

The Societal Impacts of Credentialism and Educational
Inflation: How Academia and Professional Industry
Continue to Diverge into the 21st Century

APS 1018: History and Philosophy of Engineering

Submitted by:

Emily Cadman (100 664 3580)

Executive Summary

Submitted by: Emily Cadman (100 664 3580)

Credentialism is a systemic issue in society that cannot be ignored. It is an ideology that promotes a strict pathway to success; where acquiring credentials and higher education is the only way to gaining a well-paying, deserving job. The primary stakeholders who have fuelled this ideology is the professional industry and academia. More specifically, the professional industry such as employers, companies and organizations have restricted the hiring process by subscribing to educational inflation. Meanwhile, academia promotes the value of credentials as a passport to success in order to attract students. The recurring pattern and the primary reason as to why credentialism occurs is simply because both of these parties operate in a very isolated, divided manner. In other words, as opposed to complimenting the role and priority of one another, it is evident there is a detachment. This paper focuses on these two diverging parties and the impact credentialism has on society. More specifically, this paper starts by introducing the various dynamics that have stemmed from credentialism. Following this, there is a discussion specifically focussing on Canada and the City of Toronto. This paper concludes by projecting into the future and addressing a key stakeholder driving change, which is creating pressure and questioning others.

While credentialism leads or rather forces students to continuously pursue higher education and upgrade their credentials, it is not shocking that the minimal outcome students expect upon graduating, is to fulfill a related job in the workforce. Unfortunately, despite the financial and time-consuming commitment, the outcome is disappointing. While the job requirements are increasing, the skills, responsibilities and pay remain constant, which is why there is a skills gap and labour shortage. In response to these ongoing issues, the professional industry has started to shift their mentality away from credentialism via the hiring and recruiting process. More specifically, employers are now focusing on pre-employment, personality-based tests, hiring candidates with absolutely no post-secondary education and upskilling. Unfortunately, Canada is fairly behind and remains reluctant to steer from this ideology. Canada industry executives and CEO's still remain in the conventional state, resorting to the education system and international population as the solution to bridge the skills gap and labour shortage. However, compared to newly developed programs, such as the North Carolina project, it is obvious that in order to appease all parties including employers, potential employees/students and the schooling system, these two worlds cannot afford to continue to diverge. Professional industry and academia cannot operate in individual siloes, with no communication because based on the end result (aka the student, soon-to-be employee) there are various problems that really highlight

how misaligned and out of sync these two pillars of society are. The opportunity to begin collaborating and converging is slim and this can be understood just by looking at the industry leaders. Larger companies such as IBM and Amazon, are developing in-house educational programs and training opportunities that completely eliminate the need for the educational system. This is a beneficial program for both employer and student to ensure the student is well-equipped with updated, relevant skills that apply to the company. Professional industry is no longer relying on the educational system as an outlet and in order to be involved in this new structure, it is time for the educational system to prove its worth.

There are four primary objectives of this paper. For starters, this paper aims to provide an understanding of credentialism. Ironically, this issue impacts all facets of society in some shape or form, but there is limited understanding and exposure on it. The second objective is to clearly demonstrate the history and evolution behind educational inflation. It is important to recognize that credentialism has originated and developed overtime and therefore has become an unaddressed, escalating issue in modern society. Thirdly, assess the impact that credentialism has had and continues to have on broader society. In order to clearly demonstrate the impacts, Canada is compared to its global counterparts. Lastly, analyze how the educational systems may affect the credentialist views.