Non-Degree Credentials Quality: A Conceptual Model to Guide Measurement

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# Types and Definitions of Non-Degree Credentials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub baccalaureate credit certificates</strong></td>
<td>Credential awarded by an educational institution for completion of a subbaccalaureate credit educational program, usually less than one year in length (short-term and long-term credit)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Non-credit certificates</strong></td>
<td>Credential awarded by an institution (educational or workplace) for completion of a noncredit educational program</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Apprenticeship</strong></td>
<td>Credential awarded after completion of structured educational and workplace program based on industry and occupational standards.</td>
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<td><strong>Industry certification</strong></td>
<td>Credential awarded by an industry body or governmental agency for demonstration of skills typically via examination based on industry or occupational standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Occupational or professional licensure</strong></td>
<td>Credential awarded by a governmental agency for demonstration of skills in a specific occupation and sometimes also completion of an educational program; often required to work in an occupation.</td>
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<td><strong>Badges, microcredentials</strong></td>
<td>Credential awarded for completion of a short program of study or demonstration of a targeted set of skills; these are newly emerging and are still being developed.</td>
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Research Approach

• Developed conceptual model through a review and synthesis of existing research.

• Goal is to guide efforts to understand and measure non-degree credential quality.

• Key guiding questions:
  – How can quality be conceptualized for non-degree credentials?
  – What are possible measures of quality for non-degree credentials?
  – How can stakeholders better measure and promote quality in non-degree credentials?
Conceptual Model of Credential Quality

**Credential Design**
- Content relevance
- Instructional process
- Assessment process
- Stackability and portability
- Transparency
- Accessibility and affordability

**Competencies**
- Demonstrated competencies including general knowledge, specialized skills, personal skills and social skills

**Market Processes**
- Awareness of credential and/or credential granting
- Endorsements and validations
- Organizational policies and practices
- State regulations
- Employer hiring policies and practices
- Educational institutions’ recognition of learning

**Outcomes**

**Individual**
- Employment
  - Job attainment
  - Promotion
  - Wage gains
  - Retention
- Educational
  - Stacking of additional credentials
  - Completion of academic degree(s)
- Social
  - Improved health and well-being
  - Greater civic involvement
  - Intergenerational benefits

**Societal**
- Employer
  - Employee pipeline
  - Better retention
  - Higher skills and productivity
  - Increased diversity
- Society
  - Better public safety
  - Increased efficiency
  - Reduced inequality
  - More civic engagement
Credential Design

- Competency relevance
- Instructional process
- Assessment process – initial and ongoing
- Stackability and portability
- Transparency
- Accessibility and affordability
Competencies

- Demonstrated competencies, including general knowledge, specialized skills, personal skills, and social skills
Market Processes

- Transparency initiatives
- Awareness of the credential and/or the credential grantor
- Endorsements or validations
- State regulation
- Employer hiring practice and politics
- Educational institutions recognition of learning
Outcomes

• Individual economic outcomes

• Individual educational outcomes

• Individual social outcomes

• Employer outcomes

• Societal outcomes
Suggestions on Using this Framework

• Importance of examining equity

• Quality elements as a guide

• Quality elements as diagnostic tool

• Quality relative to goals

• Quality relative to context
Recommendations for Policy and Practice

• Create awareness of non-degree credential quality and how to measure it.

• Collect better information on non-degree credential quality and outcomes.

• Develop and promote systems to assess non-degree credential quality.

• Promote and understand the use of data on non-degree credential quality.
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