# Article information:

Full article: The end of the credential society? An analysis of the relationship between education and the labour market using big data  
<https://www-tandfonline-com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/doi/full/10.1080/02680939.2018.1549752>

# Article summary:

1. The role of academic qualifications as a 'currency of opportunity' mediating the relationship between education and occupational destinations is analyzed in this article.

2. The analysis challenges the overwhelming focus on entry-level positions and provides an examination of employers' descriptions of job requirements expressed in over 21 million job adverts in the UK.

3. The analysis gives little support to technical-function theories and also challenges the foundations of the labour queue approach, based on the role of credentials as a proxy for individual 'trainability'.

# Article rating:

Appears moderately imbalanced: The article provides some useful information, but is missing several important points or pieces of evidence that would be required to present the discussed topics in a balanced and reliable way. You are encouraged to seek a more balanced perspective on the presented issues by exploring the provided research topics and looking at different information sources.

# Article analysis:

The article "The end of the credential society? An analysis of the relationship between education and the labour market using big data" provides an analysis of the role of academic qualifications in mediating the relationship between education and occupational destinations. The article challenges the overwhelming focus on entry-level positions in previous research and provides an analysis of employers' descriptions of job requirements as expressed in over 21 million job adverts in the UK.

The article presents three dominant theories that have dominated the debate on this topic: technical-function theories, queue theory, and social closure theory. Technical-function theories emphasize the 'certifying' role of credentials, whereas queue theory and social closure emphasize their 'signaling' role. The article argues that these theories exhibit fundamental differences with regards to their assessment of fairness and efficiency derived from the use of credentials in recruitment.

The article challenges technical-function theories by presenting evidence showing that employers consider a wide range of factors in recruitment processes, with credentials having lost part of their screening function in the UK context. The authors argue that instead of conceiving 'merit' in terms of educational credentials as presented in technical-function theory, employers view their selection decisions as being 'merited' by virtue of a candidate being perceived to be 'job ready'. The authors suggest that institutional characteristics such as loose connections between education and careers, weak vocational training systems or little involvement of employer representatives in curriculum design may help to explain these findings.

The article also challenges queue theory by arguing that formal education alone is not necessarily the fundamental aspect when constructing a labor queue. Instead, employers prefer to hire candidates who are perceived to be trainable. The authors suggest that increasing availability of credentials, along with other characteristics such as social backgrounds and familiarity with certain lifestyles, activities, and networks may explain why there is a disjunction between academic attainment and occupational destinations.

Overall, while this article provides valuable insights into how employers make hiring decisions based on job requirements expressed in job adverts, it has some potential biases and limitations. For example, the authors only analyze job adverts in the UK, which may limit the generalizability of their findings to other countries. Additionally, the authors do not explore counterarguments or alternative explanations for their findings, which may weaken their claims. Finally, the article does not provide a comprehensive analysis of the potential risks associated with employers' reliance on job readiness as a criterion for selection decisions.

# Topics for further research:

* Critiques of technical-function theories in recruitment processes
* The role of vocational training systems in mediating the relationship between education and the labor market
* The impact of social backgrounds on occupational destinations
* Alternative explanations for the disjunction between academic attainment and job readiness
* Risks associated with employers' reliance on job readiness as a criterion for selection decisions
* Cross-country analysis of the relationship between education and occupational destinations

# Report location:

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