



As a longstanding member of the Career Technical Education (CTE) community, NOCTI has seen the pendulum swing many times regarding technical training. Sometimes the pendulum swings in favor of

the CTE community while other times it does not. At least from a current media perspective, it certainly appears the pendulum is in CTE's favor and CTE is enjoying some time in the "spotlight." From most perspectives, being in the spotlight provides a positive opportunity to broaden public support. Because the spotlight moves from issue to issue quickly, it generally forces those who are under it to focus their message quickly. Sometimes that message can become generalized and lose its specificity. We fear this generalization may be happening within the area of credentialing.

Most readers of this blog know that NOCTI spent its early days as part of the "vocational" teacher certification process. They may also be aware that through its current foci on leadership in the areas of technical data-driven instructional improvement, credentialing, and digital badging, NOCTI continues to be proud to be a contributing member of the CTE community. As a non-profit entity lead by a board elected by the 56 state directors of CTE across the country and in US territories, NOCTI is determined to stay ahead of the needs of the field it serves. Since NOCTI's primary focus links to credentialing and the assessment associated with it, we'd like to share a few of our observations. Aside from obvious issues of cost and delivery, the focus will be on five areas NOCTI believes every CTE program should consider during the credential selection process.

1. **Proprietary vs. Non-Proprietary Credentials:** Simply put, assess the motive of the credential provider. Is the ultimate goal of the credentialing assessment to focus on a particular product line or service? Is it to establish a lifelong pattern of acquiring certificates by the learner as a revenue generator for the providing organization? Can an administrator access the technical manual (this provides statistical data on test construction and performance) on which the assessment is based?
2. **Quality:** Does the credentialing assessment meet accepted national and international standards? There are thousands of credentials that claim to meet legally defensible standards but do they? Nationally accepted standards are the American Psychological Association (APA), American Educational Research Association (AERA), and the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME) and international standards for credentialing bodies are found in ISO 17024.
3. **Program of Study Alignment:** Does the credential assessment provide an outline of what is measured in the assessment? More importantly, do the credential and your program of study align? Are you setting your students up for failure by assessing information they have never been taught?
4. **Instructional Improvement Value:** A credential that provides a simple pass/fail score provides no ability to improve a teacher's instruction for succeeding cohorts of students. It is like shooting at a target wearing a blindfold. Does the credential provider offer meaningful data to continuously improve your instruction?

5. Relevant Information for Employers: Credentials and certifications can be seen as a “shorthand” for the skills and knowledge a learner has acquired, but a certificate alone may not provide enough detail for the employer during the hiring process. Does the credential identify specific skills obtained that can be compared against an individual employer’s needs? Detail is key!

*This blog was written by NOCTI, a sponsor of the 2016 Spring Meeting. For more information about NOCTI, reach out to [nocti@nocti.org](mailto:nocti@nocti.org) or be sure to meet them at the Spring Meeting in Washington, D.C.!*