



Texas Workforce Investment Council

Policy News Highlights

Issue 13, Quarter 1, March 2011

Texas Workforce Investment Council – *Policy News Highlights* is a quarterly review of selected reports relevant to the policy and research functions of the Texas Workforce Investment Council (Council). Federal and state agency web sites, in addition to numerous public policy and educational databases are scanned monthly for relevant and emerging issues. Reports are catalogued and stored electronically in the Council’s Information Repository (IR).

The IR has recently been updated with additional and reclassified topic areas in order to allow more direct access to subject matter. The new topic areas closely track priority issues that are part of the Council’s current strategic plan and include: adult education; apprenticeship; career and college readiness; career and technical education; clusters and sector strategies; competitiveness; data; disabilities; dropout prevention; green initiatives; and training.

Policy News Highlights remains organized into three sections, beginning with a highlight on workforce trends and issues that have received heightened attention over the previous months. The second section contains abbreviated summaries of recent articles of interest to the Council and the final section is a comprehensive list of all articles and their sources that were added to the IR in the last quarter.

This Quarter’s Selected Article

Pathways to Prosperity – Meeting the Challenge of Preparing Young Americans for the 21st Century, Harvard Graduate School of Education, February 2011.

Pathways to Prosperity is a comprehensive paper that takes a broad look at the state of education in the United States (U.S.) as it relates to preparing tomorrow’s workforce. It starts with the premise that one of the basic obligations any society has is to prepare its youth for adulthood. This means providing them with a solid educational foundation in literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking. A full appreciation of citizenship responsibilities, along with career development and lifelong learning, are equally important.

After World War II, the GI Bill created an enormous expansion in opportunities for higher education, which in turn created the significant

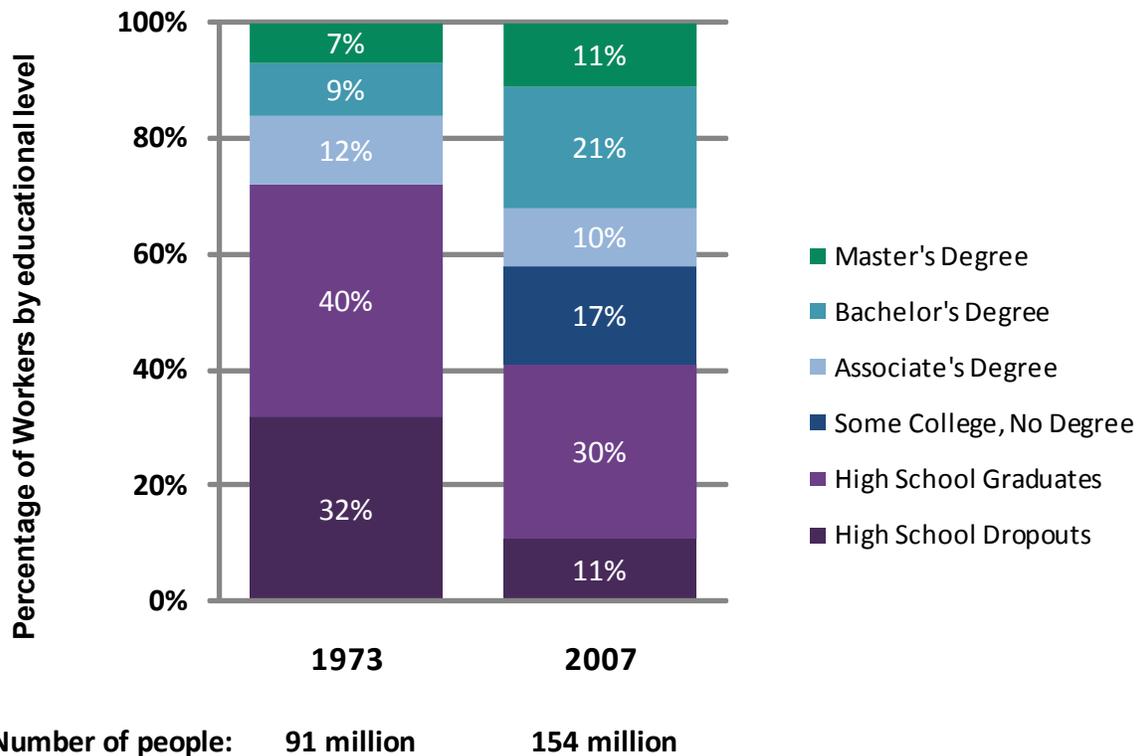
growth in American wealth and power that catapulted the U.S. to the role of world leader for most of the 20th century. Now, at the end of the first decade of the 21st century, according to *Pathways to Prosperity*, there is a growing skills gap that accounts for many young adults being unable to find jobs to maintain a middle-class lifestyle. In fact, the percentage of young adults and teens who are employed is currently at its lowest level since World War II.

Unlike the economy of the mid-20th century where a high-school diploma was adequate to secure good paying and stable jobs, this century’s market place reflects occupational growth in sectors that require at least some postsecondary education for job seekers. In addition, employers report they are unable to find qualified applicants for their job vacancies. Many high school graduates lack written and oral communications skills,

professionalism, and the ability to problem-solve required by today’s jobs. According to the authors, this suggests the pressing need for America to reexamine its approach to educating and preparing

its workforce. Below is a chart illustrating these trends that is excerpted from *Pathways to Prosperity - Meeting the Challenge of Preparing Young Americans for the 21st Century*:

Since 1973, jobs that require at least some college have exploded while opportunities for those with just a high school education have shrunk dramatically



Pathways to Prosperity states that the most prevalent model for education throughout the nation is, “college for all.” The paper points to a critical paradox: while most of today’s middle school students aspire to college, large percentages of high school students drop out, and only 30 percent of young people earn college degrees by their mid-30s.

The paper looks at why the U.S. has the highest high school dropout rate in the industrialized world. *Pathways to Prosperity* suggests that too many youth cannot see a clear cut connection between what they are studying in school and what it will yield in the way of opportunities once they are out of school and working.

The authors identify the lack of focus on career and technical education to be the major difference between the U.S. and foreign secondary educational systems. For example, during the last

two years of high school, young people in other industrialized countries enroll in programs where work-based learning is integrated with classroom learning or incorporated into the curriculum. With a clear career option in view, these adolescents perform better in school and secondary attainment rates in their countries are high.

While the authors of this paper make it clear they do not advocate a wholesale importation of such systems as the dual-apprenticeship that has been so successful for Germany and Switzerland, they do argue that the U.S. system should work toward a more comprehensive system of options and pathways for young people. Classroom-based pedagogy as the primary approach to education, they argue, does not sufficiently accommodate the widely diverse needs, abilities and interests of young Americans. *Pathways to Prosperity* suggests a long-term strategy that has three directives:

- Develop a broad approach to educational reform that offers multiple pathways to young people as they transition from high school to adulthood.
 - Clearly laid out pathways would allow students and their families to see what courses and activities provide direct access to a particular field of study in both academic and technical areas that are linked to career opportunities.
- Involve the nation’s employers and businesses to a greater degree in the educational process of young people in the U.S.
 - For example, employers and businesses could be more active in setting standards and designing programs of study, in actively advising youth, and providing opportunities for work-based learning.
- Embrace a new social compact with America’s youth.
 - “This compact should spell out what educators, employers and governments will do to provide pathways, and how they will support young people as they navigate them. In addition, it should clarify what we expect from young people.”

Pathways to Prosperity has received widespread attention in the academic and workforce communities. Such notoriety reflects the nation’s concern with improving its educational system as this process relates to securing the country’s economic future. ★



Abbreviated Summaries

Adult Education

Doing Business Together – Adult Education and Business Partnering to Build a Qualified Workforce, Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, February 2011.

This paper is based on information collected by the Council for the Advancement of Adult Literacy (CAAL) over the course of a recent, two-year project. CAAL’s goal is to promote more effective business involvement in providing workforce literacy and skills to both incumbent and potential workers. The paper outlines various approaches to successful partnering between adult education providers and businesses, and also explores how state and federal policy can support such partnerships. Five successful workforce education state partnerships are detailed, including the work of the Texas Workforce Investment Council. *Doing Business Together* explains how the Council’s strategic plan aims for the integration of adult basic education and workforce skills training programs by 2013, a goal to be implemented by the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Workforce Commission. The article also mentions the plan’s targeted employment outcomes for individuals requiring workplace literacy skills in Texas. Also, there are provisions for agency assessments of current initiatives, including an examination of existing adult education and business partnerships tracked by local workforce boards. ★

Apprenticeship

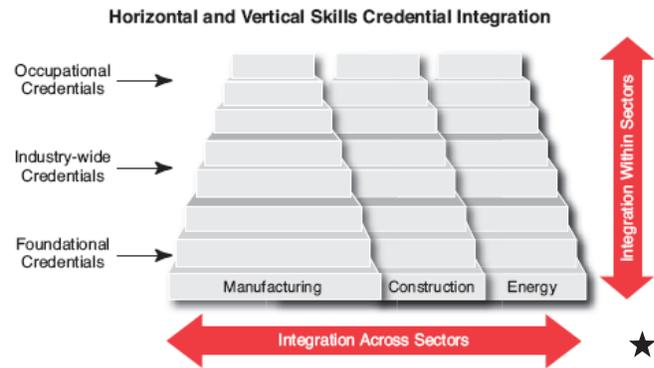
Assessing Apprenticeship Outcomes: Building a Case for Pursuing and Completing Apprenticeship, Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, February 2011.

Although this paper is about apprenticeship in Canada, it discusses policy issues that are currently relevant to apprenticeship programming in the U.S. In particular, it seeks to illustrate that “apprenticeship is a viable postsecondary education option, especially among those

individuals considering comparable college and/or non-postsecondary education options.” The paper focuses on a comparison between four distinct groups: Apprenticeship Completers, Trade Program Completers, Graduates of Selected Technical/Applied Programs, and All College Completers (excluding those in trade programs). Findings include the fact that Canadians who complete apprenticeships are now more likely to be participating in the labor force than those in the other groups of this study. The study also reports high employment rates several years after completing apprenticeship programs and better earning potential for these individuals in both the short- and long-term. Apprenticeship completers also enjoy comparatively high levels of job security and job satisfaction. ★

that all stakeholders, including workers, employers and educators would use. Since business and industry determine the skills and competencies in demand, the credentialing system would be employer driven.

Excerpted from *Breaking New Ground: Building a National Workforce Skills Credentialing System* National Skills Credentialing Framework



Career and College Readiness

***Breaking New Ground: Building a National Workforce Skills Credentialing System*, ACT, Inc., February 2011.**

In 2010, ACT convened several community college presidents for a strategic workforce development summit. American educational policymakers have been concerned about deficits in postsecondary attainment in the U.S. and this paper makes the case for a national workforce skills credentialing system.

According to the authors, the U.S. does not have a cogent workforce education system. They point out that career preparation is present in the K-12 system through Career Pathways (formerly Tech Prep), but also in community colleges and four-year universities as career technical education, and through apprenticeships. In addition to these multiple approaches, they argue the U.S. has a nonstandardized approach to credentialing and accrediting organizations, as some 700,000 different certificates are awarded each year.

This paper proposes a national skills credentialing system that would be integrated both horizontally and vertically. This means credentialing that is portable between institutions, employers and states, and stackable within career pathways, ranging from foundational, to industry-wide, to occupational competencies. Such a system would include basic elements such as a common language

Career and Technical Education

***Revamping CTE’s Image - Changing the Image of CTE*, ACTE, *Techniques Magazine*, April 2011.**

Revamping CTE’s Image – Changing the Image of CTE, is a recent article in *Techniques*, the online magazine produced by the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE). Career technical education (CTE), formerly vocational education, provides curriculum at secondary and postsecondary levels to meet the demands of a quickly changing economy. CTE courses encompass the search for sustainable energy, the growing demand in health care, as well as science, technology, engineering and math or “STEM” fields. However, CTE still suffers the stigma of being “the refuge of the not-so-smart students” and this paper discusses several ways to improve the public’s perception of CTE. Policymakers can emphasize CTE’s role in STEM and the increasing demand for workers in STEM-related occupations. Furthermore, CTE educators and federal policymakers can emphasize that today’s CTE programs integrate STEM and academics, and that pursuing CTE does not preclude a rigorous academic challenge. National media can also increase CTE awareness, as did “The Today Show” in September 2010 when it featured a CTE clip that reached over three million viewers. It

suggests that CTE educators reach out to local television stations, as well as education reporters and editors in local newsrooms. The article says that opinion editorials are also an excellent way for CTE educators to spread the word, because local government policymakers read them to stay apprised of local community affairs.

“On Capitol Hill, there is a perception that CTE, academics and STEM are separate, but in reality, CTE Programs are integrating academics and STEM into curriculums.”

—Revamping CTE’s Image - Changing the Image of CTE

Other social media, such as education blogs, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter have potential for elevating the perception of CTE. Last, the article describes “next steps” to increase the perception of CTE: students, educators and business community leaders need to consider collaborating in a national campaign to show how CTE has changed, how it is tailored to the future workforce, and which success stories illustrate this. ★

Competitiveness

State Competitiveness: Creating an Economic Strategy in a Time of Austerity, Michael Porter of Harvard Business School, February 2011.

Recently, Dr. Michael E. Porter of the Harvard Business School addressed the National Governor’s Association Winter Meeting in Washington DC. This PowerPoint presentation begins with the premise that reaching fiscal stability is inextricably linked to enhancing state competitiveness. It defines competitiveness concisely, as “the productivity with which a state utilizes its human, capital, and natural resources.” Dr. Porter goes on to explain that productivity affects wages, living standards, and sustainable economic growth, while innovation is necessary to stimulate productivity growth. Dr. Porter outlined key issues for states to improve productivity in the regional business environment. It includes composition of regional economies and breaks them down into various clusters. Houston, Texas’

oil and gas cluster is noted, as is the life sciences cluster of Massachusetts. It is a brief bird’s eye view of state competitiveness that contains clear definitions and informative graphics. ★

Data

Projections of Education Statistics to 2019 Thirty-eighth Edition, National Center for Education Statistics, March, 2011.

In publication since 1964, *Projections of Education Statistics* contains current and projected education statistics for use by educators and policymakers, as well as the general public. This issue contains aggregate data at the national level on enrollment and graduates for the past 15 years and projections relating to enrollment, graduates, teachers, and expenditures up to 2019. A new feature, this report also contains state level information on enrollment in public schools from elementary school through high school since 2001, with projections to 2019. The report does not include information about private schools. The National Center for Education Statistics states that further research and more accurate models are necessary to create reliable projections of private school enrollment and graduations throughout the 50 states. For the same reason, the data and projections in this paper do not include information for homeschooled children. Also, for the first time, this edition of *Projections of Education Statistics* also includes projections of enrollment and high school graduates by race and ethnicity. ★



Dropout Prevention

Building Roads to Success Key Considerations for Communities and States Reconnecting Youth to Education, National Youth Employment Coalition, February 2011.

The goal of this paper is to assist leaders improve and expand the options for students who are struggling to stay in high school, as well as for out-of-school youth. Its target audience is broad: state and community leaders; educators and youth advocates; school districts and postsecondary institutions; workforce programs; apprenticeship programs; state policy workers; and governor’s offices. The importance of this message is borne out by recent statistics such as that in December 2010, 18.1 percent or 3.8 million of 16- to 24-year-olds were unemployed. And, for those who do not have high school diplomas the situation is dire: in 2007, the unemployment rate for high school drop outs was 45 percent, as compared to 25 percent for high school graduates not enrolled in college.

This paper outlines five critical areas where policy and system-building at the local level is pivotal. These involve state and local policy, cross-system collaboration, data collection and its use, building capacity, and funding. Ideally, each of these areas intersects with the others to create solid options for at risk populations. Background explanations of these areas and examples of successes are followed by checklists that serve as guides for stakeholders interested in implementing any or all of these approaches. ★



Training

Roadmap to Education Reform for Manufacturing, Manufacturing Institute, March 2011.

Roadmap to Education Reform for Manufacturing is a recent article that details results from the National Manufacturing Talent Development Roundtable, held in December 2010. Produced by the Manufacturing Institute, it contains input from 36 manufacturing executives, educators and policymakers. Participants at the Roundtable agreed that in response to foreign competition, U.S. manufacturing has evolved from labor-intensive production to a technology-driven environment. While streamlined approaches and operations have allowed U.S. manufacturing to remain competitive, participants feel one of the industry’s strongest challenges is to improve the skill level of its workers. Today’s workers not only need to be able to use advanced technology, but U.S. manufacturing needs to be able to attract a new generation of skilled workers.

Some members advocate a competency-based system of education that promotes students when they have mastered curriculum. This would reduce the chances of students falling behind and eventually becoming so disinterested in school that they drop out.

The paper also supports increased industry and education partnerships as one of the best ways schools can be certain they are teaching the skills that are currently in demand in the marketplace. The Roundtable called for “the infusion of technology into the classroom,” not only in the form of computers, but more particularly as personalized computer-based instruction. Last, emphasis was placed on improving techniques for recruiting interest in manufacturing among young people, with the “Dream It! Do It!” campaign cited as a successful illumination of pathways underway in 20 regions around the country. ★

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Note to readers: While links were operational when *Policy News Highlights* was published, some may become outdated or otherwise nonfunctioning. The reader may access articles by Internet search or by going to the website of the entity that published the report.

The Texas Workforce Investment Council promotes the development of a well-educated, highly skilled workforce for Texas and advocates a workforce system that provides quality workforce education and training opportunities.

For more information, visit:
<http://governor.state.tx.us/twic/>

