Open Source Micro Diplomas: New Credentials for New Learning

Jack F. Powers, The Graduate Center, City University of New York

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Elizabeth Macaulay-Lewis

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Abstract
The standard model for college in America—a four-year bachelor's degree that teaches critical thinking, analytic reasoning, and written communication skills—is unaffordable and unattainable for most Americans. Only about a third of citizens aged 25 and over have achieved a baccalaureate degree or better. Two-thirds are left behind in precarious jobs that pay substantially less and that are losing ground. Everyone from politicians to parents repeats the mantra of “college for all”, but the reality is more like “college for the socio-economically gifted.”

At the same time, the modern world of work is evolving into a more complex, technical, and computerized environment that requires specific practical skills more than it needs the traditional white collar college virtues. Society and the market have responded by creating a parallel education system of competency-based skills certifications in almost every industry area. Some 1,800 private, public and government institutions have create more than 3,900 industry certifications that are focused on career paths and technology skills that the economy needs. Over 46 million people have achieved these “Open Source Micro Diplomas” instead of, in addition to, or in spite of a conventional higher ed degree. This paper examines our education outcomes, the evolving future of work, and exemplary industry certification programs to analyze today’s career-oriented education for all segments of society.

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WHY micro-credentials for PD? Many teachers are also quick to point out that teacher outcomes are improved when districts place as much attention on salaries, infrastructure and improving the “school climate” as they do on PD — which I’m sure every teacher would agree is a fair point. Micro-credentials work as small, specialist modules that teachers earn and accumulate, thereby progressing along a learning pathway of their own design. The outcome is usually a PD learning portfolio that excites and empowers. WHAT exactly are these micro-credentials? Powered by Mozilla, and an ever-adapting open source code, the system has been adopted across the world by a number of established education, government and technical institutions. Micro-credentials based on Mozilla Open Badges are “smart” digital images that show what you know and can do. They contain standardized information about the learning they recognize, such as issuer, criteria, and evidence. Learners can earn Open Badges in. They can display them in portfolios or “learning passports” and also on social media such as LinkedIn. They can even transfer them between different platforms as “portable learning records” for flexible recognition of their skills and accomplishments. Learners become engaged with Open Badges because they are satisfying to earn and they remain under their own control, unlike other forms of assessment. Open Badges make learning more visible, personal, and shareable. Tables and Figures used in “Open Source Micro Diplomas: New Credentials for New Learning” (2017). CUNY Academic Works.

http://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/2001. Bookmark. The class website was built with WordPress, an open source content management system, and some additional plugins. The quality of a gamified system does depend on the types of design elements that are being used, but even more so on the behaviors that these design elements stimulate in learners and how they are embedded within a website.