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Micro-Credentials in Focus: Advancing Recognition and Lifelong Learning in Asia-Pacific

Capacity-building webinar on the UNESCO recognition conventions

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Micro-Credentials in Focus

- I. Definitions and diversity
- II. Growing demand from learners and industry
- III. Futures of flexible lifelong learning systems





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I. Definitions and diversity

**Traditional
Higher Ed**

Expansion via depth and breadth

**Micro-
credentials**

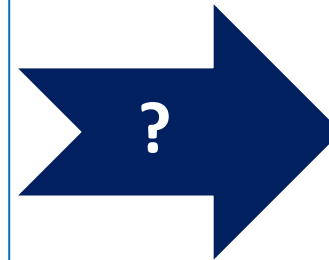
Precision via acquisition or validation

Source: Lena Patterson, 22 March 2023

[Micro-credentials Summit](#)

Working definition of micro-credentials

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



Source: UNESCO, 2022

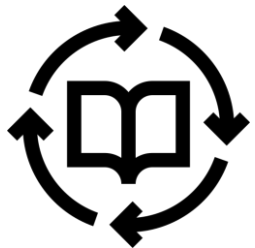
[Towards a common definition of micro-credentials](#)



Non-traditional learning modes: formal, non-formal and informal mechanisms for the delivery of educational programmes and learning activities not primarily relying on face-to-face interaction between the educator and the learner



Qualifications framework: a system for the classification, publication and organization of quality-assured qualifications according to a set of criteria



Other definitions: Non-formal learning, partial recognition, partial studies, prior learning...

Source: [Global Convention on Higher Education](#)

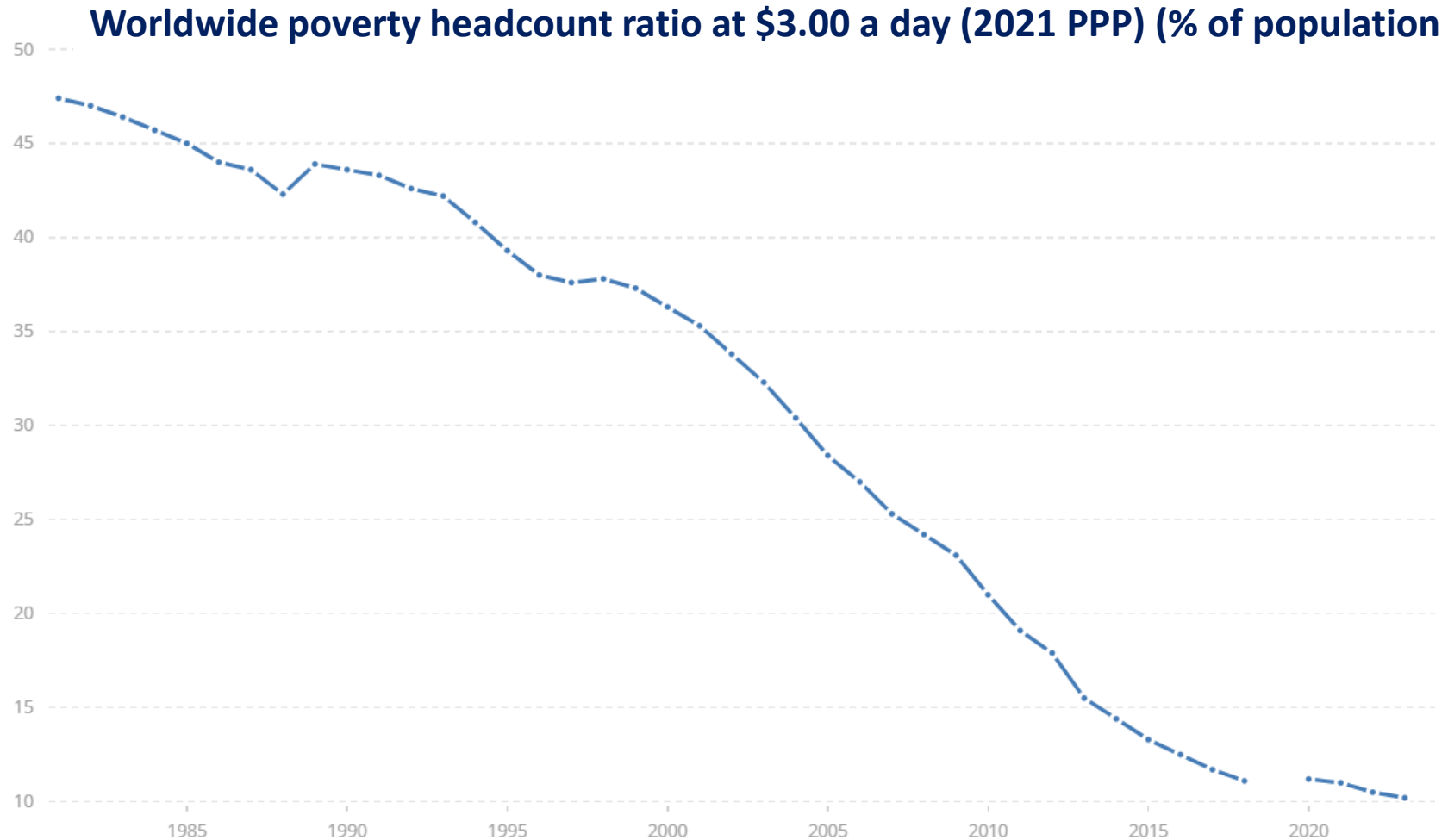


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II. Growing demand from learners and industry

Historic reductions in poverty lead to gains in quality of life

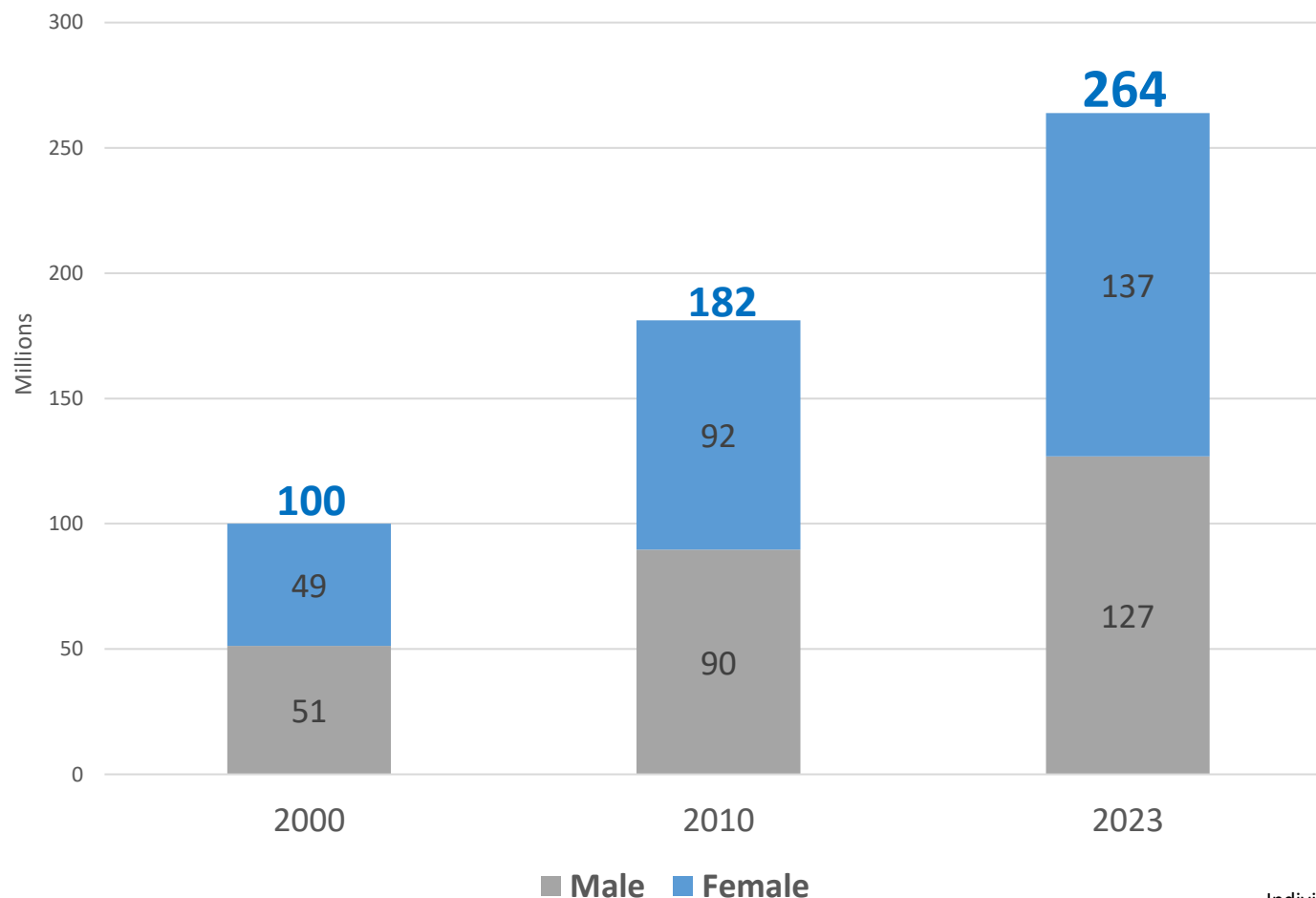
Macro-level view



Source: [World Bank](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.UK.SRVS.CV.ZS)

Growing demand for higher education

Global higher education enrolment by gender: 2000 – 2023 (# of students - in millions)



The number of students in higher education globally **more than doubled** over the past two decades up to 264 million, with women now outnumbering men.

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Enrolment in **tertiary education**, all programmes, both sexes:
Individuals officially registered in ISCED 5 - 8 programmes, or stage or module thereof, regardless of age.

Growing demand from learners and industry

Micro-credentials as an all-purpose solution?



Considering the relative novelty and growing use of micro-credentials, **evidence of their value and impact** is still scarce.

Source: [OECD, March 2023](#)

The value of micro-credentials - an employer perspective



Source: Adapted from
[CEDEFOP, 2023](#)

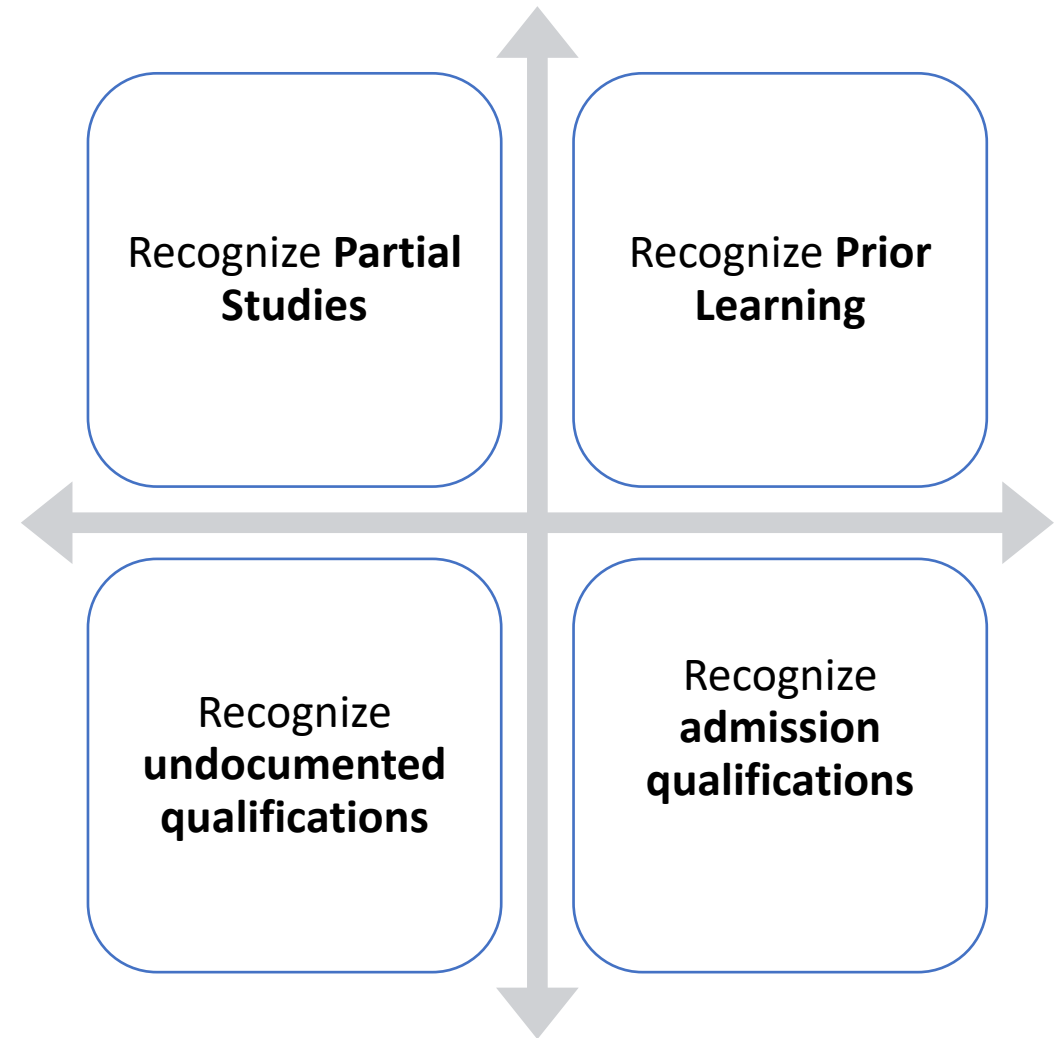


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III. Futures of flexible lifelong learning systems

**Improving lives through
equitable access to higher
education &
*fair recognition of
qualifications***

A lifelong learning perspective for recognition



Recognition and the Global Convention on Higher Education



2 million (29%)

of the world's 6.9M mobile students are hosted by the States Parties



20+ Member States

Are reported to be well-advanced with ratification procedures, including countries in all UNESCO regions



Regional conventions

35 out of 38 countries that ratified the Global Convention are States Parties to one or more regional conventions

Africa



Cabo Verde



Côte d'Ivoire



Djibouti



Guinea



Senegal



South Africa

Arab States



Palestine



Tunisia



Yemen

Asia and the Pacific



Australia



Japan



Mongolia



New Zealand



Rep. of Korea

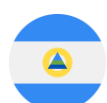
Latin America and the Caribbean



Cuba



Ecuador



Nicaragua



Uruguay

Europe



Andorra



Armenia



Bosnia & Herzegovina



Croatia



Estonia



Holy See



Finland



France



Georgia



Hungary



Iceland



Lithuania



Luxembourg



Norway



Rep. of Moldova



Romania



San Marino



Slovakia



Sweden



UK



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Education
2030

Recognition and the Global Convention on Higher Education

Education, training and learning providers are called to:

- 
1. Design micro-credentials with learning outcomes described with skill and competency taxonomies, **aligned with qualification frameworks**, as well as appropriate learning design and valid assessment methods
 2. Share data on quality assurance, learner-evaluation procedures and criteria publicly.
 3. Make micro-credential quality standards as well as recognition and validation procedures accessible for non-experts
- 
4. Implement semi-automated, transparent, fit for purpose, fair and fast recognition procedures in line with international standards and **UNESCO recognition conventions**
 5. Embrace recognition practices that enable learners to share credentials from their digital wallets

Source: 2023 International Micro-Credentials Summit Declaration

Example: Stacking courses and learning activities

Leveraging data to articulate student competencies

Enabling students to acquire lifelong skills for success at every stage of their educational journey



Source: Univ of Georgia
<https://instruction.uga.edu/>

Examples: Micro-credentials for lifelong learning



“To add to the complexity, the interface between formal recognition schemas (such as **qualifications frameworks**) and the non-formal sector can be difficult to navigate, and mostly reliant on some form of 'translation' process, such as the recognition of prior learning (RPL).

To move beyond these constraints, the trend we have observed is towards national initiatives to develop micro-credential frameworks that **map out the complementarities and pathways to formal systems.**”

Source: Keevy, et al, 2023

In UNESCO-ICHEI [CLOUD magazine](#) edited by UNESCO Bangkok

Two points of departure

- Assure the right to quality education throughout life
- Strengthen education as a public endeavor and a common good



Source: [UNESCO, 2021](#)

Towards a quality framework

UNESCO is working towards:

“Development of global quality guidelines for micro-credentials, including common definitions and principles, in partnership with organizations such as CEDEFOP, OECD and the Groningen Declaration Network (GDN).”

Source: UNESCO, 2022. [Transforming technical and vocational education and training for successful and just transitions: UNESCO Strategy 2022-2029](#)



Source: [UNESCO](#), 2025;
[UNESCO IESALC](#), 2025



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Thank you



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