

Credentials & Screening

Sociology

Whether a degree builds ability or merely signals it, and why the answer matters.

Human capital

- Education adds real productive skill
- Wage gap reflects added output
- More schooling grows the economy
- Predicts learning to be transferable
- Content of the course should matter

Signalling and closure

- The degree reveals existing traits
- Employers buy a filter, not a skill
- Collins: credential inflation follows
- Predicts the paper matters, not the learning
- Professions restrict entry to hold wages

THE DIFFERENCE THAT MATTERS

Both operate. Sheepskin effects, where the certificate pays more than the years, are evidence signalling is part of it.

Educational reference. Separating the two empirically is difficult, and the balance likely differs by field and country.