majority reflecting regional employment trends in education. Notably, the response rate did not align with the population sizes of the countries in the region. For instance, Saint Lucia, despite being much smaller than Jamaica, had more respondents, while

Guyana garnered substantially more responses than other countries (5 questions. See graphs in Annex D).

## ***Section 2: Awareness of Micro-credentials***

**Q2-Q4** The majority of respondents were aware of micro-credentials even though this term is not commonly used to describe the credentials offered for short courses in the region (Q2). Most respondents (66%) also had some familiarity with micro-credentials, but the greater number of these were only somewhat or moderately familiar. At least a third noted that they had no awareness of MCs (Q3). No country stood out as being more or less familiar. (Q4) Unsurprisingly, the respondents indicated that they primarily learn about MCs through social networking. Professional associations and institutional websites are also important sources of information.

## ***Section 3: Experience with Micro-credentials***

**Q5 – Q7** Short courses in the Caribbean have been available for many years, predating the term "micro-credential," which has become familiar to educators. Half of the respondents reported having more than ten years of experience in this regard (Q5). While 32 respondents stated that they had never been involved in developing short courses or programs, a large majority had this experience, some going back many years (Q6). Unsurprisingly, the motivation for creating short courses was primarily top-down from the administration in order to meet industry demands and/or generate new revenues. Personal interest was also an important factor (Q7).

### ***Summary of comments (Q7)***

In response to participants struggling to complete a 12-hour course, the material was restructured into smaller, more manageable mini-courses, each ranging from five to 15 minutes. The experience in developing standards and guidelines for the quality assurance of micro-credential learning products informed this decision. Mini-courses were designed to address specific skills that are occasionally required on the job, such as learning new procedures or technologies, ultimately enhancing productivity.

**Q8** Overwhelmingly, the experience of practitioners has been positive. (80 responded YES)

**Q9 Describe your experience and the impact on your work (80 responded YES)**

### ***Summary of comments (Q9)***

#### ***Designing Micro-Courses***

According to respondents, engaging in the design and development of micro-credentials has provided significant professional growth and enhanced skill sets. Creating digital media courses tailored to specific age groups has allowed for curricula that can be both age-appropriate and relevant to immediate educational needs. Through this process, at least one respondent learned to quickly build knowledge on administrative and personal interests, making micro-courses

particularly pertinent and practical. From an organisational perspective, this experience has deepened an instructor's understanding of industry needs and strategies, fostering networking and improving the ability to identify and bridge skill gaps.

Other respondents incorporated micro-credentials into a thesis; proposed learning pathways for lecturers to acquire skills in virtual reality (VR); and facilitated the transition of college lecturers to VR, enhancing their teaching methods and improving student engagement. The practical aspects of the VR area were thoroughly covered, including hands-on training that was both extensive and highly focused.

Facilitating Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Programs for the Ministry of Education in Guyana has also been a transformative experience. These five-day programs, spanning 20 to 30 hours, were highly effective in addressing the day-to-day challenges faced by teachers. The training sessions were structured to provide practical solutions, ensuring that teachers could immediately apply what they learned to improve their teaching efficacy. This experience has reinforced the value of targeted, short-term professional development programs leading to micro-credentials.

#### *Learning in a Micro-Course*

Taking micro-credentials has been a boon for acquiring new skills and knowledge quickly and efficiently. These courses are designed to be short and to the point, providing immediate, actionable insights that can be implemented. They have also equipped instructors with skills applicable to both job-related tasks and external pursuits such as research and consulting. The best micro-credentials employ flexible delivery modes, robust assessment and evaluation methods, and are directly relevant to contemporary industry needs. They condense quality learning objectives into manageable, bite-size pieces, offering certification within a short period. This approach not only meets the needs of adult learners but also ensures immediate upskilling and improved output quality.

#### *Impact on Work*

Micro-credentials have provided just-in-time new skills that are essential for productivity and efficiency. When faced with the challenge of low completion rates for a 12-hour course, it was broken down into smaller five to 15-minute mini-courses, which significantly improved completion rates. The bite-sized nature of these courses made them easier to integrate into daily routines. Access to ongoing professional development and curriculum content through flexible delivery and assessment provisions has been immensely beneficial. These micro-credentials offered helpful, short-term training opportunities that increased productivity by addressing specific job-related needs, such as new technologies or procedures.

Developing a short course in Electrical Installation to upskill Electrical and Electronic Technology Teachers for the Revised curriculum in 2015 was another impactful initiative. From an organisational standpoint, this initiative helped in understanding the organisation's needs, facilitating networking and enhancing the ability to identify and address skill gaps. As both a beneficiary and benefactor, micro-credentialing has enabled the leveraging of the core competencies of various institutions on local, regional, and international levels.



### *Certification*

Certification through micro-credentials has played a critical role in professional development and mobility. This college offers customized training in areas such as pumps, valves, and home care nursing, benchmarked to international standards where possible. While these courses are certified by the college, there is a growing demand for international certification and foreign accreditation, underscoring the value of recognised credentials. Such certifications ensure that the skills and knowledge acquired are validated, enhancing their worth in the job market and contributing to professional advancement.

### *Implementation*

Standards and guidelines for micro-credential learning products accepted across the Jamaican education sector have informed the development of various types of micro-credentials, whether for upskilling, reskilling or as components of full qualifications. They aim to increase flexibility in integrating micro-credentials into existing programme portfolios, expanding capacity to meet industry needs. Additionally, the guidelines advance competency-based practices, ensuring that learning outcomes are met. This well-articulated framework for the design, development, and delivery of micro-credentials ensures they meet established standards, enhancing their credibility and effectiveness in professional development.

### *Neutral or Negative Experiences*

Despite the many benefits of micro-credentials, not everyone has engaged with them. Some individuals have never enrolled in or used micro-credentials, opting instead for other types of courses to enhance their knowledge. Others are not familiar with the term or have not researched it prior to completing surveys. This indicates a need for greater awareness and education about the advantages of micro-credentials. Despite these gaps, those who have utilized micro-credentials overwhelmingly report positive experiences.

### *Challenges and Considerations*

Micro-credentials can be seen as targeting a different market than the traditional one. This can present significant challenges. Intensive research and trials are required, which may not always be feasible with existing staff. This highlights the need for dedicated resources and strategic planning to effectively explore new market opportunities. Balancing the demands of current operations with the pursuit of new market segments necessitates careful consideration and often additional support to ensure successful implementation and outcomes.

**Q10** Even with no experience, respondents nevertheless showed a willingness to work with micro-credentials (32 respondents)

**Q11** Among the respondents a very large majority agreed or strongly agreed that micro-credentials could strongly enhance the quality of education

**Q12** The principal advantages of micro-credentials were recognised by a majority of the respondents, with the greatest agreement on course customisation and accessibility to learning materials.

**Q13** Respondents chose lack of awareness more than credential acceptance and resistance to change at their institutions as principal challenges. Quality concerns were also considered important. Alignment with goals was not considered to be as important; and concerns about the quality of the micro-credentials, as well as their alignment with organisational goals were less commonly expressed challenges.

#### ***Section 4: Micro-credential policies***

**Q14** Not surprisingly, because few institutions had policies or guidelines, so respondents were not aware of any.

---

#### ***Summary of comments (Q14)***

Currently, a committee is collaborating with a training agency on micro-credentialing initiatives. While some organisations do not enforce micro-credentialing, others do. Micro-credentials have been present since the introduction of CXC® exams. Although policies exist for developing programs, including short courses, the term "micro-credential" is not explicitly mentioned. There is an approved procedure for certified special and short courses. COL, in collaboration with national instructors, developed an education leadership program, which included three short courses delivered over nine weeks, equivalent to approximately 3.5 academic credits. This programme was part of a broader attempt to provide mass education for teachers. Recently, Standards and Guidelines for Micro-credentials and Digital Badges have been created, aligning them with a National Qualifications Framework. Additionally, UNESCO and its specialized institute, UNESCO IIEP, have published policy guides on micro-credentials, offering blueprints for policy development and action.

**Q15** The majority of respondents (72%) felt that micro-credentials could be effective, with only one respondent finding that they were ineffective.

**Q16** Opinions on expanding the use of micro-credentials in your institution or organization

#### ***Summary of comments Q16***

##### ***Awareness and Promotion***

Raising awareness about the value and importance of micro-credentials is crucial. Currently, the focus should be on initiating efforts rather than expanding existing ones. It is essential to begin sensitizing educators about the benefits of micro-credential programs, combining awareness initiatives with pilot programs and staggered rollouts for optimal impact. Government involvement is necessary to promote micro-credentialing, emphasizing its validity, application, and acceptance both locally and internationally across all programs, including the visual and

performing arts. Enhancing communication with stakeholders about the quality, relevance, and practical benefits of micro-credentials is also vital. Ensuring greater awareness and access to these programs is vital for their success.

Efforts should be directed towards improving public awareness through social media, schools, and stakeholders, utilizing forums, seminars, workshops, and brochures. It is important to educate employees and management about micro-credentials, highlighting their value for professional development and career growth. Increasing communication with potential clients can create demand, justifying the expansion of these courses, especially in private sector colleges.

### *Incentives and Support*

Providing a robust support system and incentives for individuals pursuing micro-credentials is essential. This includes allocating time for teachers to complete courses and balancing institutional responsibilities. Implementing a reward system for completing micro-credentials, such as a point system for recognised certifications, can motivate individuals. Linking micro-credentials to opportunities for advancement, recognition, or benefits like sabbaticals and sponsored trips can further encourage participation. Institutions could also offer employees the opportunity to do short online courses.

### *Training and Implementation*

Integrating micro-credentials within existing programs is crucial for their success. Incentives like time off for face-to-face events and workshops on the benefits of micro-credentials can motivate participation. Establishing committees to design courses and a dedicated unit for producing micro-credentials is necessary. Training faculty, staff, and administrators on the development and implementation of micro-credentials is essential. Aligning micro-credentials with specific industry skills and offering them to local and regional business employees can enhance their relevance. Promoting micro-credentials early and ensuring their quick acceptance is important for their widespread adoption.

### *Policy*

Developing clear policies for the development and quality assurance of micro-credentials within existing guidelines is essential. Establishing policies for the acceptance of micro-credentials in promotions and career advancements can encourage their uptake. These policies should outline the rules and guidelines for micro-credentialing, ensuring their integration into the broader educational framework.

### *Access to Learning*

Improving accessibility and awareness of programs, content, and qualified coaches is called for. Addressing barriers to accessing these programs, especially for top management, by demonstrating financial feasibility and cross-border benefits, can increase participation

### *Cost*

Acknowledging the high costs of hiring external coaches is important, as it can make programs less attainable for most individuals. Demonstrating the financial feasibility of these programs, especially to top management, can help in securing necessary resources.

### *Other Comments*

Creating an organisation to provide micro-credential workers on a stipend, like internship programs, can ensure competency and facilitate job placements. Significant effort is required to implement these programs, including orientation workshops for better understanding. Institutions could consider leveraging past models and splitting syllabi into parts to offer continual certification opportunities. Ensuring micro-credentials are recognised in appointments and promotions by providing credits for additional points can encourage participation. Including micro-credentials as part of the criteria for job evaluations and promotions can further validate their importance.

**Q17** Respondents, by a wide margin, agreed that their institutional leaders are very supportive of micro-credentials

**Q18** In contrast to the belief in the support that institutional leadership has for micro-credentials, few institutions have provided training. Unsurprisingly, the countries with the most respondents also show the most respondents who have received training in micro-credentials.

### **19. If yes, how would you rate the effectiveness of the training or support provided?**

Of the fifteen respondents who received training, 80% found it effective, with only one person believing that their training was ineffective.

---

## **Section 5: Suggestions and Feedback from Respondents**

### *Survey of comments Q20*

Micro-credentials offer significant benefits for the Caribbean region by providing targeted, specific skill sets that improve employee productivity. These certifications enable workers to quickly gain relevant skills without the need for extensive in-house training, thereby offering an economic advantage to businesses. Companies can save on training costs while ensuring their employees are up-to-date with the latest industry standards and practices. Promoting micro-credentials as a cost-effective solution can help businesses recognise their value in maintaining a competitive edge in the market.

### *Awareness Campaign*

A regional awareness campaign could highlight the value and utility of micro-credentials. By leveraging marketing strategies, information sessions, and success stories, such a campaign can underscore the advantages of micro-credentials for career advancement and lifelong learning. Sharing real-life examples of individuals who have benefited from these certifications could be used to inspire others to pursue similar pathways, ultimately creating a more skilled and adaptable workforce.

### *Increased Publicity of Its Credentials*

Enhancing the publicity of micro-credentials involves strategic efforts to make their value widely recognised throughout the region. This can include publishing articles in industry journals, presenting at conferences, and partnering with professional associations. By increasing visibility, these credentials can become more mainstream, leading to greater acceptance and integration within various industries.

### *Advertisements and Marketing*

Utilising regional advertisements and marketing, particularly through influencers and social media, can also be used to significantly boost the reach and appeal of micro-credentials. Influencers can share their positive experiences and success stories, while targeted ads can reach potential learners where they spend their time online. Social media platforms provide an interactive space to engage with audiences, answer questions, and build a community around micro-credentialing.

### *Student Engagement and Feedback Sessions*

Engaging students through feedback sessions is essential for understanding their needs and improving the micro-credentialing process in participating countries. These sessions can provide insights into what students find valuable and what areas need enhancement. By involving students in the development and refinement of these programs, educational institutions can ensure that the offerings remain relevant and effective.

### *Stakeholder Collaboration*

Engaging key stakeholders, including educational institutions, employers, and government bodies, is critical to ensure that micro-credentials meet regional labour market needs and are recognised as valid qualifications. Collaboration can help align these programs with industry standards and ensure that they are valued by employers. Stakeholders can work together to create a supportive standards-based ecosystem that promotes the adoption and success of micro-credentials enabling regional labour mobility.

### *Need for Upskilling and Reskilling*

Given the rapid pace of change in the modern workforce, there is an even greater need for upskilling and reskilling. Micro-skilling offers new avenues for individuals and organisations to adapt and develop resilience in the face of change. These flexible learning opportunities enable workers to stay current with emerging trends and technologies, ensuring they remain competitive and capable in their roles.

### *Educate, Train, and Promote*

Education and training are fundamental to promoting the benefits of micro-credentials. Conducting region-wide public education initiatives, such as webinars and professional development sessions, can spread awareness and understanding. Training sessions with regional bodies and institutions can help implement these programs effectively. Change management initiatives can ensure that new elements are integrated into existing systems, encouraging participants to apply what they have learned.

### *Public Education and Training*

Webinars, professional development sessions and other strategies with key educational personnel can play a pivotal role in public education and training. These platforms provide a space for detailed discussions on the benefits of micro-credentials, best practices for implementation, and success stories. Sharing this knowledge can drive interest and participation in micro-credential programs.

### *Online Course Availability*

Increasing the availability of online courses can make micro-credentials more regionally accessible to a broader audience. Online platforms offer flexibility for learners to study at their own pace and from any location. This accessibility is especially important for those balancing work, family, and other commitments, making it easier for them to pursue further education and skill development.

### *Strategic Communication*

Strategic communication of related concepts and stakeholder feedback via social media and websites can enhance the promotion of micro-credentials. By maintaining a consistent and informative online presence, educational institutions and organisations can keep potential learners informed and engaged. Feedback mechanisms can also help continuously improve the offerings and address any concerns or suggestions from stakeholders.

### *Alignment with Compensation*

Aligning micro-credentials with compensation rates involves establishing a framework that recognises and rewards the successful completion of these certifications at a regional level. Awareness campaigns and marketing strategies are essential to communicate the value of micro-credentials in terms of financial and career growth. This alignment can incentivize workers to pursue these qualifications, knowing that their efforts will be financially acknowledged.

### *Financial Incentives*

Offering financial incentives, such as scholarships, grants, or reduced tuition fees, can encourage enrolment in micro-courses, particularly among underrepresented groups. These incentives make education more accessible and attractive, helping to bridge the gap between skilled labour demands and the available workforce.

### *Integration with Traditional Degrees*

Creating regionally accredited learning pathways that allow micro-credentials to ladder towards traditional degrees can enhance the appeal of micro-credentials. Such regional integration provides a clear and progressive educational trajectory for students, making it easier for them to pursue higher qualifications while gaining practical skills along the way.

### *Promotion and Endorsement by Institutions*

Leading regional institutions need to endorse and promote micro-credentials to build confidence among employers and training institutions. Greater sensitisation and forums involving post-secondary and TVET institutions can foster broader acceptance. Partnerships with renowned regional and international institutions can further legitimize these certifications, making public buy-in more achievable.

### *Linkages with Renowned Institutions*

Forming linkages with renowned regional and international institutions can accelerate the acceptance of micro-credentials. If local institutions offer these programs in collaboration with prestigious partners, it lends credibility and increases their perceived value. This approach can also facilitate the transfer of best practices and standards, enhancing the overall quality of the offerings.

### *Foundation for Other Courses*

Making micro-credentials a foundation for programmes and offering credits for them at regional universities and colleges can encourage more learners to enrol. This strategy can not only add value to the credentials themselves but also create a seamless educational pathway for students to advance their knowledge and careers.

### *Employer Acceptance*

There is little understanding of MCs among regional employers, so improving the acceptance of micro-credentials among them is crucial. If employers recognise and value these certifications in their hiring and employee development processes, it will drive greater interest and participation. Demonstrating the practical benefits of micro-credentials in real-world job performance can help achieve this acceptance.

### *Role of Accreditation Bodies*

Regional and national quality assurance and accreditation bodies should play a more active role in recognizing and incorporating micro-credentials into the academic stream. Learning from successful models in Europe and North America can provide valuable insights. Standardizing these credentials across the region can ensure their portability and acceptance, facilitating the mobility of learners.

### *Regional Policy and Market Strategy*

Developing a regional policy document and market strategy for micro-credentials can provide a clear framework for implementation. Training stakeholders on these policies and promoting them widely can help ensure consistent standards and practices across institutions and employers.

### *Quality Assurance Structures*

Establishing robust quality assurance structures, recognition agreements, and trust networks is essential for the credibility and acceptance of micro-credentials. These mechanisms ensure that the credentials are respected and valued across different sectors and regions, promoting learner mobility and confidence in the qualifications.

### *Resource and Accessibility Considerations*

Ensuring access to the internet and suitable devices is critical for the successful completion of micro-credential courses. Investments in regional infrastructure and resources can bridge the digital divide, making these learning opportunities accessible to a wider audience. Providing training on navigating learning resources and applications can also support learners in their educational journey.

### *Budgeting for Promotion*

Increased budgeting for the promotion and advancement of micro-credentials is necessary. Allocating funds for marketing, outreach, and resource development can enhance awareness and participation. Making these programs affordable and accessible to a diverse population ensures that more people can benefit from them.

### *Affordability and Accessibility*

Providing affordable and accessible modes of acquiring micro-credentials can meet the needs of a wide spectrum of people across the region. Offering flexible payment options, subsidies, or sliding scale fees can remove financial barriers, allowing more individuals to pursue these valuable qualifications.

### *Multi-Stakeholder Approach*

A multi-stakeholder approach to public education and awareness is essential for the effective design and delivery of micro-credential content in the participating countries. Engaging various levels of the educational ecosystem, from policymakers to industry partners, ensures that programs fill existing and future knowledge gaps. Collaboration with industry and educational institutions can create flexible learning pathways and meet competency requirements, making the experience rewarding for all parties involved.

### *Stakeholder Buy-In*

Ensuring that all key stakeholders buy-in and accept their roles is crucial for a smooth transition to the use of micro-credentials. This collaborative effort can align goals, resources, and expectations, fostering a supportive environment for learners and enhancing the overall success of these programs

## **Key Observations**

This investigation demonstrated the importance of a multifaceted approach. Key observations emphasize the need for targeted educational efforts, clear communication, and ongoing support. The participatory nature of the process, from web searches and document examination to the survey, ensured that any resulting MC initiative will be well-informed, more widely accepted, and aligned with the unique needs and challenges not only of CXC® but of the Commonwealth Caribbean educational ministries. Continuous evaluation and adaptation will be crucial for the successful acceptance, implementation, and sustained impact of the introduction of an MC system in the region.



## Recommendations

The present offering of MCs by institutions around the Caribbean points to the need for a regional MC initiative, including an MC Registry. This need is past urgent. Employers, educational institutions and training organisations are already fully engaged. However, there is no clear agency or frame of reference available to validate or check the authenticity of the MCs that are on offer. Human resource professionals and employers, in general, need to rely on a recognised authority to help them streamline the process of assessing the credibility of the MCs awarded.

Stakeholders should consider supporting the recommendations of Dr Eduardo Ali of CXC® and Dr Sanjaya Mishra of the Commonwealth of Learning for a micro-credential framework, a federated registry of micro-credentials, and local capacities, a micro-credentialing system as an educational subsystem within the CXC® as a Qualifications Management Framework (QMF) (See Ali, 2023 and Mishra, 2022). The CARICOM Qualifications Framework (CQF) should include a micro-credential framework aligned to it for the region's benefit, including a clear strategic roadmap for ensuring that there is a coordinated strategy for education ministries to invest in, develop and regulate MCs.

The education and training ecosystem (secondary, TVET and tertiary) needs standardization, establishing a credit basis for MCs that articulates with the CQF. This must include input from employers, secondary educators, training providers, and government representatives. A regional policy on MCs could provide guidance for education and employment (areas most affected by MCs), advancement, lifelong learning, professional development, skills upgrading and retooling qualifications.

Moreover, a re-examination of current regional qualification frameworks should be undertaken and possibly collapsed into ONE common framework that includes MCs. Or MCs and MC standards could be integrated into the various existing frameworks. When this process is completed, the frameworks can be rebranded and promoted to reduce misperceptions and create greater awareness.

The roadmap should place greater emphasis on changing negative perspectives, including misnomers on the value of MCs. Ensuring that learning design and QA standards are implemented should help alleviate misperceptions. The CXC® MC System document (Ali, 2023) addresses regional standards to be considered from secondary to post-secondary education sectors and that these can be linked to some of the standards proposed or endorsed by national QA bodies such as the University Council of Jamaica and the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago.

There are defined pathways for capacity building in the education, training and employment sectors. They can be linked to the other phases of the project for the Micro-credential Framework of the Caribbean designed by CXC® and COL. The objective is to ensure that educational and training institutions can competently design and offer MCs that are regulated. In addition, employers' requirements for occupations/jobs skills can be addressed by institutions with MCs to engage learners in just-in-time upskilling, retooling and training for both employees and potential

employees. These MCs should be designed as stand-alone credentials for employability. Educational and personal contexts should determine whether they are also stackable, or not.

Institutional and private sector supporters of the MC initiative must ensure that this framework provides learners with transferable and stackable pathways to more advanced certificates, diplomas and degrees using efficient and effective assessment strategies including PLAR.

### *Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain and Open Educational Resources*

This report has focused on MCs and their relevance for education in the Commonwealth Caribbean. Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain and OER were not the subjects of this investigation, but the affordances of these new technologies must be taken full advantage of in supporting students through AI mentorship and for instructional designers using AI for developing lessons, courses and programmes using MCs. These technologies can significantly increase efficiencies in the development and distribution of lessons and assessments, saving time and proving to be cost-effective.

AI can play a crucial role in enhancing the creation, effectiveness, accessibility, and scalability of MCs. The output of all AI-powered content is also in the public domain in most common law jurisdictions, so it can play a crucial role in the production of scalable, cost-effective OER lessons and full courses, including adaptive assessments. Additionally, AI can be used to focus on learner needs and is available 24/7. Data on student retention can also be analysed by AI, and combined with blockchain, it can be used to verify MCs.

The QMF is powered by blockchain, enabling the storage and dissemination of micro-credentials on a global scale. The transactions are secured with encryption, verified, and recorded by the network nodes. The original records cannot be deleted or changed, and all transactions can be easily traced as each new block in the chain is time-stamped. Because the blockchain is distributed, no single node holds all the information, so data loss is not possible. Thus, authentication can be verified with enhanced performance and reliable scalability. Blockchain can be used by both institutions and students to track their progress and their earned credentials while ensuring privacy.

The use of Open Educational Resources in the implementation of MCs should be maximized. MCs can be assembled from freely available openly licensed content that can be reused, revised, remixed, redistributed and retained. For many subjects, course development is not necessary, OER can be assembled and adapted. They can also be used in conjunction with AI produced lessons that are in the public domain. The UNESCO and COL recommendation supports the use of the most open licence. CC-BY (Creative Commons – Attribution 4.0 International) should be the default licence of all MC content. In addition, the maximum use of fair dealing rights should play an important role in MC implementation as there is much educational content freely available online that can be legally accessed for educational and research purposes through linking to websites.

An MC initiative could be undertaken based on existing short courses, especially those based on the use of OER. Collaboration with administrators and faculty across the region is possible using available or new online networks, including webinars and face-to-face meetings. Such collaborations can effectively ensure acceptance with the inclusion of diverse perspectives. Open and transparent processes can foster continuity, increasing trust and acceptance among all participants.

## **Summary**

CXC®, in collaboration with COL, has concluded a comprehensive investigation into understanding the state of the art in MC practice within the region and the possible affordances and challenges of MC implementation. This report outlines the journey from the initial stages, involving document examination and an online survey that has shed light on the need for an MC system with standards acceptable by the different states in the region.

The methodology employed, including the review of existing MC documents, government strategic plans, data on short courses, and an online survey revealed a comprehensive understanding of the current MC landscape in the Commonwealth Caribbean region. The investigation, through various stages of the process, facilitated the identification of affordances and challenges, which can be used for the collaborative shaping of regional MC initiatives based on common standards and credit acceptance, enabling student and worker mobility throughout the region.

COL's support exemplifies the commitment of this international organisation to the promotion of MCs for quality teaching and learning. The collaboration between COL and CXC® as detailed in this report, can serve as a model for institutions seeking to implement MC credentials internationally.

In conclusion, this investigation, as detailed in this report, not only supports agreement on a commitment to MC expansion but also provides valuable insights and a potential model for institutions and policymakers worldwide aiming to embrace the principles of student and workforce mobility, affordability, and innovation in education. This report can serve as a resource for the broader academic community, contributing to the global discourse on shaping effective MC interventions.

## Documents Consulted

- Ali, E. R. (2023, December 20). *A Position Paper for Establishing a CXC® Micro-credentialing system (MCS) [DO NOT SHARE]*. CXC® Caribbean Examinations Council.
- Ali, E. (2024, March 4). *Tables and Definitions*.
- Ashizawa, S., Ziguras, C., & Yonezawa, A. (2024, February 20). Convergence or fragmentation? Recent developments in recognition of microcredentials and their impact on higher education in Asia and the Pacific. *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*.  
<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JICE-11-2023-0031/full/pdf?title=convergence-or-fragmentation-recent-developments-in-recognition-of-microcredentials-and-their-impact-on-higher-education-in-asia-and-the-pacific>
- British Council. (n. d.). *National STEAM Education Report Jamaica: Towards Developing a Strong STEAM Ecosystem* <https://www.net.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/British-Council-STEAM-Education-Report-October-2022.pdf>
- Brown, M., McGreal, R., & Peters, M. (2023). A Strategic Institutional Response to Micro-Credentials: Key Questions for Educational Leaders. *Journal of Interactive Media in Education*, 7(1), 1 - 17.  
<https://jime.open.ac.uk/articles/10.5334/jime.801>
- Business Development Unit. (2024). *Providing Personalized Learning Pathways*. University of The West Indies St. Augustine Campus.  
[https://sta.uwi.edu/fss/sites/default/files/fss/images/BDU%20Corporate%20Brochure%20and%20Offerings%202023\\_compressed.pdf](https://sta.uwi.edu/fss/sites/default/files/fss/images/BDU%20Corporate%20Brochure%20and%20Offerings%202023_compressed.pdf)
- Commonwealth of Learning. (2023, May 31). *COL commences building a series of MOOCs with UTT*.  
<https://www.col.org/news/col-commences-building-a-series-of-moocs-with-utt/>
- Commonwealth of Learning. (2024, January 16). *COL and the Caribbean Examinations Council sign Memorandum of Understanding*. <https://www.col.org/news/col-and-the-caribbean-examinations-council-sign-memorandum-of-understanding/>
- Commonwealth of Learning. (2024, March 14). *Supporting skills training for young men and boys in Jamaica*. Author. <https://www.col.org/news/supporting-skills-training-for-young-men-and-boys-in-jamaica/>
- Commonwealth of Learning. (2024, March 15). *Antigua and Barbuda's Education Minister prioritises teacher development*. Author. <https://www.col.org/news/antigua-and-barbudas-education-minister-prioritises-teacher-development/>

- CXC®. (n. d.). *Caribbean Vocational Qualification: Requirements and Guidelines for School Administrators and Principals*. <https://moey.gov.jm/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CVQ-handbook.pdf>
- CXC®. (n. d.). *The Roles of Each Partner in the CV Award*. <https://www.CXC®.org/SiteAssets/CVQ/cvq-the-roles-of-each-partner-in-the-cvq-award.pdf>
- Dyer, R. A. D. (2014). Exploring the relevancy of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). A Caribbean University Approach. *Information Resources Management Journal (IRMJ), Special Issue on MOOCs: the challenge of the future*, 27(2). <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/80774031.pdf>
- Kazin, C., & Clerkin, K. M. (2018, September). The potential and limitations of microcredentials. *Service Member Opportunity Colleges*. [https://supportsystem.livehelpnow.net/resources/23351/Potential%20and%20Limitations%20of%20Microcredentials%20FINAL\\_SEPT%202018.pdf](https://supportsystem.livehelpnow.net/resources/23351/Potential%20and%20Limitations%20of%20Microcredentials%20FINAL_SEPT%202018.pdf)
- Keevy, J. (2020). (Un)recognising learning in our digital age. . *Working Paper*. [https://www.academia.edu/41515579/Un\\_recognising\\_learning\\_in\\_our\\_digital\\_age\\_Working\\_Draft](https://www.academia.edu/41515579/Un_recognising_learning_in_our_digital_age_Working_Draft)
- Maggioncalda, J. (2024, March 27). Guyana Launches National Training Initiative with Coursera to Empower Every Guyanese Citizen and Public Sector Employee with In-Demand Skills. *Coursera Blog*. <https://blog.coursera.org/guyana-launches-national-training-initiative-with-coursera-to-empower-every-guyanese-citizen-and-public-sector-employee-with-in-demand-skills/>
- McGreal, R., Mackintosh, W., & Lane, D. (2023). OER-based Online Micro-courses. *Journal of Open, Flexible and Distance Learning*, 27(1). <https://www.jofdl.nz/index.php/JOFDL/article/view/599>
- Ministry of Education. (2021). *Guyana Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2021- 2025* <https://education.gov.gy/en/index.php/policies/sector-plan/4212-esp-2021-2025#:~:text=The%20Guyana%20%22Education%20Strategic%20Plan,and%20lifelong%20learning%20for%20all>
- Ministry of Education. (2023, March). *Education Policy Trinidad and Tobago* <https://storage.moe.gov.tt/wpdevelopment/2023/09/Education-Policy-2023-2027.pdf>
- Ministry of Education. (n. d.). *Guyana National Report on Technical and Vocational Education and Training(TVET)* [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/---sro-port\\_of\\_spain/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_306331.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/---sro-port_of_spain/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_306331.pdf)
- Ministry of Education Culture Science Technology. (2021). *Belize Education Sector Plan 2021-2025: Making Education Work* <https://www.mocst.gov.bz/belize-education-sector-plan-2021-2025/>

- Ministry of Education Technological & Vocational Training. (2023 October 30)). *Reimagining Education in Barbados* <https://mrd.gov.bb/attachments/Education%20Reform-FINAL-WA.pdf>
- Mishra, S. (2022 (November 11)). *Flexible Learning in a Digital Age: Towards a Micro-credential Framework* 2nd Ministerial Summit of the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC®), Virtual Presentation, St George's, Grenada. <https://oasis.col.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/91025552-903f-4756-92a4-d153e4eb5f52/content>
- National External Quality Assurance Agency. (2023, November 29). *Launch of the Standards and Guidelines for Micro-Credentials*. University Council of Jamaica. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V58rMrNE1Hg>
- National Training Agency. (2014, July 9). *NTA Strategic Plan* <https://www.grenadanta.gd/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/PRESENTATION-NTA-Strategic-Plan-v1.0.pdf>
- OECD. (2021). *OECD Educational Policy Perspectives* <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/f14ef041-en.pdf?expires=1707938566&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=BB0CB5A3D433391FDB71B06724DF3BB3>
- Ralston, S. J. (2021). Higher Education's microcredentialing craze: a postdigital-Deweyan critique. *Postdigital Science and Education*, 2021(3), 83 - 101. . <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-020-00121-8>
- Rossiter, D., & Tynan, B. (2019). *Designing and Implementing Micro-Credentials: A Guide for Practitioners* [http://hdl.handle.net/11599/3279]. Commonwealth of Learning. <https://oasis.col.org/items/e2d0be25-cbbb-441f-b431-42f74f715532>
- St. Christopher and Nevis Accreditation Board Secretariat. (2015). *National Qualifications Framework for St. Kitts and Nevis (SKN-NQF) and A Unified System of Credits*
- Teachonline.ca. (2024, June 5). *Navigating the Challenges of Micro-Credentials*. Contact North/Contact Nord, <https://teachonline.ca/tools-trends/navigating-challenges-micro-credentials>
- The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago. (2022, May). *Regulation of Micro-Credentials in Trinidad and Tobago: A Proposal* [https://www.actt.org.tt/images/documents/Consultations/2022/Standards\\_Micro-credentials.pdf](https://www.actt.org.tt/images/documents/Consultations/2022/Standards_Micro-credentials.pdf)
- The Grenada National Accreditation Board. (n. d.). *Guidelines for Short Course Accreditation*. Author. <https://accreditation.gd/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Guidelines-for-Short-Course-Accreditation.pdf>
- The Jamaica Education Transformation Commission. (2021, September). *The Reform of Education in Jamaica, 2021 [Disclaimer: This is a working report and is not for citation without permission until the final*

version is presented.] <https://nationwideradiojm.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2021-8-JETC-Patterson-Report.pdf>

The University Council of Jamaica. (n. d.). *Guidelines for the Accreditation of Short Courses*. Author. <https://www.actt.org.tt/images/documents/Guidelines%20for%20the%20Accreditation%20of%20Short%20Courses.pdf>

Transnational Qualifications Framework Management Committee. (2015). *Transnational qualifications framework for the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth*. Commonwealth of Learning. <https://doi.org/http://hdl.handle.net/11599/501>

UNESCO. (2019). *Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education*. Author. <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/global-convention-recognition-qualifications-concerning-higher-education?hub=66535>

UNESCO. (2020, May). *TVET Country Profile: Grenada*. UNESDOC Digital Library. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373701>

UNESCO. (2022). *Towards a Common Definition of Micro-Credentials*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381668#:~:text=A%20micro%2Dcredential%3A%20%E2%80%A2%20Is,awarded%20by%20a%20trusted%20provider.>

UNESCO Education Sector. (2018). *Digital Credentialing: Implications for the recognition of learning across borders*. UNESCO. <https://oer4nosp.col.org/id/eprint/16/1/264428eng.pdf>

University Council of Jamaica. (2024, March 12). *Micro-credentials Workshop*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XO4i6gYVq7s>

UWI Open Campus. (2017, June 1). *Continuing & Professional Education Framework*

UWI St Augustine. *Microcredentials Accelerator Path Programme*. <https://sta.uwi.edu/fss/microcredentials-accelerator-path-programme-school-education-bundle>

Wheelahan, L., & Moddie, G. (2021, April 23). Analysing micro-credentials in higher education: a Bernsteinian analysis. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 53(2). <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00220272.2021.1887358>

## **Annex A: Microcredentials List**

Microcredentials CXC®.xlsx (Not available for circulation.)



## Annex B. Letter to Participants



COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING

April 10, 2024

### Micro-credentials Awareness and Usage Survey

President CANQATE

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC®) are commissioning a report on micro-credentials (MCs) in the Caribbean region. CXC® and COL support this survey to aid in regional educational planning.

We have completed a comprehensive review of internal documents related to MC and institutional policies, including relevant reports, strategic plans, etc.; these along with external MC policies and relevant papers. From this exercise we have created a list of questions that have been vetted by COL and CXC®. They are intended to provide input on stakeholder views for a report on MCs later in the year.

These questions are to be answered candidly to the best of your knowledge and are not to be considered judiciously. If any question is not applicable, it is fine to so indicate with N/A. The purpose of these questions is to discern the attitudes, experiences, and other information on short courses and MCs in the Caribbean region. The responses from interviewees will be aggregated. COL and CMC personnel will be privy to this report and to the raw data/responses. Individual responses will remain confidential. This evaluation is an exercise supported by COL and CXC® as part of informing/conceptualising issues around MC in the Caribbean region.

In order to expedite the evaluation, we would respectfully request that you respond to the questions by **April 30**. It should not take you more than fifteen minutes to complete the survey. If you need clarifications, please follow up directly with me.

Please find the questionnaire at the following link: XXX

Thank you for your participation.

---

## Annex C: Stakeholder Survey

### Survey Title: Micro-credentials Awareness and Usage Survey

Micro-credentials are certifications or attestations for short, compact learning experiences that help learners develop in-demand competencies and skills. These short courses can also be referred to as workshops, seminars, or lectures. They include authentic assessments of learner knowledge and competencies that can mirror real workplace tasks so that the learning can be applied right away. Micro-credentials are digital verifications of these skills acquired by learners on completion of short courses ranging from a few hours to 45 hours and sometimes longer.

Introduction: Thank you for participating in our survey. The purpose of this survey is to understand your awareness of and experience with micro-credentials and micro-courses in higher education in the Caribbean region. Your insights will contribute to understanding the perspectives of stakeholders towards micro-credentials. Your responses will help us improve and tailor our offerings to better meet the needs of institutions and other stakeholders in the region. This survey should take less than 30 minutes to complete. Please complete the survey by May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

#### Section 1: Demographic Information

##### 1.1. Role:

- Administrator
- Manager
- Academic/Faculty
- Teacher/Instructor
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

##### 1.2. Organisation:

- University
- College
- Secondary
- Private institution
- Professional Association
- Business
- Regional organisation
- \* Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

##### 1.3. Years of Experience in the organisation.

- \* Less than 5 years
- \* 5-10 years
- \* 11-20 years

\* More than 20 years

1.4 Gender:

\*Male          \*Female          \*Prefer not to say

1.5 Country of residence:

---

## **Section 2: Awareness of Micro-credentials**

1. Have you heard of micro-credentials before taking this survey?

\* Yes          \* No

2. How would you rate your familiarity with micro-credentials?

- \* Not familiar at all
- \* Somewhat familiar
- \* Moderately familiar
- \* Very familiar
- \* Extremely familiar

5. What sources do you use to learn about new educational opportunities? (Check all that apply)

- University/College websites
  - Professional Association
  - Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)
  - Online forums or communities
  - Word of mouth
  - News articles or blogs
  - Other, please specify:
- 

## **Section 3: Experience with Micro-credentials**

6. Have you ever been involved in developing or delivering a short course? Or a programme leading to a certificate? (If NO. skip to #10)

\* Yes          \* No          \*Not applicable

7. If yes, what motivated you to develop a short course or programme? (Check all that apply)

- \* Administration request
- \* Demand from industry

- \* Personal interest
- \* Need for new revenue sources
- \* Other, please specify: [Open text field]

8. If yes, what was your overall experience with the short course?

- \* Very positive
- \* Positive
- \* Neutral
- \* Negative
- \* Very negative

9. If you have used micro-credentials, please briefly describe your experience and the impact on your work.

Comment:

---

10. If no, then would you be willing to work with micro-credentials in your field?  
(agreement scale.)

Not at all    Not likely    Neutral    Willing    Very Willing

11. To what extent do you believe micro-credentials can be implemented to enhance the quality of educational content and curricula?

- \* Strongly agree
- \* Agree
- \* Neutral
- \* Disagree
- \* Strongly disagree
- \* Don't know

12. In your opinion, what are the main advantages of incorporating micro-credentials in your educational environment? (Choose up to 3).

- \* Cost savings for students
- \* Increased accessibility to learning materials
- \* Customization of course content

- \* Collaboration and knowledge sharing
- \* All of the above
- \* Don't know
- \* Additional or Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

13. What challenges do you foresee in the adoption of micro-credentials within your institution?

- Resistance to change
  - Lack of awareness of micro-credentials
  - Quality concerns
  - Acceptance of credentials
  - Alignment with organisational goals
  - Other (Please specify)
- 

#### **Section 4: Micro-credential policies**

---

14. Are you aware of any existing policies, guidelines or initiatives regarding the use of micro-credentials at your (or another) organisation?

- \* Yes
- \* No
- \* Not sure

Comment:

---

15.. If yes, how would you rate its effectiveness in promoting the use of micro-credentials?

- \* Very effective
- \* Effective
- \* Neutral
- \* Ineffective
- \* Very ineffective
- \* Don't know

16. What, in your opinion, could be done to expand the use of micro-credentials in your institution or organisation? (Open-ended)

---

17. How supportive do you believe your organisation's leadership is regarding the implementation of micro-credentials?

- \* Very supportive
- \* Somewhat supportive
- \* Neutral

- \* Not very supportive
- \* Not supportive at all
- \* Don't know

18. Have you received any training or support related to micro-credentials from your institution?

- \* Yes
- \* No
- \* Not applicable

19. If yes, how would you rate the effectiveness of the training or support provided?

- \* Very effective
- \* Effective
- \* Neutral
- \* Ineffective
- \* Very ineffective
- \* Don't know

### **Section 5: Suggestions and Feedback**

20. Do you have any suggestions or feedback to improve the acceptance of micro-credentials or micro-courses in the region? [Open text field]

---

Conclusion: Thank you for participating in our survey! Your input is valuable to us. If you have any further comments or questions, please feel free to contact us at [contact information].

## Annex D: Stakeholder Survey Results

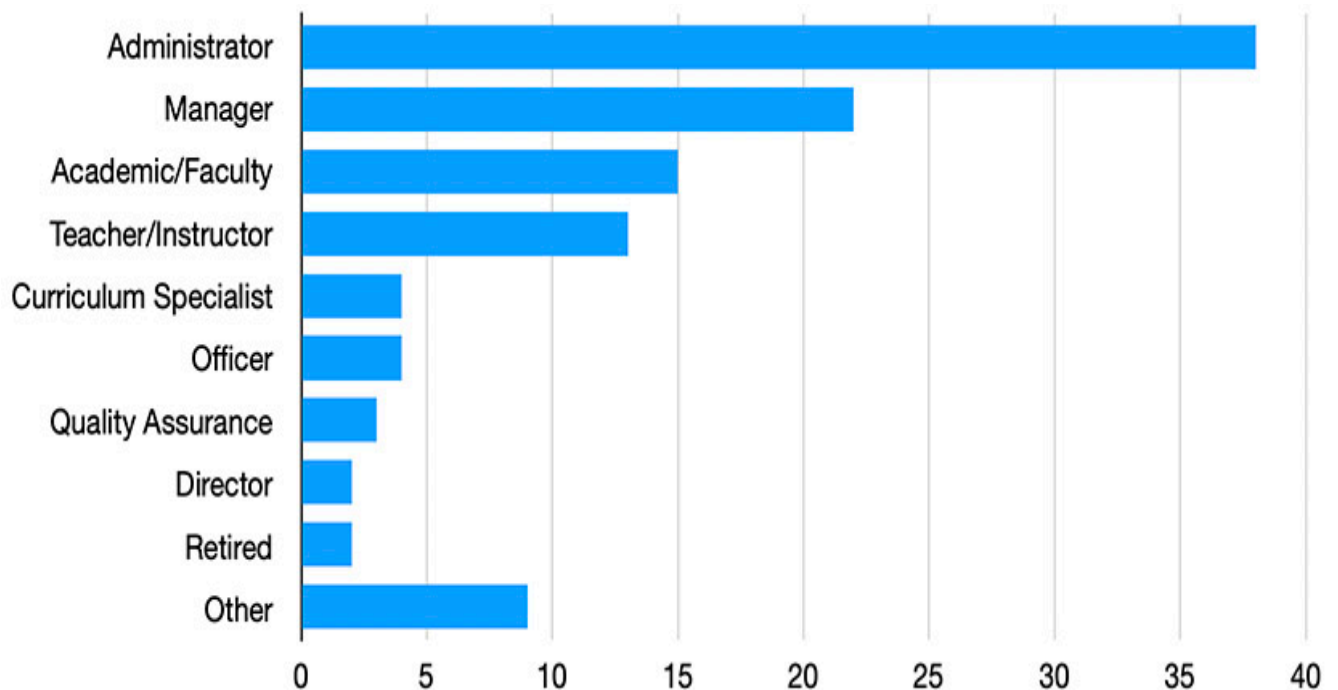
### Micro-credentials Awareness and Usage Survey

The purpose of this survey was to understand the degree of awareness of and experience with micro-credentials and micro-courses in education in the Caribbean region. The survey link was sent out to *The Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education (CANQATE)* for circulation among members (c.300). The survey link was also circulated to members of the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC®) (c. 100) and to selected faculty and administrators at the University of the West Indies (UWI) (c. 100).

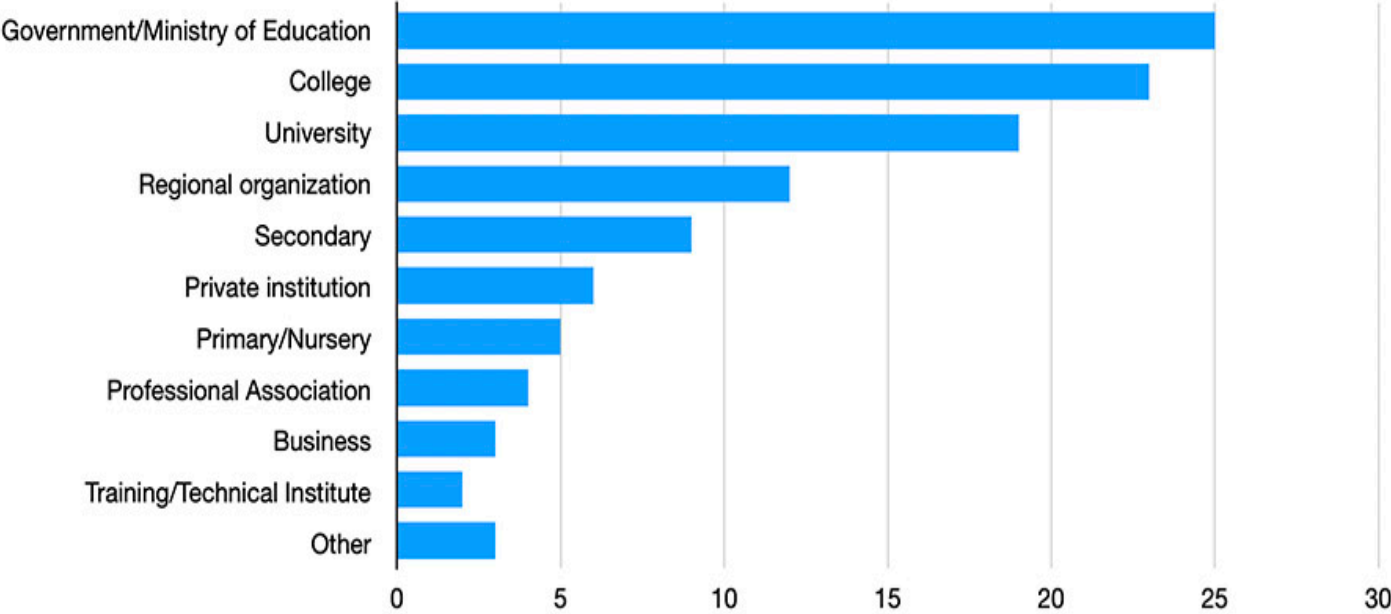
Participants in 12 Caribbean countries responded. There were 157 responses, of which 112 completed or partially completed the survey. This is a moderately low response rate, which compromises the generalizability of the results by overrepresenting more engaged individuals. Nevertheless, the survey can be considered reliable and valid for understanding the views and opinions of the population that is engaged with or demonstrates an interest in the subject of micro-credentials.

#### Section 1: Demographic Information

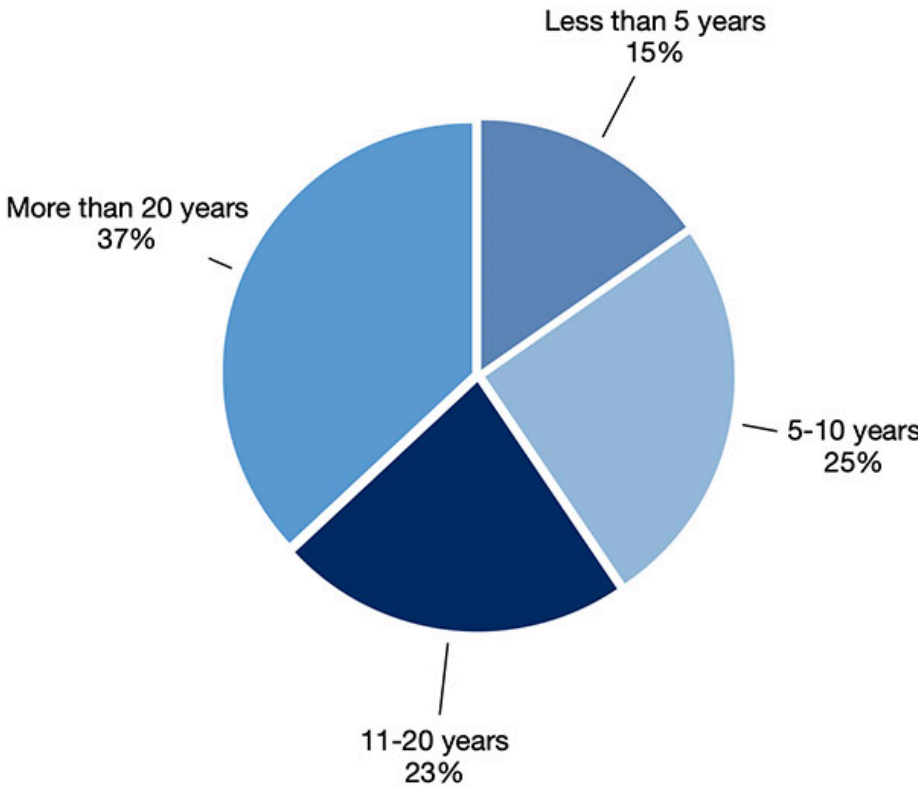
**1.1 Role:** Administrators and managers formed the majority of respondents, followed by Faculty and Instructors.



**1.2. Organisation:** Most respondents were from governmental ministries, organisations and tertiary institutions.

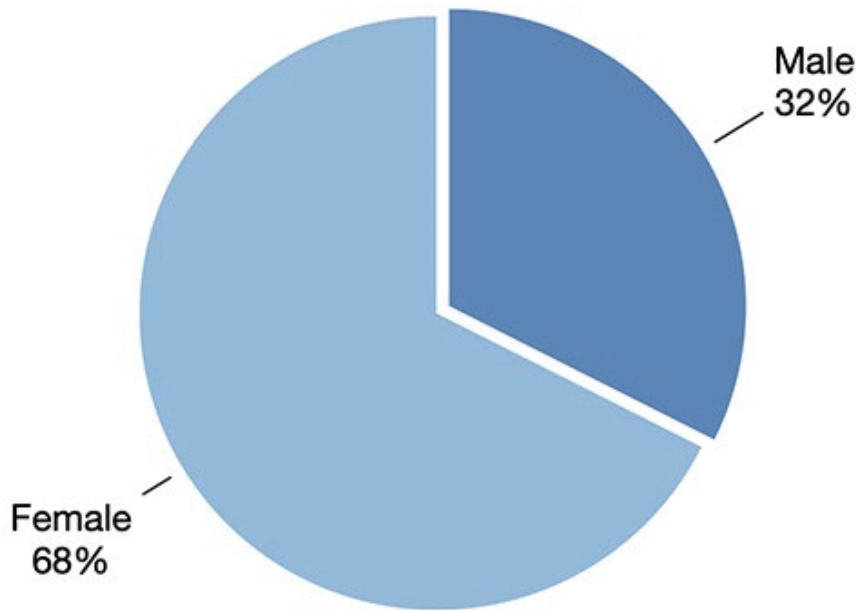


**1.3. Years of Experience in the organisation.** The majority of respondents were veteran employees with more than 10 years of experience in education.

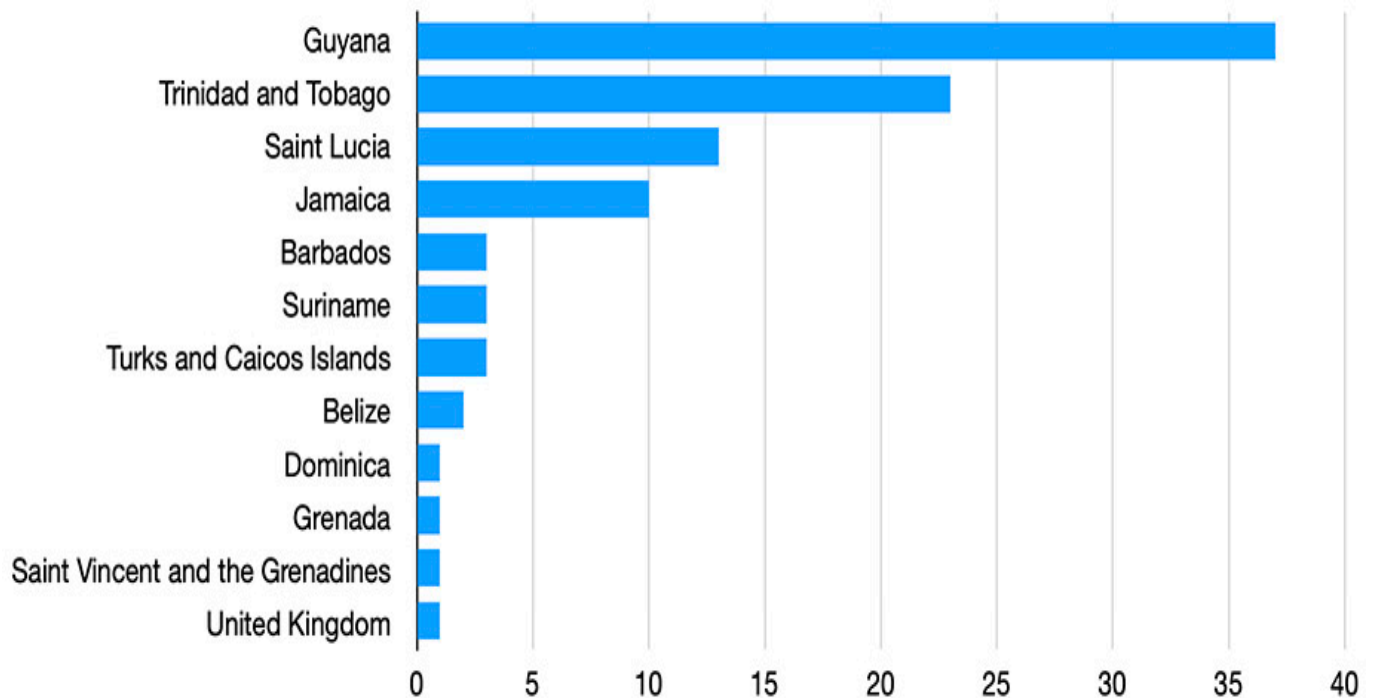




**1.4 Gender:** The female majority reflects regional employment statistics in the education sector.



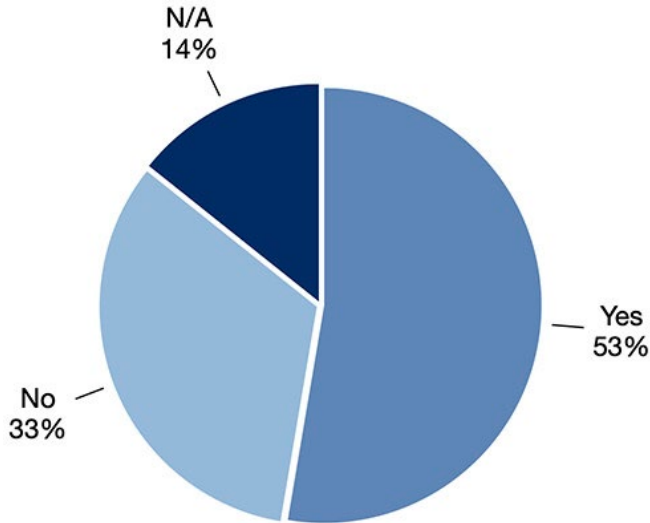
**1.5 Country of residence:** The response rate does not correspond to the populations of the countries in the region. Saint Lucia, for example, is a very small country in comparison to Jamaica yet shows more respondents to the survey. Guyana garners substantially more respondents than others.



## Section 2: Awareness of Micro-credentials

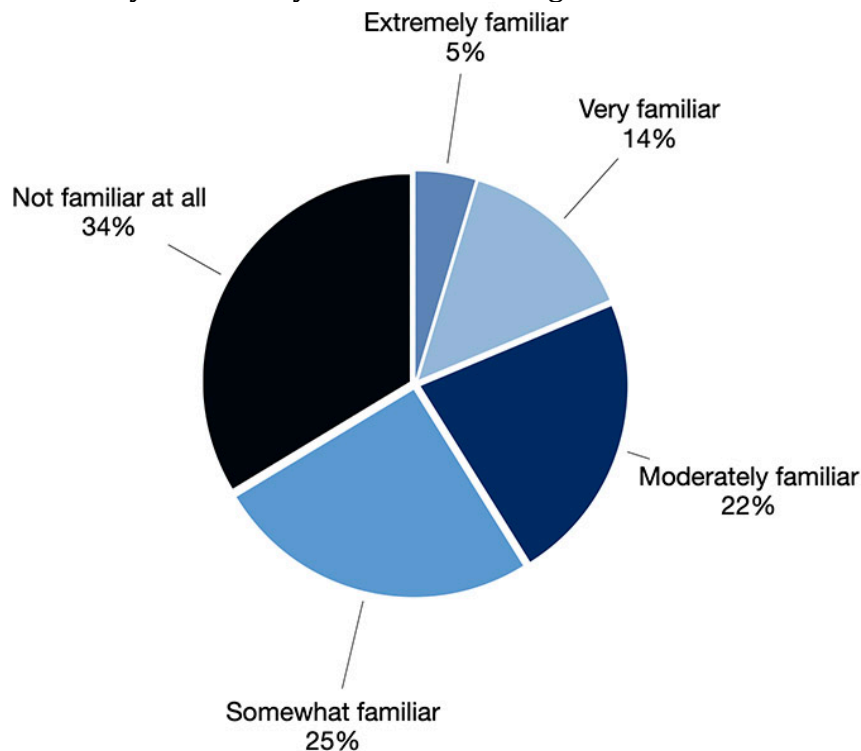
### 2. Have you heard of micro-credentials before taking this survey?

The majority of respondents are aware of micro-credentials even though this term is not being used to describe the credentials offered for short courses in the region.



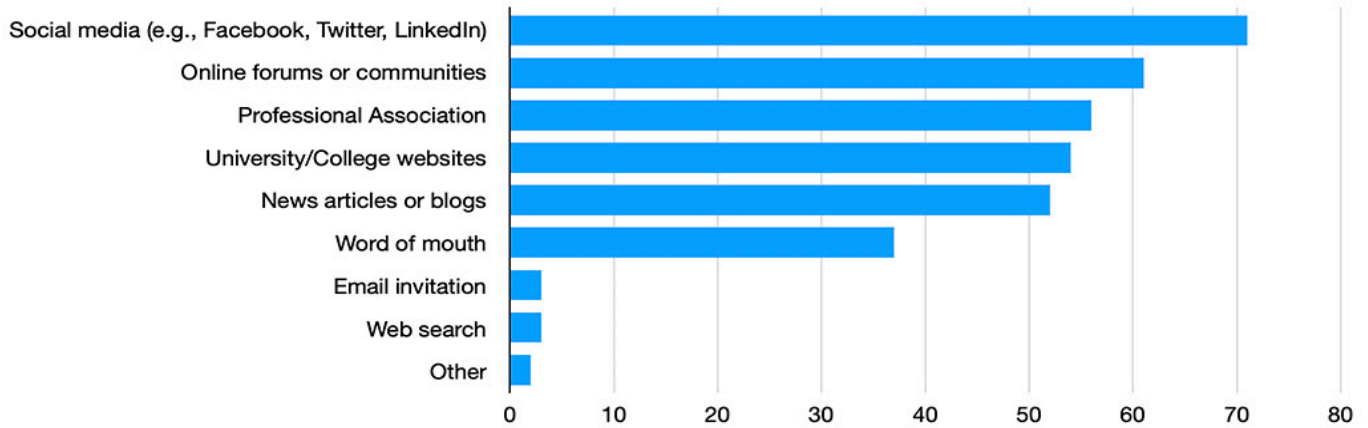
### 3. How would you rate your familiarity with micro-credentials?

The majority of respondents (66%) had some familiarity with micro-credentials, but the majority of these were only somewhat or moderately familiar. At least a third noted that they had no familiarity. No country stood out as being more or less familiar.



#### 4. What sources do you use to learn about new educational opportunities? (Check all that apply).

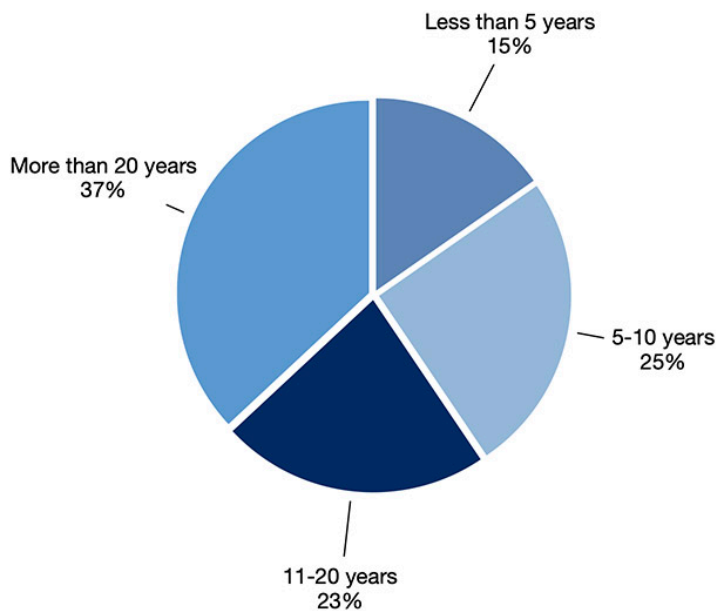
Unsurprisingly, the respondents are learning on the Internet through social networking. Professional associations and institutional websites are also important.



### Section 3: Experience with Micro-credentials

#### 5. What is your experience with micro-credentials?

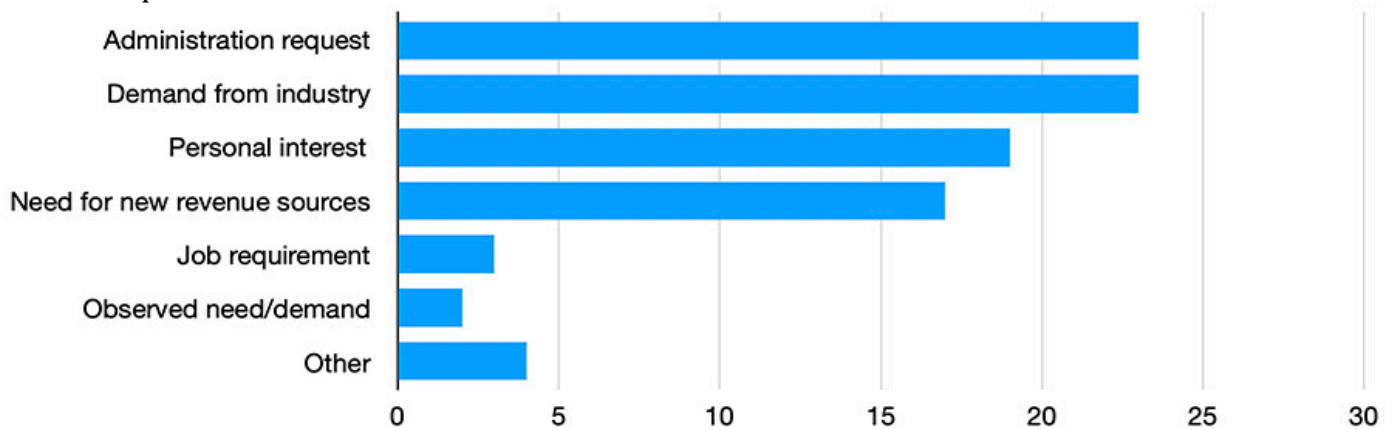
Short courses in the Caribbean have been around for many years before the term “micro-credential” became popular.



**6. Have you ever been involved in developing or delivering a short course? Or a programme leading to a certificate? (If NO. skip to #10) (YES= 80; NO= 32)**

**7. If yes, what motivated you to develop a short course or programme? (Check all that apply).**

Interestingly, the motivation for creating short courses came from the top down, from the administration, to meet industry demands and/or generate new revenues. Personal interest was also an important factor.



**Comments:**

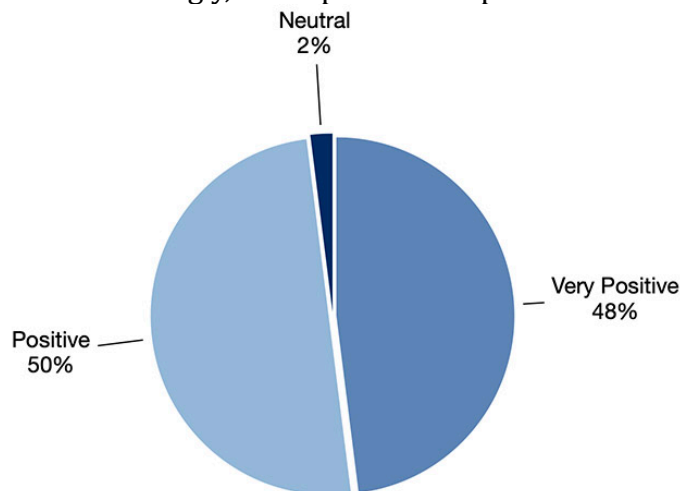
*\*Persons were not completing a 12-hour course we created, so we felt it useful to break it out into smaller five to 15 minute minicourse.*

*\*I have been involved in developing standards and guidelines for the quality assurance of micro-credential learning products.*

*\*There are specific skills which are needed from time to time on the job. These could include specific procedures or new technologies which have to be used. It increases productivity*

**8. If yes, what was your overall experience with the short course? (YES = 80)**

Overwhelmingly, the experience of practitioners has been positive.



**9. If you have used micro-credentials, please briefly describe your experience and the impact on your work. YES =80)**

**Comments:**

**Designing micro-courses**

- *The experience has provided greater knowledge and enhanced my professional skills.*
- *I have designed micro-credentials, which provided the opportunity to design digital media courses that were age-appropriate and allowed for choosing content to match the needs of the curriculum. I have participated in micro-credentials and found them to be very pertinent to building knowledge quickly on a given point of need from administration and personal interest.*
- *From an organisation position, I believe it helped me to better understand the needs of the organisation and what works best. It allowed me to network and enhanced my ability to assess the gaps.*
- *It was embedded in my thesis, where I proposed learning pathways for the lecturers to learn virtual reality based on the survey results. The experience was intended to impact lecturers at the college in their transition to virtual reality.*
- *It gave me a really good insight into the practical aspects of the subject area. It was very subject-oriented with a wide range of hands-on training.*
- *I facilitated Continuous Professional Development Programs for the Ministry of Education, Guyana. These are usually for five-day durations (20 to 30 hours). They are very effective in helping teachers to be trained based on the day-to-day issues they confront during the teaching and learning process.*
- *I have been asked to teach online by giving short presentations about my work. The experience enhanced my work since I had to think about the work in a new context to suit the audience and the objectives of the course. The development of exam questions for my part of the course added to my experience.*

**Learning in a micro-course**

- *If by using a micro-credential, you mean taking one, then it was very useful as it was short, to the point and provided me with the knowledge and some skills to be able to effectively implement in my organisation.*
- *Have also taken various micro-credential courses that have provided me with skills that I could apply on the job or in external pursuits such as research or consulting.*
- *The best micro-credentials I have experienced often employ flexible delivery modes, utilize robust assessment and evaluation methods and are directly relevant to industry knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are relevant to the 21st century. They also compact quality learning objectives into bite-size pieces and offer certification within a short period of time. The micro-credentials are built to reflect an understanding of the adult learner and feature experiential learning as an indispensable tool. The impact is immediate upskilling and an improvement in output quality.*

- *Have also taken various micro-credential courses that have provided me with skills that I could apply on the job or in external pursuits such as research or consulting.*

### **Impact on Work**

- *Provided just-in-time new skills.*
- *Persons were not completing a 12-hour course we created, so we felt it useful to break it out into smaller five to 15-minute mini-courses that could be completed during a commute.*
- *Since the material is delivered in bite-size amounts, it is easier to integrate.*
- *Access to ongoing professional development and curricula content not readily available outside of programs of longer duration; flexible delivery and assessment provisions.*
- *I provided a helpful, short-term training opportunity.*
- *Positive.*
- *There are specific skills which are needed from time to time on the job. These could include specific procedures or new technologies which have to be used. It increases productivity.*
- *Develop a short course in Electrical Installation to upskill Electrical and Electronic Technology Teachers in preparation for the delivery of the Revised curriculum in 2015.*
- *From an organisational position, I believe it helped me to better understand the needs of the organisation and what works best. It allowed me to network and enhanced my ability to assess the gaps.*
- *As a beneficiary and benefactor, micro-credentialing enabled me to leverage the corporate core competence of various institutions served locally, regionally, and internationally.*

### **Certification**

- *Certification: Our college offers training in pumps, valves, and home care nursing, for example. These short courses are customized to meet the demands of clients as well as benchmarked to reflect the standards of similar international courses where possible. These courses are certified by the college itself, however, many clients ask for international certification and foreign accreditation.*
- *Increased professional mobility.*

### **Implementation**

- *I have been involved in developing standards and guidelines for the quality assurance of micro-credential learning products across the Jamaican education sector. The guidelines serve to inform the provision of any type of micro-credential whether they are for upskilling, re-skilling, or a component of a full qualification. They will enable increased flexibility for the integration of micro-credentials into existing program portfolios while expanding capacity to meet industry needs.*
- *The advancement of competency-based practice in determining that learning outcomes have been met.*
- *A well-articulated framework for the design, development, and delivery of micro-credentials that meet established standards.*

### Neutral or Negative Experiences

- *Never enrolled.*
- *I have never used micro-credentials.*
- *Have not used micro-credential courses but did pursue other types of courses to enhance my knowledge in Curriculum Development and Blended Learning in TVET.*
- *I am not too familiar with this term and did no research prior to completing this survey.*
- *I have never used this mode of teaching and learning before. Thank you!*

### Challenges and Considerations

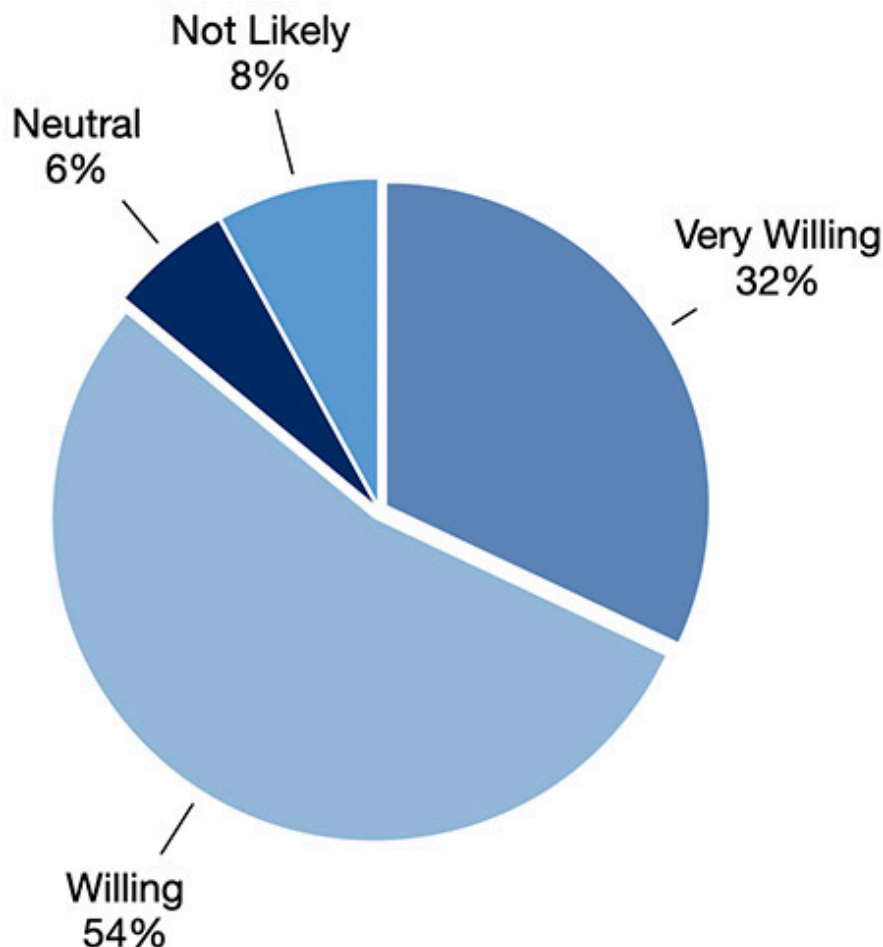
- *Aiming for a different market than the main target market takes intensive research and trials. This is not always possible to do with existing staff.*

---

### 10. If no, then would you be willing to work with micro-credentials in your field?

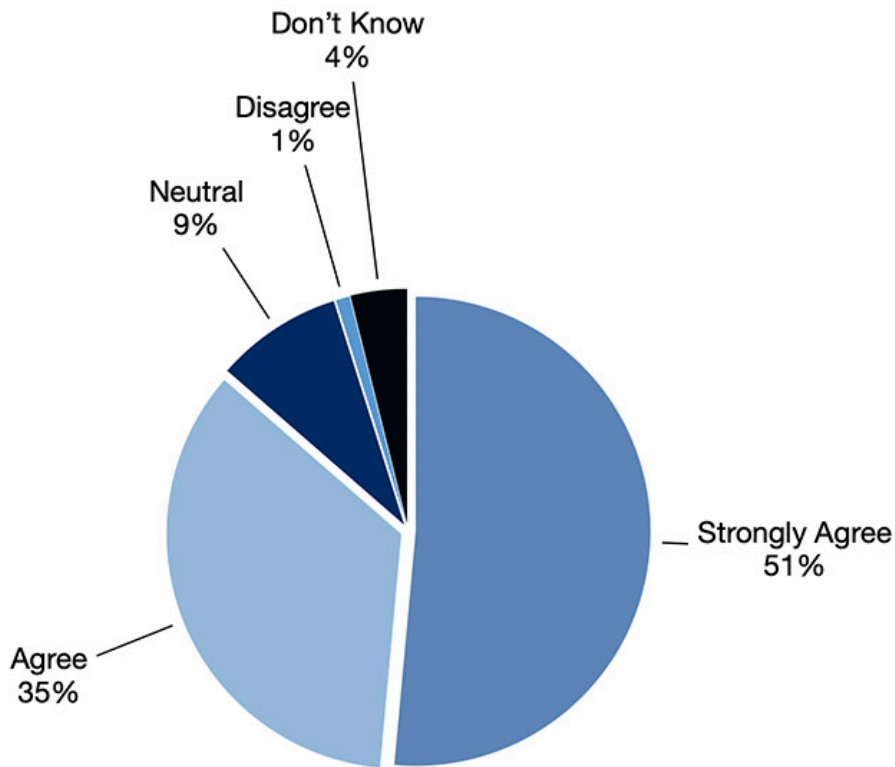
(NO=32)

Even with no experience, respondents, by a large majority, showed a willingness to work with micro-credentials.



**11. To what extent do you believe micro-credentials can be implemented to enhance the quality of educational content and curricula?**

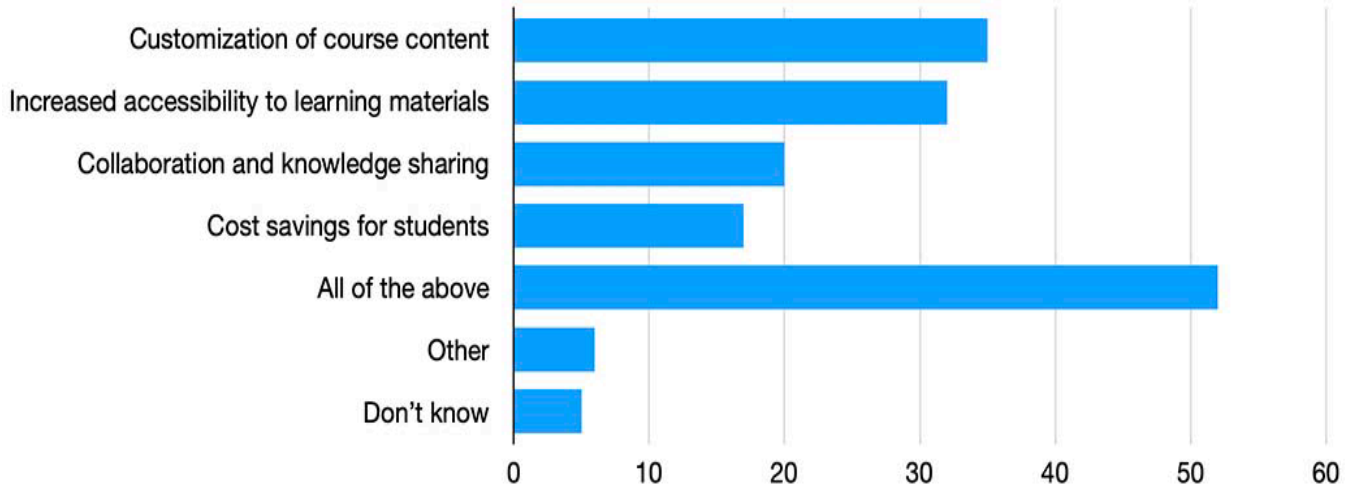
Among the respondents, a majority strongly agreed that micro-credentials could strongly enhance the quality of education and a very large majority agreed or strongly agreed.



**12. In your opinion, what are the main advantages of incorporating micro-credentials in your educational environment? (Choose up to 3).**

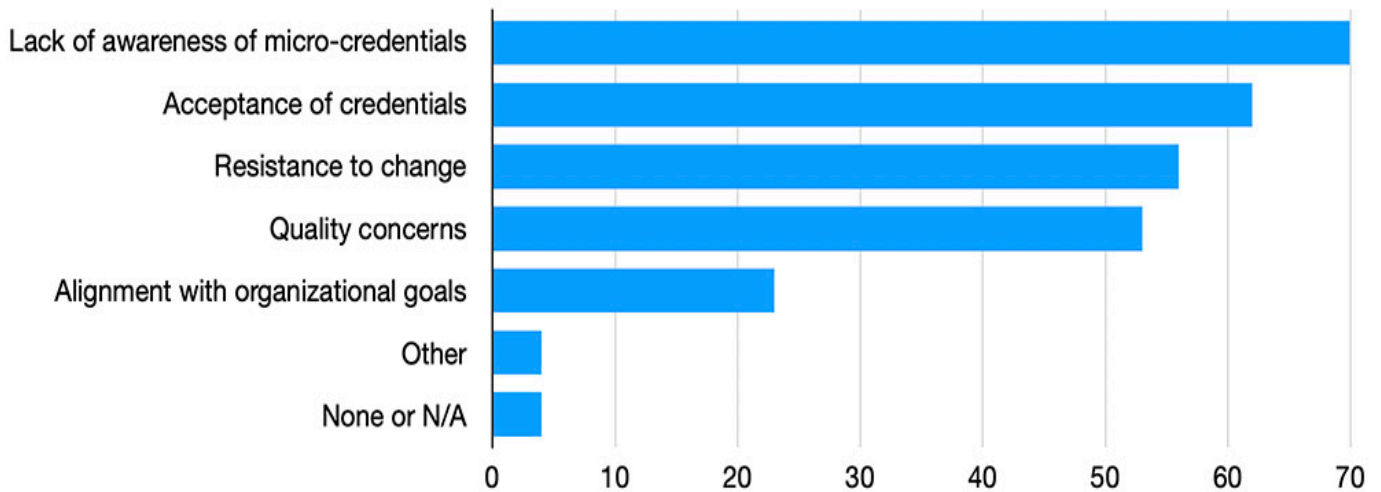
The principal advantages of micro-credentials were recognised by a majority of the respondents, with the greatest agreement on course customisation and accessibility to learning materials.





**13. What challenges do you foresee in the adoption of micro-credentials within your institution?**

Respondents chose lack of awareness more than credential acceptance and resistance to change at their institutions. Quality concerns were also considered important. Alignment with goals was not considered to be as important, and concerns about the quality of the micro-credentials, as well as their alignment with organisational goals, were less popular challenges.

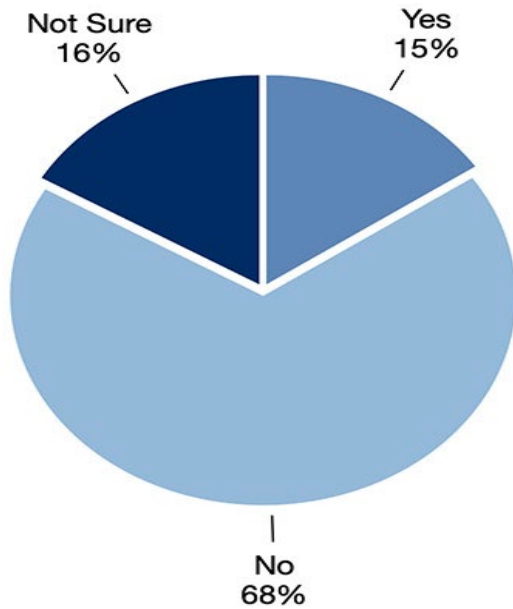


**Section 4: Micro-credential policies**

---

**14. Are you aware of any existing policies, guidelines or initiatives regarding the use of micro-credentials at your (or another) organisation?**

Not surprisingly, because few institutions had such policies or guidelines, respondents were not aware of any.

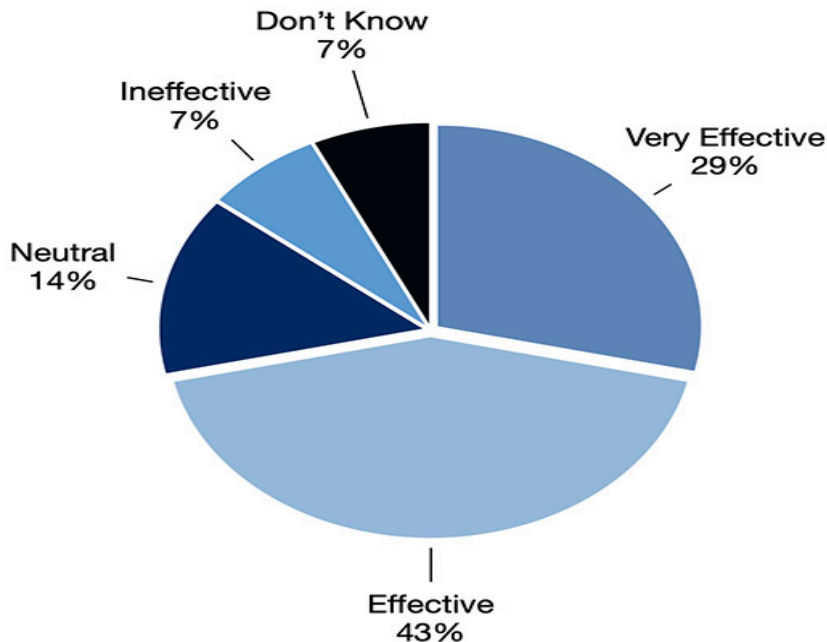


**Comments:**

- *Currently there is a committee collaborating with the local NTA on micro credentialing (*
- *My org. does not enforce it. I'm a part of Quality Matters and ISTE, and they do enforce it*
- *Micro-credentials have been with us since the advent of ABD and CXC® Exams.*
- *There are policies in relation to the development of programs, including short courses, but the use of the word "micro-credential" is not included.*
- *We have an approved 'Procedure for approval of Certified Special /Short Courses'. This was approved by our Academic Board in April 2022.*
- *NCERD, Guyana in partnership with COL, in 2022, developed the Education Leadership Program. It was delivered in 9 weeks (approximately 50-54 hours [approximately 3.5 academic credits]. It comprised three short courses: Foundations of Education Leadership (3 weeks); Leading Education Systems (two weeks); and Leading Change (four weeks). I was a facilitator.*
- *A few were attempted for mass teachers' education.*
- *JTEC has recently developed Standards and Guidelines for Micro-credentials and Digital Badges. These standards are used to align Micro-credentials to the National Qualifications Framework of Jamaica (NQF-J).*
- *Yes, our both UNESCO (Towards a common definition of micro-credentials: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381668> ) and our Specialized institute the UNESCO IIEP has developed a policy guide on this topic - Short courses, micro-credentials, and flexible learning pathways: a blueprint for policy development and action: policy paper <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384326>*

**15. If yes, how would you rate its effectiveness in promoting the use of micro-credentials?**

The majority of respondents (72%) felt that micro-credentials could be effective, with only one respondent finding that they were ineffective.



**16. What, in your opinion, could be done to expand the use of micro-credentials in your institution or organisation? (Open-ended)**

**Comments:**

**Awareness and Promotion**

- *Sensitisation of the value and importance of the micro-credentials.*
- *In our case, we are not at the point of expansion. We need to get started first.*
- *Begin to sensitize educators about the benefits of micro-credential programs.*
- *Awareness coupled with pilot and timeliness for a staggered rollout*
- *The government will need to start promoting it. Sensitization of micro-credentialing needs to start.*
- *Clarity and awareness of its validity, application and acceptance locally and internationally across all programmes of study, including the visual and performing arts.*
- *Better awareness of quality and relevance of content.*
- *The provision of greater communication to stakeholders.*
- *Greater understanding of their significance and the role that they play in assisting students to acquire knowledge*
- *Enhance efforts to educate on the value of micro-credentials as continuing professional development opportunities and institutional profile, whilst earning revenue.*
- *Dissemination of knowledge about the demand for and advantages of micro-credentials at higher education.*
- *Greater awareness of micro-credentials and its recognition.*
- *Increased emphasis on the practical benefits of this programme*
- *Knowledge must be shared as to what is available within the organisation*

- *Acknowledgement that knowledge gained will build org. skills; it helps with promotion etc*
- *Starting with raising awareness about the benefits of micro-credentials for lifelong learning.*
- *Awareness and demonstration of its benefits*
- *Increased communication with potential clients to sensitize them to opportunities for training in relevant areas will lead to increased demand and a resulting willingness on the part of the college to expand the supply of these courses. (This applies especially in private sector colleges.)*
- *Marketing - publicizing, deepening awareness of micro-credentials*
- *Discussion, By-in, sensitization*
- *Education and awareness.*
- *Public awareness through social media/schools/stakeholders*
- *Have forums to educate the public about it.*
- *Awareness sessions*
- *information accessibility*
- *Sensitization sessions/educational workshops/ brochures.*
- *Public awareness*
- *Awareness*
- *Having seminars and forums providing information about micro-credentials.*
- *Provide awareness and educate employees and management about micro-credentials. Through seminars/workshops and other informational sessions, outline the values, benefits and relevance of micro-credentials and ways in which they can enhance and foster growth and development for an individual and his/her career.*
- *Awareness in micro-credentials*
- *Awareness*

### **Incentives/Support**

- *Also provide a support system for persons willing to attain micro-credentials. Finally, give incentives to encourage persons to become involved.*
- *Provide to us the time needed to complete the courses. Since we are teachers we need time separately to complete all short courses and effectively involve in short courses. My experience is that there are short courses offered by commonwealth which are very nice courses but our institution have us busy to do our institutional responsibilities.*
- *Reward system/Incentive for completion of micro-credentials (e.g. point system to attain more recognised certification upon completion of a number of micro-credentials)*
- *Provide employees with the opportunity to do short online courses*
- *Link these to opportunities for advancement, recognition or other benefits e.g. sabbaticals, fully or partially sponsored trips to say conferences,*

### **Training & Implementation**

- *Training and implementation*
- *Embed it within existing programs.*
- *Timely communication for registration purposes*

- *Offer incentives if pursued e.g. time off to attend face-to-face events such as field trips*
- *Workshops or seminars on the benefits of micro-credentials.*
- *Setting up of committees per subject area to design courses*
- *Training and exposure of administrators and faculty*
- *Education and training*
- *The college already has lifelong learning, which provides micro credentials. An expansion is always welcomed, where it can be incorporated as electives rather than full courses.*
- *The establishment of a unit or department dedicated to producing micro-credentials.*
- *Training in designing and developing micro-credentials and incentives to do so.*
- *When these short courses are being developed, cognizance should be taken of how these may eventually be incorporated into a programme leading to an academic qualification*
- *Educating faculty, staff, and students of the benefits to be derived from the development, implementation, and use of micro-credentials.*
- *Linking micro-credentials to entry qualification for higher certification/degree*
- *These courses need to be certified, recognised and incentive-based*
- *Begin with more basic computer/IT skills training before making upgrading using micro-credentials compulsory*
- *Consultation at all levels*
- *Advanced promotion of it and speedy acceptance of the credentials*
- *The availability of content via magazines/brochures/seminars.*
- *Ministerial workshops. Induction for new staff at a new position.*
- *Introduction of new resources and technologies*
- *More relevant courses to sustain and maintain teachers' interest in the teaching profession*
- *Aligning micro-credentials with specific skills required by specific industries/sectors.*
- *Offering streams for employees of local and regional businesses and industry partners*
- *Convert long range qualifications to multiple micro-credentials*
- *Awareness coupled with pilot and timeliness for a staggered rollout*
- *Collaboration with institutions and agencies that already utilize such credentials and have recognition*

## **Policy**

- *Develop a clear policy that allows for development and QA within existing guidelines*
- *The organisation developing and implementing policies around micro-credentialling.*
- *An approved policy on how micro-credentials can be accepted for promotion.*
- *Establish rules and guidelines as policies*
- *Policy decision and market*

## **Access to learning**

- *Greater accessibility and awareness*
- *Access to programs, program content & materials and qualified coaches are not always easy to come by.*
- *Greater awareness and access*

## Cost

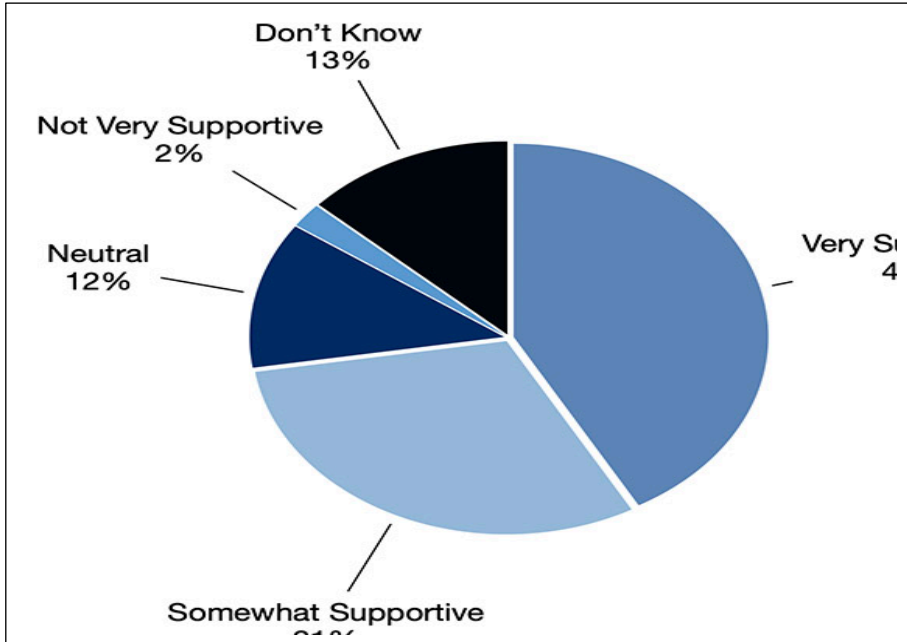
- *Hiring external coaches is costly, which makes the programs unattainable for most.*
- *Specifically for top management, it would require showing them the cross-border benefits firstly and secondly the financial feasibility*

## Other comments

- *It would help to have an organisation or a branch of this CXC®/COL collaboration, that is mandated to provide micro-credential workers to my organisation. These workers would be stipend by a sponsored organisation for a few months in a similar way that HEART Trust does with their internship programme. Some MOU can be achieved to stipulate an arrangement for these workers to be given at least a 6–12-month contract once they score required points after their internship evaluation. I believe this would help to convince my organisation that the workers are competent. However, based on the payment structure, the micro-credential workers may feel as though they are underpaid (as they know the job but would not have the usual degree/associate, etc, which is usually a contributing factor to one's pay). In the other way, a worker who had to get their qualifications (degree etc) may feel as though a micro-credential worker should not be getting the same pay.*
- *Considerable effort required to Ed USA*
- *Orientation or introduction via workshop or seminar will be beneficial for people in various organisations to better understand the role and purpose of micro-credentials.*
- *CXC® once offered the Basic proficiency which can be considered technically a form of micro credentialing. Syllabi can be split into four (4) parts P1, P2, P3 and P4 and offered continually through the year. Accumulation of all four parts would derive full certification. This was done for the London examinations in subjects in the 1990's.*
- *The organisation uses the system of micro-credentials a great deal already, and there is often no space on the registration list*
- *COL and CXC® may consider leveraging this survey via democratizing the issuance of micro-credentials benchmarking the defunct "the British Cottage Industry Model"*
- *on behalf of the British Standard Institutions*
- *Micro-credentials is very beneficial to employees and the effectiveness of the organisations as these programs are tailored for the specific needs of the institution. However, employees chase after degree programs since appointments and promotions are based on degrees.*
- *Therefore, to expand the use of micro-credentials, participants should be given credits that can gain them additional points during appointments and promotions.*
- *A space must be included for same as a part of the criteria for a job*

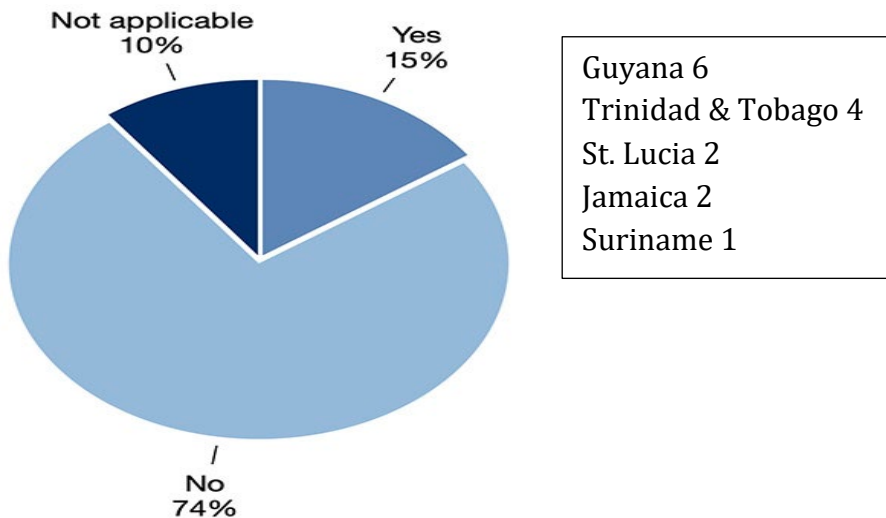
## **17. How supportive do you believe your organisation's leadership is regarding the implementation of micro-credentials?**

Respondents, by a wide margin, agree that their institutional leaders are very supportive of micro-credentials.



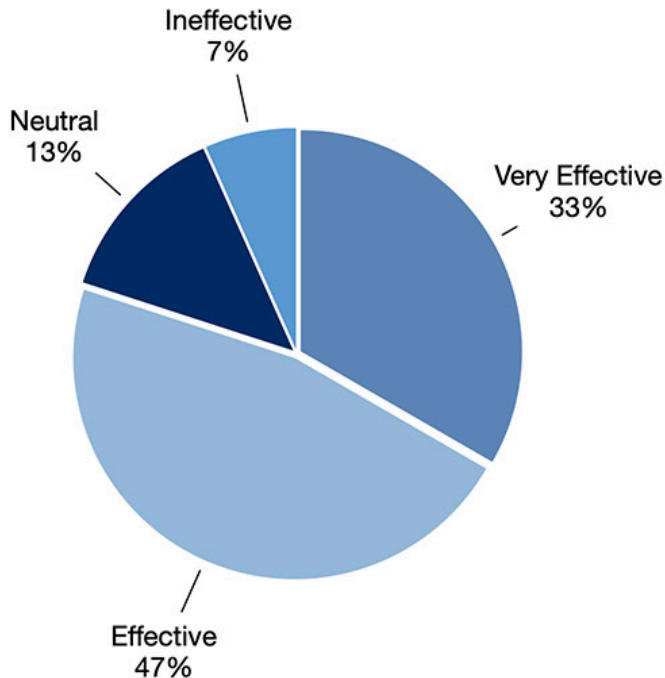
**18. Have you received any training or support related to micro-credentials from your institution?**

In contrast to the belief in the support that institutional leadership has for micro-credentials, few institutions have provided training. Unsurprisingly, the countries with the most respondents also show the most respondents who have received training in micro-credentials.



**19. If yes, how would you rate the effectiveness of the training or support provided?**

Of the fifteen respondents who received training, 80% found it effective, with only one person believing that their training was ineffective.



## Section 5: Suggestions and Feedback

### 20. Do you have any suggestions or feedback to improve the acceptance of micro-credentials or micro-courses in the region? [Open text field]

#### Awareness

- \* Increase awareness of the benefits of micro-credentials and their applicability in improving productivity in the workforce. Additionally, pitch it as an economic benefit for businesses that do not have to do extra in-house training for the skills required in different posts.*
- \* Awareness Campaigns - increased awareness about the value and utility of micro-credentials through marketing campaigns, information sessions, and success stories that highlight the benefits of career advancement and lifelong learning.*
- \* Increased publicity of its credentials and value in the workplace.*
- \* Advertisements/marketing of benefits/use of influencers and social media.*
- \* Student engagement and feedback sessions.*
- \* Stakeholder Collaboration - Engage key stakeholders, including educational institutions, employers, and government bodies, to ensure that micro-credentials meet local labour market needs and are recognised as valid qualifications.*
- \* Given the pace of change, the even greater need for upskilling and reskilling, micro-skilling offers new avenues for persons and organisations to adapt to and develop resilience in the face of change.*
- \* It will take many stakeholders and actors - government, academia, employers, HR & Talent experts, quality assurance agencies and learners to make the experience rewarding for all parties involved.*

#### Educate, Train and Promote



- \* Educate, train and promote.
- \* Educate and speak of the benefits of micro-credentials. Testimonials could be good too.
- \* Public Education and Training- webinars and PD sessions with key education personnel.
- \* Conduct training with regional bodies and implement same in institutions.
- \* Change Management initiatives.
- \* The new elements implemented must become part of the system to ensure that the participants put into practice what they have learned/gained.
- \* More information needs to be given on this subject.
- \* Have more online courses available.
- \* Strategic communication of related concepts & stakeholder feedback via social media and websites.

### **Alignment with Compensation**

- \* There needs to be an alignment of the micro-credentials with compensation rates i.e. the establishment of a framework of compensation including successful completion of micro-credentials. More awareness campaigns and marketing strategies are needed.
- \* Financial Incentives-Offer financial incentives such as scholarships, grants, or lower tuition fees to encourage enrolment in micro-courses, especially for underrepresented groups in higher education.
- \* Provide Incentives for the recognition and reward of micro-credentials.
- \* Integration with Traditional Degrees- Create pathways that allow credits from micro-courses to be counted towards traditional degrees or further education. This integration can make micro-credentials more attractive to students who see them as a stepping stone to higher qualifications.

### **Promotion and Endorsement by Institutions**

- \* The leading regional institutions need to endorse and promote it so that the employers and training institutions would have confidence in accepting these for work and study.
- \* Greater levels of sensitization and forums involving post-secondary and TVET institutions, instead of the predominant focus on ministry officials.
- \* Linkages with renowned regional/international institutions will go a far way in cutting the timeline in getting micro-credentials accepted. If our local community college, for example, offers micro-credentials in collaboration with leading institutions, it will make public buy-in easier.
- \* Make MCs a foundation for other courses and offer credits at Regional Universities/Colleges.
- \* The acceptance of micro-credentials or micro-courses can be improved in the region if employers accept or show willingness to accept micro-credentials in the hiring of employees or in the upgrading of employees in the workplace.

### **Involvement of Accreditation Bodies**

- \* The National Quality Assurance/Accreditation bodies should be more involved or more aware of these courses and how they can be incorporated into the academic stream. Assistance or guidance needs to be obtained from other (European or North American) bodies on how they have been able to improve the acceptance of micro-credentials.
- \* Provide Accreditation and standardization of micro-credentials across the region.
- \* Develop a regional policy document, market policy and train stakeholders.

*\* Quality assurance structures, recognition agreements, and trust networks to enable the portability and mobility of learners.*

### **Resource and Accessibility Considerations**

- \* Access to the internet and devices, along with the knowledge to navigate the learning resources/applications, are very important for the commencing of and completion of courses.*
- \* Two critical considerations: the availability of internet access and the presence of suitable devices.*
- \* Increased budgeting for the advancement and public promotion of such.*
- \* Provide modes of acquiring affordable and accessible MCs and can meet a wide spectrum of people.*

### **Multi-Stakeholder Approach**

- \* A multi-stakeholder approach to public education and awareness has to be conducted at several levels of the educational ecosystem in order to:*
  - o Promote the effective design and delivery of content to fill existing and future knowledge gaps.*
  - o Facilitate flexible learning pathways for different learning styles and socio-economic realities.*
  - o Satisfy competency requirements through industry/sectoral collaborations with training partners and educational institutions.*
- \* Ensure all key stakeholders buy in and accept their role for a smooth transition to micro-credential use.*



COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING