Implementing Lifelong Learning through Flexible Learning Strategies: Practices, Challenges and Opportunities

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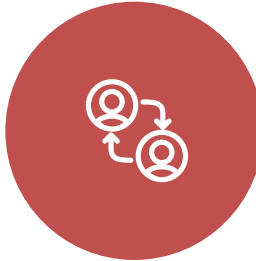**President & Chief Executive Officer**

NQF, BQA 24 Feb 2022

Agenda

1 International concepts and models of lifelong learning

2 Role of governments, qualification frameworks, employers, and educational institutions in supporting lifelong learning

3 Share good practices and experience in implementing RPL and flexible learning to support lifelong learning

4 Main challenges and obstacles in implementing lifelong learning

Introduction

- The negative impact of COVID-19 in employment and incomes across the world has been significant with greater impact on women, young people and low skilled worker in many sectors of the industry.

- The 4th industrial revolution and the pandemic crisis have heightened the need for promoting lifelong learning, as many of todays skills are no longer matching job and skills required by the industry.

- This has certainly created renewed interest in and expectation for lifelong learning as a mean to mitigating the skills deficit and address the labor market disruption.

- The half-life of skills is shrinking so quickly that
  - continuous education and upskilling are no longer a "perk" or employee benefit,
  - they are a business imperative for both companies and employees to thrive in a 21st century economy.
- The way to upskill is through lifelong learning opportunities which is also a means in retaining staff.

What is Lifelong Learning?

- Lifelong learning:
  - "All learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective" (European Commission [EC], 2001).

- Lifelong Learning is listed in Sustainable Development Goal # 4:
  - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Driving Flexible Lifelong Learning Through Government Policies

- The Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education and the Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA) have taken measures to promote flexible lifelong learning via various strategies, including:
  1. Micro-Credentials
  2. Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)
  3. Credit Transfer for Massive Open Online Courses
  4. Technical and Vocational Education and Training
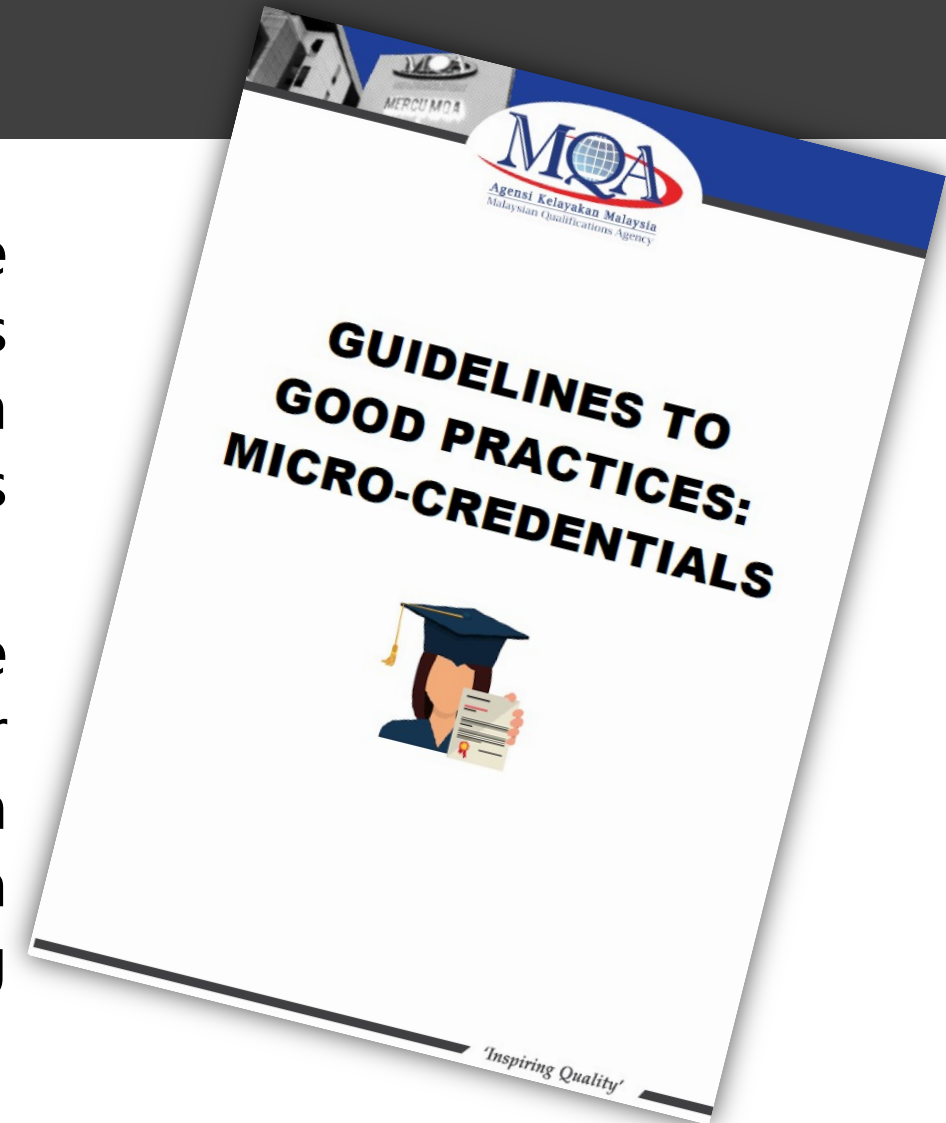
What are Micro-Credentials?

- No globally accepted definition of micro-credentials:
  - *smaller units of study, which are usually shorter than traditional forms of accredited learning and courses leading to conventional qualifications such as degrees.*
  - an umbrella term that "*encompasses various forms of credential, including 'nano-degrees', 'micro-masters credentials', 'certificates', 'badges', 'licences' and 'endorsements'*" (UNESCO, 2018, p.10).

- Micro-credential has become synonymous with certificates of assessed learning earned through the major MOOC platforms, with many providers adopting their own labels: MicroMasters (EdX), Nanodegree (Udacity) and Specialization (Coursera).
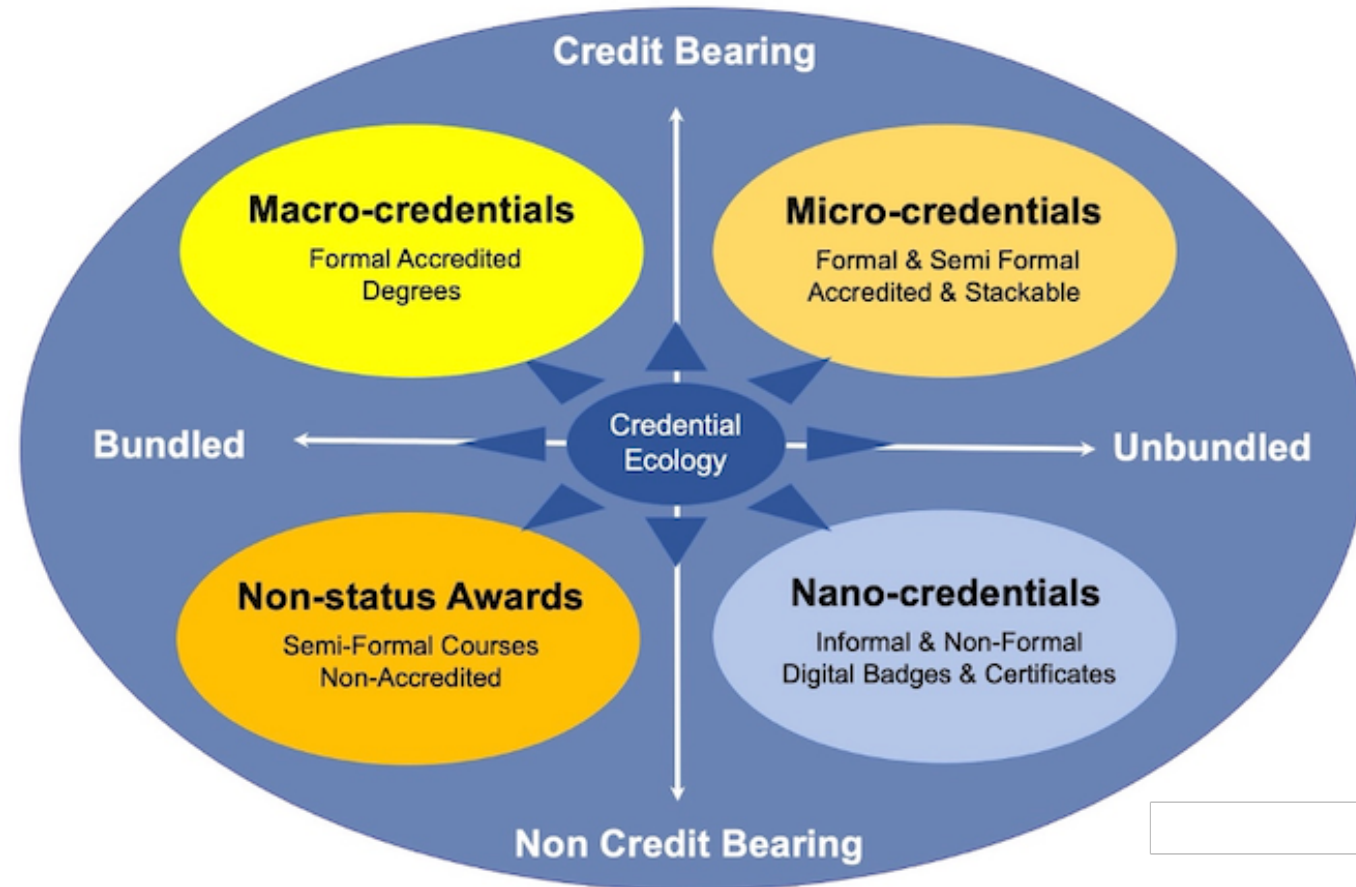
*(Ref: Mark Brown, Mairéad Nic Giolla Mhichil, Elaine Beirne and Conchúr Mac Lochlainn (2020). The Global Micro-credential Landscape: Charting a New Credential Ecology for Lifelong Learning. National Institute for Digital Learning, Dublin City University. Journal of Learning and Development **2021, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 228-254**)*

Malaysia's Lifelong Learning : Micro-Credentials

- In line with its vision for flexible and responsive higher education, the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) developed in 2020 a comprehensive Guidelines to Good Practices (GGP): Micro-credentials.

- The initiative was designed to enable the unbundling of accredited programmes of higher education providers (HEPs), making them accessible to nontraditional learners in line with the national lifelong and life-wide learning agenda
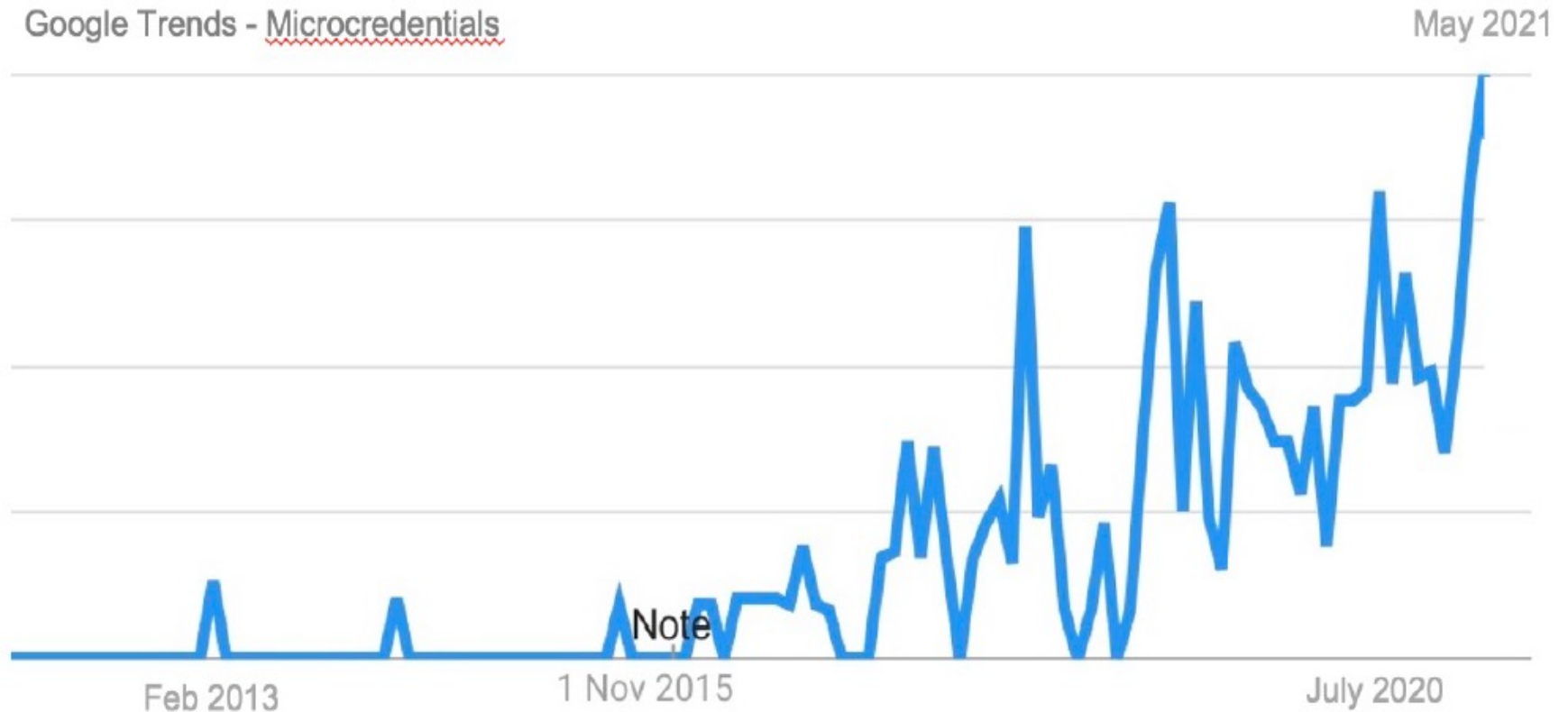
Mapping the New and Emerging Micro-credential Landscape

Source: Brown, M., Mhichil, M. N. C., Beirne, E., & Mac Lochlainn, C. (2021). The global microcredential landscape: Charting a new credential ecology for lifelong learning. Journal of Learning for Development, 8(2), 228-254.

- The figure shows that the highest point in the trend data for the term 'micro-credentials' was in May 2021.

- The term is most searched in Australia but also appears frequently among search queries in Malaysia, Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom in that order.

Source: Brown, M., Mhichil, M. N. C., Beirne, E., & Mac Lochlainn, C. (2021). The global micro-credential landscape: Charting a new credential ecology for lifelong learning. Journal of Learning for Development, 8(2), 228-254.

1. Governments, international organisations and multinationals are making future-focused decisions demonstrating their high-level commitment to micro-credentials, usually through new online and digitally-enhanced models of educational provision. However, the micro-credential landscape is diverse.

    - However, efforts are needed to develop a unified micro-credential ecosystem.

2. The field of micro-credentials remains relatively immature at both national and international levels.

    - There is a need to the future acceptance of micro-credentials.

    - Assessment of learning against stated learning outcomes and transparent standards is crucial to building trust, recognition and quality assurance.

Source: Brown, M., Mhichil, M. N. C., Beirne, E., & Mac Lochlainn, C. (2021). The global micro-credential landscape: Charting a new credential ecology for lifelong learning. Journal of Learning for Development, 8(2), 228-254.

3. There is a need for a coherent adoption, development and recognition of micro-credentials at both a country and international level.

- Current developments in Australia, Canada, Malaysia and New Zealand offer valuable insights from the experience of early adopters.

- However, more funding for education, development work, IT infrastructure and research is required to answer how should countries, institutions, and organisations respond to the global micro-credentialing movement?

Source: Brown, M., Mhichil, M. N. C., Beirne, E., & Mac Lochlainn, C. (2021). The global microcredential landscape: Charting a new credential ecology for lifelong learning. Journal of Learning for Development, 8(2), 228-254.
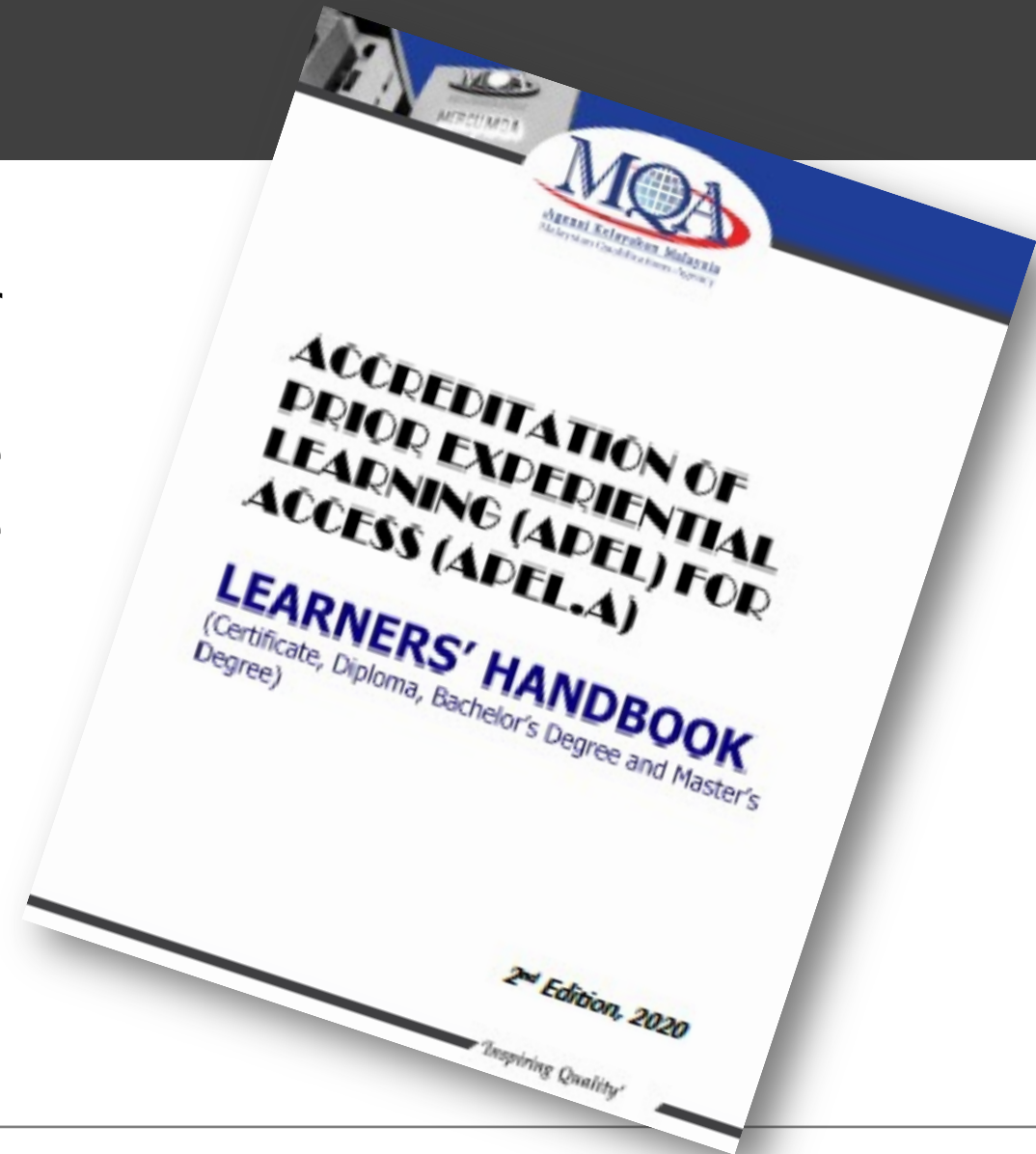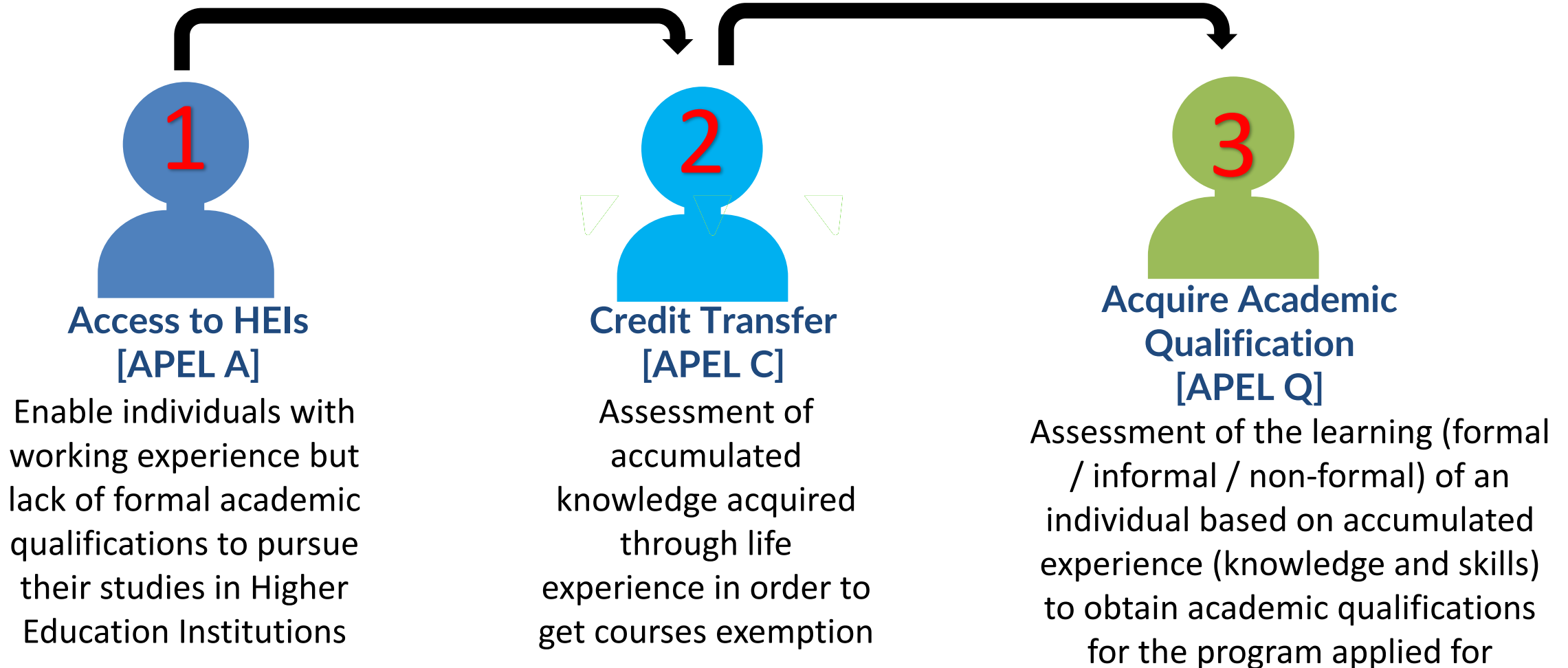
2. Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning

- From 2011 onwards, MQA launched 3 guidelines on Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) A, C and Q and Guidelines on Credit Transfer for Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) to facilitate recognition of all forms of learning.

*With **APEL**, not only can working adults gain admission into **University** by leveraging on their prior learning experiences, they can also use their experiences to earn credits in order to shorten their study duration.*

Categories of Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

1

Access to HEIs [APEL A]

Enable individuals with working experience but lack of formal academic qualifications to pursue their studies in Higher Education Institutions

2

Credit Transfer [APEL C]

Assessment of accumulated knowledge acquired through life experience in order to get courses exemption

3

Acquire Academic Qualification [APEL Q]

Assessment of the learning (formal / informal / non-formal) of an individual based on accumulated experience (knowledge and skills) to obtain academic qualifications for the program applied for

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning or APEL is a systematic process that involves the identification, documentation and assessment of prior experiential learning to determine the extent to which an individual has achieved the desired learning outcomes, for access to a programme of study and/or award of credits.

APEL A provides an opportunity for individual with working experience but lack of formal academic qualifications to pursue their studies in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

APEL A in Malaysia can only be use as entry requirement to the following level of qualification;

- Level 3 (Certificate);
- Level 4 (Diploma);
- Level 6 (Bachelor's Degree); and
- Level 7 (Master's Degree).

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning for Credit Award [APEL.C] is a learning evaluation process (informal and non-formal) of an individual based on cumulative experiences (knowledge and skills) to obtain credit transfer for course(s) in the programme enrolled.

Benefits of APEL.C:

1. Recognize learning acquired through work experience and short courses attended;
2. Reduce redundant learning for students;
3. Encourage admission of adult learners to higher education programmes; and
4. Reduce cost and time to complete study.

Accreditation of Prior Experience -Based Learning for the Purpose of Qualification Award [APEL.Q] is the process of assessing the learning (formal / informal / non -formal) of an individual based on accumulated experience (knowledge and skills) to obtain academic qualifications for the program applied for. Emphasis is given to the assessment of the individual's ability to use the learning achieved through his experience in achieving the learning outcomes or body of knowledge of a program.

Benefits of APEL.Q:

1.Recognize learning gained from formal education, work experience and short courses followed;
2.Reduce repetitive learning to students;
3.Encourage the admission of adult candidates to higher education programs; and
4.Reduce the cost and time to obtain an academic qualification.

# Malaysian Qualifications Framework, 2nd Edition, 2018

MQF LEVEL	GRADUATING CREDIT	SECTOR		LIFELONG LEARNING
		ACADEMIC	TVET*	
8	No credit rating	PhD by Research		
8	80	Doctoral Degree by Coursework & Mixed Mode		
7	No credit rating	Master's Degree by Research		
7	40	Master's Degree by Coursework & Mixed Mode		
7	30	Postgraduate Diploma		
7	20	Postgraduate Certificate		
6	120	Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	*Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)*
6	64 **	Graduate Diploma	Graduate Diploma	
6	34 **	Graduate Certificate	Graduate Certificate	
5	40	Advanced Diploma	Advanced Diploma	
4	90	Diploma	Diploma	
3	60	Certificate	Certificate	
2	30	Certificate	Certificate	
1	15	Certificate	Certificate	

* Technical and Vocational Education and Training   ** Inclusive of 4 credits for U1 courses from general studies

3. Credit Transfer for Massive Open Online Courses (CTM)

- The MOOC initiative in Malaysia is prominently highlighted in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education)
- CTM guidelines were issued by MQA in 2016.
- The award of credits through the CTM process is given on the basis of recognizing the learning acquired and not for the experience gained from the MOOC itself.
- A MOOC is facilitated by at least an instructor whether it is offered as an in-session or a self-paced mode.
- The course instructor is normally affiliated to an academic institution or organization.
- Criteria for credit transfer include:
  - Authenticity
  - Coverage/sufficiency/ adequacy
  - Relevancy
  - Currency
  - Fairness & Equity
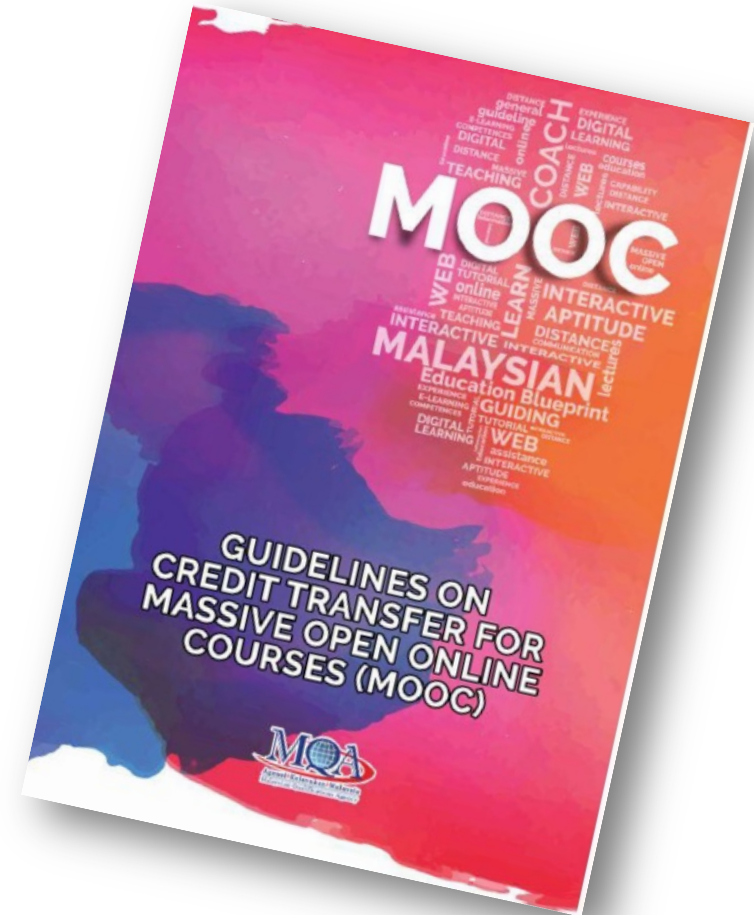
- This Document defines TVET as an education and training process that has occupational direction with a major emphasis on industry practices. It aims to produce competent workforce in related fields for the achievement of socio and economic objectives of the country.

- The Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) through MQA takes the responsibility to strengthen the TVET sector to be in parity with the academic sector.
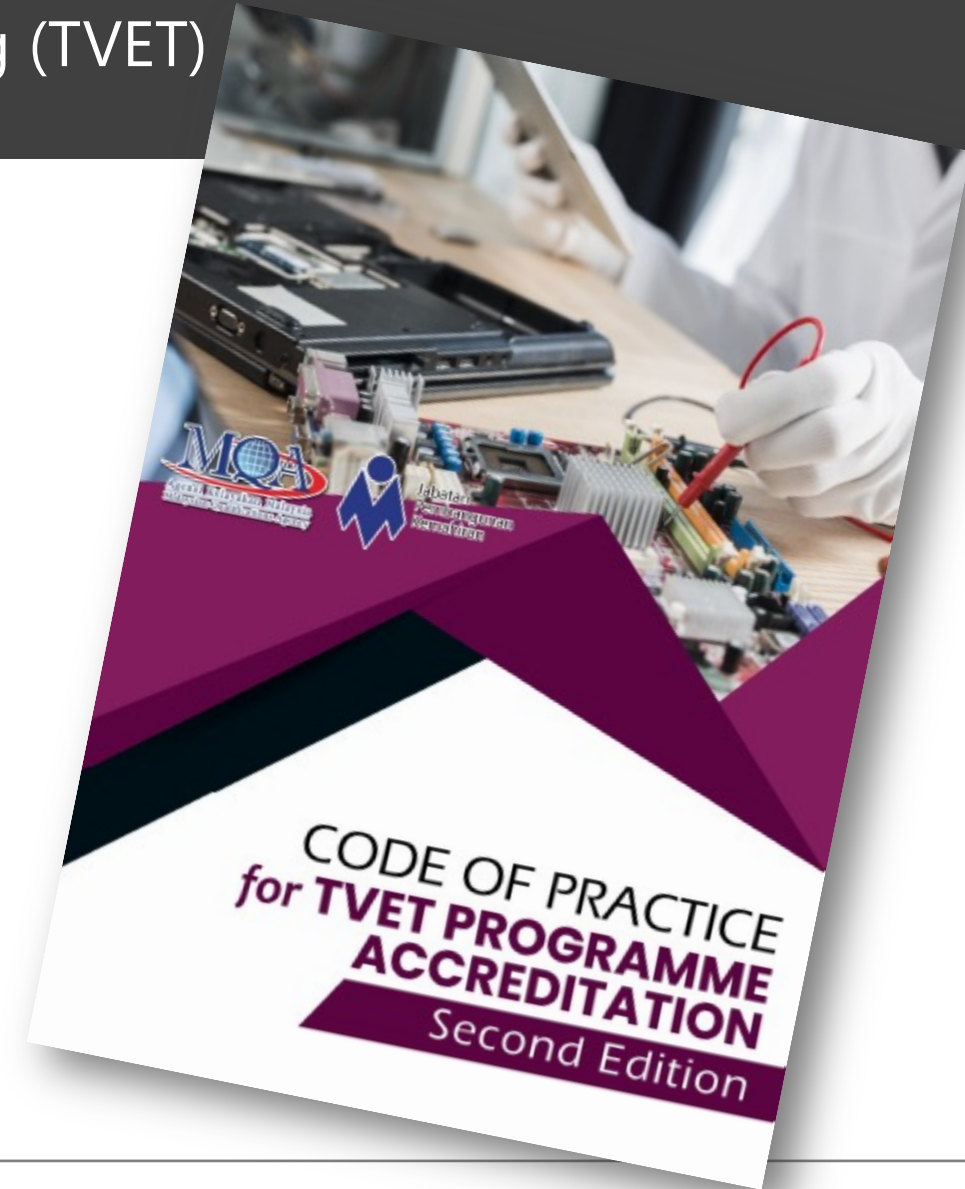
Main Challenges and Obstacles in Implementing Lifelong Learning

- Learner
  - Awareness
  - Time
  - Financial resources
  - Employer's support
- Learning Provider
  - Infrastructure - hybrid
  - Unique value proposition – focus on skills rather than knowledge
- Eco-system
  - Governance
  - Quality assurance standards
  - Accessibility and Equity

- Reasons for non-participation in adult learning (percentage of adults who wanted to participate but did not)
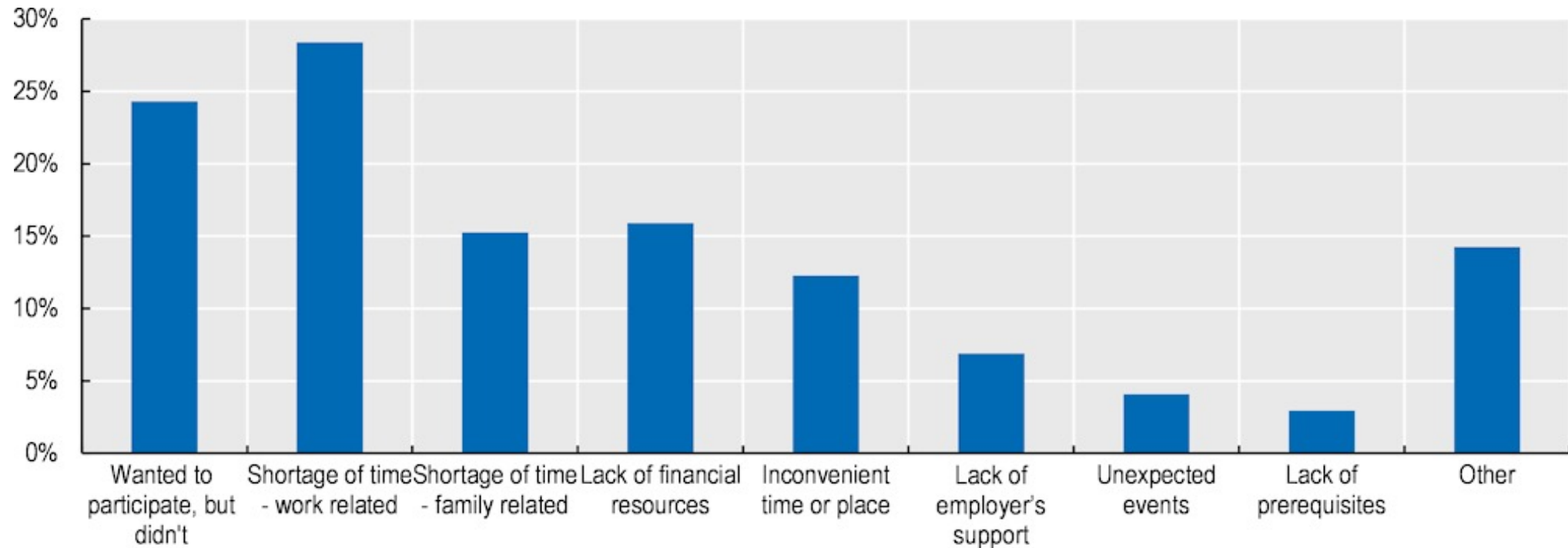
Note: Average of OECD countries participating in PIAAC. Figures refer to participation in formal and non-formal adult learning.
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on the Survey of Adult Skills, PIAAC (2012, 2015, 2017). The bar "Wanted to participate but didn't" refers to the share of adults who responded that they did not take part in training over the previous 12 months but would have liked to".
https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/the-potential-of-online-learning-for-adults-early-lessons-from-the-covid-19-crisis-ee040002/

Conclusion

- Lifelong learning has the potential to be a disrupter.
- It may eventually replace the traditional brick and mortar as employers seek role specific curriculum.
- Lifelong learning on its own will not lead to economic mobility but needs to be paired with other employer policies and practices that support on the job success.

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