

Chapter 6

Digital Badges in Latin America and the Caribbean: The Inter–American Development Bank Experience

Stella Porto

Inter-American Development Bank, USA

Andrea Leonelli

Inter-American Development Bank, USA

Xenia Coton

Inter-American Development Bank, USA

Claudia Useche

Inter-American Development Bank, USA

Pablo Olguin

Inter-American Development Bank, USA

Victoria Sofia D’Agostino

Inter-American Development Bank, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter provides an overview of digital badge adoption by the Inter-American Development Bank both at the organizational level as well as for an external audience in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). It describes the value and impact of digital badges for an international multilateral organization, for its employees, and for its regional stakeholders. It discusses the challenges and opportunities of expanding the adoption of digital badges for the public sector in the LAC region. The authors believe the chapter will be of interest to policymakers in LAC, other international organizations with interest in areas of knowledge and learning, institutions of higher education interested in Latin American issues in education and training sectors, and other professionals in a variety of international settings.

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INTRODUCTION

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) is the leading development institution in Latin America and the Caribbean. As originally stated in the Agreement establishing the IDB in 1959, its mission is to contribute to accelerating the economic and social development of the developing member countries in the region. IDB fosters economic growth, helps reduce poverty and inequality, improves governance, fosters climate change mitigation and adaptation, promotes gender equality and inclusion, and responds to crises, natural disasters, and other socioeconomic challenges. It also conducts extensive research and shares knowledge through a vast array of publications and capacity-building opportunities.

Since 2004, IDB has been offering professional capacity building for those in the public sector in the LAC region, covering various topics in social and economic development. This offering has steadily grown in these almost two decades to include a variety of modes of online delivery, including MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses). Since IDB is a non-degree granting institution, alternative credentials are the perfect fit to recognize learning and achievement.

IDB has stepped into the alternative credentials landscape envisioning three main goals: providing recognition of achievement and competencies to its personnel, providing recognition of learning to its audience in the LAC region, and ultimately stimulating and supporting change in the region. IDB is a potential critical catalyst of an innovative approach in the cross-sector realm of labor markets, education, and technology-based innovation. In this chapter, we will explore IDB's strategies to pursue such potential.

This chapter provides the details of the work done at the Inter-american Development Bank (IDB) considering both its internal audience (employees of a large organization) and its external audience (public sector professionals in LAC). It reports on the advancements and challenges as it takes the role of both an issuer of digital badges and that of a partner supporting other regional agencies in this similar journey. Throughout this chapter, the authors use various terms interchangeably, namely digital badges, open badges, badges, and alternative credentials. The latter might serve as a broader term for all nontraditional credentials, including digital badges. In the context of IDB, alternative credentials are in fact always open digital badges.

The Background and Context section provides an overview and analysis of online training programs and digital credentials for continuing education opportunities in LAC. It describes the reasons why IDB started to use digital badges and the current context of digital badges in LAC. It briefly explains the importance of digital badges within this context and IDB's role as a key player in LAC and as a catalyst for the adoption and expansion of digital badges in the region.

The following section ("IDB Credentials for Professional Development within the Organization") focuses on the adoption and use of digital badges internally at IDB. Like other large organizations, IDB places significant value on the capacity building of its personnel to facilitate the understanding of the institution's organizational culture, policies, procedures, rules, and regulations to develop its functions properly. IDB has included digital badges as part of various organizational training opportunities, including HR compliance training, soft skills training such as leadership and negotiation, as well as technical training to help its employees follow the various project management processes involving loan operations. The section looks at organizational factors that are often critical to implementing any project, such as project governance, teamwork, the definition of roles and responsibilities, and communications.

The section "IDB Credentials for Professionals in the LAC Region" follows with a discussion of the challenges and opportunities of expanding the adoption of digital badges in LAC, with a special focus on the public sector. This includes a presentation of the efforts IDB has made as an issuer of badges in

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