ACQF-II Micro-credentials Survey Report

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List of abbreviations

ACQF	African Continental Qualifications Framework
CATS	Credit Accumulation and Transfer System
MC	Micro-credentials
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
REC	Regional Economic Community
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RQF	Regional Qualifications Framework
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

1   Background and methodology

1.1   Background and objective of the survey

The African Continental Qualifications Framework-II supports the development of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) and related policies in African countries, working in close cooperation and coordination with the relevant national authorities and with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs).

This report presents the findings of the 2023 ACQF-II Micro-credentials (MC) survey.

The aim of the survey was to collect data on the place and trends of micro-credentials in the qualifications and lifelong learning systems in different African countries. More specifically, it aimed to identify common types of micro-credentials, explore organisational differences, and investigate various characteristics such as stackability, quality assurance methods, inclusion in NQFs and information requirements. Moreover, the survey gathered stakeholder perceptions, information on the current offering of micro-credentials and future plans.

1.2   Data collection, analysis and methodology

Dissemination and data collection

The survey was distributed online, via an email campaign. The questionnaire form was open between October 23 – November 21, two targeted respondents submitted answers on December 7 and 14 respectively. The survey was opened for the receipt of additional responses between 5-12 of January, for securing additional responses.

The survey was disseminated together with the Recognition of Prior Learning survey, in one questionnaire. This choice helped ease the workload of respondents, as both surveys were distributed to large similar target groups in the same time frame. Furthermore, using one dissemination link had the potential for a higher multiplier effect, as targeted respondents were requested to disseminate the survey further.

The survey was distributed in three languages, English, French and Portuguese, to key stakeholders among AU Member States and Regional Economic Communities. The contact database was provided by the ACQF-II Content Coordinator. The survey's design, dissemination, data collection, cleaning and analysis were concluded by PPMI, with the support of the ACQF-II Content Coordinator and the ACQF-II experts.

Together with the RPL questionnaire, the survey had 76 questions. Out of the 76, 7 questions were 'common', surveying general aspects, such as the residence and organisation of respondents. The micro-credentials questionnaire comprised 39 questions.

Methodological considerations

In total, the Micro-credentials and Recognition of Prior Learning survey received 59 complete responses. Complete responses are considered those that have answered all obligatory questions and reached the end of the survey – thus, non-mandatory questions may not have been answered by all 59 respondents.

The total number of complete responses came from 28 countries. Subsequently, some countries received multiple responses. Initial analysis made clear that in certain cases, responses are conflicting, even if these are from the same country and organisation. Thus, the survey results were validated by the ACQF-II experts in case of the more factual questions. In such cases, we also present country-by-country results, alongside the original results. In the case of more subjective questions, that survey perceptions or attitudes, results are presented as is.

The report primarily presents results by frequencies and absolute values, instead of percentages. This choice is motivated by the number of responses, which does not exceed the one-hundred limit, generally considered the lowest threshold for presenting non-distorted results in percentages.

In the case of country-by-country tables, results were recoded in cases where diverging answers were registered from respondents from the same organisation or country. Key questions were validated by a group of experts to reconcile diverging responses from respondents within the same country or the same organisation. In the case of multiple-choice questions, the country-by-country tables include the occurrence of each answer option that was selected at least once.

The data collected during the survey exercise was examined using descriptive analysis, cross-tabulation analysis and qualitative content analysis.

The micro-credentials part of the survey was structured as follows:

- Conceptual approaches to micro-credentials
- Usage of micro-credentials
- Characteristics of micro-credentials
- Attitudes, needs and approaches regarding micro-credentials

1.3 Consideration of the incidence of diverging responses

There were a few questions where diverging responses appeared. For instance, opinions between different organisations in the same country varied when asked about the existence of a formal definition of micro-credentials and considering the extent to which micro-credentials are referred to in policy documents. This might be due to limited access to some of the information or the absence of consensus over the process of the development of micro-credentials. In cases of contradictory answers, priority was granted to the responses from the representatives of the government or other national institutions keeping in mind that these respondents are at the centre of policy-making.

1.4 Geography

The survey has received responses from 28 countries. Most were recorded from Zambia (7), Burkina Faso (4), Eswatini (4), Guinea-Bissau (4), Mozambique (4) and Seychelles (4). Angola, Kenya, Morocco, and Tunisia all received 3-3 responses, South Africa and Uganda 2 responses, while all other countries have received 1 response. The table below presents the respondent frequencies across the countries.

Figure 1. Number of respondents across participating countries

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■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 7 ■ No data

1.5 Organisational background

Two types of organisations, both national institutions, make up the better part, more than half of the survey. Most respondents are affiliated with national institutions responsible for NQFs, with 17 responses (a bit less than a third of all responses) and with national government institutions (15 responses)

Table 1. Respondents by type of organisation

	Percent	Count
National institution responsible for the national qualifications framework	28.80%	17
National government institution (e.g. ministry)	25.40%	15
Quality assurance agency	10.20%	6
Public education and training provider (e.g. university, school)	10.20%	6
Regional economic community or organisation	6.80%	4
Private education and training provider	5.10%	3
Employer organisation (e.g. professional associations, chamber of commerce etc.)	3.40%	2
International development agency	3.40%	2
Other	3.40%	2
Career guidance body	1.70%	1
Company	1.70%	1

2   Survey results

2.1   Conceptual approaches to micro-credentials

2.1.1   Usage of terms and formal definitions

Given the relative novelty of the concept itself, there are various definitions put forward for micro-credentials.

According to UNESCO, micro-credentials are increasingly promoted as a more flexible way of recognizing knowledge, skills, and competences. They give learners and employees the possibility to collect and combine smaller units of learning according to their specific needs and, as such, are often seen as facilitating lifelong and life-wide learning. Further, they are a "record of focused learning achievement verifying what the learner knows, understands and can do" that includes an assessment based on clearly defined standards and awarded by trusted providers. Micro-credentials have "standalone value and may contribute to or complement other micro-credentials and macro-credentials" and "meet the standards required by the relevant quality assurance" (UNESCO, 2022). The EU, in its working definition, outlines micro-credentials as "proof of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a short learning experience" (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training. 2022a). The definition includes further characteristics, such as assessment against transparent standards, containment of proof in a certified document that specifies various information on the awarding body, assessment methods, name of the holder and the achieved learning outcomes.[1] Cedefop portrays micro-credentials as a new way for individuals to build their own skills profile by collecting and 'stacking' learning in a flexible way, at their own pace, and according to their own priorities.[2]

In sum, these definitions highlight the flexibility, possibility of customisation as well as the duration of the learning period, that are characteristic of micro-credentials. At the same time, the simulatenously introduced definitions show that the field is very much in motion currently. As summarised in the ACQF Thematic CPD Briefs no. 13, the key common characteristics of micro-credentials are:

- Referring to learning over a limited time period and/or in a specific area,
- May form part of or adding to formal qualifications,
- Potentially 'stackable' over time, adding to individual learning careers,
- Given their limited size and focus, more flexible than traditional qualifications,
- Based on assessed learning,
- Frequently delivered in a digital form. [3]

The usage and state of development of micro-credentials in Africa was estimated via a 4-scale question, specifying various degrees of adoption. In decreasing order, we surveyed the following stages of the adoption of micro-credentials:

- Micro-credentials are used, well established in the policy framework and used by providers and learning
- Micro-credentials are new and used among providers and learners is only starting

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[1] https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/micro-credentials

[2] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/microcredentials-labour-market-education-and-training

[3] https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-13-micro-credentials-concepts-debates-experiences-2013-towards-a-common-understanding-in-different-parts-of-the-world/@@display-file/file/Thematic%20Brief%2013_Micro-credentials_towards%20common%20understanding_WEB.pdf

- Micro-credentials are used, but only in the context of policy debate and research
- Micro-credentials are not used in any context

In line with results observed in Europe (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training. 2022b), the micro-credentials space is in evolution in Africa as well, with countries being at different stages. The figure below indicates that half of the respondents (18, 50.0%) claim that the formal definition of micro-credentials in their country is in the process of development, this forms a majority compared to other options. Another considerable part (13, 36.1%) indicates that there is no formal definition of the term in their educational system. Only 3 (8.3%) respondents stated the existence of an established definition of micro-credentials, while the rest (2, 5.6%) admitted that they could not answer.

Figure 2. Formal definitions of micro-credentials (data by respondents)
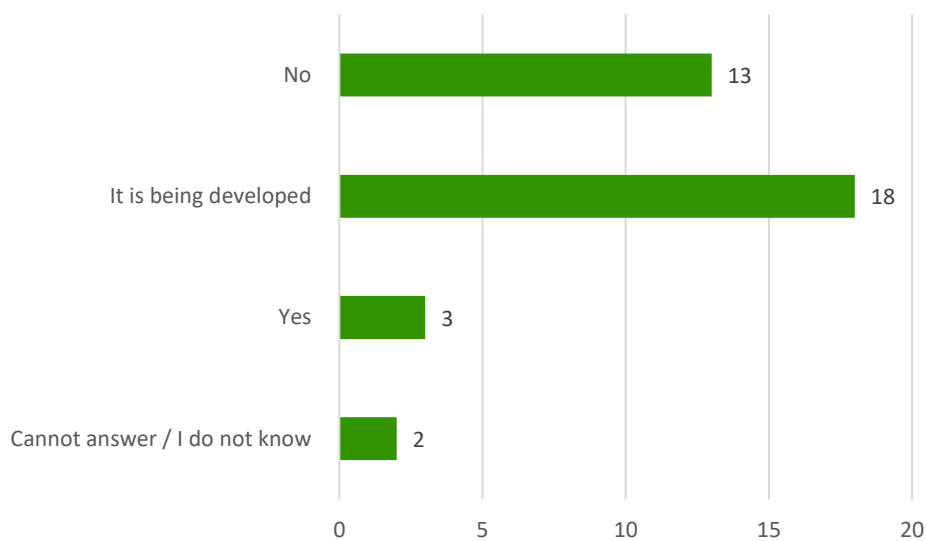
While in most cases formal definition is in development, usage of the term "micro-credential" is already apparent in respondents' countries and organisations. Overall, 36 respondents (61.0%) answered that the term is used in the context of their education systems. Out of those, 3 (5.1% out of all respondents) stated that it is well established in the framework and used widely by the stakeholders. 17 (28.8%) and 16 (27.1%) claimed that the usage is only starting or that it is used only in the context of policy debate respectively. 19 or 32.2% of respondents indicated that the term in their country's context is not used at all while the rest (4, 6.8%) couldn't answer or did not know. The figure illustrating the answers can be seen below.

Figure 3. Usage of micro-credentials (data by respondents)
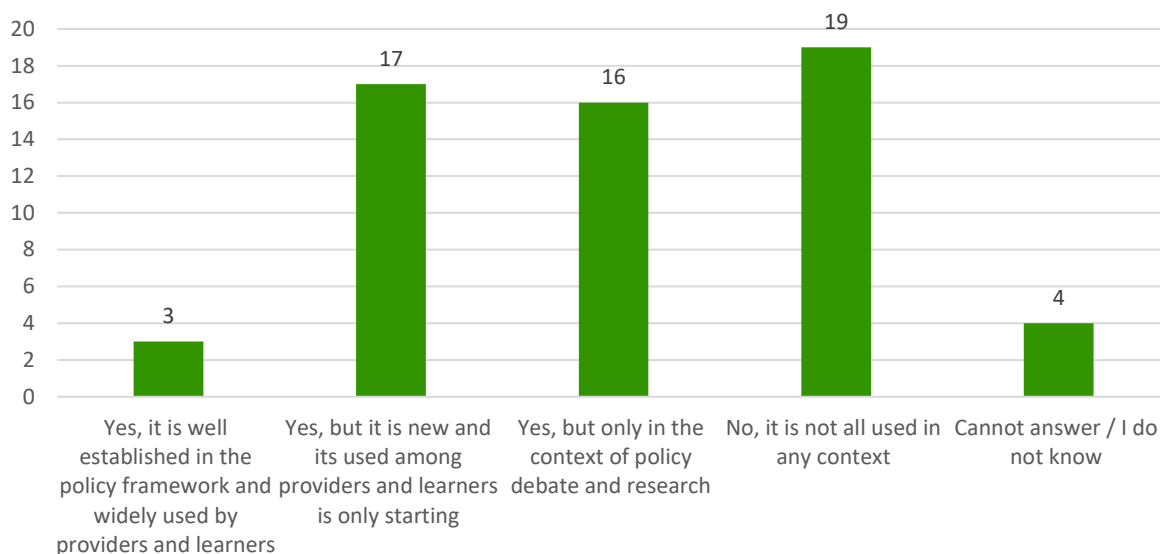
Out of all respondents where the definition is established and the term is used, 3 stakeholders provided the definitions of mircro-credentials used in their country. They are presented in table below:

Table 2. The existing definition of micro-credentials

	Explanation
Sudan	Credits indicate the volume of learning , and is based on national hours of learning. 10 national hours of learning = 1 credit
Zambia	Skills under TEVETA Recognised Prior Learning or Trade Test Level 3
	Trade qualifications. Obtained in a short estimation period and on a specific subject or field of education

When asked, 9 out of the 22 respondents (40.9%) answered to use another term than micro-credentials. The table below presents the alternative definitions:

Table 3. Official definitions of other terms approximating the meaning of micro-credentials

What is your country of residence?	Original language	Translation
Angola	Cursos de curta duração, e acções de capacitação	Short courses and training activities
Burkina Faso	Attestation de participation à la formation	Certificate of attendance
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Examen National de Fin d'Etude Professionnelle ENFP	National Examination for the End of Professional Studies ENFP
Guinea-Bissau	Certificado de capacitação	Training certificate
Kenya	Statement of Attainment, Certificate of Participation, Certificate of Completion	
Malawi	Certificate of competence or Records of Achievements	
Mozambique	In our country the minimum certifiable accomplishment is the Unity Standard	
Zambia	These are qualifications that are professionally accepted for example at a skill levels	

2.1.2 Frequency of use

Micro-credentials are not yet referred to in official policy documents according to the plurality of the responses (21, 46.7%). Around a third of the responses reported that the concept is mentioned or referred to (16, 35.6%), while quite a lot of respondents could not answer the question (8, 17.8%).

On the other hand, discussions in national and regional fora are more extended, which can be expected to result in a future increase in the presence of micro-credentials in national or regional policy strategies. Results show that almost the majority of the respondents think that micro-credentials are discussed at least to a large extent or very large extent (20, 44.4%). An identical share thinks that there are discussions to a smaller extent (20), while only 4 responses (8.9%) claimed that there are no discussions.

The difference between the interest and discussions in micro-credentials on the one hand and the requency of currently existing definitions across countries on the other hand, show that just as elsewhere,[4] the appeal of micro-credentials is present in the continent as well, with strong political and sectoral interests.

Figure 4. Extent of discussing micro-credentials (or approximate terms) in national and regional policy discussions (data by respondents)
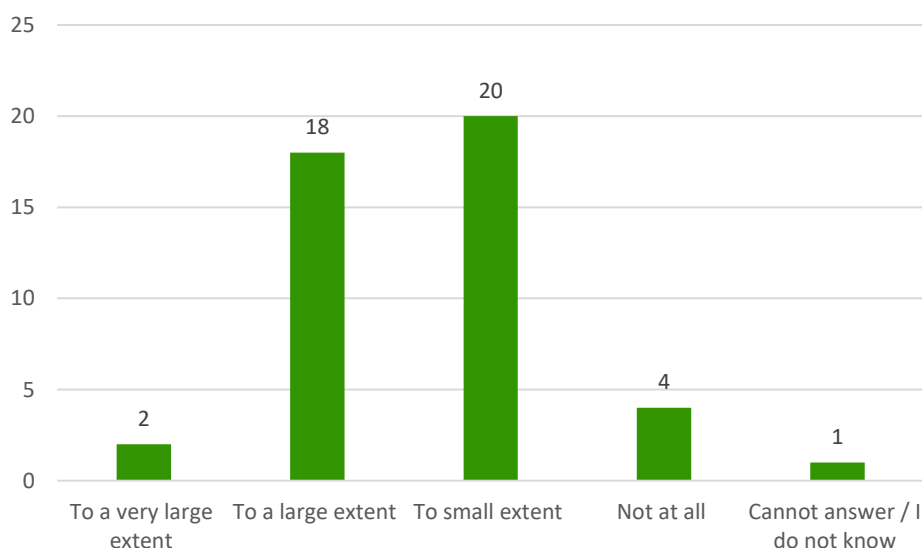
Below, we summarise these results across countries. It is important to bare in mind, however, that the question measures the perceptions of surveyed stakeholders.

Table 4. Extent of discussing micro-credentials in policy discussions (country-by-country)

	To a very large extent	To a large extent	To small extent	Not at all	Cannot answer / I do not know
Angola		+			
Botswana				+	
Burkina Faso[5]		+			
Cabo Verde		+			
Chad			+		

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[4]   https://acqf.africa/resources/micro-credentials/acqf-support-debate-and-information-on-micro-credentials-concepts-policies-experiences

[5] Based on the answer of a more authoritative organisation

Democratic Republic of the Congo	+			
Eswatini (formerly Swaziland)		+		
Ghana		+		
Guinea-Bissau		+		
Kenya		+		
Malawi	+			
Mauritius		+		
Mozambique		+		
Namibia		+		
Nigeria		+		
Rwanda	+			
Senegal	+			
Seychelles	+			
Somalia				
South Africa	+			
Sudan	+			
Tunisia	+			
Uganda	+			
Zambia		+		

2.1.3 Sectors and providers

Micro-credentials are often seen as an instrumental tool to reskilling and upskilling within the VET sector (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, 2024).

In line with this and according to the survey data, micro-credentials are outstandingly more times offered in technical and vocational education and training sector as selected by 36 (47.4%) respondents. Almost two times fewer (19, 25%) respondents indicated that micro-credentials are applied in higher education, while 12 (15.8%) answered that they are offered in adult education. 2 (2.6%) respondents implied that micro-credentials are not offered in any of the education sectors. More detailed information is represented by the figure below.

Figure 5. Education and training sectors offering micro-credentials (multiple choice, data by respondents)
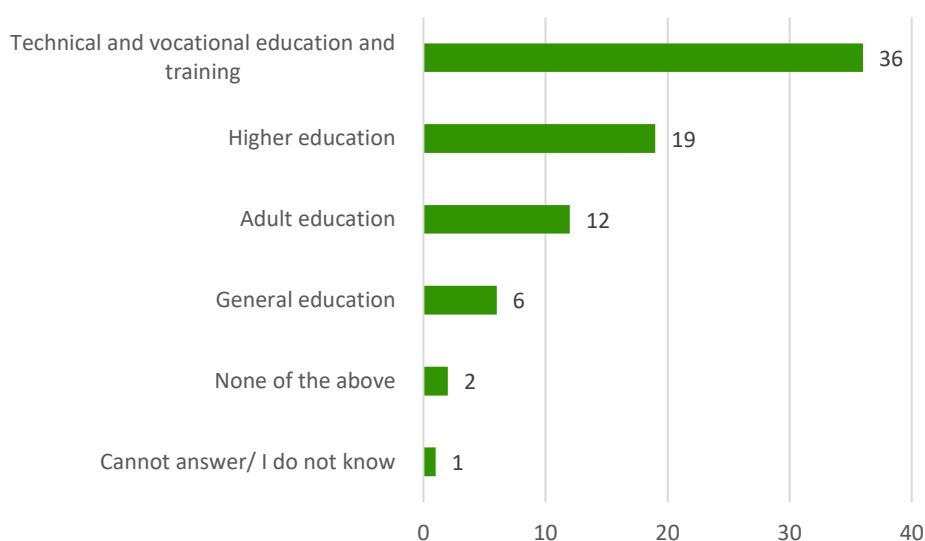
Continuing further on the line of observed variations in the different stages of adoption of micr-credentials it can be established that countries' also differ in temrs of the various sectors where micro-credentials are present. Some countries, such as Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau and Zambia, offer them in every sector. Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria and Rwanda offer micro-credentials only in technical and vocational education and training, while Namibia only in adult education. Respondents from Chad stated that micro-credentials aren't provided in any of the sectors. Down below can be seen a table with responses from each country.

Table 5. Education and training sectors offering micro-credentials (country-by-country)

	General education	Technical and vocational education and training	Higher education	Adult education	None of the above	Cannot answer/ I do not know
Angola		+				
Botswana						+
Burkina Faso	+	+	+	+		
Cabo Verde			+			
Chad					+	
Democratic Republic of the Congo		+				
Djibouti						
Egypt						
Eswatini (formerly Swaziland)		+	+			
Ethiopia						
Ghana		+				
Guinea-Bissau	+	+	+	+		
Kenya		+	+			
Malawi		+				
Mauritius		+	+			

Morocco						
Mozambique		+	+			
Namibia				+		
Nigeria		+				
Rwanda		+				
Senegal		+	+	+		
Seychelles		+	+	+		
Somalia						
South Africa		+	+	+		
Sudan		+	+			
Tunisia		+	+	+		
Uganda		+				
Zambia	+	+	+	+		

Comment: all the options that had at least one response were marked.

As underlined by many reports and studies on the topic, the credibility and trustworthiness of providers is crucial to ensure the success and value of micro-credentials. Similar to patterns observed elsewhere (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, 2023), there is a wide variety of providers among the responding countries. Considering these, vocational education and training providers are mentioned slightly more frequently than others – 29 (17.9%), respondents having indicated them as the main providers. Companies and professional bodies follow with 21 (13.0%) and 20 (12.3%) respondents.

The data also shows that providers of digital micro-credentials, such as online learning platforms are less strongly present (18 responsnes or 11.1%). Similarly, universities were chosen by 18 (11.1%) respondents. Trade unions and schools were selected the least amount of times – the former was selected by 7 (4.3%) respondents while the latter by 4 (2.5%). 1 (0.6%) respondent referred to other institutions. A more detailed view can be seen in the figure below.

Figure 6. Main providers of micro-credentials (multiple-choice, data by respondents)
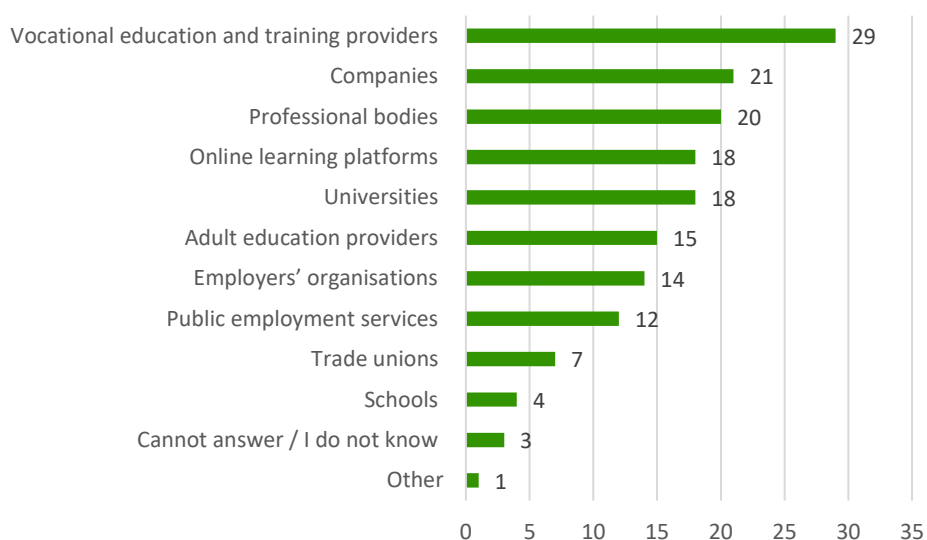
The table below shows the main providers of micro-credentials by country. In a couple of countries, all of the sectors are offering micro-credentials. This is the case in Burkina Faso, Guinnea-Bissau and Zambia. Among countries that have providers in most of the sectors are Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Seychelles and South Africa. Some countries have only one or two sectors that are micro-credential providers. These

countries include Angola, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique and Namibia. More detailed country-by-country data can be found in the table.

Table 6. Main providers of micro-credentials (country-by-country)

	Schools	Vocational education and training providers	Universities	Adult education providers	Public employment services	Companies	Professional bodies	Trade unions	Employers' organisations	Online learning platforms	Other	Cannot answer / I do not know
Angola		+								+		
Botswana												+
Burkina Faso	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		
Cabo Verde					+	+	+					
Chad												+
Democratic Republic of the Congo				+	+	+	+	+	+			
Djibouti												
Egypt												
Eswatini (formerly Swaziland)		+	+		+	+	+	+	+	+		
Ethiopia												
Ghana						+			+	+		
Guinea-Bissau	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		
Kenya		+	+			+	+		+	+		
Malawi		+										
Mauritius										+		
Morocco												
Mozambique		+					+					+
Namibia						+						
Nigeria		+					+	+		+		
Rwanda		+					+		+			
Senegal		+	+	+						+		

Seychelles		+	+	+	+	+	+		+			
Somalia												
South Africa		+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	
Sudan		+	+	+		+						
Tunisia		+	+	+	+					+		
Uganda		+	+		+	+	+			+		
Zambia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		

Comment: all the options that had at least one response were marked.

2.1.4 Recipients' characteristics

Regarding the age of the learners, most of the respondents (26, 36.6%) claimed that the main recipients of micro-credentials are aged between 20-35 years. Almost a quarter of stakeholders (17, 23.9%) indicated that micro-credentials are used in the education of people aged 36-54 years old. The same amount of respondents (10, 14.1%) respondents stated that the main recipients are people from 16 to 19 years old. Thus, the focus on younger recipients seems to emphasize the important of micro-credentials providing career paths and learning opportunities, among others.

Importantly, a substantial share of respondents indicated that learners of all age groups are considered to be recipients of micro-credentials. More comprehensive data can be seen in the figure below.

Figure 7. Main recipients of micro-credentials across different age categories (data by respondents)
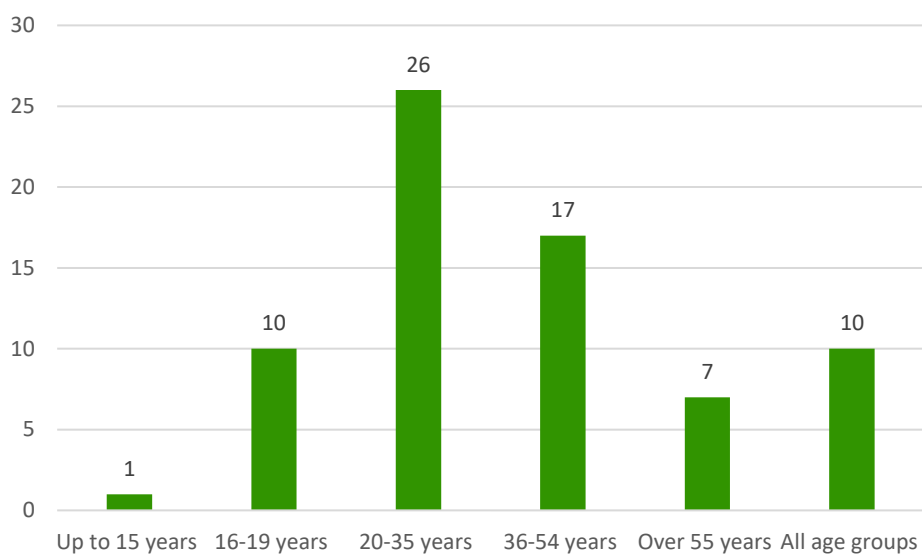
The main micro-credential recipients across various groups of learners are individuals in non-formal and informal learning – they were selected by almost one-fifth of respondents (23, 19.3%). Employed individuals were indicated by 19 stakeholders (16.0%), while workers of the informal sector and self-employed individuals were chosen by 16 (13.4%) and 15 (12.6%) respondents respectively. 10 (8.4%) respondents indicated that all learners' groups benefit from micro-credentials. The least frequently (2, 1.7%) respondents chose retired individuals as the main recipients of micro-credentials. More detailed data on the type of recipients is presented in the figure below.

Figure 8. Main recipients of micro-credentials by various groups of learners (data by respondents)

Group	Value
Individuals in non-formal and informal learning	23
Employed individuals	19
Workers of the informal sector	16
Self-employed individuals	15
Unemployed individuals	13
Individuals in formal education	11
All groups	10
Employers	6
Cannot answer / I do not know	4
Retired individuals	2
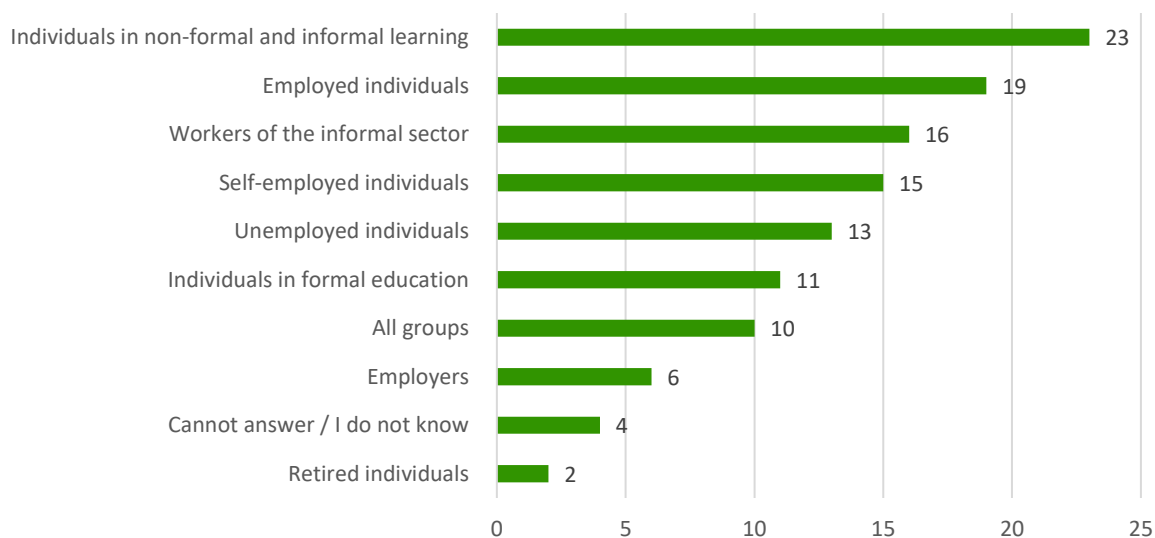
2.1.5   Future trends

As corroborated by Cedefop's findings, micro-credentials are on the rise in the African continent as well as elsewhere in the world (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training. 2022a).

Accordingly, the future growth prospects regarding the offer of micro-credentials are positively evaluated by the respondents. The absolute majority indicated that the growth is expected to a large or a very large extent – such expectations were claimed by 19 (42.2%) and 18 (40%) respondents out of 45 respectively. Only 3 (6.7%) people answered that the growth is expected to happen to a small extent, the same amount of respondents could not answer the question. Please see the figure illustrating the survey results below.

Figure 9. Future growth expected in the offer of micro-credentials (data by respondents)

Category	Value
To a very large extent	19
To a large extent	18
To a small extent	3
We do not have sufficient data	2
Cannot answer / I do not know	3
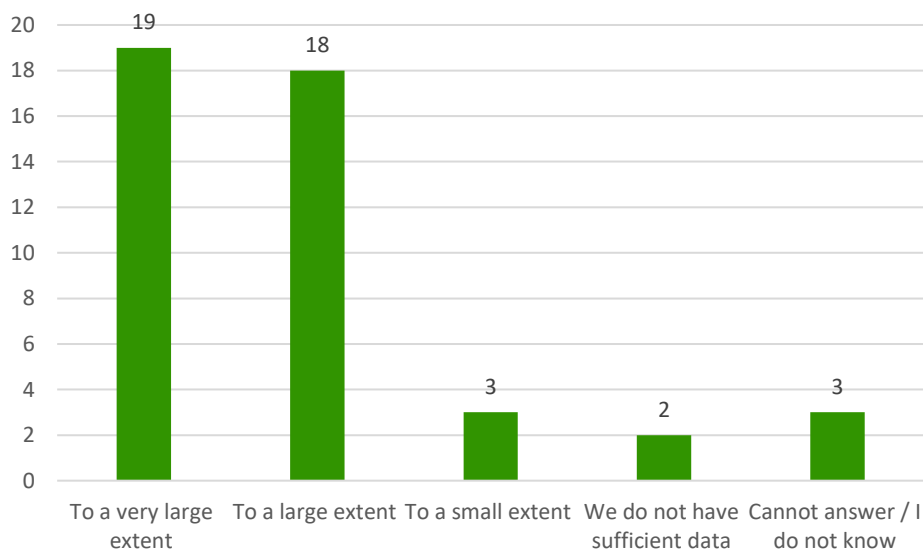
2.2 Characteristics of micro-credentials

2.2.1 Types of micro-credentials

8 of the 11 relevant organisations (public and private training providers, career guidance bodies, public employment services, employer organisations, and companies) report to offer some type of micro-credentials. In 6 out of 8 cases, the offered micro-credentials are provided both free of charge and in paid financing models, while in 2 cases, only paid micro-credentials were reported.

As can be seen below, there are various types of micro-credentials offered, the most frequent of which are more labour-market-oriented. Accordingly, professional certificates (31), skills programmes (29) and vocational certificates (24) are the most common types of micro-credentials. Interestingly, digital types of certifications seem to be less frequently occurring.

Figure 10. Most common types of micro-credentials offered in responding countries (data by respondents)
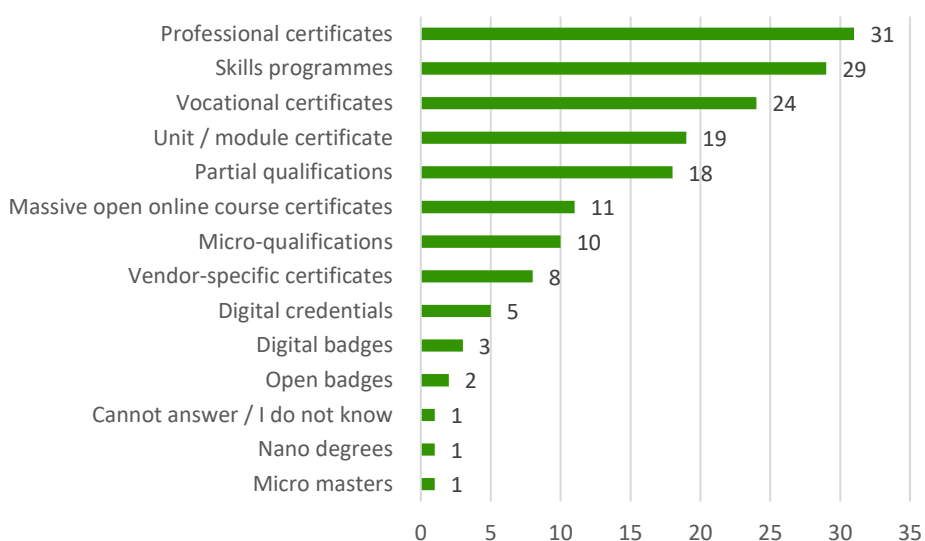
In terms of types of micro-credentials, Zambia offers the most types of micro-credentials compared to other countries (10). Guinea-Bissau and South Africa's educational system, according to stakeholders, have 9 types of micro-credentials. Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Mauritius have only one or two common types of micro-credentials in their offering. More detailed data can be found in the table below.

Table 7. Most common types of micro-credentials offered (country-by-country)

Type of micro-credentials	Countries
Micro masters	Zambia
Partial qualifications	Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Tunisia, Zambia
Professional certificates	Angola, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia
Vocational certificates	Burkina Faso, Chad, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia
Unit / module certificate	Cabo Verde, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, Tunisia, Zambia
Skills programmes	Angola, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland),

	Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia
Digital badges	Namibia, Senegal, South Africa
Digital credentials	Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia
Micro-qualifications	Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Zambia
Vendor-specific certificates	Burkina Faso, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Zambia
Massive open online course certificates	Angola, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia
Open badges	Mauritius, Uganda
Nano degrees	Guinea-Bissau
Cannot answer / I do not know	Mozambique

When asked about reasons for not offering micro-credentials, the organisations cited various considerations, all of which were represented in largely equal weight. Out of the 10 possible choice options, training providers explained that they do not offer micro-credentials because employers do not recognise these (2), micro-credentials are not accredited by responsible agencies/bodies, they are not compatible with NQFs (2) or because the organisation only offers full qualifications.

2.2.2 Elements of micro-credentials and stackability

The micro-credentials on offer may have various information elements displayed on them. The current picture shows that there are a few elements are shared unanimously through all the organisations, which are the most necessary pieces of information. More specifically, the date of issuing (8), the issuing authority or awarding body (8), the title of micro-credential (7) and the identification of the holder (6) are the most used information elements on micro-credentials are the central pieces of information.

Prerequisites for participation (5), the purpose and scope of learning activities (5), results of the assessment (4) and the type of assessment (4) are marginally less used elements. In comparison, quality assurance status, form of participation, workload expressed in credits/duration, learning outcomes and duration of validity are all less often used (3) elements. Relationships to existing qualifications are specified in only one case.

Figure 11. Information elements of micro-credentials offered by responding organisations (data by respondents)
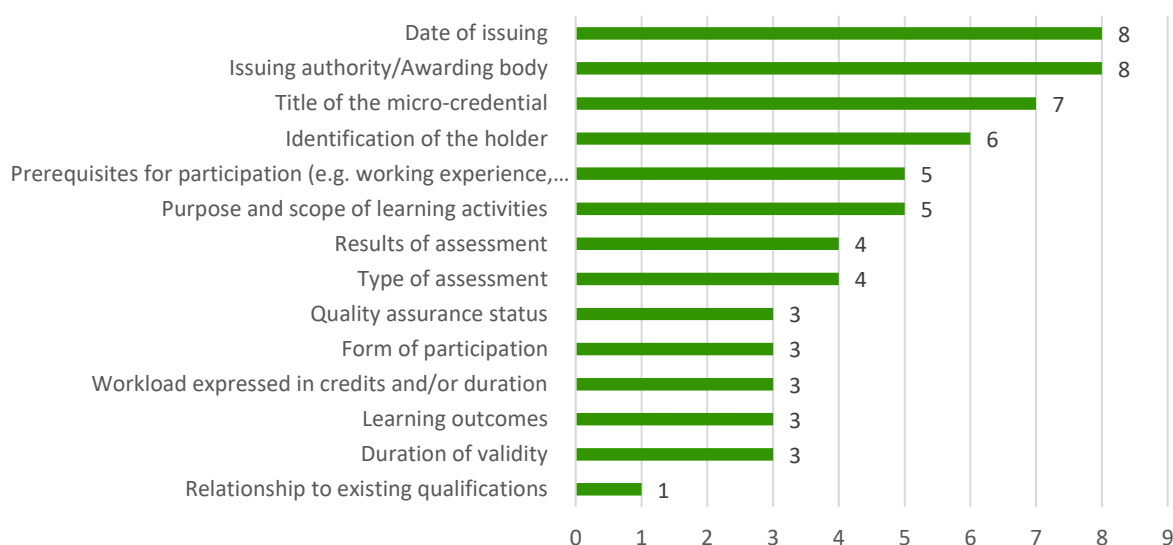
Regarding country-by-country data, South Africa, Rwanda and Zambia are among those that provide a wider list of information elements on micro-credentials. In turn, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, and Tunisia usually have fewer elements present. The table below shows what information elements each country possesses, based on the responses recorded.

Table 8. Information elements of micro-credentials offered (country-by-country)

Information element offered	Countries
Identification of the holder	Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Tunisia, Zambia
Title of the micro-credential	Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Tunisia, Zambia
Issuing authority/Awarding body	Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Tunisia, Zambia
Date of issuing	Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Tunisia, Zambia
Duration of validity	Rwanda, South Africa, Zambia
Purpose and scope of learning activities	Burkina Faso, Rwanda, South Africa, Zambia
Learning outcomes	Rwanda, South Africa, Zambia
Prerequisites for participation (e.g. working experience, skills and/or qualifications required)	Ghana, Rwanda, South Africa, Zambia
Workload expressed in credits and/or duration	Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa
Type of assessment	Rwanda, South Africa, Tunisia, Zambia
Results of assessment	Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Tunisia
Form of participation	Ghana, Rwanda, South Africa
Relationship to existing qualifications	Zambia

One crucial advantage of micro-credentials is the possibility to combine them with other credentials. Out of those who completed the survey, 4 of the organisations (50%) provide a possibility for micro-credentials to be stacked up or combined with other qualifications and credentials. 3 do not offer stackability options and 1 could not answer the question. Further, various methods of stackability are employed by providers of micro-credentials, with the possibility of combining it into a full qualification (3), recognition of prior learning (3), recognition as part of an education and training programme (3) or the combination of micro-credentials into a larger credential (2).

2.2.3 Quality assurance procedures

As Cedefop establishes, the uprise in the demand for micro-credentials has also increased the supply. This proliferation, however, can imply the appearance of unregulated certifications that may undermine credibility on the medium- and long-term (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, 2022a). Hence, the different solutions and practices regarding quality assurance will be crucial to ensure the value of these. When asked about quality assurance procedures applied by the respondents' organisations, somewhat fewer countries provided their feedback. According to this, most respondents make use of formalised assessments, with internal and external assessors who are sufficiently qualified. More detailed answers can be found in the table below. Nevertheless, the relatively low number of responses warrants that this aspect should be more closely analysed in future research and that more focus should be put on it during policy-making processes.

Table 9. Quality assurance procedures of organisations offering micro-credentials

	Description of quality assurance procedures applied to micro-credentials
Ghana	1. Selection of content on relevant & contemporary issues 2. Adequate contact time, group and individual tasks and exercises that enrich the learner's experience. Experiential learning is key. 3. Only vetted and

	qualified personnel are engaged to deliver and facilitate. 4. Learners should have certain pre-requisite knowledge and skills that are related to what they want to do but even those without are also accommodated at their own level.
Kenya	1. Involvement of formative and summative assessments. It incorporates internal and external assessors.
Rwanda	1. Needs Assessment. 2. Curriculum development 3. Curriculum validation 4. Trainer monitoring and assessment 5. Inspection
South Africa	1. None at the moment
Zambia	1. Answer questions during facilitation and written graded marked test
	1. It has to be planned by a team (need-based) and approved at the departmental, school or senate level

2.3   Relation with National Qualifications Frameworks

2.3.1   Inclusion of micro-credentials in NQFs

Most of the countries of the survey have a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in the pipeline. Accordingly, 23 (85.2%) out of 27 countries have reached at least a stage of adoption or implementation or operation. Only 4 (14.8%) respondents stated that the NQF did not achieve this stage in their country. The figure below illustrates the results.

When asked about the possibility of including micro-credentials in existing NQFs, most respondents (12, 52.2%) who answered yes to the earlier question reported that micro-credentials are indeed included. Only 2 (8.7%) respondents stated that these types of credentials are not included. Out of those where micro-credentials are not yet included in NQFs, one respondent stated that it is planned to include them.

However, a considerable amount of respondents (9, 39.1%) admitted that they could not answer the question. The figure below illustrates the results.

Figure 12. Possibility to include micro-credentials in national NQF (data by respondents)
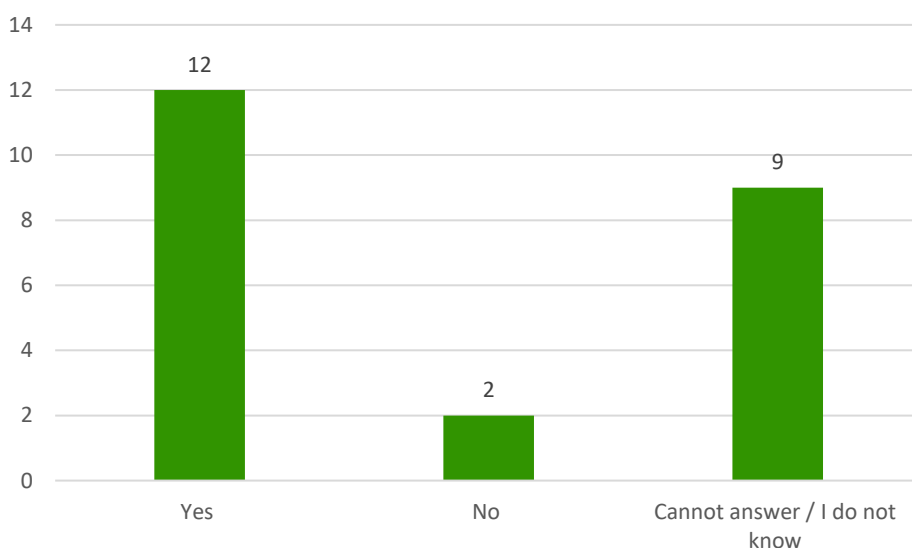
2.3.2   Levels, information elements and stackability of micro-credentials included in NQFs

Respondents were also asked at which levels micro-credentials are available. The table below provides received responses.

Table 10. Micro-credentials availability at different levels

	Details provided on included levels
Eswatini (formerly Swaziland)	At all levels
Guinea-Bissau	It'll be at level 5.
Kenya	Level 3 - 4
Mauritius	None
Seychelles	From Certificate level
	Level 3-5
South Africa	Currently, the South African NQF registers part-qualifications. All part-qualifications reside in the occupational qualifications sub-framework and are at varying levels.
Tunisia	Level 3-4-5.
Zambia	Not yet included
	Primary level

In comparison to micro-credentials in general, more information elements are present in the case of micro-credentials that are included in the NQFs of the surveyed countries. This draws attention to the importance of integrating micro-credentials into more structured frameworks, in order to increase the value of these credentials.

The most frequently selected element is the issuing authority/awarding body, among the most popular answers also appear learning outcomes, date of issuing and title of micro-credentials. All of these elements were mentioned by 20 or more respondents. The least frequent elements are the type of assessment, prerequisites for participation and form of participation – two former were selected 12 times whereas the latter 8 times. A more detailed information is illustrated in the figure below.

These results are roughly in line with the minimal definitions and required pieces of information, as discussed at the beginning of section 2.1.1. However, the type of assessment is less often included, instead, focus is put more on the result of the assessment itself.

Figure 13. Information elements of micro-credentials included in NQFs (multiple choice, data by respondents)
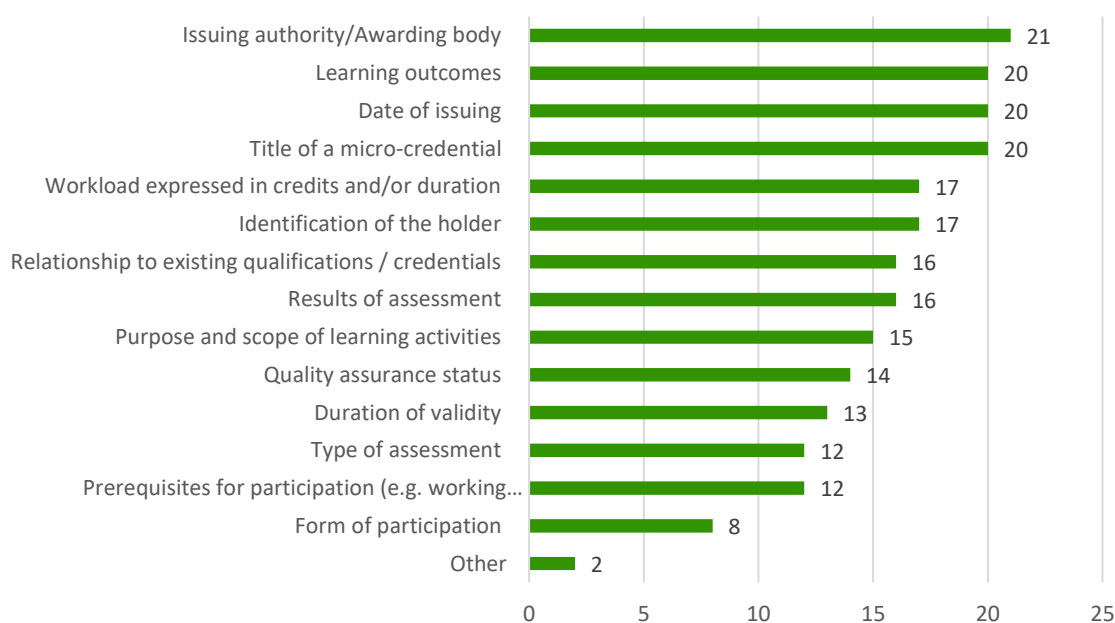
When considering results from each country, Eswatini, Guinea-Bissau and Seychelles stand out among others in the amount of information elements of micro-credentials included in the NQF. According to the respondents, they have all of the elements listed in their NQFs. While Angola, Cabo Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Tunisia and Zambia have at least a few elements, other countries do not have them or there is no knowledge of them. A representative from Mauritius stated that micro-credentials aren't yet developed. More detailed information on each element and the countries that possess them can be seen in the table below.

Table 11. Information elements of micro-credentials included in NQFs (country-by-country)

Information elements included in the NQF	Countries
Identification of the holder	Cabo Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Malawi, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia
Title of a micro-credential	Cabo Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, Tunisia, Zambia
Issuing authority/Awarding body	Cabo Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, Tunisia, Zambia
Date of issuing	Cabo Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, Tunisia, Zambia
Duration of validity	Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa
Purpose and scope of learning activities	Cabo Verde, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, Tunisia, Zambia
Learning outcomes	Angola, Cabo Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia
Prerequisites for participation (e.g. working experience, skills and/or qualifications required)	Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa
Workload expressed in credits and/or duration	Angola, Cabo Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia
Type of assessment	Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Seychelles, Zambia
Results of assessment	Cabo Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mozambique, Seychelles, Zambia
Form of participation	Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Seychelles
Quality assurance status	Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia
Relationship to existing qualifications / credentials	Angola, Chad, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia
Other	Mauritius, Mozambique
Not yet developed	Mauritius

8 out of the 12 responded that micro-credentials can be stacked up with other qualifications and credentials. Furthermore, the possibilities of stackability are realised via recognition of prior learning (6), recognition as part of an education and training programme (6), credit accumulation (4), through combining it into a larger credential (4) or into a full qualification (4).

2.4 Attitudes, needs and approaches to micro-credentials
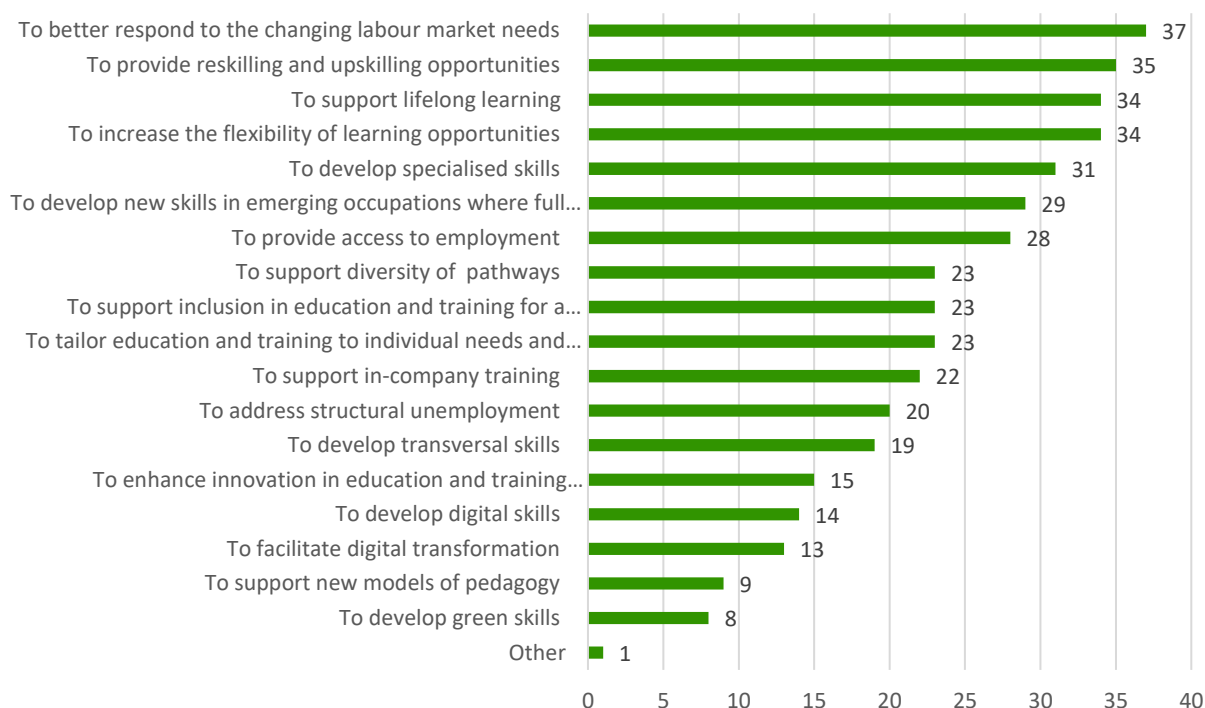
2.4.1 Main purposes of micro-credentials

As seen from the figure below, micro-credentials may serve various purposes according to the surveyed respondents. The most popular purpose is to better respond to the changing labour market needs (37).

Other purposes that were chosen more than 30 times include providing reskilling and upskilling opportunities (35), supporting lifelong learning (34), increasing the flexibility of learning opportunities (34) and developing specialised skills (31). Only two purposes were mentioned by less than 10 respondents; these include supporting new models of pedagogy (9), to develop green skills (8) and other (1).

Thus, stakeholders expect that micro-credentials will fulfil various roles and make a positive contribution ranging from increasing learning opportunities to reducing skills gaps and providing further learning pathways. These results show that stakeholders are cognizant of what the literature on micro-credentials sees as the most attractive features: increasing employability, supporting CPD and workplace training, and increasing flexibility for learning.[6]

Figure 14. Main purposes of micro-credentials (multiple choice, up to 8 of the most important items, data by respondents)

Purpose	Value
To better respond to the changing labour market needs	37
To provide reskilling and upskilling opportunities	35
To support lifelong learning	34
To increase the flexibility of learning opportunities	34
To develop specialised skills	31
To develop new skills in emerging occupations where full…	29
To provide access to employment	28
To support diversity of pathways	23
To support inclusion in education and training for a…	23
To tailor education and training to individual needs and…	23
To support in-company training	22
To address structural unemployment	20
To develop transversal skills	19
To enhance innovation in education and training…	15
To develop digital skills	14
To facilitate digital transformation	13
To support new models of pedagogy	9
To develop green skills	8
Other	1

There are a few countries where respondents identified that micro-credentials answer to almost all of the possible purposes. Among such countries, there are Eswatini and Zambia. Only in a very small fracture of countries, there are less than 8 micro-credentials purposes, including Botswana (1), Mauritius (4), Egypt (5) and Sudan (6). Comprehensive country-by-country results can be found in the table below.

Table 12. Main purposes of micro-credentials (country-by-country)

Purpose of micro-credentials	Countries
To tailor education and training to individual needs and to make it more learner-centred	Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Egypt, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia
To support inclusion in education and	Burkina Faso, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa,

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[6]https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-13-micro-credentials-concepts-debates-experiences-2013-towards-a-common-understanding-in-different-parts-of-the-world/@@display-file/file/Thematic%20Brief%2013_Micro-credentials_towards%20common%20understanding_WEB.pdf

training for a greater diversity of learners	Uganda, Zambia
To increase the flexibility of learning opportunities	Angola, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia
To better respond to the changing labour market needs	Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Tunisia, Zambia
To provide reskilling and upskilling opportunities	Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia
To support lifelong learning	Angola, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia
To support diversity of pathways	Angola, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Chad, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia
To provide access to employment	Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Tunisia, Zambia
To support in-company training	Angola, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia
To enhance innovation in education and training institutions	Angola, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Zambia
To support new models of pedagogy	Angola, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Zambia
To develop new skills in emerging occupations where full qualifications do not exist	Angola, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia
To develop transversal skills	Angola, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia
To develop specialised skills	Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia
To develop green skills	Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Somalia, Zambia
To develop digital skills	Angola, Chad, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Zambia
To facilitate digital transformation	Angola, Cabo Verde, Djibouti, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda
To address structural unemployment	Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Tunisia, Zambia
Other	Tunisia

2.4.2 The main challenges related to the uptake of micro-credentials

The data suggests that the main challenges in implementing micro-credentials revolve around their recognition and standardisation.

When asked about prevailing challenges related to the implementation of micro-credentials, three issues were mentioned more than 30 times. Most respondents (35) claim that there are no agreed standards for quality assurance of micro-credentials, that it is a new form of credential which is not well known (32) and that micro-credentials are not supported by national policies and authorities (31). Less than 10 respondents stated that what raises challenges is that micro-credentials are not accessible

to a wide range of learners (8) and only 2 indicated that micro-credentials are too expensive. More detailed data on the frequency of other challenges can be seen in the figure below.

Figure 15. Main challenges related to the uptake of micro-credentials (multiple choice, up to 5 of the most important items, data by respondents)

In terms of breaking down challenges according to countries, a few countries have indicated ten or more challenges, including options that were mentioned at least by one stakeholder. Those are Burkina Faso (11), Guinea-Bissau (10), Tunisia (10) and Zambia (10). Cabo Verde (1) and Somalia (2), based on the respondents, have only a couple of challenges related to implementing mico-credentials. More detailed country-by-country data can be found in the table below.

Table 13. Main challenges related to the uptake of micro-credentials (country-by-country)

Challenges related to the uptake of micro-credentials	Countries
It is a new form of credential that is not well-known	Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Tunisia, Zambia
There is a range of names for short learning experiences, which causes confusion	Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mozambique, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia
There is no common definition for micro-credentials	Angola, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia
Micro-credentials are not trusted and recognised by employers	Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, Djibouti, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia
Micro-credentials are not trusted by education and training providers	Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Kenya, Morocco, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia
Micro-credentials are not supported by national policies / authorities	Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, Zambia
Micro-credentials are not compatible with national qualifications frameworks and	Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Morocco, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, South

systems	Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia
There are limited opportunities to stack up micro-credentials	Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Seychelles, South Africa, Tunisia, Zambia
There are no agreed standards for quality assurance of micro-credentials	Angola, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia
Micro-credentials are too expensive	Burkina Faso, Mozambique
Micro-credentials are not accessible to a wide range of learners	Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Sudan, Tunisia
The risks of wrong use of micro-credentials are not well-known	Burkina Faso, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Senegal, Seychelles, Tunisia, Zambia
Other	Mozambique, Somalia
Cannot answer / I do not know	Botswana, Malawi, Zambia

2.4.3   Features of high-quality micro-credentials

Respondents were further asked to choose in their view the most important features to ensure high-quality micro-credentials. The most times (46), compared to other features, respondents selected recognition by relevant national authorities as the number one feature to ensure that these credentials are high-quality. More than 30 times respondents also chose the items of recognition by education and training organisations (39), trust by employers (36) and that it links supply and demand (32) together successfully. The least impactful elements that were mentioned 15 times or less, according to respondents, are learning flexibility (15), affordability to obtain (12) and availability on online learning platforms (9). A more detailed view can be found in the figure below.

Figure 16. Important features of high-quality micro-credentials (multiple choice, up to 5 of the most important items, data by respondents)
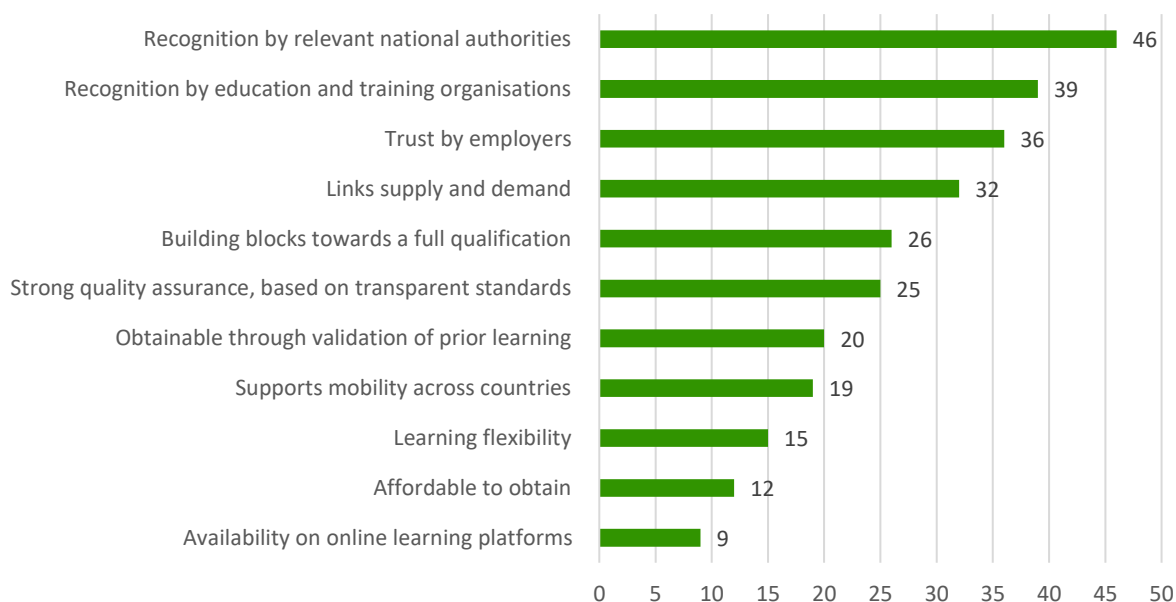
The table below shows what features are considered of high-quality country-by-country.

Table 14. Important features of high-quality micro-credentials (country-by-country)

Features of high-quality micro-credentials	Countries
Recognition by relevant national authorities	Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia
Recognition by education and training organisations	Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia
Trust by employers	Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia
Affordable to obtain	Angola, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, Zambia
Links supply and demand	Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, Zambia
Availability on online learning platforms	Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, Somalia, Uganda
Supports mobility across countries	Angola, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, Seychelles, Tunisia, Zambia
Building blocks towards a full qualification	Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia
Obtainable through validation of prior learning	Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tunisia, Zambia
Strong quality assurance, based on transparent standards	Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Tunisia, Zambia
Learning flexibility	Angola, Cabo Verde, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Senegal, Seychelles, Somalia, Tunisia, Zambia

2.4.4 A common approach to micro-credentials

The importance of developing a common continental approach to micro-credentials is evident from the collected data. The overwhelming share, 42 respondents (72.4%), agree that the common approach is very important. 14 (24.1%) of the surveyed respondents believe that the approach is important. Lastly, only one person (1.7%) considers the African approach to micro-credentials to be unimportant or very unimportant.

These results suggest that there is widespread recognition of the potential benefits of a unified strategy, which could include greater consistency and comparability of credentials, improved quality

assurance, and enhanced mobility and recognition for learners. The figure presenting survey results can be seen below.

Figure 17. Importance of developing a common African approach to micro-credentials (data by respondents)
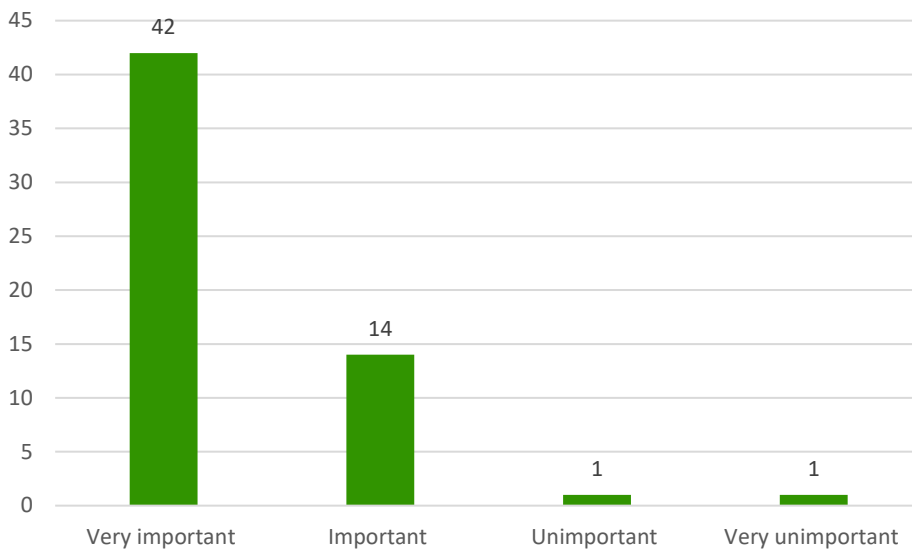
When considering results by country, the absolute majority of countries also believe that the common African approach to micro-credentials is very important.

Table 15. Importance of developing a common African approach to micro-credentials (country-by-country)

	Very important	Important	Unimportant	Very unimportant
Angola	+			
Botswana	+			
Burkina Faso	+			
Cabo Verde		+		
Chad	+			
Democratic Republic of the Congo	+			
Djibouti		+		
Egypt		+		
Eswatini		+		
Ethiopia	+			
Ghana	+			
Guinea-Bissau	+			
Kenya	+			
Malawi	+			
Mauritius	+			
Morocco	+			
Mozambique	+			
Namibia		+		
Nigeria	+			
Rwanda		+		

Senegal	+		
Seychelles	+		
Somalia		+	
South Africa	+		
Sudan	+		
Tunisia		+	
Uganda	+		
Zambia	+		

When asked about the main aspects of the common continental approach, respondents distinguished a few important elements. The two most frequently mentioned aspects are the recognition of micro-credentials (47) and quality assurance standards (47). Only slightly less prominent is inclusion in NQFs/register or database, which was selected by 46 respondents. 41 respondents also chose common and transparent definitions, that would fulfil the purpose of supporting international mobility and recognition of micro-credentials. Among the options that received 25 or fewer responses are the digitalisation of learners' micro-credentials documents (25), stackability of micro-credentials (24) and repositories or registries (20). The least popular aspect besides the option of others was the form of participation (11). More detailed data can be seen in the figure below.

Figure 18. Main aspects of the common approach (multiple choice, data by respondents)
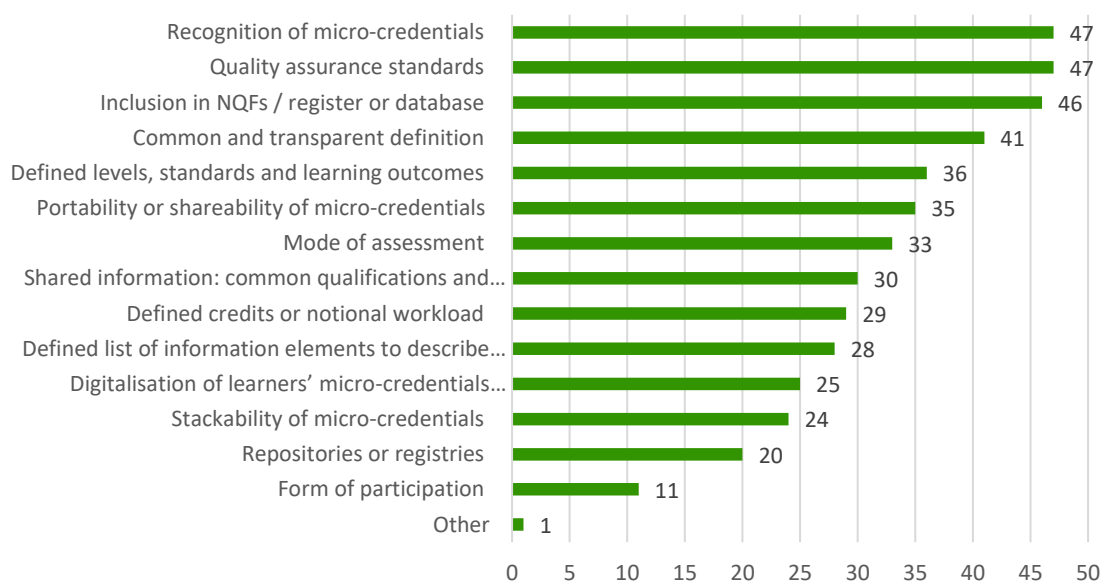
Down below can be found the main aspects of the common approach considered by the countries.

Table 16. Main aspects of the common approach (country-by-country)

Aspects of the common approach	Countries
Common and transparent definition	Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia
Defined list of information elements to describe micro-credentials	Angola, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tunisia, Zambia
Inclusion in NQFs / register or database	Angola, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Morocco,

	Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia
Defined levels, standards and learning outcomes	Angola, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia
Quality assurance standards	Angola, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia
Defined credits or notional workload	Angola, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia
Portability or shareability of micro-credentials	Angola, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia
Shared information: common qualifications and credentials digital platform	Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia
Repositories or registries	Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Zambia
Mode of assessment	Burkina Faso, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Zambia
Stackability of micro-credentials	Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, Djibouti, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Seychelles, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia
Recognition of micro-credentials	Angola, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia
Form of participation	Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ghana, Morocco, Mozambique, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa
Digitalisation of learners' micro-credentials documents	Angola, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia
Other	Morocco

Respondents were also asked where would they position the micro-credentials in the qualifications and credentials system. Out of 59 respondents, 20 (33.9%) identified that they would see micro-credentials as a combination of several approaches. 12 (20.3%) people claimed that they would position micro-credentials as a supplement to existing qualifications and slightly less (11, 18.6%) would consider them as a bridge between formal education and non-formal and informal learning. 7 (11.9%) respondents would see them as embedded in formal education while 4 (6.8%) respondents each would place micro-credentials as an alternative to formal education and as an entry pathway into formal education. Only

1 (1.7%) respondent claimed that they were unable to answer. The results of the question are illustrated in the figure below.

Figure 19. Preferences on the positioning of micro-credentials in the wider qualifications and credentials system (data by respondents)
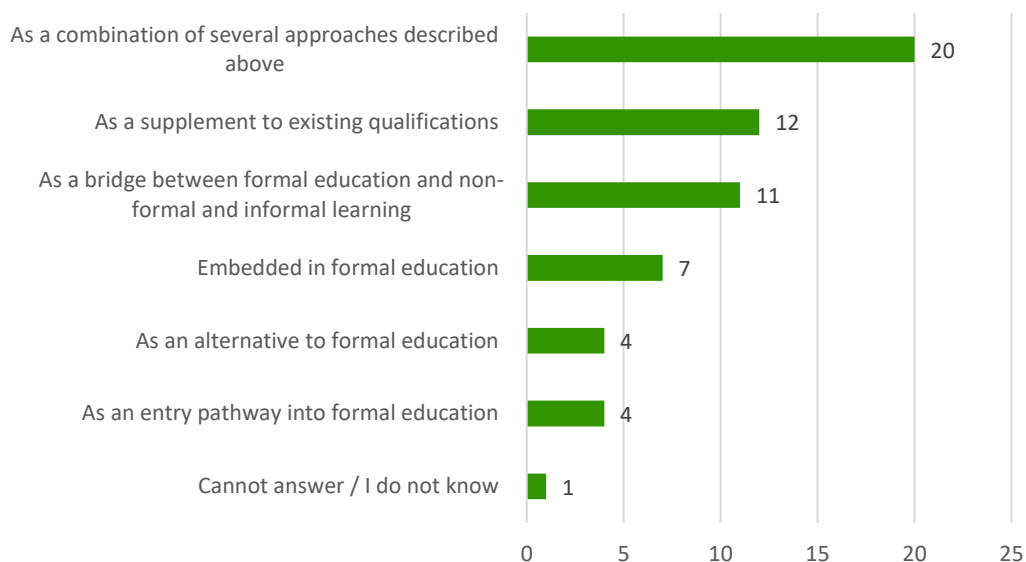
The table below shows what preferences on positioning micro-credentials in the wider system are set country-by-country.

Table 17. Preferences on the positioning of micro-credentials in the wider qualifications and credentials system (country-by-country)

Preferences for positioning micro-credentials	Countries
As a bridge between formal education and non-formal and informal learning	Angola, Burkina Faso, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Seychelles, Uganda, Zambia
As a combination of several approaches described above	Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, Egypt, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia
As a supplement to existing qualifications	Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mozambique, Tunisia, Zambia
As an alternative to formal education	Morocco, Seychelles, Somalia
As an entry pathway into formal education	Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, South Africa
Embedded in formal education	Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Morocco, Tunisia, Zambia
Cannot answer / I do not know	Mozambique

2.4.5   Assistance from the ACQF-II project

When asked where countries would require assistance in designing or implementing micro-credentials, several answers were received. Among the most recurrent answers, respondents mentioned:

- Capacity-building to help stakeholders acquire information on policy-making and design was probably one of the most salient needs that stakeholders highlighted as the first necessary step in the journey of introducing micro-credentials to their national systems. Training workshops were a recurring request in this respect.

- Further dissemination of information to other interested parties as well as awareness-raising could take various forms such as the sharing of best practices across Africa and may help in securing buy-in from decision-makers as well
- Concrete help in policy design was also mentioned in some of the answers. As a related theme, the question of quality assurance were also noted by some respondents.

The full answers are presented in the table below:

Country	Comment
Angola	The terminology of micro-credentials is something new, but there are small short-term training courses and capacity-building actions that fall under the concept of micro-credentials, since they can be certified and capitalised, but in terms of a political framework there is nothing, nor how they can be included in the Qualifications Framework.
	Distance and digital education
Botswana	How micro-credentials can be legislated but being part of the NQF
Burkina Faso	National Certification Framework and National VAE Framework
	Burkina Faso is planning to create a CNC, a national catalogue of qualifications and VAE. Assistance from the ACQF-II project would be most welcome in all these areas.
Chad	Agri-food, building and public works, livestock farming, crafts, hairdressing
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Capacity-building, inclusivity and lobbying of public authorities to set up a Certification Authority
Djibouti	Ministry of Labour Education and Vocational Training and the Ministry of Labour in charge of Formalisation and Social Protection
Egypt	Until now, we do not have policies for the implementation of micro-credentials in Egypt, so we need to design policies
Eswatini (formerly Swaziland)	Training workshops
	We still need capacity building to better understand what they are before we can design a policy framework
	Integration of micro-credentials to the National Qualifications Framework or developing a parallel structure dedicated for micro-credentials for purposes of recognition and validation
Ethiopia	Quality assurance
Guinea-Bissau	Reflection and training of the Working Group on the development of the future Guinea-Bissau NQF
	Aspect of Support for designing a micro-credit policy framework in Guinea-Bissau
	We need the ACQF-II to support us in the creation of normative laws for micro-credentials; accredited and aligned with Continental quality standards; that it is an instrument with mobility quality; that it fits into the NQF etc.
Kenya	Dissemination of information to the bottom with efficiency.
	Embedding it in the existing framework of qualifications
Malawi	We need assistance in finalising the NQF and aligning it properly to the Regional Frameworks. The TVET Qualifications Framework (TQF) also needs reviewing.
Mauritius	For recognition
Morocco	At institutional level
	Industrial and craft sectors
Mozambique	Training of members and experience from other countries
Namibia	Financial resources
Seychelles	Assistance in designing a policy framework as we do not have one and do not have experts in this area
	Identifying existing potential M-Cs. Defining/describing M-Cs officially. Placing M-Cs clearly on the NQF. Using existing international M-Cs to improve the portability of local ones.
	To come up with an appropriate definition
Somalia	Somalia does not have a common micro-accreditation system. Instead, we rely on institutional-based accreditations. In light of this, I would like to request your support in developing policies and standards for micro-accreditations in Somalia. We believe that having a standardized framework will greatly benefit our TVET and non-formal education sectors. It will ensure quality assurance, promote consistency, and enhance

	the credibility of our institutions. Assistance in developing these policies and standards will be instrumental in advancing our educational system. We are eager to collaborate with you and learn from best practices in this field.
South Africa	ACQF-II project could share examples of good practice in Africa
Sudan	In designing, implementing, and governance of national qualification framework, recognizing RPL
Tunisia	Mutual recognition between employers and employees through trade unions
	Integration of micro-certifications into the CNC
Zambia	Recognition and certification of micro-credentials
	Policy and standards development on Micro-Credentials
	In Quality assurance and appropriate skills auditing methods.
	Capacity building on it
	Developing a policy on the recognition of micro-credentials and incorporation of micro-credentials in the NQF

3 Concluding remarks

To summarise, only a handful of countries have micro-credentials fully developed, in the majority of countries they are in the process of being developed. Thus, the mapping shows that micro-credentials are in a nascent phase in Africa but interest and development are very much present. Nonetheless, as of yet, many countries have not yet started concrete development. Furthermore, most of the respondents claim that micro-credentials are an object of policy debate to a rather small extent.

While in most countries debates have started at least among policymakers and sometimes among educational institutions and learners, however, there a still a considerable share of countries where the term is not at all used in any context. Importantly, future trends are perceived positively – a vast majority of respondents believe that the expected growth of micro-credentials will happen to a large or very large extent.

While most countries are in a development phase or just taking the first steps, in the applicable cases where micro-credentials are present, technical and vocational education and training dominate with regard to the current offering of micro-credentials. As follows, TVET providers are the main providers of micro-credentials as well.

Turning to the specificities of micro-credentials, the most frequently included information elements of micro-credentials are the issuing authority/awarding body, the learning outcomes, the date of issuing and the title of micro-credentials. Consensus is less present in the case of other types of information elements.

There is not one outstanding purpose that micro-credentials serve, instead, stakeholders expect micro-credentials to contribute to various societal aims. Among the most commonly selected are to better respond to the changing labour market needs, to provide reskilling and upskilling opportunities to support lifelong learning and to increase the flexibility of learning opportunities. Recognition by relevant national authorities, however, was outstanding among other features of high-quality micro-credentials.

The most frequently mentioned challenges to the adoption of micro-credentials include the lack of agreed standards for quality assurance of micro-credentials, that it is a new form of credential currently less known and that micro-credentials are not supported by national policies and authorities. Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Tunisia and Zambia are the countries that face the biggest amount of challenges regarding micro-credentials.

The survey results clearly indicate a strong consensus on the importance of developing a common continental approach to micro-credentials. The most frequently mentioned features of such an approach would be the continent-wide recognition of micro-credentials and quality assurance standards.

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